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**NEW WAYS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS**

*Books by Dr. Karen Horney*

NEW WAYS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

THE NEUROTIC PERSONALITY OF OUR TIME

SELF ANALYSIS

OUR INNER CONFLICTS : A CONSTRUCTIVE

THEORY OF NEUROSIS

# NEW WAYS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

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BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

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MY desire to make a critical re-evaluation of psychoanalytical theories had its origin in a dissatisfaction with therapeutic results. I found that almost every patient offered problems for which our accepted psychoanalytical knowledge offered no means of solution, and which therefore remained unsolved.

As most analysts probably do, at first I attributed the resulting uncertainty to my own lack of experience, lack of understanding or blind spots. I remember pestering more experienced colleagues with questions such as what Freud or they understood by "ego," why sadistic impulses were interrelated with "anal libido," and why so many different trends were regarded as an expression of latent homosexuality—without, however, obtaining answers that seemed satisfactory.

I had my first active doubts as to the validity of psychoanalytical theories when I read Freud's concept of feminine psychology, doubts which were then strengthened by his postulate of the death instinct. But it was several years before I started to think through psychoanalytical theories in a critical way.

As will be seen throughout the book, the system of theories which Freud has gradually developed is so consistent that when one is once entrenched in them it is difficult to make observations unbiased by his way of

thinking. It is only through recognizing the debatable premises on which this system is built that one acquires a clearer vision as to the sources of error contained in the individual theories. In all sincerity I may say that I regard myself qualified to make the criticisms contained in this book, because I consistently applied Freud's theories for a period of over fifteen years.

The resistance which many psychiatrists as well as laymen feel toward orthodox psychoanalysis is due not only to emotional sources, as is assumed, but also to the debatable character of many theories. The complete refutation of psychoanalysis which these critics often resort to is regrettable because it leads to discarding the valid with the dubitable and thereby prevents a recognition of what psychoanalysis essentially has to offer. I found that the more I took a critical stand toward a series of psychoanalytical theories, the more I realized the constructive value of Freud's fundamental findings and the more paths opened up for the understanding of psychological problems.

Thus the purpose of this book is not to show what is wrong with psychoanalysis, but, through eliminating the debatable elements, to enable psychoanalysis to develop to the height of its potentialities. As a result of both theoretical considerations and practical experience, I believe that the range of problems which can be understood is enlarged considerably if we cut loose from certain historically determined theoretical premises and discard the theories arising on that basis.

My conviction, expressed in a nutshell, is that psychoanalysis should outgrow the limitations set by its being an instinctivistic and a genetic psychology. As to the

latter, Freud tends to regard later peculiarities as almost direct repetitions of infantile drives or reactions; hence he expects later disturbances to vanish if the underlying infantile experiences are elucidated. When we relinquish this one-sided emphasis on genesis, we recognize that the connection between later peculiarities and earlier experiences is more complicated than Freud assumes: there is no such thing as an isolated repetition of isolated experiences; but the entirety of infantile experiences combines to form a certain character structure, and it is this structure from which later difficulties emanate. Thus the analysis of the actual character structure moves into the foreground of attention.

As to the instinctivistic orientation of psychoanalysis: when character trends are no longer explained as the ultimate outcome of instinctual drives, modified only by the environment, the entire emphasis falls on the life conditions molding the character and we have to search anew for the environmental factors responsible for creating neurotic conflicts; thus disturbances in human relationships become the crucial factor in the genesis of neuroses. A prevailing sociological orientation then takes the place of a prevailing anatomical-physiological one. When the one-sided consideration of the pleasure principle, implicit in the libido theory, is relinquished the striving for safety assumes more weight and the role of anxiety in engendering strivings toward safety appears in a new light. The relevant factor in the genesis of neuroses is then neither the Oedipus complex nor any kind of infantile pleasure strivings but all those adverse influences which make a child feel helpless and defenseless and which make him conceive the world as

potentially menacing. Because of his dread of potential dangers the child must develop certain "neurotic trends" permitting him to cope with the world with some measure of safety. Narcissistic, masochistic, perfectionistic trends seen in this light are not derivatives of instinctual forces, but represent primarily an individual's attempt to find paths through a wilderness full of unknown dangers. The manifest anxiety in neuroses is then not the expression of the "ego's" fear of being overwhelmed by the onslaught of instinctual drives or of being punished by a hypothetical "super-ego," but is the result of the specific safety devices' failure to operate.

The influence these basic changes in viewpoint have on individual psychoanalytical concepts will be discussed in successive chapters. It suffices here to point out a few general implications:

Sexual problems, although they may sometimes prevail in the symptomatic picture, are no longer considered to be in the dynamic center of neuroses. Sexual difficulties are the effect rather than the cause of the neurotic character structure.

Moral problems on the other hand gain in importance. To take at their face value those moral problems with which the patient is ostensibly struggling ("super-ego," neurotic guilt feelings) appears to lead to a blind alley. They are pseudo-moral problems and have to be uncovered as such. But it also becomes necessary to help the patient to face squarely the true moral problems involved in every neurosis and to take a stand toward them.

Finally, when the "ego" is no longer regarded as an

organ merely executing or checking instinctual drives, such human faculties as will power, judgment, decisions are reinstated in their dignity. The "ego" Freud describes then appears to be not a universal but a neurotic phenomenon. The warping of the spontaneous individual self must then be recognized as a paramount factor in the genesis and maintenance of neuroses.

Neuroses thus represent a peculiar kind of struggle for life under difficult conditions. Their very essence consists of disturbances in the relations to self and others, and conflicts arising on these grounds. The shift in emphasis as to the factors considered relevant in neuroses enlarges considerably the tasks of psychoanalytical therapy. The aim of therapy is then not to help the patient to gain mastery over his instincts but to lessen his anxiety to such an extent that he can dispense with his "neurotic trends." Beyond this aim there looms an entirely new therapeutic goal, which is to restore the individual to himself, to help him regain his spontaneity and find his center of gravity in himself.

It is said that the writer himself profits most through writing a book. I know that I have benefited through writing this one. The necessity to formulate thoughts has greatly helped me to clarify them. Whether others will profit, no one knows in advance. I suppose there are many analysts and psychiatrists who have experienced my uncertainties as to the validity of many theoretical contentions. I do not expect them to accept my formulations in their entirety, for these are neither complete nor final. Nor are they meant to be the beginning of a new psychoanalytical "school." I hope, however, that they are sufficiently clearly presented to

permit others to test their validity for themselves. I also hope that those seriously interested in applying psychoanalysis to education, social work and anthropology will receive some help toward clarification of the problems with which they are confronted. Finally I hope that those laymen as well as psychiatrists who have tended to repudiate psychoanalysis as a construction of startling but unsubstantiated assumptions will gain from this discussion a perspective on psychoanalysis as a science of cause and effect and as a constructive tool of unique value for the understanding of ourselves and others.

During the time of my dimly perceived doubts as to the validity of psychoanalytical theories two colleagues encouraged and stimulated me, Harald Schultz-Hencke and Wilhelm Reich. Schultz-Hencke questioned the curative value of infantile memories and emphasized the necessity of analyzing primarily the actual conflict situation. Reich, though at that time engrossed in the contentions of the libido theory, pointed out the necessity of analyzing in the first instance the defensive character trends a neurotic has built up.

Other influences on the development of my critical attitude were more general. An elucidation of certain philosophical concepts brought home to me by Max Horkheimer helped me to recognize the mental premises of Freud's thinking. The greater freedom from dogmatic beliefs which I found in this country alleviated the obligation of taking psychoanalytical theories for granted, and gave me the courage to proceed along the lines which I considered right. Furthermore, acquaintance with a culture which in many ways is different

from the European taught me to realize that many neurotic conflicts are ultimately determined by cultural conditions. In this respect my knowledge has been widened by acquaintance with the work of Erich Fromm, who in a series of papers and lectures has criticized the lack of cultural orientation in Freud's works. He also has given me a new perspective on many problems of individual psychology, such as the central significance which the loss of self entails for neuroses. I regret that at the time of writing this book his systematic presentation of the role of social factors in psychology has not yet been published, and that therefore I cannot quote him in many instances where I should have liked to do so.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Miss Elizabeth Todd, who has edited the book and has helped me greatly both by her constructive criticisms and by her suggestions as to a more lucid organization of the material. My thanks are due also to my secretary, Mrs. Marie Levy, whose untiring labors and fine understanding have been invaluable. Also I feel indebted to Miss Alice Schulz, who has given me a better understanding of the English language.

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