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Reviews and Criticisms

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REVIEWS AND CRITICISMS

MENTAL CONFLICTS AND MISCONDUCT. By *William Healy*. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1917. Pages XI+330.

"Innate cussedness" is no longer a satisfactory explanation of conduct abnormalities. Dr. Healy has clearly shown, in his latest book, the importance of investigating the deciding factors in a career of delinquency. "A remarkable, dynamic quality characterizing certain hidden mental reactions to experiences is responsible in some individuals for the production of misconduct, or, indeed, whole careers of delinquency." It is the problem of this book to set forth the nature of this most important mechanism of mental life.

The theory underlying the discussion is that all actions are determined by previous experience. It is not necessary that the experience be remembered. In many cases the subject may be unconscious of the factors determining his behavior. The most important elements may have been repressed, and for many days may not have reached the conscious level. The chief problem in work with those whose conduct is abnormal, is to bring to the light of clear consciousness the details of emotional conflicts, which, in spite of "being out of sight, exert an influence."

It is essential to realize that conduct is determined by definite, even though not easily ascertainable factors. When we arrive at the point of view that all actions are determined, it is reasonable to consider the possibility of reformation through the introduction of new experiences. Aroused largely by unchanged environment as the author truly remarks, thoughts or impulses once held may very likely crop up in mind again, through the active forces of memory and of association and habit formation. These are the suggestions coming from various features of living conditions in an old neighborhood, from an achieved reputation, from old associates in delinquency, or from companions known while under detention. Even the family attitude toward the offender may result in the continuance of the delinquency. In work with various cases, all these adventitious forces have been observed at work and, where no change of environment has been effected, the continuance of the tendency to offense has seemed inevitable.

The discovery of the "mental conflict" or the emotional disturbance which is the cause of the abnormal conduct is the essential prerequisite of treatment. Healy says the general method of psychological investigation considered in this book has usually been called psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic procedure is, however, more complex and requires a finer technique than is desirable or necessary for the solution of problems of misconduct. For this purpose a simpler procedure is sufficient, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the procedure is designated *mental analysis*, that is, "the method of using the memory to penetrate into the former experiences of mental life."

In making the analysis it was not long before the author was "forced to the conclusion that information such as might be obtained by mental testing, physical examination, by learning the main points

of developmental and family history, and by inquiring into the companionship, or other environmental conditions, was absolutely insufficient to explain the essentials of the development of a marked tendency to delinquency in certain cases. Certain elements of innate mental life had to be sought out and invoked for explanation, even if practical issues alone were in view."

An "interview" might be a good term to summarize the method of mental analysis. "Then, perhaps, nothing so frequently taps the source of trouble as sympathetic questioning about worries, and persistently recurring images or ideas. The simple asking, 'What is it that bothers you? or, Do you worry about anything?' is often sufficient to bring out facts which brightly illuminate further progress of analysis." In making these investigations certain difficulties must be faced, and certain problems solved. In the chapter on "Methods" much valuable information is given for the guidance of the analysts.

While the method is not absolutely proscribed for any type of case, there are subjects for whom it is not desirable. "Rarely to be benefitted by mental analysis are adolescent girls showing hypersexual tendencies, even though mental conflict plays a part in the case, they are properly subjects for educational discipline and environmental control."

Since it is the memory that is being used, the more recent the memories the more satisfactory will be the results. In adults, mental conflicts are not so likely to develop and the fruitful field of effort is with younger rather than with older subjects. It is also true that the lower the intelligence the less is the probability of accurate reproduction. We may, therefore, be sure that "the promise of practical returns from the use of mental analysis in cases of misconduct, caused by mental conflict, is much greater with the more intelligent."

In chapters 5 to 16 inclusive, constituting two-thirds of the book, cases of mental conflict are discussed. While the presentation of these cases is extremely valuable, it seems to the reviewer that direct causal connection has not been established between the mental conflicts discussed and the abnormal conduct. In many cases the mental conflict is concerned with sex affairs. The abnormality of conduct is usually taking what does not belong to oneself. The interpretation that the stealing is due to disturbing thoughts about sex relationship or sex practices seems a trifle insecure. It would be desirable to know in how many cases there have been similar conflicts in reference to sex matters where no deviation from the accepted standards of social reaction is noticed.

A demonstration of a causal relation between certain experiences and certain types of reaction would be an exceedingly important contribution to the solution of the problem of delinquency. It would then be possible to outline corrective or re-educational measures. Even though it is not clearly shown in this work that the conflicts discussed do stand in causal relationship to the delinquency, the book is a most important contribution. When judges, probation officers, psychologists and medicopsychologists, realize that all actions may be explained in

terms of previous experiences, it is undoubtedly true that we shall have a rapid reformation in our methods of dealing with delinquency. Dr. Healy is to be congratulated on the strong presentation of this point of view.

Municipal Court of Philadelphia, Pa. DAVID MITCHELL.

SOME CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF MENTAL TESTS AND TEST SERIES. By *Florence Mateer*, Ph. D. *Mental Hygiene*, April, 1917. Pp. 241-51.

Ten years ago no mental tests were attracting attention, but Binet was developing his series. Their use, at first cautious, rapidly grew extensive, while all handicaps were ignored. Then followed criticisms and constructive attempts at standardization. Goddard's contribution is valuable, as he shows the percentages of children at the various chronological ages as well as at the various mental ages who do the same question, thus giving a two-plane distribution which checks itself. The weakness of the Binet tests is their lack of distinction between defect and disease. We must not diagnose as defective those testing a certain amount below chronological age; the quality of response and corroboration must be relied upon. Also, we must not designate a definite percentage of a group as defective, and try to find tests that discriminate that many, as suggested by Pinter and Paterson. All feeble-mindedness cannot be detected in early childhood. Today's tests are of differential diagnosis, not prognosis.

We dare not depend on any one test series for the detection of the defective unless more varied and comprehensive than those of the present day, because the mental defective is not he who lacks one attribute, but is lacking in so many ways that he cannot make shift in an emergency even though he use all the ability he has. Sticking to any one procedure causes prejudice which leads to a personalized revaluing of all other data which are approved or discarded according to their correlation with the data dug out by the pet tool.

One of the first essentials for advance in mental testing is a standardization of examiners; even such a rating as easy, hard, variable, or exact would be better than nothing. Test standardizations should be based on empirical data rather than statistical theories. Unselected groups and community surveys would be a good basis of study. The individual tests should be evaluated. The defectives should be known as far as possible from some other diagnosis. Failure to pass the tests of society, together with educational acquisitions not up to what the person has had the chance to get, is good corroborative evidence of mental defect. Mental test findings must correlate highly with such evidence.

A Gaussian curve of distribution is not sufficient proof of the diagnostic value of a test; it must have a mode indicating normality. The matter is too complex for a single test series. A great number of distributions must be used. He who is below in a sufficient number

is defective. This number should be determined by a statistical survey of all cases. The borderline case will be more easily diagnosed, the greater the number of tests. Another factor aiding in evaluation of tests will be a more liberal use of correlation coefficients and the resultant correction of opinions drawn from distribution curves alone.

When sufficient data have been assembled to give a coherent and complete picture of brain activity, then and only then, is diagnosis allowable.

Evanston, Ill.

ELIZABETH PETTY SHAW.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPECIAL ABILITIES AND DISABILITIES. By *Augusta F. Bronner*. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1917. Pp VI+269.

Besides the preface, and an appendix which contains statements on the results of certain psychological tests, there are ten chapters in this book. The first chapter is a statement of the problem, "That human beings have particular abilities and disabilities varying more or less—and frequently varying greatly—from the level or normal capacity, is a fact of much psychological interest as well as of great practical educational and social significance." Efforts have usually been made to determine positive correlations between different mental traits, but these correlations are far from unity correlations, and superiority in one trait may be, and often is, accompanied by actual incapacity or specialized defect in another. The question, in reference to those with specialized abilities and disabilities, is different from that of the feeble-minded, i. e., of those who are definitely of the institutional type. In case of those with special defect, or ability, the problem is not segregation, but rather adjustment to the social organism.

The chapter on "Methods of Diagnosis" is, to a large extent, a discussion of many individual tests which may be used in a psychological examination. From the standpoint of social behavior, perhaps the most important statement in the chapter is the following: "The situations which in real life call the emotions into play are not easily duplicated in the laboratory, and artificial stimuli for arousing them necessarily would result in totally different reactions. How can one study experimentally love and hate as they affect behavior? Or what can tests reveal concerning the formation and results of anti-social grudges? Judgment as to defects in emotional life, as well as in regard to will, must be based very largely, if not altogether, upon the individual's social reactions."

Chapter 3 on "Differential Diagnosis" indicates some cases for which one must be on the lookout. The possibility of confusing epileptic deterioration, the phenomena of hysteria, or the irregular mental functioning of chorea, with other types of mental abnormalities, is clearly outlined. Two statements in the chapter are probably open to considerable question. The first one is, "Sometimes mental dullness caused by excessive use of *tea* or *coffee*, or by *smoking* indulged in to an extreme degree, exhibits itself in a form which makes observers

suspicious of specialized defect." The second one is, "To distinguish between the normal individual with special disability and the defective with special ability should not present a very difficult problem in the light of all that we have already said." The latter statement is liable to lead to considerable misunderstanding. Even though one has the training, which the writer of the discussion has had, it is not always an easy task to decide this question. The layman reading the discussion is liable to make interpretations which the writer probably did not wish to suggest.

"Some Present Educational Tendencies," is the title of Chapter 4. School investigators have, to a large extent, dealt with the system as a whole, rather than with the pupils in the system. The individual concerned has had little consideration: "But since one salient characteristic of the mental life is individual differences, this certainly should affect the theory of education on the one hand, and practical procedure on the other."

In order to have as efficient an administration of the schools, as there is of the ordinary commercial establishment, much more consideration must be given to the result in the case of each pupil.

Chapters 5 to 8 inclusive include discussions of various types of special disabilities, presenting cases which illustrate the type of defect. The first question is of special defect in number work, the second is of defect in language. In reference to these, cases of word blindness, and word deafness are discussed, and the number of cases are presented in which these factors are possible explanations for the social mal-adjustment.

Chapter 7 discusses "Special Defects in Separate Mental Processes." Memory, inner visual functions, and perceptual abilities are included in the discussion.

The 8th Chapter is the discussion of "Defective Mental Control." "A moment's reflection should convince anyone that special defect in control of actions is a phenomenon no more peculiar than is disability of any other type. The power to awaken inhibiting ideas and to keep such thoughts in the foreground of consciousness so that they may become effective is a power as truly characteristic of mental life as is the capacity for recalling past experience or for performing any other mental function." A number of cases, well worth perusal, are presented.

Chapter 9 discusses special ability in cases where there is general subnormal mentality. The special abilities are with number work, with language, and with concrete material and rote memories. Occasionally some of these special abilities have a distinct economic value, and it is desirable to determine their presence in order to prescribe the best treatment for the subject.

The final chapter is on "General Conclusions." "It is not the author's purpose to offer any specific devices guaranteed to overcome defects, or to develop abilities. Since each individual problem-case would seem to require intelligent consideration on the basis of all data that can be gathered concerning it, it naturally follows that no general

formulae for treatment can be given, no dogmatic statements made in regard to general constructive measures."

Such a discussion as is presented in this book, points to a much more satisfactory solution of the problem of abnormal conduct than we have usually supposed possible. In line with other publications from the psychopathic institute, this book emphasizes the fact that there are definite, if with difficulty ascertainable, reasons for the conduct of an individual. In other words, behavior is not something determined by an individual *willing* to do wrong, or *willing* to do right, but behavior is determined by the kind of organism with which an individual starts out in life, and by the experience which he has had.

Municipal Court of Philadelphia.

DAVID MITCHELL.

PSYCHIATRIC FAMILY STUDIES. By *A. Myerson, M. D.* American Journal of Insanity, Vol LXXIII, No. 3, January, 1917.

This paper presents (1) a review of the literature on the treatment of the psychoses and the family studies done by other workers; (2) rearrangement and criticism of Koller and Dien's work on the heredity of the insane and non-insane; (3) marriage rate of the four groups of insane as shown by the Taunton (Mass.) State Hospital statistics; (4) "anticipating and antedating" as shown by the work of Mott and others and by Taunton figures; (5) the analysis of individual families from the records of the Taunton State Hospital. The author has three objections to the Mendelian laws as at present applied to psychopathic heredity: (1) "It is assumed that the neuropathic differs from the normal by the lack of some normal determiner. There is evidence adduced for this point of view and it is just as possible that a diseased determiner or even a new one is at work." (2) "The laws of Mendel have not been shown to apply for any single normal human character of simple type, except perhaps, eye color. To assume then that the vast range of the psychoses (the feeble-minded, the epileptic, character anomaly, criminality, and neuroses) is related to a unit determiner, or group of determiners acting as a unit is, to say the least, premature." (3) "There is a question in my mind whether a true Mendelism has been followed. The dominant characters of Mendel appear in a first generation through the mixing of two stocks, and in the second and later generations the proportion of recessive and dominant appears through the inbreeding of the first generation; that is to say, what would correspond to the mating of brothers and sisters in human relationships. No such conditions prevail in mankind and expectation of ratios and proportions seems to be futile."

In regard to the marriage rate of the insane, Myerson finds (1) "the males in the alcoholic, parietic and dementia praecox groups marry less than do the females. In the seniles, though the percentage of married men is greater, the totals of those who have entered conjugal relations at one time or another are about equal."

In regard to the statistics of the cases treated at the Taunton State Hospital, Myerson says the following: "There had been at the time that this part of the work was completed, in January, 1916, 22,300 admissions to Taunton State Hospital since its founding in 1854. From a rough calculation made by analyzing 3,000 cases taken at various points in the history of the hospital it seems that about 16,000 persons are represented in the 22,300 commitments. Of the 13,000 people in the hospital at that time, roughly ten per cent were related to one another. Of the patients that had been in the hospital from 1854 to 1916 there were 1,547 who were related to one another, and these represented 663 families."

"The mother-son relationship is much less frequent than the mother-daughter (as 55 is to 80), but the father-son relationship is only slightly less common than the father-daughter (as 55 to 59), and represents a difference more likely to be accidental."

In part five are discussed at length ninety-eight family groups. The author sets himself the following problem: "Given a certain type of mental disease in an ancestor, what form of mental disease is to be expected in his direct insane descendant?"

Answering this question, the result of this family study is as follows: From a paranoid psychosis in the immediate ancestor, dementia praecox or a paranoid condition results. Dementia praecox in the ancestor produces dementia praecox in the descendant. Cases of maniac depressive insanity show either the same psychosis or dementia praecox.

The study is made on material collected at the Taunton State Hospital, first by Dr. Charles C. McGaffin, former pathologist, and then by the author, Dr. A. Myerson, present chemical director and pathologist. All the records of the hospital were analyzed and supplemented by information obtained by field workers in regard to patients and their families after discharge.

This is a very interesting and suggestive study and a very good example of what may be done with state hospital records which so often are not available for any scientific purpose. The author is wisely conservative in his deductions, since, as he points out, institution records are unsatisfactory as material on the basis of which one may answer some of the urgent problems confronting the psychiatrist, such as the question of the relation of genius to insanity, the problem of the psychoneuroses, criminalism and similar problems. Of course, it is obvious that in order to obtain any satisfactory conclusion in regard to such questions a great deal more information must be obtained regarding the uncommitted members of these families than it is possible to obtain from these records. This study, however, should encourage the hospital official not only in continuing to keep careful and detailed records, but in enlarging their scope and above all in following a good system of cross reference, such as that instituted at the Danvers State Hospital in Massachusetts, by the former superintendent, Charles Whitney Page. This work is a pointed answer

to the question so frequently asked by the lay officials as to the value of psychiatric records in state hospitals.

Chicago.

HERMAN M. ADLER.

FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS AS SEEN IN COURT. By *V. V. Anderson*, M. D. *Mental Hygiene*, April, 1917. Pp. 260-65.

The feeble-minded formed a nucleus of the recidivists. Examination shows that 25-40% of the group are feeble-minded. Of a group of 1,000 troublesome offenders, Anderson found 36% feeble-minded. This was a selected group, hence the proportion is quite high. Not more than 10% of all criminals are feeble-minded, yet this 10% is the very backbone of recidivism. An intensive study of a group of 100 feeble-minded individuals taken without selection from court files gives the following data: All showed sufficient deviation in childhood to have made their detection possible; 73% did not get beyond the fifth grade in school; 75% were not self-supporting after leaving school. They were equally incapable of conforming to the standards of conduct of their communities, as shown by the fact that the average number of arrests apiece was 18.25. Both probation and penal treatment were tried by the court. The group was placed on probation 432 times, 220 times surrendered, and 118 inside probations. They were given 735 penal sentences, of 106 years total, and 250 indeterminate sentences. An adequate explanation of all this maladjustment is found in the fact that 75% were below the mental level of ten-year-old children. There has been untold economic waste in not recognizing in early childhood the feeble-mindedness of these individuals, who should have been protected from their own weakness and who would have been made happy and useful in a limited environment created for their special needs. The community has acted unintelligently in failing to interpret correctly the condition of these weaker members.

Evanston, Ill.

ELIZABETH PETTY SHAW.