TREATMENT.


The only possible way to remedy abnormal conduct arising from neurotic disease is to bring the motive of the individual into the field of consciousness, as a preliminary step at least to changing the behaviour. Thus we may discover the tendencies behind the conduct in question, and then control and redirect the energies. This is what is meant by extending the field of conscious control, which is the principle at the basis of the psychoanalytic approach to psychotherapeutic problems. A most common way in which unconscious tendencies lead astray is by the projection of a wish. The conquering of our environment is made possible only by an increase in our knowledge of that environment; but mental hygiene concerns itself with a different aspect of the enlarging of the field of conscious control. An individual's reaction in any particular situation is not alone determined by the factors of the situation itself, but the sum total of his previous experience which relates him to it, and for most of which he is quite unconscious. Thus a bias and a prejudice born of the unconscious colour all our problems, and the essence of mental hygiene is self-knowledge. Our instincts are bound to get expression in some way sooner or later, and, if we are not capable of understanding their promptings, then they gain expression by some devious pathway and parade as something which they are not. Physicians must no longer be content to leave the personality out of the scheme of their attempts to understand illness, and every physical symptom must have its reverberation in the mind of the patient. Mental reactions are as definitely determined and as reasonable as physical and physiological reactions. Evolution has been, among other things, the result of an increase in the capacity to bring the instincts under the domination of the intelligence. White thinks that various physical ailments which come more nearly within the conception of organic disorders, but which may well at first be purely functional, and at present are most baffling to our understanding, may receive much illumination if we view the human machine as a whole. If an individual approaches the problem of his life with a divided interest, he must constantly be utilizing his energies for different and often mutually opposed ends. Hence the machine will be set for certain types of reaction which are not permitted to come to pass. These motor sets of the organism will produce tensions of the voluntary and visceral musculature as well as psychological tensions which, when long continued or severe in character, tend to break down the machine. Energy which is used in the service of repression shows itself in the friction with which the machine works and the consequent wear and tear of its several parts. Evolution is not always slow and uniform in progress, but at times advances by the sudden creation of something new. The author looks upon the new psychology as a new instrument with which to attack the problem of living.

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