THE NORMAL MIND
AN INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HYGIENE
AND THE HYGIENE OF SCHOOL INSTRUCTION

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER AND MOTHER
AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE PARENTS
WHO TRUST THEIR CHILDREN AND
PUT RESPONSIBILITY UPON THEM

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CHAPTER XXI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The function of the nervous system is to make protoplasmic connection between the receptor and the effector organs. Thus, primarily, as pointed out by James, it is a mechanism for converting stimuli into reactions. The nervous system has also the great function of coördination and in its higher development the function of association. With the development of the new brain, the neöncephalon, the rudiments of which appeared in the selachians, came the power of association, which increased along with the evolution of the cortex until in the human being both reach the acme of their development. We find no dramatic beginning of associative memory; but, when any species did acquire this power, it became possible for the animal to profit by its own experience. Learning became possible.

We have taken one form of association, namely, the association of stimuli, for illustration. The other forms of association and of learning have been considered only incidentally.

With the development of the power of association of disparate stimuli it became possible to acquire reactions to stimuli that before were indifferent. With the development of the nervous system and this power of association, the development of integration at higher levels became possible.

In the individual, integration and the power of ad-
justment may be developed, physically, by coördinated activity, and mentally, in the doing of purposeful tasks. By the doing of tasks mental attitudes are developed, and they, together with inherited tendencies, determine behavior. Hence they are called determining tendencies. Any stimulus that touches off a determining tendency is called suggestion. The function of education and the function of the teacher are largely suggestion.

Although the activity of an organism is determined by stimuli internal and external, this is only half the story, because stimuli are often in conflict, and in coördinated activity inhibition is as important as stimulation. As often pointed out, they are two halves of the same whole. In biological development we find the two together; in all neural activity we have both stimulation and inhibition. In mental activity the same is true; and in education stimulation and inhibition are both necessary. Our behavior, as James used to say, is the resultant of our impulsions and our inhibitions. Thus we have the overinhibited type and the underinhibited type.

Evidence has been cited for the view that the integration of the personality that makes right adjustment possible is the essential characteristic of the normal mind. An integrated organism is a whole of interdependent parts, not a summation of parts, a whole that is more than the sum of its elements. Tentatively, the thesis has been maintained that the child's mind, like its physical organism, is integrated from the start, although at a low level. It reacts as a whole to its environment.

The ordinary conception of childhood may well be doubted. While the child is different physically and mentally from the adult, and while both mind and body
are undeveloped, it may nevertheless be found with further investigation that the child’s personality is better integrated, at least after the second year of life, when the connection between the new brain and the old brain has been made and the function of association in the cortex developed, than that of the adult. Integration may occur at different levels, and it is not incompatible with a low stage of mental and physical development. It is a functional concept. This is not in conflict, but in harmony, with the view of habit given above, the need of breaking down old habits in the building up of higher habits, and of unlearning in the process of higher learning. All this reconditioning is reintegration; for the organism acts as a whole. Like growth itself the process ever begins anew, and in normal children at ever higher levels.

Apparently the evidence shows, as Koffka maintains that psychogenesis begins with wholes and with integration. In child psychology, however, the theory still survives that its mental processes begin with a chaos of elements, the child’s blooming, buzzing confusion, as James called it; and education apparently has never become quite emancipated from the old view of the child as bad and the belief that the function of education is to redeem the child and make him good.

Naturally, if the child itself is an integrated organism, it need not surprise us to find that its perception of objects begins with the perception of wholes. For this view there is much evidence, Köhler and Koffka have collected this from the investigations of children and animals, although it cannot be cited here. A typical example is the observation that Miss Shinn made on her niece. This observer reports that the child at the
age of 25 days had no interest in simple colors, but did have in the human face as a whole.

From the very first of a child’s mental development the process is from wholes to parts, or, from what Köhler calls the *Gestalt* to the parts which belong to it. As phenomena, a man, for example, does not exist for the child as made up of organs, but the organs belong to the man. The same is true of many primitive peoples. In their languages one cannot say a hand, but a hand is always designated as the hand of somebody.

It is interesting to recall that in the study of the conditioned reflex Pavlov found that the conditioned response at first is to general rather than to special stimulation. At first the dog responds to associated stimulation of the skin by scratching, with a secretion of saliva; and like stimulation of other parts of the skin gives the same response. Afterwards, however, the process of analysis occurs, and the characteristic response, the flow of saliva, occurs only on stimulation of a definite locality; and in like manner auditory stimuli are analyzed, response at first to a whole, with response later to the differentiated stimuli of definite tones.

If this new theory should prove true, then the special effort in the mental hygiene of childhood should be to preserve the integrity of the child; above all to avoid all the distracting and disintegrating conditions of education, and protect from any form of education that tends to destroy the very characteristics and modes of reaction necessary for the mental health, the things, in a word, that we try so hard to develop in our reeducation of cases of mental disorder. Renewed emphasis will then be placed on freedom for the child in the doing of his own tasks; the need of mental hygiene at the two great epochs of development, early childhood and adolescence;
the preservation at all costs of the integration of the personality which already exists in childhood; and the giving of opportunity for worth while tasks and legitimate self assertion at the period of adolescence, again to give freedom for reintegration of the individual personality.

We have presented the accepted doctrines and used the common terms speaking of the survival of childish attitudes and emotions. The point, however, may well be raised whether this does not do injustice to childhood. At least, there is another side to this. The normal child is really normal, not bad or pathological in its mental and moral condition. Many of its traits should survive. When we subtract the mental attitudes we have taught children, by our own example, how many remain that are undesirable?

To speak more concretely of the child's attitudes that are normal and should survive, it may be noted that the child is trustful and not suspicious; is free from fear except fear caused by violent change of stimulation, a loud noise, for example; is free also from anger except when bound or limited in its activity, where anger is really a defense reaction of its already integrated organism; is free from injurious repressions and inhibitions, from self-consciousness and the vast number of interfering and inhibiting thoughts and feelings related to self that constantly interfere with the adult's activity; has an optimistic attitude toward life, and usually a sense of humor; gives attention to the present situation, and, in its own activity, is orderly in its associations. The child exhibits its highest form of integration in conscious attention. It delights in expending energy in motor reactions involving the whole organism; and in the doing
of its own freely chosen tasks, shows an integration well-nigh perfect.

Thus along with our negative hygiene, which attempts to remove the repressions and inhibitions and infantile attitudes that represent survivals from childhood, we should now develop a positive hygiene whose aim shall be to preserve the integrated habits of attention, the attitudes of work and play, from the child's world. An adult who can work with a child's whole-hearted attention, who in hours of recreation can drop back into the child's attitude of play, who can find his wages in his work without distracting thoughts of pay or scholastic reward or tokens of honor, or even the need of defending his own personality, has an asset for the mental health no negative precautions can equal. Mental hygiene, like somatic hygiene, began with the cure of disorder, and with negative precautions; but it has now advanced to positive hygiene and prevention. A form of prevention that preserves the healthful attitudes of childhood is vastly more important than the negative hygiene which has to be brought in to atone for the faults and sins of early education by eradicating childish attitudes that are disintegrating and pathological.

To child and adult alike the most disintegrating influence is that of uncontrolled emotion. The wish of a child known to the writer, that we did not have feelings, has been echoed by many adults. Among the causes of disintegration to-day are failure in one's work, failure to be understood, disparagement of the personality, exposure of one's real faults, slights of "the dear ego", injustice, reflection on one's honor, and the like. With these, emotional complexes are likely to be formed and the beginnings of mental disorder develop.

Cannot control of feeling be acquired while retaining
a normal affective life? With increased knowledge of endocrinology a better hygiene of feeling will be possible. Meanwhile mental training helps. It has been pointed out that a direct reaction or some fitting surrogate is always possible. And an objective mental attitude toward feeling can be acquired. Children can be trained to react at first to their feelings by searching for the facts of the situation and taught the truth of the French maxim: tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner. They can be trained in work and play and group activities, taught that to give way to feeling disintegrates the personality, that it marks the behavior of a mind diseased, that those controlled by their emotions lose for the time being their ability to reason correctly, become pseudo-feebled-minded, objects of pity rather than blame; and as specially emphasized above, they can be trained to see that their own feelings have nothing to do with reality.

The function of the school as an institution par excellence for giving worth while tasks and the opportunity of the teacher, have been emphasized. Some of the ways in which the school develops unfortunate inhibitions and robs the child of his task have also been noted. The importance for the school of the principles of mental hygiene involving attention to the present situation, orderly association, work, the attitude of facing reality, self-control, and the like, have been illustrated.

Certain possibilities of development and certain limits are set by heredity. To extend these is the function of the eugenist, to make the most of them, the function of the educator and the mental hygienist. Mental hygiene shows that within the limits set for the individual by heredity, not only can mental disorders be prevented, but integration of the personality and positive habits of health can be developed.
To learn to face reality, to acquire habits of attention and orderly association, to develop wholesome interests, to control one's emotions, to coöperate in a normal social group; in a word, integration of the individual character and integration of the social group, are more valuable than the acquisition of all knowledge and the mastery of all conventional accomplishments. Thus the application of the principles of mental hygiene in all forms of education, whether in the home, the school, on the playground, or in industry, is essential for efficiency, happiness, and normal development.

Modern hygiene is positive, its aim is not the mere prevention of disease, but the development of habits of health. Neither mental health nor physical health can be taken for granted. The watchword of both is prevention; but the best means of prevention is usually healthful development—on the physical side, a high health level and habits of health, on the mental side, integration and healthful mental attitudes. The author would emphasize the need of physical health and freedom from infection no less than Dr. Cotton; but would, perhaps, emphasize mental training more. The twofold aim, prevention on the one hand, and the development of healthful function on the other, involve to-day a nucleus of scientific knowledge and hygienic practice suggested by the words stimulation, inhibition, association, integration, task, coöperation, development.

This country rightly has faith in its public schools; but the popular slogan, "The schools must save America," will never come true as long as the schools trust to mere instruction of the individual pupil in conventional knowledge. They will never really save themselves or anything else until they give training for the individual and for the social group according to the
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

essential doctrines of scientific education and mental hygiene, and this for the home as well as in the school, and from the kindergarten to the university.

Both civilization and democracy are likely to be, as the critics say, mere dreams always liable to become nightmares, unless healthful mental attitudes and integration in the individual and the social group are developed. Without this, peace itself has its conflicts and clashes of interest, which may be more pathological than those of war itself. On the other hand, with such training in education and hygiene, differences of ability and personal opinion and conflicts of interest and judgment become themselves helpful stimuli that make for growth and development in the individual and the group.

Everywhere to-day there is conflict of theory, doubt in regard to democracy itself, pessimism in regard to civilization, hopelessness in regard to the lack of intelligence in the majority of people, and hope only in the superior few. Everything in life and modern education makes for inhibition, hence the reaction and revolt among the young, the pessimism among the old, and in general unrest, intellectual and moral. On the other hand, from lack of social inhibitions developed by normal social training come apparently degeneration of manners and the unspeakable deeds of perverted adolescents that have recently shocked us. In such a condition of education and civilization, why not for one thing at least try to conserve in children what is so important for adults—attention to the present, the instinct of activity and workmanship, and spontaneity in thought and action—and while teaching the alphabets of learning, of morals, and of health, why not at least try to avoid the outstanding forms of injurious inhibition.
If Bateson should prove to be right, that the great difference between the genius and the common man is the fact that the genius is free from inhibitions by which ordinary men are handicapped, then the hope of the world lies more in mental hygiene than it does in conventional education itself.

**Supplementary Bibliography**


*These books are recommended as preparatory and supplementary to the reading of this volume.*
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

19. ——, *The Teacher's Health* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 137 p.

For an introduction to the literature on the more psychiatrical aspects of mental hygiene, the reader can consult the Book Review Supplement of *Mental Hygiene*, January, 1924, Vol. 8, No. 1, especially the selected list of books by Dr. Williams.