

Personal Adjustment

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PREFACE

The principles on which this book is based are products of my work with maladjusted persons during a period of over forty years. During that period of practical work the principles took shape and substance, and theories that I may have had in the beginning were progressively rectified. Being based on practical work, with conclusions developed during the work, it might be claimed that my conclusions involve the 'pathologist's fallacy'; but I think that continued association with normal persons has eliminated that danger.

Presentation in lecture form of the materials included in this volume to large classes of undergraduate students has led me to believe that the students have understood the points presented and have considered the topics to be important. I have therefore revised and rewritten my lectures and now present them so that general readers, as well as students, may have an opportunity to read them.

Some readers may think that the title of the volume should be *Personal and Social Adjustment* . . . ; but as I have indicated in various places in the presentation, adjustment, maladjustment, and readjustment are fundamentally personal processes. Some others may say that I am dealing with the topic called 'mental hygiene,' but I prefer not to use that designation.

In Chap. II, I give detailed attention to the processes and conditions of learning, because sound adjustment, maladjustment, and readjustment are all three learning processes. In this chapter, which is fundamental to the topics follow-

ing it, I have attempted to organize the facts that have been revealed by experimental research, while revising certain popular misconceptions.

As a preliminary to the discussion of marital problems, I have included a chapter (Chap. X) dealing with erotic, genital, and reproductive processes, a chapter that contains information needed by almost every person, married or unmarried. I have written this chapter in plain language and have so presented it in lectures because a veiled approach to the topic of 'sex' is manifestly absurd. Any topic pertaining to 'sex' should be either presented plainly or else omitted.

In discussing marital problems, I have avoided 'armchair theories' and have drawn on my long experience with disrupted families, which has been illuminating to me and has provided principles that should be useful to young persons of all types, principles that should be absorbed long before marriage is contemplated.

Chapter XIII, on the care and training of infants and children, also includes topics that young persons should understand long before marriage. This chapter, which is one of the most important in the book, is based on my practical experience, not only with my children and grandchildren, but also with the children of other parents.

Although the purpose of this volume is prophylactic rather than remedial, I have included some discussions of remedial techniques and principles and presentations of symptomology of mentally maladjusted conditions. These topics are included for two reasons: first, to illuminate the pitfalls that one must avoid in order to remain well adjusted; second, to give information on methods and techniques that persons can apply to themselves for the remedy of maladjusted conditions of minor sorts.

Since, in various places in the text, I have criticized the doctrines of the psychoanalysts, I have added the final

chapter, 'Psychoanalysis, Its Foundations and Applications,' in order to explain the antagonism of psychologists to the psychoanalytic doctrines. Psychoanalysis has for years been presented to the public as a 'modern scientific system,' and a large section of the public believes that psychologists accept the psychoanalytic doctrines; in fact, many persons think that psychology and psychoanalysis are the same thing. In this chapter I present facts of a historical nature, and facts of a practical nature, which are unknown to college students and to the major section of the public. It is indeed high time that psychoanalysis should be presented in its true light.

KNIGHT DUNLAP.

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.,
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PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

1. *Applied Psychology*

If the title of this book were *Social and Personal Adjustment*, the inserted word 'social' would be misleading because any personal adjustment involves adjustment of the person's social relations. The topics to be considered in this volume belong in the field of applied psychology, the purpose of the presentations being to explain how maladjusted conditions can be avoided or prevented from developing. To this end we shall consider some of the principles of therapy (remedy) of maladjusted conditions, not to give instruction in psychotherapy but to throw light on maladjusted conditions and on the methods by which you can avoid such conditions and can prevent their development in your children. First, we shall consider the general field of applied psychology and the subdivision of the field.

Psychology, as you know, is one of the oldest of the sciences—as old as arithmetic. The first treatise on psychology that has come down to us is one by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), but there were psychologists before Aristotle was born. Aristotle's interests were primarily in what we call 'pure psychology'—the development of principles—but he was also interested in applications in some of the fields of applied psychology, especially in the field of political psychology. Before Aristotle, the Sophists were giving instruction on the subject that lately has been called *How to Make Friends and Influence People*. Long before the Sophists ap-

peared, the priests of the god of healing, Asklepios, were giving treatment to patients who were mentally maladjusted, as well as to patients suffering from physical diseases.

In modern periods psychology has been applied to so many phases of civilized life that it is impossible for any one person to become competent in the whole range of applications. The growing tendency, accordingly, is to split the field into a number of subfields, in each of which a psychologist who specializes in that subdivision may hope to attain to competence.

2. *Subfields of Applied Psychology*

Some of the more important subfields of applied psychology may be listed and discussed briefly for the purposes of explaining the limitations of this course. The main subdivisions of the total field of applied psychology, as commonly named, are (a) educational psychology; (b) psychology of infancy and early childhood, commonly listed as 'child psychology'; (c) medical psychology, otherwise called 'psychotherapy'; (d) abnormal psychology; (e) psychology of marriage and marital relations; (f) commercial and industrial psychology, sometimes called 'business psychology'; (g) psychology of art and art appreciation, otherwise called 'psychological esthetics'; (h) psychology of religion; (i) psychology of morals or ethics; (j) psychology of law and law enforcement, often designated as 'legal psychology.'

These are sample subfields. In addition we find books written and courses offered in the psychology of adolescence and various other topics, such as psychology of government, usually designated as 'political psychology.' Few problems of human life or conduct lie in only one of these subfields, hence the problem for the specialist in any field is not so simple as it might seem. Some of the subdivisions might seem, from a superficial point of view, to be included in one of the other divisions. The main problem of educational

psychology, for example, is, or should be, the problem of learning; hence it might seem that the problems of infancy and early childhood should be included in the first division. No one person, however, can be competent in the first topic and also in the second. The rapid development of applications of psychology to the second topic has been due to the experimentally trained psychologists who have concentrated their work in that division, while having less concern with learning for the periods of adolescent youth and adult life.

The lack of comparable progress in educational psychology has been due to fewness of experimentally trained psychologists who have worked in that division of the field. There is great need for psychologists in that division to save it from 'armchair' educators.

The psychology applied in the medical field has been almost entirely popular psychology of a sadly antiquated type. The progress that was expected a generation ago to be a resultant of cooperation of psychologists and physicians was thwarted by the rise of psychoanalysis, which is based on ancient popular superstitions. Cooperation of psychologists and physicians has recommenced, however; and this cooperation is essential for the protection of the public from quacks within the medical profession and quacks outside that profession. It is impossible for a psychologist who acquires competence in the applications of psychology to the remedy and prevention of mentally maladjusted conditions to become competent also in physical medicine. Human life is too short for the dual acquisition, hence cooperation of psychologists and physicians is essential. In theory, psychiatrists are trained in both physical medicine and psychology; but psychiatrists in private practice ('commercial' psychiatrists) are too much given to the ignoring of physical (organic) factors of the patient, although psychiatrists in the larger institutions for the 'psychopathic' patients

continue to pay full attention to the organic factors, as did all psychiatrists before the advent of psychoanalysis.

The remedying of family maladjusted conditions, and the prevention of family conditions of that sort through the dissemination of sound psychological information to individuals before they marry, is a subfield of applications in which experimentally trained psychologists who have undertaken the necessary specialization have rendered signal service. More application of scientific psychology is necessary in this subfield to protect the public from quacks who 'advise' the public—racketeers who have few qualifications for the work they undertake and whose erroneous advice makes trouble for the psychologists.

The subfield of legal psychology has been little cultivated by psychologists. The making and enforcing of laws still remains a crude art, almost inappreciably tinctured with science. Commercial and industrial applications have been made increasingly, but this subfield suffers from the lack of adequately trained psychologists and from the increasing number of quacks—opportunists without adequate training in scientific psychology. A person doing work in this field needs not only sound training in psychology, including experimental psychology, but also experience in the business world. I have been asked to give advice concerning adjustment in business situations, but I refrain from this because my business experience lies too far back in the past and business situations change rapidly.

Applications of psychology to the fine arts are still in the exploratory stage. The requirements for competent psychological work in this field are so severe that persons in the United States who are competent to apply psychology to even one of the fine arts can be counted on the fingers of one hand. For sound work in the field of music, for example, one must not only be trained in experimental psychology but must also be a performer of merit and skilled

in composition. So far as I know, there are only two men in the United States who are competent in the psychology of music. Application of psychology to the problems of painting likewise requires competence in the art of painting, as well as in psychology. I know of no persons who are competent in this way, here or abroad.

Applications have been made to the field of religion and its problems, but most of these attempts at application have been made by persons who were untrained in psychology and apparently ignorant of the problems of religion. For these reasons the disquisitions entitled "The Psychology of Religion" have been confined to a limited range of topics which fall in the category of the 'pathology of religion,' neglecting completely religion as a feature of normal human life.

Psychotherapy, abnormal psychology, and marriage constitute the topics with which we shall be mainly concerned here, for the problems and situations that most college students will meet later in life are mainly covered by these topics. Some problems on which we shall touch lie in the field of what is sometimes called 'social psychology' but is better designated as 'group psychology.'

In the limits of a small volume, we can deal only with a selected list of problems. Our selections will be based on the estimated importance of the problems, the probability that they will be encountered, and the interrelations of the problems with one another. Adjustment, in one of the meanings of the term, is a learning process; maladjustment also, in a comparable meaning, is a process of learning. In the other meanings of these terms, adjustment is a result of learning and maladjustment similarly is a result of learning. From either point of view, learning is the factor that produces a well-adjusted condition or a maladjusted condition. Therefore, after disposing of some preliminary topics, we shall discuss learning and its conditions.

We shall next consider a topic which is of especial importance to students, and in which I hope that you will be interested. This topic has been named in the past 'how to study,' but we shall not neglect the related topics 'why study' and 'what to study.' The presentation may be disappointing, since on many points we have to say, "We don't know." I shall not put before you much material from books on studying, because I am skeptical about most of the conventional materials on this topic.

The remainder of the volume will be devoted to the general topic 'how to avoid becoming maladjusted,' with some attention to the problem of overcoming minor neurotic maladjustment. For purposes of comparison we shall consider the various types of mental disorder and their conventional classification, from both the descriptive and the etiological points of view (etiological means 'pertaining to causes'), after which we shall pay especial attention to the types of disorder classed as neuroses and neurotic maladjustments.

As a preparation for the topic that will follow it, we shall then consider what is commonly called the 'sexual life.' The discussion will deal with psychological factors in the sex life, with only minor attention to anatomical and physiological details. From this we shall proceed to consideration of marital adjustment and maladjustment, with some attention to adequate selection of mates for marriage. For these topics we shall depend on the results of practical dealings with maladjusted persons. Philosophical speculations do not help; the application of armchair theories does more damage than does letting maladjusted persons alone.

To profit from the discussion of the topics throughout the course, one needs a grounding in elementary psychology, without which one would be as far adrift as are some of the racketeers who are counseling unfortunate people at present. While for the development of psychological principles for application, an extensive training in psychology

and long experience with maladjusted persons are essential, a grasp of the principles of elementary psychology may suffice (if you have such a grasp, which you may not) for an understanding of our discussion sufficient to enable you to protect yourselves and to protect your children.

After discussing marital adjustment and maladjustment, we shall consider the care and training of the infant and the young child—a topic that is closely related to the topic of marriage, as well as to many of the other topics listed. We shall next consider some maladjusted conditions and responses that are sometimes called ‘social’; and we shall finish with a discussion of psychoanalysis, its history and theories, and the damage done by its application.

It will be noted throughout that we approach the problems of adjustment and maladjustment from the negative point of view, indicating the conditions to be avoided and the ways of avoiding them. One might ask, “Why not approach the problems positively, and tell us how to be ‘well adjusted’?” The answer is that the negative approach is simpler and appears, so far, to be a successful one. There are many ways of being ‘well adjusted’; in fact, there are as many patterns of normal life as there are normal persons. On the other hand, there are a limited number of known patterns of maladjustment into which persons slip, and these patterns are fairly well defined in type. It is therefore more economical to point out the pitfalls and how to avoid them, than to attempt to outline the innumerable patterns of normal persons.

The various topics have been arranged in an order in which one naturally leads to the next, so that the presentation of one simplifies the presentation of that which follows.

3. Fundamental Terms and Concepts

In the foregoing discussions we have used certain ambiguous terms, with their equally ambiguous opposites.

These terms are *adjustment*, with its opposite, *maladjustment*; and *normal*, with its opposite, *abnormal*. Before proceeding further, we must decide just what we are to mean by these terms, for unless we make their meanings definite and adhere consistently to the meanings we adopt, we shall plunge into confusion.

The verb *to adjust* is quite unambiguous. To adjust something is to improve its relations with other things, to make it fit its circumstances, to cause it to fulfill better the requirements that are laid upon it. When you adjust the sheet of paper in your typewriter, you improve its spatial relations to the platen and the type bars. When your watch is adjusted, it is so changed that it keeps better time; its operation is fitted better into the period of rotation of the earth, which is the basis of our timing. So, when a person is adjusted, his responses, including his perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and conduct, are fitted better to each other and to his environment. The verb *to adjust* and its participial forms, *adjusting* and *adjusted*, are used with these meanings only. The verb *to maladjust* and its participial forms also are used in the single sense of lessening the adjustment of a thing or a person.

The abstract noun *adjustment* and its antonym *maladjustment* are both used in two senses.

A. *Adjustment* means, primarily, the process of adjusting or of being adjusted. If you say that you paid a mechanic a certain sum for the adjustment of the carburetor of your car, what you really mean is that you paid the man for adjusting it. If you say that the adjustment of a person suffering from a neurosis will be a difficult matter, you mean that the adjusting of the person will be difficult. If you use the term *readjustment* you will be, in a similar usage, referring to the process of readjusting the person. In a parallel usage, the term *maladjustment* means the process of maladjusting, of decreasing the fit of a person or thing or