

A GUIDE FOR
THE MODERN PRACTITIONER

**KAREN
HORNEY**

A black and white portrait of Karen Horney, an older woman with short, curly, light-colored hair. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark jacket over a white blouse with a ruffled collar. The background is a plain, light color.

**& CHARACTER
DISORDER**

IRVING SOLOMON

Karen Horney & Character Disorder
A Guide For The Modern Practitioner

About the Author



IRVING SOLOMON, PhD, is a psychologist–psychoanalyst and a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology. He has authored numerous papers on psychotherapy and two books, *The Encyclopedia of Evolving Techniques in Dynamic Psychotherapy* and *A Primer of Kleinian Therapy*. He maintains a private practice of psychodynamic therapy in Rockville Centre, New York.

Karen Horney & Character Disorder
A Guide For The Modern Practitioner

Irving Solomon, PhD

Photograph of Irving Solomon taken by Ira Brophy.

Copyright © 2006 by Springer Publishing Company, Inc.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Springer Publishing Company, Inc.

Springer Publishing Company, Inc.
11 West 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036

Acquisitions Editor: Lauren Dockett
Production Editor: Jeanne Libby
Cover design by Mimi Flow

06 07 08 09 10 / 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Solomon, Irving.

Karen Horney and character disorder : a guide for the modern practitioner / Irving Solomon.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8261-2995-1 (soft cover)

1. Horney, Karen, 1885–1952. 2. Psychology, Pathological.
3. Psychoanalysis. I. Title.

RC506.S62 2006
616.89'17—dc22

2005017981

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

For
Sandra; Neil and Patty, Rebecca and Daniel;
Leigh and Tommy, Jackie and T.J.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
1 Introduction	1
2 The Basic Tenets of Karen Horney	11
3 Horneyan Theory and Clinical Insights	21
4 Sadistic Impulses and Self-Hate	47
5 Valid and Invalid Claims	67
6 “Shoulds,” Glory, and Pride	79
7 The Initial Interview	107
8 Interpretation	121
9 Transference and Counter-Transference	141
10 Verbatim Treatment Selections	149
11 Summary of Main Elements and Ending Therapy	159
12 Applying Horneyan Concepts Today	167
13 A Horneyan Analysis of the Main Character in Brian Moore’s Novel <i>The Statement</i>	173
References	179
Glossary of Horneyan Terms	185
Author Index	189
Subject Index	191

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

My first contact with Karen Horney's psychoanalytic theory and therapy originated from a surprising source. I had just begun a four year postdoctoral training program in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis at Adelphi University. During the first year the students were required to participate in a course dealing with the basic principles of psychotherapy. The class at that time was taught by Jules Nydes, a much admired instructor, former analysand of the eminent Freudian psychoanalyst, Dr. Theodor Reik. Much to my astonishment Nydes asked us to read the chapter, "The Road of Psychoanalytic Therapy" in Karen Horney's book *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950a, pp. 333–365). As I began to study the chapter I recalled vaguely that Horney was labeled a NeoFreudian and definitely out of favor with the dominant classical Freudian camp, but I was struck by the finding that her writing was remarkable for its crystal-clear expression. In contrast to the vast majority of psychoanalytic writers of journal papers and books, Horney vigorously wrote better than they in simple, lucid prose about problems of the inner heart in conflict with itself.

She also led me to an elegant, necessary panoramic view of psychotherapy. I liked her recognition that therapy (i.e., in my practice mainly once-per-week sessions) is urgent; that it is, like much of life, fired at us point blank within each session. I sensed her respect for the right of each patient to restore his or her vitality, to take stock of their own capabilities and not hide their strengths because of basic anxiety (i.e., Horney's concept). She, in her chapter, reminded me once more of the significance of Montaigne's wise statement about self-depreciation, namely, that "It is

a malady confined to man, and not seen in any other creature, to hate and despise himself. It is on a par with our vanity to desire to be other than we are.”

Much later my admiration for Horney grew even more when I read about her painful, courageous conflict with the self-appointed gurus of the New York Psychoanalytic Society. Horney had gathered as an instructor in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute many students attracted by her clear exposition and the value of her ideas. Nonetheless, she was dismissed from the society by a powerful, rigid, dogmatic inner circle on the spurious, shabby grounds that she was “upsetting” the students. “Upsetting” apparently meant to them, a free and open exchange of different points of view about what makes for an effective psychoanalytic therapy.

At her dismissal Karen stood up “. . . and with great dignity, her head held high, slowly walked out” (Rubins, 1978, p. 240). Accompanied by a number of her supportive colleagues, she and they marched down the street and they sang “. . . Karen’s favorite spiritual: ‘Go down Moses, way down in Egypt land, Tell old Pharaoh, to let my people go’—the song celebrating the liberation of the Jews from Egyptian tyranny” (Rubins, 1978, p. 240).

Undaunted Horney continued to contribute significantly as a writer, teacher, and founder of the Karen Horney Society and Institute, to the advancement of psychoanalytic therapy. Her major ideas, both theoretical and clinical, that are vital to the understanding and treatment of character pathology are gathered together, explained, and illustrated in this book.

Karen Horney and Character Disorder: A Guide for the Modern Practitioner is intended for every mental health professional who takes on the challenge of treating a patient who has a character disorder, the most pervasive pathology of our time.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my great debt to my wife, Sandra, who steadfastly encouraged and aided me in the creation of this volume. I wish to acknowledge the expertise of Ms. Dockett, an Editor at the Springer Publishing Company, who asked probing questions and made suggestions that without a doubt improved the quality of this book. I also wish to thank Dr. Macias who graciously permitted me the use of the library facilities at the Karen Horney Institute which provided me with helpful data.

IRVING SOLOMON

This page intentionally left blank

1 Introduction

Who is Karen Horney and why are her psychoanalytic ideas so important in today's world of once-per-week dynamic psychotherapy?

A BRIEF SKETCH OF HORNEY'S LIFE

There is a photo on the cover of Bernard J. Paris' fine biography (1994) of Karen Horney, which depicts her seated at a table with a cigarette in her left hand and a drink in her right hand. She is smiling and the effect of her smile and posture conveys a love of life, a capacity for joy and enthusiasm.

Another biographer, Jack Rubins (1978), after extensive interviews with people who knew Horney, concludes that she was a complex personality.

She needed to encompass and unify many diverse and conflicting traits, apparently with constant struggle. But no one who knew her was unaffected by her; all spoke of her with passion. All agreed that she exerted a strong influence upon them. Her charisma—that most misused and difficult to define of words—was evident. (Rubins, 1978, p. XIV)

Susan Quinn titles her biography (1987) of Karen Horney "A Mind of Her Own," to emphasize what she considers her greatest strength. Horney showed throughout her life an independence of mind and spirit.

She consistently relied on her own experience to test the reality and validity of any view of behavior.

The preceding statements describe Karen Horney as an adult, but what was she like as a child? What were the personalities of her parents and siblings? Where was she born?

Karen Horney (1885–1952) was born in a suburb of Hamburg, Germany. Her father was a commodore with the Hamburg-American shipping line and was generally known as Captain Danielson. His first wife died and he subsequently married Clotilde Van Ronzelen, Karen's mother. Captain Danielson was 18 years her senior.

Karen's father was a stern, religious man who could quote from the bible and would be considered a fundamentalist by today's standards. He apparently had a vile temper, for he would sometimes fling his bible at his wife if he felt she displeased him.

Perhaps because of Karen's father's religious beliefs he favored her older brother, Berndt. Karen's mother, Sonni (her nickname in the family) disputed this favoritism. Sonni was better educated and more sophisticated than her husband and could be more tolerant than he was. Karen had ambivalent feelings toward her father, on the one hand admiring him for his love of life and on the other hand fearing and being intimidated by him. Her father's irascible temper and stern demandingness apparently fostered so much marital tension that Sonni divorced him when Karen was almost 20.

Karen Horney was a fine student. She was goal-oriented, energetically imaginative, intuitive, and intellectually gifted. In medical school she found life exhilarating and liberating. She attacked and assimilated the subject matter with relish and success. She received her medical degree in 1913.

During her medical studies Karen met and married Oskar Horney, who eventually earned a Ph.D. in law, economics, and political science. He occupied an executive position in a major industrial firm and did well financially until his firm fell apart during the inflation of 1933. Ultimately Karen separated from Oskar because she felt he was too lacking in elemental passion, too limited in strength and pride. She craved a stronger man. Karen took their three daughters and moved into a small apartment near Oskar.

During the years of World War I she was analyzed by two major psychoanalytic pioneers, Karl Abraham and Hanns Sachs. She became a psychoanalyst and a faculty member of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute.

In 1931, Franz Alexander, director of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, invited Horney to come to America and accept the position of associate director of his institute. He greatly admired her independent thinking and her clear exposition of ideas. She accepted the invitation and remained in Chicago from 1932 to 1934, relocating to New York when collegian tensions occurred between her and Alexander. There she affiliated with the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, the major medical psychoanalytic training school in the Freudian professional community.

CONTROVERSY

Horney was one of the first analysts to challenge basic Freudian assertions, such as the psychoanalytic account of female development. Based on her own understanding of herself as a woman, she took issue with the idea that women wish to be men because of an inferiority (i.e., they lack a penis), of their external genitals. According to classical Freudian theory women presumably then develop feelings of inadequacy. Horney stated that, while there are some women who desire to have a penis, their wish is not caused by a feeling of being castrated creatures. Rather, she asserted that the classical psychoanalytic perception of women's masculinity complex was a devaluation of women, the outcome of a male-dominated culture. Women, she advanced, have a tendency to define themselves in terms of men's needs and/or wishes. Horney went even further by postulating that men perceive women as having penis envy as a way of reducing their own inadequacy, their inability to creatively have a child.

Horney disputed Freudian psychoanalysis by challenging its biological, psychosexual premise. She saw behavior as a consequence of cultural distinctions and values, the outcome of a masculine-dominated society. She also criticized the prevailing psychoanalytic view that women are inherently more masochistic than men. She claimed that it was a cultural ideology that women feel weaker emotionally than men and are therefore

more prone to self-destructive behavior. Probably Horney's experience of American culture in contrast to European culture gave her a clearer perspective that allowed her to reject the basic Freudian instinct theory in favor of cultural determinants.

Horney became disenchanted with the Freudian mandate that the patient's present behavior must inevitably be interpreted in terms of the past. Instead, she saw the value of concentrating on the present behavior in the context of character trends. Horney observed that all behavior was not sexual in origin nor was aggression necessarily bad; it could be mere assertion.

The preceding challenges to the Freudian dictum increasingly alienated and antagonized some influential members of the New York Psychoanalytic institute. They pressured her to resign and she left, along with a number of sympathetic colleagues who appreciated free expression, exploration, and discussion of psychoanalytic contributions. They correctly recognized that psychoanalytic thought was a work in progress, not a completed body of knowledge.

Horney and the colleagues who left with her formed their own institute, the American Institute for Psychoanalysis and the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis. At first, under the leadership of William Silverberg, there was collegial harmony and a free expression of diverse ideas. But when lay analyst Erich Fromm joined the institute, he was not accorded the same teaching of technique and supervisory rights as his medical colleagues. Relegated to a peripheral position, Fromm left the newly formed institute. A number of prominent analysts left with Fromm, among them Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson, and Janet Rioch. Horney was a prime mover in ousting Fromm. The two had been lovers and Horney may have been angry with him for ending their affair and for presumably driving a wedge presumably between her and her daughter, Marriane. Horney had referred her daughter to Fromm as her training analyst. Perhaps Horney feared that Fromm would take over the fledgling institute or perhaps she wished to preserve the medical aura of the institute for political reasons. It is possible Horney hoped for an affiliation with the New York Medical College. That hope never materialized.

Fromm's expulsion along with the departure of a number of talented, creative analysts may have retarded a more spirited advancement of psychoanalytic theory and technique within the institute. Nonetheless,

under the leadership of Karen Horney and her remaining supporters, the institute thrived.

Horney's attitude toward nonmedical analysts is a puzzling one. When Horney left Europe and moved to London she sent her children to Melanie Klein, a lay analyst. She also respected and admired Fromm's psychoanalytic competence, since she sent her daughter to him for a training analysis. At that time, though, there were many psychoanalytic institutes which treated nonmedical students and applicants for psychoanalytic training as second-class citizens. Even Theodor Reik, a colleague of Freud, was refused full membership in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute on the grounds that he did not possess a medical degree.

Karen Horney continued to expand her institute in New York City until her death at 67 years of age. Horney died in her sleep from cancer on December 4, 1952. She left a remarkable professional legacy: the thriving Karen Horney Psychoanalytic Institute and Center at 329 East 92nd Street in New York City, which provides psychoanalytically oriented training programs for professionals in the mental health field under the auspices of the American Institute for Psychoanalysis (the institute and center also offers low-cost psychoanalytic psychotherapy); the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, a publication extending Horney's ideas and the contributions of other models of psychotherapy (e.g., existential). Her books, containing her ground-breaking psychoanalytic ideas, have gone through more than 19 printings, and a multitude of psychotherapists utilize her ideas in psychotherapy.

THE WRITING STYLE OF KAREN HORNEY

Karen Horney's writing is clear, well-organized, and engaging. Susan Quinn (1987, p. 266) notes that she had the ". . . knack for describing the experience of others in a way that is instantly recognizable to them, in a way that makes them feel, 'She's talking about me.'" Quinn (1988, p. 283) comments that, her lectures as well as her writings seemed to have a common impact of self-recognition on her audience and readers. They made comments such as "When I read her books, I saw myself," and "I felt as if she knew me and it helped me understand myself and others better."

Bernard J. Paris, a professor of English and a biographer of Horney, observes that her writing is not fashionably obscure in the vein of Lacan, Derrida, and post modernism.

It is not full of mysterious, recondite terminology, as are the writings of Freud, Jung, and Lacan, and it does not have the aura of being secret knowledge possessed only by the master. It does not provide an elaborate analogical or mythological system that appears to explain the obscure or the ineffable. Much of it deals with what we can learn through self-observation rather than with highly inventive hypotheses about infantile and unconscious experience. Horney explores unconscious motives and conflicts, but she makes them readily accessible to conscious understanding. (Paris, 1994, pp. xx–xxi)

Dr. Cameron (1954, p. 29) a psychoanalytic psychiatrist cites

. . . an important characteristic of Karen Horney's work; her essential directness and simplicity of approach to the problems on which she worked. One may attribute this to two things. First, she was not trapped, as so many others are and have been, in the theoretic superstructure of her teachers. And secondly, we must attribute Karen Horney's essential directness and simplicity of approach to the fact that she herself did not seem to require the successive development of theoretic structure which has been so much an impediment to the communication of others.

Dr. Cameron makes an observation concerning the development of analytic thinking which succinctly points up a failing in advancing analytic therapy, a failing Horney avoided. He (Cameron, 1954, p. 29) notes:

It is quite tragic to see what a vast amount of labor has been spent in endlessly turning over and exchanging, with wearisome repetition, the thought forms of the original mind—thought forms from which the vitality has now departed as certainly as it has from an empty sea shell.

HORNEY'S BOOKS AND PAPERS

Between 1937 and 1950 Horney completed five books that contained her major ideas. Her first book was *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*

(1937). This book heightened cultural awareness of mental illness. The second book, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939), critiqued Freud's premises and was responsible for her rejection by her New York analytic Freudian colleagues. Horney's third book, *Self-Analysis* (1942), details a case history of "Clare," illustrating the application of Horney's new model of psychoanalytic thinking. Both *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950a) advance Horney's views of basic anxiety, interpersonal and intrapsychic defenses. She also discusses the "pride system," self-hate, the search for glory, neurotic claims, tyrannical "shoulds," and the idealized self.

Feminine Psychology (1967) and *Final Lectures* (1987) were published after her death. *Feminine Psychology* disputed Freud's concept of penis envy, female masochism, and feminine development. *Final Lectures* (1987) contains transcripts of her concluding course dealing with psychoanalytic therapy.

Bernard J. Paris has performed an invaluable service for Horneyan clinicians by editing two books, *The Therapeutic Process* (1999), a collection of her clinical essays and lectures, and *The Unknown Karen Horney* (2000), a spectrum of her papers dealing with feminine psychology, relationships between the sexes, and psychoanalytic theory.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

To introduce Horney's core ideas I shall rely chiefly on *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950a), as I believe they more than her other books best represent her theory and clinical thinking. I intend to offer clinical illustrations of her ideas as I encountered them in my practice. Whenever possible I shall try to keep the vignettes as brief as possible although there will be a few exceptions along the way. I shall also introduce the contributions of other psychoanalytic schools (e.g., Freudian, Kleinian) when they are relevant, although the preponderance of my interpretations and understanding will be along Horneyan lines. Given the complexity of human behavior it is foolish and downright unfair to a patient to slot that patient exclusively into one analytic model no matter how useful that model may or may not be. I shall

always remember an American Psychological Association conference on various therapy models. Each school of therapy had a major representative and at the conclusion of their talk a question from the audience proposed the following: How would each of them allocate \$50,000 given to their clinic for the hiring of therapists of a different persuasion from their own? Dr. David Wolpe, a conditioning behavior pioneer, said he would only hire therapists who adhered to his theory. Rudolph Ekstein, a Freudian, said that he had often wondered how a practitioner of another therapy model might succeed with patients he had failed to help. He would hire some therapists who had a different theoretical point of view than his own. I was quite impressed by his humility and appreciation of the complexity of behavior and the appropriate recognition that no one school of therapy possesses the total truth.

APPLYING HORNEY'S PRINCIPLES TODAY

The goals of this book are as follows:

1. To introduce, define, and illustrate through clinical vignettes the major tenets of Horney's theory and technique. Her treatment of self-hate is a good example. With regard to this formidable dynamic component within the self, Horney (1950a, p. 112) wrote, that it "makes visible a rift in the personality that started with the creation of an idealized self. It signifies that there is a war on." Horney also noted (p. 114) that "*the power and tenacity of self-hate* is astounding even for the analyst who is familiar with the way it operates." More than any other psychoanalyst Horney put into words the key role self-hate played in the character disorder's pathology. She stated: "Surveying self-hate and its ravaging force we cannot help but see it as a great tragedy, perhaps the greatest tragedy of the human mind" (p. 154).

2. To indicate how Horney's observation that there is a potential for growth existing in each individual fosters a powerful, optimistic attitude strengthening the cooperation in therapy between the therapist and the patient; It acts to restore the patient's expectation that constructive change can eventually occur.