

Personality: The Human Potential

**By
Melvin L. Weiner, Ph. D.**

Pergamon General Psychology Series

PERGAMON GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY SERIES

Editors: Arnold P. Goldstein, Syracuse University
Leonard Krasner, SUNY, Stony Brook

Personality: The Human Potential

PGPS-33

This page intentionally left blank

*Personality:
The Human Potential*

Melvin L. Weiner, Ph.D.

PERGAMON PRESS INC.

New York · Toronto · Oxford · Sydney · Braunschweig

PERGAMON PRESS INC.
Maxwell House, Fairview Park, Elmsford, N.Y. 10523

PERGAMON OF CANADA LTD.
207 Queen's Quay West, Toronto 117, Ontario

PERGAMON PRESS LTD.
Headington Hill Hall, Oxford

PERGAMON PRESS (AUST.) PTY. LTD.
Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, N.S.W.

VIEWEG & SOHN GmbH
Burgplatz 1. Braunschweig

Copyright © 1973 Pergamon Press Inc.
Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 74-184400

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 prior permission of Pergamon Press Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

08 016946 5 (H)
08 017194 X (S)

*I find that the great thing in this world is not
so much where we stand, as in what direction we
are moving.—Oliver Wendell Holmes*

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

PREFACE	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
CHAPTER 1. Civilization at the Crossroads	1
2. Anxiety and the Crises of Life	5
3. The Repetition Compulsion	33
4. The Uncommitted	55
5. Schizophrenia	67
6. Drug Addiction	75
7. Suicide	79
8. Homosexuality	85
9. Sexual Problems	99
10. Pregnancy and Abortion	105
11. Marital Relationships	111
12. The Broken Home	115
13. Death of a Parent	121
14. Panic States and Emergencies	125
15. The College Dropout	133
16. Conflict at Work	139
17. Antisocial Behavior	145
18. Man's Fate and Individual Responsibility	155
19. The Place of Psychology in a World of Technology	163
REFERENCES	167
INDEX	169

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

I originally began writing this book as an exploration into the crucial problems facing today's youth, since the problems of conflict and unrest, and of confusion about self and life of the younger generation seemed to be so lacking in understanding and insight. However, it imperceptibly began to percolate down into my consciousness that when I explored the hopes and fears, goals and anxieties, and strengths and weaknesses of a specific young person, I was in fact writing about the ageless difficulties in life adjustment and the tragedies pervading our contemporary scene. For example, the image rose in my mind that I was not only writing about a specific young woman's problem in sexual relationships, but about the challenge of sexual fulfillment that all women share in common. And in exploring the life of a self-centered young man who was unable to love or to have other than pseudo-relationships, I realized that I was actually exploring the problems which all of us face, to some degree, in the challenge of becoming truly involved and in loving deeply and meaningfully.

Therefore, when I viewed the explosions, violence and lawlessness around us, the hypocrisy and corruption, and the cynicism and selfishness permeating our lives, and the lack of any intellectual, philosophical or religious perspective—all of which I found not confined to the problems of youth, but characteristic of a world-wide crisis, I was all the more convinced that a better understanding of the nature of human relationships in general was never more necessary than at present.

These considerations brought into focus that while the crises of today's youth may have taken on a special and sometimes unique form, their confusions about self and life reflected and symbolized the state of crisis that was pervading all our lives in the current era. Consequently, rather than only sharing with you many "fifty-minute" hours concerning youth in crisis, I shall explore the major emotional problems of contemporary life. More specifically, I shall focus on the critical turning-points in people's lives, for it is at these crucial junctures that a person's life may be opened up to new possibilities in living and may take on new direction and form.

The purpose of this basically optimistic book is to demonstrate how, at a critical turning-point, psychological understanding offers a person a rare, and not often repeated, challenge and opportunity to truly alter the course

of his life. A person who uses the insights gained through psychological exploration is provided with the freedom of choosing a new course in his life, and of choosing wisely. With self-discovery, a person may free himself from the chains of his conflicted past, choose a fresh path, and develop a new life of productivity and meaningful gratifications. In contrast, there are countless numbers of unhappy people, who, never freed of their emotional conflicts, choose the wrong road which leads them to a life of unrealized potential and limited gratifications—an emotional dead-end in their lives, when another road could have been available to them.

Spurred by questions from students, lecture audiences and prospective patients themselves, who wondered what really goes on in the psychotherapy consultation room, I have written these psychological studies to share with my readers some of the experiences I have had in pursuing the depths of human conflict and suffering. In this respect I have tried to preserve something which so many books on this subject lack—I mean not only authenticity, but the *spirit* of psychotherapeutic work. Psychotherapy, enormously complicated, intriguing and secretive, is less like the romance and excitement of a detective story, and more like the hard, tortuous exploration and unearthings of the archaeologist. Always fascinating, the patient and the therapist take a trip together, not the trip of popular psychoanalysis—which starts from some highly dramatic event and in less than sixty minutes of television time works back to a repressed memory from infancy and the solution of all of the person's problems in a mother-fixation, where everything is neatly unraveled and just as neatly tied together again at the end—but the long expedition of the psychological archaeologist. In reality, the patient and the therapist dig around together, and explore the hidden and uncharted motives of the patient's mind dating from a time in the patient's life long forgotten and hidden alike from the patient and the therapist. As one explores these subterranean caverns of the mind, one never has all the answers. There are no neat paradigms to explain everything. Rather, gradually—very gradually—the really true story of the patient's life unfolds and emerges. The patient and the therapist together move along an intricate and fragile path of psychological discovery in which the patient is helped to strip away layer after layer of façade. Carefully and painstakingly they uncover the relics of the deepest layers of his emotional life from which one can reconstruct and reveal that elusive, but crucial aspect of the person—the core of his personality.

All too often, dramatists, and even professional psychological writers themselves, have either exploited, distorted or misunderstood what truly goes on in the psychotherapy consultation room. An awesome and phony mystique has been built up around psychotherapy which has resulted in keeping many people, who could be helped by it, at a distrustful distance.