

**FOUNDATIONS OF  
PSYCHIATRY: NERVOUS  
AND MENTAL DISEASE  
MONOGRAPH SERIES NO. 32**

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Foundations of Psychiatry: Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series No. 32 by William A. White & Dr. Steward Paton

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**WILLIAM A. WHITE & DR. STEWARD PATON**

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NERVOUS AND MENTAL DISEASE MONOGRAPH SERIES No. 32

# Foundations of Pyschiatry

BY

WILLIAM A. WHITE, M. D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
DR. STEWART PATON

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## INTRODUCTION

Many of the perplexing problems in the World today are the results of attempts to regulate society on the basis of what man is supposed to be.

Practically very little is actually known about man as he is, yet laws are drafted and adopted, and proposals to regulate international relations and to direct the course of civilization are made, based upon the old purely imaginative conceptions of the forces shaping human character.

Ideals of social progress and hopes for international peace can only be changed from visions of wishful thinkers into plans capable of being realized by modifying cherished ideals to meet the actual biological needs of mankind.

In this volume, for which I have been privileged to write an introduction, the author, Dr. White, has pointed out what information is available for preparing the foundations of a science of human character. He has emphasized the driving power of the instinctive life, traced the genesis of impulses, and has pointed out some of the prejudices and fixed ideas that are responsible for so much of the chaos in the World. This presentation should be useful not only to physicians interested in trying to check the spread of nervous and mental diseases, that have become one of the greatest menaces to civilization, but to all the great army of earnest people now engaged in efforts to promote peace and to reorganize society.

STEWART PATON.





## PREFACE

The present century has witnessed an advance in the field of psychiatry which is unprecedented and has resulted in no less than a complete revolution in our ways of thinking of mental disease. From the period, out of which we are only now passing, when all mental disease was thought of as insanity and all nervous disease as hysteria or perhaps neurasthenia, to the present with its elaborate description and interpretation of mental mechanisms and personality make-up, a tremendous step forward has been taken in the understanding of the human individual of momentous importance, not only to psychiatry but to the practice of medicine in general as well as to all those related sciences that are occupied with an understanding of man.

In my previous works<sup>1</sup> I have endeavored to cover the descriptive aspects of psychiatry, to outline and interpret the more important of the mental mechanisms and to give the application of the facts and principles of the new psychology to certain fields of endeavor, specifically psychotherapeutics and mental hygiene. Such a series of works constitute an effort to develop a *System of Psychiatry* which describes the various mental illnesses, traces their causes in the underlying mental mechanisms, outlines their

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of Psychiatry*: Published by the Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, Washington, D. C., 1920. (8th ed.)

*Diseases of the Nervous System*: Written with Dr. S. E. Jelliffe. Published by Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1920. (3d ed.)

*Mental Mechanisms*: Published by the Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, Washington, D. C.

*Modern Treatment of Nervous and Mental Diseases*: Edited with Dr. S. E. Jelliffe. Published by Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1913.

*Mechanisms of Character Formation*: Published by the Macmillan Company, New York, 1916.

*The Principles of Mental Hygiene*: Published by the Macmillan Co., New York, 1917.

*The Mental Hygiene of Childhood*: Published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1919.

*Thoughts of a Psychiatrist on the War and After*: Published by Paul B. Hoeber, New York, 1919.

treatment and the principles involved in their prevention, and gives the application of the principles to various related problems, not only of individual man but of man as a social animal.

In this work I shall endeavor to set forth these same principles from a wider viewpoint, gathering them together and discussing their biological, psycho-biological, and sociological foundations and ramifications in a general philosophy of the foundation principles which underlie an adequate approach to the problems of psychiatry. This is no less than an effort to formulate a *Philosophy of Psychiatry*.

I have undertaken this broad philosophical approach to psychiatry because of my conviction that only by an illumination of the foundations of the principles of psychiatry can a full understanding of them be had and only when that is accomplished will much wrong thinking about them be in the way of correction.

This method of procedure is inevitable. In any new department of thought it is natural that its early stages should be characterized by an attempt to describe the various phenomena which are conceived rightly to come within its proper domain, later attempts are made to interpret these phenomena, and lastly, on the basis of these descriptions and interpretations an effort is made to correlate the findings with the general principles of science which have been worked out in other fields. This latter effort, namely, to correlate the facts of a given field of inquiry with the principles worked out in other fields which touch it more or less directly, is the proper function of philosophy and is the field which this book attempts to present. This is an ambitious task and I can only hope to succeed in pointing the way which others may follow. Because of the rapid advance in the field of psychiatry in recent years and the realization of its value for an understanding of many problems which until recently were never conceived to come within its sphere, I believe that a philosophy of psychiatry may be of great value at the present time.

During the period of the world war the several groups of psychoanalysts in different countries were separated one from another. Verbal, written and printed communications were closed or rendered extremely difficult. As a result each group developed along lines of its dominant trends less modified than usual by the other groups with varying tendencies. The war

period therefore served to accentuate the distinctive characteristics in the various quarters.

In the United States, where the growth of the psychoanalytic movement, and particularly the development of its relations to the broader study of psychopathology, has been more free, more progressive, and less doctrinal, certain fairly well defined trends have come into the foreground, which, while not exclusively characteristic, are still given much more emphasis here than elsewhere.

These characteristics are sufficiently marked so that it would seem proper to speak of an American School of Psychopathology as distinctive from the European groups.

In general, the features which the American School emphasize may be outlined as follows: (1) The unity of the organism as an energy system; (2) human behavior as a special problem of energy transformation and discharge; (3) structural organization as an instance of the phyletic synthesis of experience, with the nervous system as the chief agent in this organization; (4) the principle of action patterns of discharge as integral parts of the structural organization; (5) the conception that the symbol is a source and a carrier of energy; (6) the abolition of the metaphysical distinction between mind and body; (7) the conception of the unconscious as a container of the phyletic history of the organization of the psyche in action pattern symbolization; (8) the importance of archaic symbols and their relationship to somatic as well as mental diseases; (9) the belief that organic disorders have their psychologic as well as their somatic symptomatology; (10) the belief that standards of conduct are an integral part of the action pattern symbolizations and therefore must be included in the understanding and management of all medical and social problems.

The most comprehensive expression of these tenets is to be found in Jelliffe and White's *Diseases of the Nervous System*. This little book, *Foundations of Psychiatry*, is an expression of the distinctive features of the American School and an examination into the foundation principles involved. Its function is, to use an expression of one of the members of my staff, to biologize psychiatry, in the sense, of course, that biology is inclusive of psychology, the humanities and the social sciences.

W. A. W.