

The Functional Autonomy of Motives

Authored by
mohammad looti

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For fifty years this JOURNAL has served both as a rich repository for research and as a remarkably sensitive record of the psychological temper of the times. These two services are of great historical value. Since there is no reason to doubt that The American Journal will continue to hold its position of leadership in the future, one wonders what new currents of psychological interest its pages will reflect in the coming half-century. With what problems will psychologists be chiefly concerned? What discoveries will they make? What types of scientific formulation will they prefer?

To predict at least one of these trends accurately requires no clairvoyance. On all sides we see the rising tide of interest in problems of personality. Up to a few years ago the somewhat segregated field of clinical psychology alone was concerned; but now theoretical and experimental psychology are likewise deeply affected. As never before the traditional portrait of the "generalized human mind" is being tested against the living models from which it is derived. As compared with particular minds it is found to lack locus, self-consciousness, organic character, and reciprocal interpenetration of parts, all of which are essential to personality. Unless I am greatly mistaken the coming half-century will see many attempts to replace the abstract datum (mind-in-general) with the concrete datum (mind-in-particular), even at the peril of a revolutionary upset in the conception of psychology as science.

Some of the best known definitions of psychology formulated in the past fifty years have given explicit recognition to the individuality of mind -- that is, to its dependence upon the person. But these definitions have not as yet noticeably affected the abstractive tendency of psychological research -- not even that of their authors. Wundt, James, and Titchener serve as examples. The first wrote: "It investigates the total content of experience in its relations to the subject." The second: "Psychology is the science of finite individual minds;" and the third: "Psychology is the study of experience considered as dependent on some person." None of these authors developed his account of mental life to accord with his definition. It is as though some vague sense of propriety guided them in framing their definitions; they knew that mind (as a psychological datum) exists only in finite and in personal forms. Yet their historical positions -- the spirit of the times in which they worked -- prevented them from following their own definitions to the end. Had any one of them done so, the psychology of personality would have had early and illustrious sponsorship.

In line with what I regard as a certain development in the psychology of the future I venture to submit a paper dealing, I think, with the one issue that above all others divides the study of mind-in-general from the study of mind-in-particular. Motivation is the special theme, but the principle involved reaches into every nook and cranny of the evolving science of personality.

Two Kinds of Dynamic Psychology

Any type of psychology that treats motives, thereby endeavoring to answer the question as to why

men behave as they do, is called a dynamic psychology. By its very nature it cannot be merely a descriptive psychology, content to depict the what and the how of human behavior. The boldness of dynamic psychology in striking for causes stands in marked contrast to the timid, "more scientific," view that seeks nothing else than the establishment of a mathematical function for the relation between some artificially simple stimulus and some equally artificial and simple response. If the psychology of personality is to be more than a matter of coefficients of correlation it too must be a dynamic psychology, and seek first and foremost a sound and adequate theory of the nature of human dispositions.

The type of dynamic psychology almost universally held, though sufficient from the point of view of the abstract motives of the generalized mind, fails to provide a foundation solid enough to bear the weight of any single full-bodied personality. The reason is that prevailing dynamic doctrines refer every mature motive of personality to underlying original instincts, wishes, or needs, shared by all men. Thus, the concert artist's devotion to his music is sometimes 'explained' as an extension of his self-assertive instinct, of the need for sentience, or as a symptom of some repressed striving of the libido. In McDougall's hormic psychology, for example, it is explicitly stated that only the instincts or propensities can be prime movers. Though capable of extension (on both the receptive and executive sides), they are always few in number, common in all men, and established at birth. The enthusiastic collector of bric-a-brac derives his enthusiasm from the parental instinct; so too does the kindly old philanthropist, as well as the mother of a brood. It does not matter how different these three interests may seem to be, they derive their energy from the same source. The principle is that a very few basic motives suffice for explaining the endless varieties of human interests. The psychoanalyst holds the same over-simplified theory. The number of human interests that he regards as so many canalizations of the one basic sexual instinct is past computation.

The authors of this type of dynamic psychology are concerning themselves only with mind-in-general. They seek a classification of the common and basic motives by which to explain both normal or neurotic behavior of any individual case. (This is true even though they may regard their own list as heuristic or even as fictional.) The plan really does not work. The very fact that the lists are so different in their composition suggests -- what to a naïve observer is plain enough -- that motives are almost infinitely varied among men, not only in form but in substance. Not four wishes, nor eighteen propensities, nor any and all combinations of these, even with their extensions and variations, seem adequate to account for the endless variety of goals sought by an endless variety of mortals. Paradoxically enough, in many personalities the few simplified needs or instincts alleged to be the common ground for all motivation, turn out to be completely lacking.

The second type of dynamic psychology, the one here defended, regards adult motives as infinitely varied, and as self-sustaining, contemporary systems, growing out of antecedent systems, but functionally independent of them. Just as a child gradually repudiates his dependence on his parents, develops a will of his own, becomes self-active and self-determining, and outlives his

parents, so it is with motives. Each motive has a definite point of origin which may possibly lie in instincts, or, more likely, in the organic tensions of infancy. Chronologically speaking, all adult purposes can be traced back to these seed-forms in infancy, but as the individual matures the tie is broken. Whatever bond remains, is historical, not functional.

Such a theory is obviously opposed to psychoanalysis and to all other genetic accounts that assume inflexibility in the root purposes and drives of life. (Freud says that the structure of the Id never changes!) The theory declines to admit that the energies of adult personality are infantile or archaic in nature. Motivation is always contemporary. The life of modern Athens is continuous with the life of the ancient city, but it in no sense depends upon its present "go." The life of a tree is continuous with that of its seed, but the seed no longer sustains and nourishes the full grown tree. Earlier purposes lead into later purposes, and are abandoned in their favor.

William James taught a curious doctrine that has been a matter for incredulous amusement ever since, the doctrine of the transitoriness of instincts. According to this theory -- not so quaint as sometimes thought -- an instinct appears but once in a lifetime, whereupon it promptly disappears through its transformation into habits. If there are instincts this is no doubt of their fate, for no instinct can retain its motivational force unimpaired after it has been absorbed and recast under the transforming influence of learning. Such is the reasoning of James, and such is the logic of functional autonomy. The psychology of personality must be a psychology of post-instinctive behavior.

Woodworth has spoken of the transformation of "mechanisms" into "drives." A mechanism Woodworth defines as any course of behavior that brings about an adjustment. A drive is any neural process that releases mechanisms especially concerned with consummatory reactions. In the course of learning, many preparatory mechanisms must be developed in order to lead to the consummation of an original purpose. These mechanisms are the effective cause of activity in each succeeding mechanism, furnishing the drive for each stage following in the series. Originally all these mechanisms were merely instrumental, only links in the long chain of processes involved in the achievement of an instinctive purpose; with time and development, with integration and elaboration, many of these mechanisms become activated directly, setting up a state of desire and tension for activities and objects no longer connected with the original impulse. Activities and objects that earlier in the game were means to an end, now become ends in themselves.

Although Woodworth's choice of quasi-neurological terminology is not the best, his doctrine, or one like it is indispensable in accounting for the infinite number of effective motives possible in human life, and for their severance from the rudimentary desires of infancy. Further discussion of the operation of the principle and a critique of Woodworth's position will be more to the point after a review of the evidence in favor of the principle.

Evidence for Functional Autonomy

We begin in a common sense way. An ex-sailor has a craving for the sea, a musician longs to return to his instrument after an enforced absence, a city-dweller yearns for his native hills, and a miser continues to amass his useless horde. Now, the sailor may have first acquired his love for the sea as an incident in his struggle to earn a living. The sea was merely a conditioned stimulus associated with satisfaction of his 'nutritional craving.' But now the ex-sailor is perhaps a wealthy banker; the original motive is destroyed; and yet the hunger for the sea persists unabated, even increases in intensity as it becomes more remote from the 'nutritional segment.' The musician may first have been stung by a rebuke or by a slur on his inferior performances into mastering his instrument, but now he is safely beyond the power of these taunts; there is no need to compensate further; now he loves his instrument more than anything else in the world. Once indeed the city dweller may have associated the hills around his mountain home with nutritional and erotogenic satisfactions, but these satisfactions he now finds in his city home, not in the mountains; whence then comes all his hill-hunger? The miser perhaps learned his habits of thrift in dire necessity, or perhaps his thrift was a symptom of sexual perversion (as Freud would claim), and yet the miserliness persists, and even becomes stronger with the years, even after the necessity or the roots of the neurosis have been relieved.

Workmanship is a good example of functional autonomy. A good workman feels compelled to do clean-cut jobs even though his security, or the praise of others, no longer depends upon high standards. In fact, in a day of jerry-building his workman-like standards may be to his economic disadvantage. Even so he cannot do a slipshod job. Workmanship is not an instinct, but so firm is the hold it may acquire on a man that it is little wonder Veblen mistook it for one. A business man, long since secure economically, works himself into ill-health, and sometimes even back into poverty, for the sake of carrying on his plans. What was once an instrumental technique becomes a master-motive.

Neither necessity nor reason can make one contented permanently on a lonely island or on an island farm after one is adapted to active, energetic city life. The acquired habits seem sufficient to urge one to a frenzied existence, even though reason and health demand the simpler life.

The pursuit of literature, the development of good taste in clothes, the use of cosmetics, the acquiring of an automobile, strolls in the public park, or a winter in Miami -- all may first serve, let us say, the interests of sex. But every one of these instrumental activities may become an interest in itself, held for a life time, long after the erotic motive has been laid away in lavender. People often find that they have lost allegiance to their original aims because of their deliberate preference for the many ways of achieving them.

The maternal sentiment offers a final illustration. Many young mothers bear their children unwillingly, dismayed at the thought of the drudgery of the future. At first they may be indifferent to,

or even hate, their offspring; the 'parental instinct' seems wholly lacking. The only motives that hold such a mother to child-tending may be fear of what her critical neighbors will say, fear of the law, a habit of doing any job well, or perhaps a dim hope that the child will provide security for her in her old age. However gross these motives, they are sufficient to hold her to her work, until through the practice of devotion her burden becomes a joy. As her love for the child develops, her earlier practical motives are forgotten. In later years not one of these original motives may operate. The child may be incompetent, criminal, a disgrace to her, and far from serving as a staff for her declining years, he may continue to drain her resources and vitality. The neighbors may criticize her for indulging the child, the law may exonerate her from allegiance; she certainly feels no pride in such a child; yet she sticks to him. The tenacity of the maternal sentiment under such adversity is proverbial.

Such examples from everyday experience could be multiplied ad infinitum. The evidence, however, appears in sharper outline when it is taken from experimental and clinical studies. In each of the following instances some new function emerges as an independently structured unit from preceding functions. The activity of these new units does not depend upon the continued activity of the units from which they developed.

(1) **The circular reflex.** Everyone has observed the almost endless repetition of acts by a child. The good-natured parent who picks up a spoon repeatedly thrown down by a baby wearies of this occupation long before the infant does. Such repetitive behavior, found likewise in early vocalization (babbling), and in other early forms of play, is commonly ascribed to the mechanism of the circular reflex. It is an elementary instance of functional autonomy; for any situation where the consummation of an act provides adequate stimulation for the repetition of the same act does not require any backward tracing of motives. The act is self-perpetuating until it is inhibited by new activities or fatigue.

(2) **Conative perseveration.** Many experiments show that incompleted tasks set up tensions that tend to keep the individual at work until they are resolved. No hypothesis of self-assertion, rivalry, or any other basic need, is required. The completion of the task itself has become a quasi-need with dynamic force of its own. It has been shown, for example, that interrupted tasks are better remembered than completed tasks, that an individual interrupted in a task will, even in the face of considerable opposition return to that task, that even trivial tasks undertaken in a casual way become almost haunting in character until they are completed.

Conative perseveration of this order is stronger if an empty interval of time follows the period of work, showing that left to itself, without the inhibiting effect of other duties or activities, the motive grows stronger and stronger. The experiment of Kendig proves this point, as well as that of C.E. Smith. The latter investigator demonstrated that there is no more success in removing a conditioned fear if the de-conditioning process is commenced immediately. After a twenty-four hour

delay the fear has become set, and is more difficult to eradicate. Hence the sound advice to drivers of automobiles or airplanes who have been involved in an accident, that they drive again immediately to conquer the shock of the accident, lest the fear become set into a permanent phobia. The rule seems to be that unless specifically inhibited all emotional shocks, given time to set, tend to take on a compulsive autonomous character.

(3) **Conditioned reflexes not requiring reëforcement.** The pure conditioned reflex readily dies out unless the secondary stimulus is occasionally reënforced by the primary stimulus. The dog does not continue to salivate whenever it hears a bell unless sometimes at least an edible offering accompanies the bell. But there are innumerable instances in human life where a single association, never reënforced, results in the establishment of a life-long dynamic system. An experience associated only once with a bereavement, an accident, or a battle, may become the center of a permanent phobia or complex, not in the least dependent on a recurrence of the original shock.

(4) **Counterparts in animal behavior.** Though the validity of a principle in human psychology never depends upon its having a counterpart in animal psychology, still it is of interest to find functional autonomy in the lower organisms. For example, rats, who will first learn a certain habit only under the incentive of some specific tension, as hunger, will, after learning, often perform the habit even when fed to repletion.

Another experiment shows that rats trained to follow a long and difficult path, will for a time persist in using this path, even though a short easy path to the goal is offered and even after the easier path has been learned. Among rats as among human beings, old and useless habits have considerable power in their own right.

Olson studied the persistence of artificially induced scratching habits in rats. Collodion applied to the ears of the animal set up removing and cleaning movements. Four days later the application was repeated. From that time on the animals showed significantly greater number of cleaning movements than control animals. A month after the beginning of the experiment when the ears of the rats as studied by the microscope showed no further trace of irritation, the number of movements was still very great. Whether the induced habit spasm was permanently retained the experiment does not say.

(5) **Rhythm.** A rat whose activity bears a definite relation to his habits of feeding (being greatest just preceding a period of feeding and midway between two such periods) will, even when starved, display the same periodicity and activity. The acquired rhythm persists without dependence on the original periodic stimulation of feeding.

Even a mollusc whose habits of burrowing in the sand and reappearing depend upon the movements of the tide, will, when removed from the beach to the laboratory, continue for several

days in the same rhythm without the tide. Likewise certain animals, with nocturnal rhythms advantageous in avoiding enemies, obtaining food, or preventing excessive evaporation from the body, may exhibit such rhythms even when kept in a laboratory with constant conditions of illumination, humidity, and temperature.

There are likewise instances where acquired rhythms in human life have taken on a dynamic character. Compulsive neurotics enter upon fugues or debauches, apparently not because of specific stimulation, but because "the time has come." A dipsomaniac, in confinement and deprived for months of his alcohol, describes the fierceness of the recurrent appetite (obviously acquired) as follows.

Those craving paroxysms occur at regular intervals, three weeks apart, lasting for several days. They are not weak, namby-pamby things for scoffers to laugh at. If not assuaged with liquor they become spells of physical and mental illness. My mouth drools saliva, my stomach and intestines seem cramped, and I become bilious, nauseated, and in a shaky nervous funk.

In such states of drug addiction, as likewise in states of hunger, lust, fatigue, there is to be sure a physical craving, but the rhythms of the craving are partially acquired, and are always accentuated by the mental habits associated with it. For instance, eating in our civilized way of life takes place not because physical hunger normally occurs three times a day, but because of habitual rhythms of expectancy. The habit of smoking is much more than a matter of craving for the specific narcotic effects of tobacco; it is a craving for the motor ritual and periodic distraction as well.

(6) **Neuroses.** Why are acquired tics, stammering, sexual perversions, phobias, and anxiety so stubborn and so often incurable? Even psychoanalysis, with its deepest of depth-probing, seldom succeeds in effecting complete cures in such cases, even though the patient may feel relieved or at least reconciled to his difficulties after treatment. The reason seems to be that what are usually called 'symptoms' are in reality something more. They have set themselves up in their own right as independent systems of motivation. Merely disclosing their roots does not change their independent activity.

(7) **The relation between ability and interest.** Psychometric studies have shown that the relation between ability and interest is always positive, often markedly so. A person likes to do what he can do well. Over and over again it has been demonstrated that the skill learned for some external reason, turns into an interest, and is self-propelling, even though the original reason for pursuing it has been lost. A student who at first undertakes a field of study in college because it is prescribed, because it pleases his parents, or because it comes at a convenient hour, often ends by finding himself absorbed, perhaps for life, in the subject itself. He is not happy without it. The original motives are entirely lost. What was a means to an end has become an end in itself.

Furthermore, there is the case of genius. A skill takes possession of the man. No primitive

motivation is needed to account for his persistent, absorbed activity. It just is the alpha and omega of life to him. It is impossible to think of Pasteur's concern for health, food, sleep, or family, as the root of his devotion to his work. For long periods of time he was oblivious of them all, losing himself in the white heat of research for which he had been trained and in which he had acquired a compelling and absorbing interest.

A much more modest instance is the finding of industrial research that when special incentives are offered and work speeded up as a consequence, and then these special incentives removed, the work continues at the speeded rate. The habit of working at a faster tempo persists without external support.

(8) **Sentiments vs. instincts.** Every time an alleged instinct can by rigid analysis be demonstrated not to be innate but acquired, there is in this demonstration evidence for functional autonomy. It is true enough that maternal conduct, gregariousness, curiosity, workman-ship, and the like, have the tenacity and compelling power that instincts are supposed to have. If they are not instincts, then they must be autonomous sentiments with as much dynamic character as has been attributed to instincts. It is not necessary here to review all the arguments in favor of regarding such alleged instincts as acquired sentiments.

(9) **The dynamic character of personal values.** When an interest-system has once been formed it not only creates a tensional condition that may be readily aroused, leading to overt conduct in some way satisfying to the interest, but it also acts as a silent agent for selecting and directing any behavior related to it. Take the case of people with strongly marked esthetic interests. Experiments with the word-association test have shown that such people respond more quickly to stimulus-words connected with this interest than to words relating to interests they lack. Likewise, in scanning a newspaper they will observe and remember more items pertaining to art; they also take a greater interest in clothes than do non-esthetic people; and when they are asked to rate the virtues of others, they place esthetic qualities high. In short the existence of a well-established acquired interest exerts a directive and determining effect on conduct just as is to be expected of any dynamic system. The evidence can be duplicated for many interests other than the esthetic.

Critique of Functional Autonomy

Objections to the principle of autonomy may be expected from two sides. Behaviorists will continue to prefer their conception of organic drive with its capacity for manifold conditioning by ever receding stimuli. Whereas purposivists will be unwilling to accept a pluralistic principle that seems to leave motives so largely at the mercy of learning.

The behaviorist is well satisfied with motivation in terms of organic drive and conditioning because he feels that he somehow has secure anchorage in physiological structure (The closer he

approaches physiological structure the happier the behaviorist is.) But the truth of the matter is that the neural physiology of organic drive and conditioning is no better established, and no easier to imagine, than is the neural physiology of the type of complex autonomous units of motivation here described.

Two behavioristic principles will be said to account adequately for the instances of functional autonomy previously cited, viz., the circular reflex and cross-conditioning. The former concept, acceptable enough when applied to infant behavior, merely says that the more activity a muscle engages in, the more activity of the same sort does it engender through a self-sustaining circuit. This is, to be sure, a clear instance of autonomy, albeit on a primitive level, oversimplified so far as adult conduct is concerned. The doctrine of cross-conditioning refers to subtle recession of stimuli, and to the intricate possibility of cross-connections in conditioning. For instance, such ubiquitous external stimuli as humidity, daylight, gravitation, may feed collaterally into open channels of activity, arousing mysteriously and unexpectedly a form of conduct to which they have unconsciously been conditioned. For example, the angler whose fishing expeditions have been accompanied by sun, wind, or a balmy June day, may feel a desire to go fishing whenever the barometer, the thermometer, or the calendar in his city home tells him that these conditions prevail. Innumerable such crossed stimuli are said to account for the arousal of earlier patterns of activity.

Such a theory inherits, first of all, the well-known difficulties resident in the principle of conditioning whenever it is made the sole explanation of human behavior. Further, though the reflex circle and cross-conditioning may in fact exist, they are really rather trivial principles. They leave the formation of interest and its occasional arousal almost entirely to chance factors of stimulation. They give no picture at all of the spontaneous and variable aspects of traits, interests, or sentiments. These dispositions are regarded as purely reactive in nature; the stimulus is all-important. The truth is that dispositions sort out stimuli congenial to them, and this activity does not in the least resemble the rigidity of reflex response.

A variant on the doctrine of cross-conditioning is the principle of redintegration. This concept admits the existence of highly integrated dispositions of a neuropsychic order. These dispositions can be aroused as a whole by any stimulus previously associated with their functioning. In this theory likewise, the disposition is regarded as a rather passive affair, waiting for reactivation by some portion of the original stimulus. Here again the variability of the disposition and its urge-like quality are not accounted for. The stimulus is thought merely to reinstate a complex determining tendency. Nothing is said about how the stimuli themselves are selected, why a motive once aroused becomes insistent, surmounting obstacles, skillfully subordinating conflicting impulses, and inhibiting irrelevant trains of thought.

In certain respects the principle of autonomy stands midway between the behavioristic view and the thoroughgoing purposive psychology of the hormic order. It agrees with the former in

emphasizing the acquisition of motives, in avoiding an a priori and unchanging set of original urges, and in recognizing (as limited principles) the operation of the circular response and cross-conditioning. It agrees with the hormic psychologist, however, in finding that striving-from-within is a far more essential characteristic of motive than stimulation-from-without. It agrees likewise in distrusting the emphasis upon stomach contractions and other "excess and deficit stimuli" as "causes" of mature behavior. Such segmental sources of energy even when conditioned cannot possibly account for the "go" of conduct. But functional autonomy does not rely as does hormic theory upon modified instinct, which after all is as archaic a principle as the conditioning of autonomic segmental tensions, but upon the capacity of human beings to replenish their energy through a plurality of constantly changing systems of a dynamic order.

The hormic psychologist, however, will not accept the autonomy of new motivational systems. If mechanisms can turn into drives, he asks, why is it that habits and skills as they become exercised to the point of perfection do not acquire an ever increasing driving force? The mechanisms of walking, speaking, or dressing, cannot be said to furnish their own motive-power. One walks, speaks, or dresses in order to satisfy a motive entirely external to these learned skills.

The criticism is sufficiently cogent to call into question Woodworth's form of stating the principle, viz., "mechanisms may become drives." It is not an adequate statement of the case.

Looking at this issue more closely it seems to be neither the perfected talent nor the automatic habit that has driving power, but the imperfect talent and the habit-in-the-making. The child who is just learning to speak, to walk, or to dress is, in fact, likely to engage in these activities for their own sake, precisely as does the adult who has an unfinished task in hand. He remembers it, returns it, and suffers a feeling of frustration if he is prevented from engaging in it. Motives are always a kind of striving for some form of completion; they are unresolved tension, and demand a "closure" to activity under way. (Latent motives are dispositions that are easily thrown by a stimulus or by a train of associations into this state of active tension.) The active motive subsides when its goal is reached, or in the case of a motor skill, when it has become at last automatic. The novice in automobile driving has an unquestionable impulse to master the skill. Once acquired the ability sinks to the level of an instrumental disposition and is aroused only in the service of some other driving (unfulfilled) motive.

Now, in the case of the permanent interests of personality, the situation is the same. A man whose motive is to acquire learning, or to perfect his craft, can never be satisfied that he has reached the end of his quest, for his problems are never completely solved, his skill is never perfect. Lasting interests are recurrent sources of discontent, and from their incompleteness they derive their forward impetus. Art, science, religion, love, are never perfected. Motor skills, however, are often perfected, and beyond that stage they seldom provide their own motive power. It is, then, only mechanisms-on-the-make (in process of perfecting) that serve as drives. With this emendation,

Woodworth's view is corrected, and McDougall's objection is met.

Implications of Functional Autonomy

The principle of functional autonomy accounts, as no other principle of dynamic psychology is able to do, for the concrete impulses that lie at the root of personal behavior. It is thus the first step in establishing a basis for the more realistic study of unique and individual forms for personality. "But how -" the traditionalists may cry, "how are we ever to have a science of unique events? Science must generalize." So it must, but it is a manifest error to assume that a general principle of motivation must involve the postulation of abstract or general motives. What the objectors forget is that a general law may be a law that tells how uniqueness comes about. The principle of functional autonomy is general enough to meet the needs of science, but particularized enough in its operation to account for the uniqueness of personal conduct. Its specific advantages stand out in the following summary.

It clears the way for a completely dynamic psychology of traits, attitudes, interests, and sentiments, which can now be regarded as the ultimate and true dispositions of the mature personality.

It avoids the absurdity of regarding the energy of life now, in the present, as somehow consisting of early archaic forms (instincts, prepotent reflexes, or the never-changing Id). Learning brings new systems of interests into existence just as it does new abilities and skills. At each stage of development these interests are always contemporary; whatever drives, drives now.

It dethrones the stimulus. A motive is no longer regarded as a mechanical reflex or as a matter of reintegration, depending entirely upon the capricious operation of a conditioned stimulus. In a very real sense dispositions selected the stimuli to which they respond, even though some stimulus is required for their arousal.

It readily admits the validity of all other established principles of growth. Functional autonomy recognizes the products of differentiation, integration, maturation, exercise, imitation, suggestion, conditioning, trauma, and all other processes of development; and allows, as they do not, considered by themselves, for the preservation of these products in significant motivational patterns.

It places in proper perspective the problems of the origin of conduct by removing the fetish of the genetic method. Not that the historical view of behavior is unimportant for a complete understanding of personality, but so far as motives are concerned the cross-sectional dynamic analysis is more significant. Motives being always contemporary should be studied in their present structure. Failure to do so is probably the chief reason why psychoanalysis meets so many defeats, as do all other therapeutic schemes relying too exclusively upon uncovering the motives of early childhood.

It accounts for the force of delusions, shell-shock, phobias, and all manner of compulsive and maladaptive behavior. One would expect such unrealistic modes of adjustment to be given up as they are shown to be poor ways of confronting the environment. Insight and the law of effect

should both remove them -- but too often they have acquired a strangle hold in their own right. At last we can account adequately for socialized and civilized behavior. The principle supplies the correction necessary to the faulty logic of bellum omnium contra omnes. Starting life, as a completely selfish being, the child would indeed remain entirely wolfish and piggish throughout his days unless genuine transformations of motives took place. Motives being completely alterable, the dogma of Egoism turns out to be a callow and superficial philosophy of behavior, or else a useless redundancy.

It explains likewise why a person often becomes what at first he merely pretends to be -- the smiling professional hostess who grows fond of her once irksome rôle and is unhappy when deprived of it; the man who for so long has counterfeited the appearance of self-confidence and optimism that he is always driven to assume it; the prisoner who comes to love his shackles. Such personae, as Jung observes, are often transformed into the real self. The mask becomes the anima.

The drive behind genius is explained. Gifted people demand the exercise of their talents, even when no other reward lies ahead. In lesser degree the various hobbies, the artistic, or the intellectual interests of any person show the same significant autonomy.

In brief, the principle of functional autonomy is a declaration of independence for the psychology of personality. Though in itself a general law, at the same time it helps to account, not for the abstract motivation of an impersonal and therefore non-existent mind-in-general, but for the concrete, viable motives of each and every mind-in-particular.

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