The Psychologist in the Service of the Community.

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GLENWOOD, IOWA.
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VERY fortunate indeed must I count myself to have the opportunity of reading to this conference a paper about the services a psychologist hopes his work in time will be able to render the community.

Among the members of this Conference are representatives of most all the different kinds of state institutions in which the work of a psychologist would be of value. We have with us representatives of hospitals for the insane, institutions caring for the epileptics, the institution for feeble-minded, the industrial schools and reformatories and the orphans, home, and I feel sure that every one present is familiar with the juvenile courts and the public schools, the only work I shall mention outside of institutions proper.

I shall try to call your attention in the same degree to what I think is possible for the psychologist to accomplish, as to what I do not think he has any possibility of doing.

Encouraged by certain psychologists, and more especially through the absurdity of calling a department for child-study a "Psychological Clinic," as it is done in certain places, newspapers and popular magazines have brought to the public ideas about the practical value and use of psychology of which the largest part are entirely wrong, and the rest very much exaggerated.

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There is, however, nothing more dangerous for a new movement than in the start to convey to the public exaggerated notions about what can be accomplished. This will invariably lead to one of two things,—it will either take the impatient public too long to see realized the wonderful things they expected, and then the public will lose all interest and not care for the smaller things really accomplished, or there will be given out, in order to keep up the expectation, or as a means of self-advertisement, "results" with no real scientific foundation.

Now let us consider the different kinds of institutions, one after another and try to find out of what value, if any, the work of a psychologist would be, on the one side for science, on the other side for the practical work of the institution. In both cases everything gained would be, in the first place more indirectly, in the second place more directly, of value for the community.

First, let us mention

*The Psychologist in the Hospitals for the Insane.*

What can psychology gain from the study of mental abnormalities? One familiar with the history of modern psychology knows that it was by clinical observations, by autopsies and by experiments on animals, that Gall (c. 1806), Flourens (c. 1820) and Foville (c. 1840) proved that the psychological processes are correlated to physiological processes in the cortex of the brain. He knows that it was in the same way that among others Bouillaud (c. 1850), Broca (c. 1860), Fritsch and Hitzig (c. 1870) proved that the whole cortex is not of the same significance, but that certain psychological processes are attached only to physiological processes in certain parts of the cortex. It was through his observation of two now famous cases that Broca, 1861, discovered that the function of speech is centered in a part of the brain less than two centimeters in diameter in the left third frontal convolution. It was through their observations of still more cases that Wernicke, Lichtheim, Kussmaul, and others gave us that understanding of the processes involved in voluntary speech that we have now, and, in
just the same way, Wernicke, Charcot, Störring and others gave us what little knowledge we have of the processes involved in reading and writing. Through clinical observations it was that Carl Lange was led to the investigations that resulted in his theory about the nature of emotions, well nigh the most important psychological discovery in the last fifty years. (That this theory now is a part of common knowledge is due much more to that American physician, the genius among American psychologists, William James, than to Lange himself.)

When we thus see that scientific psychology was made possible and some of the most important steps in its further progress were won through observations of pathological cases, we are justified in presuming that such a line of study also in the future will bring great results.

But even without taking these facts into consideration, we can see the great possibilities for psychology that a study of the pathological cases offers. As one very able writer of psychopathology, Störring, says: “The possibility of psychological experiment depends on the condition that a given psychical process stands in a relation of dependence to a physical process by which it can therefore be evoked. But naturally the more complex a process is, the less easily can we evoke it by physical stimulation and in such cases experiment meets with difficulties. At this point the study of the pathology of mental life must come in to assist, for in pathological cases nature makes experiments for us and they affect complex psychical phenomena far more than simple, since the relatively complex are of more frequent occurrence. Since nature in these cases accomplishes what normal psychology achieves by experiments, the observation of morbid phenomena has in mental pathology the value of experiment in normal psychology.”

But also, if we look upon the study of mental abnormalities from the point of view of pure psychology, or descriptive psychology, it is of very high value. Just in the same way, our attention is often called for the first time to some peculiarity in a person we know quite well, by a clever caricature of him, which exaggerates this peculiarity, so we can find forced upon
our attention one or another characteristic in a certain psychological complex by seeing it exaggerated under abnormal conditions. Where, for instance, can we find better opportunities for the study of anxiety or fear, than in the condition of morbid anxiety we so often find in cases with primary depression. Sometimes the physiological characteristics of the condition are the most prominent as in “Precordial Anxiety,” sometimes the psychical, and we get, through these morbid cases, an opportunity to study the condition which we never would have otherwise, because it is extremely difficult to produce a genuine feeling of anxiety experimentally, and because it, even if we could produce it, only would be of very short duration.

What must now be the educational and personal qualifications of a psychologist who should be able to work in a hospital for the insane with any hope of success? He must have, first of all, a knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, both normal and pathologic, which should not, in any way, be less than that required of a physician graduating from a first-class medical college. He must have a thorough knowledge of the whole system of physiological-psychology, and be familiar with the methods of experimental psychology. Last, but not least, he must be thoroughly familiar with and have the most profound respect for the great principles of science which are the only sure foundation, not only for psychology, but for every kind of science. He must, for instance, always remember that the only way we can explain what we do not understand is by carrying it back to something we do understand. There is a sad lack of respect for this rule among a certain kind both of psychologists and of physicians. If it were not so, we should never see the “subconscious” or the “unconscious” used in explaining anything, as there is absolutely nothing we know less about, neither would we ever see used absurdities like “unconscious mental states.” He must be a keen observer of men and their ways, a quality not especially developed by the whole methods of experimental psychology, the devotees of which often are so accustomed to have their instruments and experiments tell them everything that they
can see nothing without them. He should not only have gained his knowledge from books and laboratories, but should have a rather wide experience in the school of life. If he shall have any hope of gaining a real understanding of the working of the abnormal mind, his own mind should not be too even, but he should be, from his own experience, somewhat familiar with that state of mind which the great student of men, Goethe, thought about when he said “himmelhoch jauschend zum Tode betrüb.” And, finally, he should have that sympathy for suffering humanity which alone can inspire in the patients that confidence without which his whole work will be entirely in vain.

If we then suppose that the superintendent of a hospital for the insane should be fortunate enough to secure for his institution the services of such a man, of what value would it be to the institution?

The psychologist would carry on his work from an entirely different viewpoint than that of the medical staff of the institution and this is just the reason why it might prove itself to be a valuable assistance to the medical work. Back of every effort of the medical staff is the purpose of finding means of curing the abnormal conditions that is the cause of the patient's being in the institution. And it can not be said with too much emphasis that with the treatment and cure of patients the psychologist can have nothing whatsoever to do. If he usurps for himself the right to treat abnormalities of mind, even if his treatment is only "psychological," he places himself in rank and file with all the other "quacks" who, in spite of the high standing of the medical science in this country, seem to have an easier hunting-ground here than in any other civilized country.

The right kind of a psychologist can, however, be of invaluable assistance to the psychiatrist in gaining a clear psychological understanding of the individual cases. His much larger knowledge of the working of the normal mind, his understanding of normal psychological functions through experiments and introspection, will enable him to find what function of the mind is affected and how it is affected in very many cases where it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the psychiatrist.
Very much of interest can be brought out through psychological experiments on the insane, but to take up this side of the subject would require more space than it is possible to give in this limited paper. The psychologist will want to have a free hand to do his experiments and it will be the duty of the medical superintendent to keep him away from the very many acute cases where it would be very unfortunate to allow any kind of experiments.

All in all, it seems to me that while normal psychology may expect much from the work of trained psychologists in hospitals for the insane, the gain for the practical psychiatrist will be mostly indirect, consisting in a clearer psychological understanding of his cases.

Finally, before taking up my next point, I want to say that scientific psychology has no connection whatever with those persons who, with a "We alone know," written over their whole appearance and with an arrogance and a lack of respect for the opinions of others, unheard of among serious men of science, are trying to force psychology and psychiatry back to that time when mysteries as "unconscious mental complex" were "scientific" explanations and when the interpreters of dreams were looked upon as "wise" men. Those persons ought to array themselves in vestures of fine linen, put gold chains around their necks, and request for themselves the title of "Zaphnath-paaneah." (Gen. xli,45.)

Next we will discuss:

*The Psychologist in the Institution for Feeble-minded.*

The work of a trained psychologist in an institution for feeble-minded has already been tried for several years. The honor of having started it belongs to Superintendent Dr. A. C. Rogers, who, as early as 1898, engaged a physician with a special training in psychology to carry out psychological research. The first real systematic work in this line is, however, that started in 1906 at the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls at Vineland. The originator of the work was the Superintendent of the Training School, Prof. E. R. Johnstone, to whose profound enthusiasm and
unceasing energy the cause of the feeble-minded owes so large a debt. Prof. Johnstone was fortunate enough to secure as director of his Department of Research, Dr. H. H. Goddard, a man of rare scientific and personal qualifications. I do not think there is any one present who does not know of Goddard and the great work he is doing. There certainly is no psychologist working with the feeble-minded who does not look upon Goddard as his leader and teacher.

The scientific and personal qualifications of a psychologist in an institution for feeble-minded must, of course, be much the same as given before. Two points I want to say a few words about. As he will get his main work with growing children, he should have a thorough knowledge of normal children and their ways. Not that kind of knowledge that can be had through even the best course in “Educational Psychology,” but that kind that only can be had through living together with children. The ideal seems to me that he should have spent a couple of years as a teacher in a boarding school. That he should have some experience in teaching is very essential, as his work for a great part will be in connection with the school department of the institution. Finally he ought to have worked for some time in a hospital for the insane. Only then will he be able to recognize those traits of insanity that, more or less difficult to distinguish, run through the woof of almost all defective minds and add their part to its peculiar pattern.

The work in an institution for feeble-minded is very different from the work in a hospital for the insane. With our present knowledge we must still admit the correctness of the old saying, “Once feeble-minded always feeble-minded.” While, therefore, in the hospitals for the insane the work, first of all, has the purpose of removing the abnormal conditions of the patients, making it possible for them to go out again into the community as useful citizens, the workers in an institution for feeble-minded can only hope for that result in extremely few of his cases.

What can be done for the feeble-minded is to develop every faculty in them, if it is ever so small, and try to make them so useful to themselves and to the institution as is possi-
ble. In other words, the work of education and training is more important than the medical work.

Now, let us see how the psychologist can assist in this work: Most known is the assistance he can give in the so-called "classification" of the children. There is very much confusion in the classification of the mentally defective, and almost every writer has one of his own. The classifications used for the different forms of insanity and mental defectiveness are in the most cases not more scientific than the classifications of zoology were when the whale was classed as a fish. The only way to a scientific classification is through a more and more intensive study of the pathological conditions that form the basis for the mental symptoms. The classification of mental abnormalities is therefore the work of the pathologist and not the work of the psychologist. The classification which the psychologist is trying to make in several institutions is a practical classification with the purpose of dividing the children as to their possibilities for training. He does this through a very elaborate system of tests, which every one working with them is trying to make as efficient as is possible, (and these tests are used in almost every country where there is any caring for the mentally defective) through his observations of the individual cases, and through information from the different other officers and employes who have to do with the child.

I do not think the work has been tried in any place where it has not proved to be of very great value to the school. It saves time both for the teachers and the child, and what is still more important, it saves the child in many cases from being given a work which it can not do, and from the disappointment and loss of self-confidence in having to give up something.

But this classification, however important, is only the smallest part of the psychologist's work. If he has the necessary experience, and his laboratory is provided with the necessary instruments, he will be able to do much more. He will test the child's sight and hearing. If he finds anything wrong, he will refer it to the physician for medical examination. He will test the child's memory, its power of attention, its power
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of imagination; he will make a careful examination as to what power the child can exercise over its different muscles, and so forth and so on.

Suppose that the wealthy parents of a feeble-minded child should die. Somebody would then have to be appointed guardian to the child. What would such a guardian do? I suppose that first of all he would send the child to a school for feeble-minded, realizing that it would get the best care there. Then he would make out a list of all the property left that child, and try in every way to develop every part of it that it might be as valuable for the child as possible. Now, what the psychologist of the institution does in his laboratory to the same child, by all his tests and experiments, is just making a list of all the mental properties in the child’s possession, and when he has done that, he has still left the more important and much more difficult part of his work—to find ways and means to develop them and make them valuable to the child.

Through his examinations of the individual children, the psychologist will come in possession of a multitude of observations, and his object will now be to find characteristics common to all the children or to certain groups of them. If then, for instance, it can be shown—and I believe it can—that the most important characteristic of all the mental defectives is their lack of what we call attention, that it is impossible for them to keep their mind on the same thing for any length of time, that their mind, left to itself, is always wandering, then it must be evident that the whole educational work of the institution must center around that one thing, must have that principal purpose: to develop and strengthen this faculty in each child to the limit of its ability. And if it can be further shown,—and I believe it can,—that the common way of teaching is very far from doing this, that it does not take this important fact into any consideration, then I think the whole system should be changed. I, personally, would not for one second deplore such a change. The so-called “common school education” is idolized to a ridiculous extent throughout the world, especially by those having little or nothing of it. I, for my part, have never been able to see what good it can be
to a man to be able to read and write, if he has nothing to write about, and is unable to understand what he reads. It is furthermore a fact that the only institution that I know of in which they have eliminated almost all common school education, the one at Darenth, England, caring for more than 2,000 children, has gained results with their children unheard of elsewhere.

Such a change can, however, only be made gradually and very slowly in a big institution and it is absolutely necessary for its success that it be made with the hearty co-operation of all partaking in the work.

Another very important feature in connection with this special work will very naturally be assigned to the psychologist. I mean the study of the family history of the children. The problem of heredity and of its importance among the causes of feeble-mindedness is very great, very difficult, and possible results would have far-reaching consequences.

If this work, however, shall have any hope of accomplishing anything, there must either be required a much higher degree of accuracy in filling out the blanks of the institution, or there must be engaged the services of "field-workers," as they have them now in several institutions.

*The Psychologist in an Institution for the Epileptic*

will have almost exactly the same work as the psychologist in an institution for feeble-minded. The medical treatment of the epileptic is, however, so much more important than that of the feeble-minded, that it seems to me more necessary for an institution for epileptics to have a good pathologist and a well furnished pathological laboratory than to have an psychologist. The best, of course, is to have both, but I think the only way to a better understanding of the epileptic condition and to a possible cure is through pathological investigations, as these are carried out, for instance, at the Craig Colony in New York under the direction of Dr. Shanahan, and at the Monson State Hospital in Massachusetts, under the direction of Dr. Flood.
Also for

*The Psychologist in the Schools for the Blind and the Deaf,* there would be work of very much interest and of great importance for our knowledge of normal psychology. It would, however, take us too far to take that part up here.

If he were the right kind of a man

*The Psychologist in an Industrial School or Reformatory* would have splendid opportunities for doing very interesting and very important work. We know very little about the psychology of the so-called “criminal child.” We do not know what role environment plays in the making of it, and what role heredity plays. Some are of the opinion that he is always mentally defective, others say that he is often extremely bright but has no “moral sense.” I am inclined to think that they first are right in almost all cases, but we do not know. Painstaking studies continued through a long time might, to some extent, solve the question. Then we would be able to take up a real fight against juvenile crime, and could anything be a greater blessing to the community?

Very many of the children committed to the industrial schools are there found to be mentally defective, and there is a continual transferring of inmates to the school for the feebleminded. It is, however, only the most pronounced cases. It would certainly be a good thing to have an expert make a careful examination of all the children in these industrial schools, and, as far as possible, find out the defective. These children would be much better off in a school for feeble-minded, which is the only place where they can get the kind of treatment and training that they need and the work in the industrial schools would, I feel sure, be greatly benefited by getting rid of them.

A few words I would like to say about

*The Psychologist in an Orphans' Home.*

Our present knowledge of the development of the normal child after the time it has passed its babyhood is very small. In fact we have no reliable information whatever as to the mental development of growing children and very, very little as to their physical development.
It would be extremely difficult to find the right man for the work, but if he could be found and for some years would live in such an institution together with the children, measuring their physical development and testing their mental capacities from time to time, and first and last gaining their friendship and confidence, then we should in ten years have more real knowledge about children than we will get in a hundred years studying them as we do know.

The same result could be gained if one or more of the many splendid boarding schools there seem to be in this country could see their way to take on their staff a trained psychologist and give him time to do the work.

I hope now to have mentioned the different kinds of institutions where I think the work of a psychologist could be of use. Next I shall mention

_The Psychologist in the Juvenile Courts._

Among all the great things the American people have to show visitors from foreign countries, I do not think there is one single one they ought to be so proud of as the juvenile courts.

I had not been in New York many months before I knew that the most wonderful thing there was not Brooklyn Bridge, nor "the skyscrapers," nor Fifth Avenue, but was the little old house down town where "the Children's Court" had rooms. I went down there with the idea that if I attended the sittings for a week or so, I could learn practically all there was to learn. I went there day after day for several months, and I saw that a court for children has more problems to wrestle with than any one man could hope to solve in a life-time.

The cases I saw there, and there were from fifty to one hundred and fifty a day, convinced me that every child who comes to court for more than trifling things, like playing ball in the streets, should be given a thorough physical and psychological examination. I am sure we would then come to another understanding of many, many cases, especially cases of truancy and so-called incorrigibility, than we now have.

Several people have asked me, when they have seen the Binet test, if it would not be a good thing if the probation officers in the different children's courts could learn how to
apply this test. It was their opinion that the probation officer then would be able to decide if a child was mentally defective or not. It can not be said with too much emphasis that this idea is nonsense. If you have a group of certain children, the Binet test can be of pretty good assistance to you in finding the relative intelligence of these children. But, in making a diagnosis of mental defectiveness in cases where there can be any doubt this test is of no value whatever. Such a diagnosis can not be made at all by any one not an expert, and it is often difficult even for him.

But now I must hasten to the end, and I shall take up the last subject I want to speak about.

The Psychologist in the Public Schools.

The daily routine work of the psychologist in connection with the public schools would, of course, be the examination of children sent to him from their schools. That part of it, however, will not require further comment, except to say that it should be carried out in close co-operation with a physician. One very important part of the psychologist's work will be the work of prevention. Through his examination and observation of a child and through his knowledge of its environment and family history the psychologist should be able to decide if the child is of neuropathic stock, and to give advice not only as to the right training of the child, but also as to the kind of an education which will be of the most benefit for it.

Nobody familiar with the common system of public school education can have any doubt that it involves an incredible amount of intellectual waste. You have seen how much the newspapers and magazines have written during the last few months about "scientific management in business," and the great saving there is expected from this source. I dare say that there has never been any responsible business where the waste of money could be compared with the waste of intellectual work found in the common school system. To find new methods and stop this waste will be almost the most important part of the psychologist's work.

No question is of more importance for the whole community than the one of finding the best way to educate the children.
The practical psychologist is like the gardener in an orchard. There must be enriching, grafting and pruning. Our present knowledge is very, very small. It will take much time, much work, and—much love for children in the workers before we will have any real knowledge. The child-problem is not only the most important one which we have, but the most difficult.

The psychologist who has not known children since he was a child himself, and who now studies them in books and laboratories, and is "a great authority on child-psychology;" the teacher who has taken a graduate course in "educational psychology," and teaches her classes after "the newest scientific methods," and is "a very prominent teacher," for such as these, the child problem is principally a question of time enough, laboratories enough, instruments enough.

The man who is neither an authority in child-psychology, nor in any other kind of "ology," who is not a teacher, much less a prominent teacher, the man who, since he was not much more than a child himself, has had no greater interest than his interest in children, who has lived with them for years as master in boarding schools, has worked with them in their "clubs," has been with them in courts and in ball parks, has tried to win their confidences and friendships as he found them summer nights in parks and winter nights in tenement hallways, he, sometimes, has a feeling of being lost in a wilderness. Sometimes he finds a kind of a trail, sometimes again, he has to cut one. But he does not lose his spirit. He knows that others will take up the work where he will have to leave it. Some day there will be a broad way through, and, in times to come, there will be, instead of a wilderness, beautiful forests and fertile land.