The autonomic functions and the personality

Kempf Edward J
The Autonomic Functions and the Personality

BY

DR. EDWARD J. KEMPF
NEW YORK, N. Y.
FORMER CLINICAL PSYCHIATRIST, SAINT ELIZABETH'S HOSPITAL
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THIS WORK IS REVERENTLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

CAROLINE TSCCHUDI KEMPF.

She was one of those women whose faith in God and Nature, as the nature of God, inspires men to study Nature.
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PREFACE

It has always seemed to me that the inability of earnest, intelligent students of medicine and psychology to grasp Freud’s and Jung’s libido concepts indicates that there must be something not quite satisfactory with the idea of libido. Although it attempts to give a more intimate portrayal of the energetic constitution of man and his love of life, it savors of metaphysics because the mind is unable to conceive clearly of a process without some thing to proceed. From another source—an old aversion for the clerical-academic, vague soul hypothesis and its unintelligible psychophysical parallelism—I have for some time felt that the only psychological conception that can be expected to endure must be founded entirely upon the functions of the reflex circuit and the autonomic apparatus.

The recent laboratory demonstrations of the peripheral autonomic origin of the craving for food (acquisitive-assimilative) and the craving to urinate (avertive-emissive), and the capacity of the dominant autonomic apparatus to become conditioned to react to indifferent stimuli, that have been coincidently associated with its primary stimuli, have permitted the completion of a conception of the personality on the basis of the conditioned autonomic reflex. Hence a dynamic mechanism, that can be visualized by the student, may be substituted for the libido concept.

I am particularly indebted, in order, to the works of Darwin, Sherrington, James, Freud, Cannon, von Bechterew and Watson, and the teachings and personal influence of my teacher in psychology, Prof. Ernest Lindley; in physiology, Profs. W. Moenkhaus and J. Macleod; and in psychiatry, Prof. Adolf Meyer and Dr. W. A. White. From the thoughts and works of these men, scientific data, suggestions and theories finally became associated together for me in the following conception of the dynamic nature of the personality and its place in the great cosmic system.

I wish especially to express my thanks to Dr. White for his suggestions in the preparation of the book, and to Dr. Stanley Cobb, Miss Clara Willard and Mrs. Kempf for suggestions in correcting the manuscript.

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Edward J. Kempf