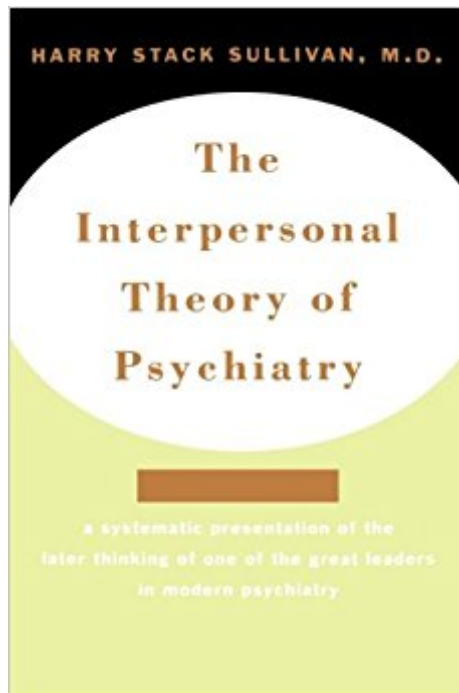




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The Interpersonal Theory Of Psychiatry



Synopsis

Harry Stack Sullivan's classic and groundbreaking synthesis of psychoanalysis, psychology and social science. This book contains the fullest statement of Sullivan's developmental approach to psychiatry, showing in detail how Sullivan traced from early infancy to adulthood the formation of the person, opening the way to a deeper understanding of mental disorders in later life.

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Customer Reviews

In the world of Freud and Jung, of Horney and Adler--American Harry Stack Sullivan is almost an anomaly, -- often overlooked except by specialists, here we have something worth reading and thinking about on his work. Years ahead of his peers, Sullivan shares his learnings and we are the better for having the benefit of his experience. Read the other psychoanalysts by all means, but do not overlook Sullivan or his work at the same time.

Excellent recommended reading from the the author, a psychiatrist, in explaining studies of how genetics, and mostly an individual's developing years determine his or her personality, and or mental impairments, leading to certain personality traits. Stuart

A true classic!

Sullivan's ideas, at the time of their writing, were revolutionary and not accepted by mainstream

psychiatry. This book represents some of Sullivan's best lectures, put together by his students after his death, and gives the student of psychiatry or psychology a penetrating conceptualization of mental health, and problems of living (to use Sullivan's words). The interpersonal theory of psychiatry is one of anxiety in human relationships, and all of the twists, turns, and maneuvers taken by our personality (self-system) in order to avoid or minimize such anxiety. A must read.

Here is a 393 page, posthumously published book from 1953 by American psychiatrist Herbert Harry Stack Sullivan, M.D. (1892-1949), who introduced interactional/cultural forces to intrapsychic psychoanalysis by describing how they cause mental illness. He says, "...psychiatry...cannot be concerned with anything which is...private...only with the human living...in...the public mode...psychobiology seeks to study the individual...and...cultural anthropology...the social heritage...of...a group, so psychiatry--and its convergent, social psychology--seeks to study the biologically and culturally conditioned...in...interpersonal situations...." In this volume Sullivan outlines psychological development from infancy to late adolescence, as well as interpersonal relations gone awry. The author explains different behaviour patterns or "dynamisms": malevolence, intimacy, the self-system and lust. Touching on the last mentioned, British social psychologist Michael Argyle, in "The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour" (1967), states, "...sexual motivation can be looked at as a social approach drive similar to the need for affiliation....leading to physical proximity...." And so it was over two thousand years ago the Romans propounded the word "sexus," defined as the intrinsic dissimilarity of man and woman. This became the word "sex" in the English translation, a term recurrently applied in everyday life. The meaning of this word is devoted not only to the reproductive aspect of human beings or the natural differences existing between male and female, but also to the expression of one's most personal feelings. Complete sexual fulfilment is a realization of one of life's ultimate joys. The sex response begins with sensation, the first impulse to embark upon the sphere of consciousness. As the force initiating it is augmented so is the sensation, but not at the same expedition. Internal changes then occur as the input, which is never tantamount to the sensation itself, is fed into the central nervous system and channeled to various organs. When enlivened, this sensation procures meaning, becoming a sense perception of which sight is the foremost. Depending on how one is disposed, this vision may be enhanced if one has touched or heard it before. Motherly affection in early childhood is of paramount importance in the development of a person's tactile sense, particularly in girls who do not have as many arousal areas as boys do at this time. The olfactory sense may often be indistinct, like that of touch, and develops

in the skin as an individual matures. Music, which can have a penetrating effect on the nervous system, is frequently involved in the development of one's auditory sense. Although the early sequential order of sensory development in adolescents is tactile, auditory and visual respectively, this order is reversed as a person approaches adulthood. Sensations cause internal pressure, exerting a strain on the organism because of stress when certain demands are not complied with. When this "primal" or indigenous need is unfulfilled, a lack is exhibited. This causes "primal pain" usually felt at the heart and genitals, effectuating tension. Tension, a peripheral phenomenon, may manifest itself in the three social needs that we have, specifically lust or the pursuit of sexual release (motivated by the sex drive), security or the desire to be emancipated from the dangers of the outside world (motivated by diffidence), and lastly, intimacy, the yearning to always be with someone (motivated by solitude). All of these needs may encounter one another at some time; and it might be noted that lust may not always be integrated with intimacy, which can inseparably implicate love itself, i.e., the caring for the person concerned and not just a sheer physical endeavour. Being intimate, however, does not essentially guarantee security if the relationship is ephemeral; and lust, which is the last need to mature, undoubtedly warrants no security. A concurrence of all these needs provides a wholesome relationship. The "lust dynamism," evolved from the vegetative, central and hormonal functions, is manifested in sexual fantasies, dreams and overt sexual behaviour involving orgasm or part of it. To enhance your comprehension of social psychology and sexuality, read "The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry" by Harry Stack Sullivan, where "Mr. Citizen of Precious Time blares his philippic at suburban minions."

I appreciate The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (1953) by Harry Stack Sullivan, M.D., who died in 1949, a basis for creating a literary life as a subjective realm in which a person may picture thoughts that Sullivan would consider within topics like: Patterns of Inadequate or Inappropriate Interpersonal Relations Chapter 19, Matters Schizoid and Schizophrenic. I would like to quote an opinion I expressed concerning security defenses on March 24, 1996: The problem seems to arise from situations which produce "very intense anxiety" associated with the suspicion that someone has "gone off the deep end." An elaborated view might include "awe, dread, loathing, and horror." (p. 315). Sullivan even mentions the "Grand Canyon." In order to avoid such feelings, Sullivan believes that obsessional substitution may be a good indication of "what goes on in the self-esteem in order to keep something utterly excluded from awareness, so that there is no possibility of its eruption into awareness." (p. 319). The section called Evidences of Dissociation covers pages 316-322, followed by Possibility of Reintegration of Dissociated Systems, which covers

"deliberate fugues" in which one "plunges into some situation, with a sort of tightening up of everything, often keeping his eye on something irrelevant—that is, preoccupying himself with things really tangential to what he is after. . . . And by a sort of attenuating process, by which the whole thing adds itself to conscious experience slowly, one survives it and is better off for it." (p. 323). Books can be analyzed like a cosmic pogo stick up in a society of spectacle that is only paying attention to the satisfaction of its own entertainment values. Electronic communication allows hits to be communicated as music, news, or commercial messages which jar anyone who does not get the same cosmic pogo stick up experience that everyone else is having, frequently in solitary enjoyment of pleasure addictions instead of interpersonal relationships, and the institutions which assume that religion, law, philosophy, or developmental history have a tradition that can beat Freudian aspects of riding a cosmic pogo stick down the stairs to the basement in a nuclear submarine should pay more attention to crimes against humor.

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