

# Book Reviews

## Psychoanalysis and Theories of Man

**Identity: Youth and Crisis.** ERIK H. ERIKSON. Norton, New York, 1968. 336 pp. Cloth, \$6.95; paper, \$2.95.

The continuing vitality of psychoanalysis has been much questioned in recent years. Psychoanalysis is of course many things. It is a "movement" with both political and ideological components, backed by a training system not altogether dissimilar from the novitiate and buttressed by a complex body of exegesis on the work of Freud. Psychoanalysis is also a therapeutic technique—the most intensive, thoroughgoing, and expensive method of psychological change. Finally, psychoanalysis is a comprehensive theory of human development that claims a scientific basis.

In each of these modes psychoanalysis has been challenged, often most vigorously by psychoanalysts themselves. The "political" aspects of the psychoanalytic movement, the ideological component of psychoanalytic training, and the reverential traditionalism of some psychoanalytic writing have been widely attacked. Most psychoanalysts today acknowledge that classical psychoanalysis as a therapy is counterindicated for many or most patients. And the claims of psychoanalysis to status as a scientific theory of human behavior have been repeatedly questioned.

Whatever the limitations of psychoanalysis as ideology or as therapy, the continuing vitality of psychoanalytic theory is witnessed by the most recent work of Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. Erikson is perhaps the most original of those who sought to continue the spirit of Freud's pioneering inquiry into the human psyche. In this new volume, his most theoretical work to date, he has collected and rewritten 20 years of essays on the subject of identity. The papers here updated include his work on identity and history, on the "identity crisis," on the psychology of women,

and on race relations. To these earlier works, Erikson has added new sections in which he links his own theory more firmly both to the psychoanalytic tradition and to the events of the past decades. *Identity: Youth and Crisis* is probably Erikson's most important work; it gives us a sense not only of his range and originality, but of how much psychoanalytic theory has changed since Freud.

Freud's first interest, of course, was in the vicissitudes of the unconscious—especially in the way psychic energy was organized around the child's early experience of his body and of his intimate family relationships. From Freud's early work emerged the theory of the Oedipus complex, of early psychosexual development, and of the enormous impact of forgotten or fantasied events upon the neuroses and the achievements of later life. Only in his later years did Freud turn toward man's adaptive capacities, toward society, and toward history; and he did so in an almost apologetic spirit, mistrusting his own metaphysical bent as he leapt from individual psychology to religion, civilization, myth, and taboo. It has remained for Freud's followers to continue and extend the study of man as an adaptive creature, as a social animal, and as a historical figure.

These three interests—ego, society, history—define the work of Erikson, who largely takes for granted what Freud wrote about early development, and seeks to extend Freud's views to other contexts. For Erikson, the adult contains within him not only the passionate child, but the autonomous, synthesizing, and self-regulating ego. For Erikson, "society" means not only the micro-society of the early family, but the continuing impact of social opportunity on development at every stage of life. And "history" is for Erikson not merely or even primarily "life history,"

but the embeddedness of human life in the dialectic of the generations and the processes of historical change.

In his first book, *Childhood and Society* (1950), Erikson was above all concerned with the intricate interdependence of individual growth and societal resource. His theory of psychosocial stages, although built upon Freud's psychosexual theories, goes beyond them to describe "normative life crises," crises both social and biological, crises organized around the routine turning points in human development like adolescence, intimacy with the opposite sex, adult "generativity" (work, child-bearing), and old age. At each stage in human life, Erikson emphasized, the development of the ego—of man's capacity for self-regulation, synthesis, and adaptation—depends not only upon the biological and the unconscious, but upon what is available to him in his human and social environment and what he can make of it.

In his more recent works, Erikson's attention has turned more and more toward the historical. In *Young Man Luther*, he examined the intersection of development and history in the youth of a great religious reformer; in *Insight and Responsibility*, he considered the development of ego strengths in the light of the relation between the generations. In *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson is above all concerned with the relationship of the historical and the individual—specifically with how, in the youth of each individual, the inner struggle for self-definition and for an unspoken sense of inner competence intersects with the history of his generation and his culture.

Erikson's emphasis on the historical is in one respect premised on traditional psychoanalytic assumptions. Psychoanalytic theory has always stressed the overriding importance of infantile and childhood history in the determination of later behavior. But when Freud said "history," he usually meant "case history," that is, the largely forgotten, unconscious, and infantile residue in the adult. The independent importance of the experience of later childhood, adolescence, and adulthood was thereby minimized, as was the psychological role of the kind of history that concerns the historian.

For Erikson, human development is intrinsically historical in a more extended sense. For one, man's developmental historicity does not end with the

resolution of the Oedipus complex, but extends throughout life. Each stage of life builds upon the stage that precedes it, synthesizing and integrating what went before. Human development, then, is more than the working-out of infantile experience and fantasy (although it is that); and it is more than the transaction between man and his environment (although it is that too). Life is a continual process of inner reintegration in which the life-historical and the actual are repeatedly resynthesized.

Individual life is historical in a second sense. Influenced by modern concepts of evolution and studies of animal ethology, Erikson continually asks, How does man transmit culture (knowledge, symbols, concepts of self, and ways of dealing with the world) from generation to generation? Freud's discussion of the relationship of the generations was largely exhausted by his concept of the Oedipus complex. Erikson sees the Oedipus complex as but one aspect of the intergenerational dialectic that not only reenacts man's primitive drives and libidinal nature, but rehearses the time when children will become the parents to the next generation. In the dialectic of the generations on which history is built, Erikson therefore sees not only discontinuity, rebellion, envy, and hatred, but—in any society that survives—signs of a more orderly succession that permits each new generation to reassert what is valid from the past while creating what is appropriate to its present.

Finally, Erikson is acutely aware of how historical possibilities, demands, and settings affect the very structure of life and of the theories we spin around it. Freud hoped to arrive at a universal theory of personality on the basis of his self-analysis and his work with Viennese patients at the turn of the century. Erikson points to the cultural and the historical in Freud's work to argue that the most basic symbols and forces in personality are affected by the individual's historical involvement and position.

The very concepts by which man attempts to understand himself in any historical era—including such concepts as "identity"—come out of and pass quickly back into the elusive historical process they seek to capture. Thus, Erikson can view the work of Freud simultaneously as a special product of the Victorian, Viennese ethos from which it grew, as a lasting contribution

to human understanding, and as itself a powerful force in the shaping of the "post-Freudian" world.

But to those devoted to other concepts of science, Erikson often seems inexact, elusive, rhetorical, and even mystical. Erikson is a clinician, not a behavioral scientist. And clinical empiricism, which seeks understanding through intensive studies of a few individuals, seems maddeningly "unscientific" to those committed to a methodology of exact measurement and statistical significance. Erikson deliberately eschews the operational definitions, precise formulations, and testable hypotheses that define most scientific work today. Collecting 20 years of writing on the subject of identity, he provides no definition of the concept, preferring illustration, the case histories of gifted men, example and allusion. As a result, the concept of identity, despite its usefulness to political theorists, historians, literary critics, and sociologists, has inspired remarkably little work by research psychologists. To some, this will

indicate the limits of Erikson's views. To Erikson, it would simply indicate that a sense of identity is elusive, difficult to identify with specific operations and exact indices, and completely related to individual motives, social opportunities, and historical positions.

But if Erikson's clinical empiricism is not that of the behavioral scientist, this fact too makes him very much a part of the psychoanalytic tradition. Although Erikson is in many respects highly critical of certain of Freud's basic assumptions, he remains true to the original effort of Freud—by the intensive study of a few men and women, in all of their depth, ambiguity, and historicity, to do justice to the complexity of man. In Erikson's hands, psychoanalysis as a theory of man—a theory grounded in clinical observation, open to change and correction, self-conscious and self-critical—demonstrates its continuing vitality.

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## Seeking Tractable Neural Analogues

**Models of the Nervous System.** SM DEUTSCH. Wiley, New York, 1967. x + 266 pp., illus. \$9.95.

It is a brave man indeed who attempts such a Herculean task as that of constructing adequate functional models of the brain. Twenty years ago there was apparently considerable optimism, mainly a result of the advent of cybernetics and of information theory, that there would be major theoretical breakthroughs toward an understanding of how brains work. Today, those neural theorists who have survived the transition seem to be, if not sadder, certainly considerably more sophisticated in their approach to neural modeling. It is now generally accepted that the payoff diminishes rapidly as the range and complexity of the neural problem that is posed increase. It is also generally accepted, by theorists as well as experimentalists, that the chief weakness of most theorizing about the nervous system has been oversimplification, due largely to lack of an immediate acquaintance with raw experimental material and problems. Now there is continued emphasis on biological veridicality, and most theoretical work is concerned with the classical questions

of neurophysiology: the generation and propagation of the action potential in myelinated and unmyelinated fibers, synaptic transmission, electrotonic effects in somatodendritic membrane, potential changes in inhomogeneous and anisotropic volume conductors, and so on. Since 1954 there has been considerable work done on the statistical analysis of the firing patterns of individual neurons, but only now is there work in progress on the two-point correlation functions associated with interacting neurons. Since 1954 there has also been a considerable development in what are now called bioengineering and bionics, an interweaving of biology and electronics. Here again, after an initial trauma, current neural work is focused on the synthesis and analysis of small nets of model neurons, serving to represent, for example, various insect or arthropod ganglia. And of course considerable work has been done, both analytic and synthetic, on the image-forming nets of peripheral sensory systems.

The present book is aimed at bioengineers, and falls naturally into two parts. In the first part, after some preliminary development of the elements of linear systems analysis, a