Paul H. Hoch's Contribution to the American Psychopathological Association

By Joseph Zubin

We have heard reviews of Paul Hoch's contributions to many fields. It is my purpose to indicate the contributions he has made to our association, a most pleasant task since it is a success story of how he helped instill life and vigor in a once moribund organization.

It is difficult to recall when Paul first appeared on our horizon. He presented himself unassumingly, as an interested bystander; he came to watch, but remained to act. Perhaps it was his cogent comments at meetings, perhaps it was his personal charm or his disarming manner in debate, perhaps it was his warm personal approach—but whatever it was, by 1943 he had become a force in our association. I remember a meeting about 1940, which he too was fond of recalling, at which four people were in attendance. Father Moore, who was the speaker, and Samuel W. Hamilton, Paul and I were the entire group. We huddled in a corner of an all-too-spacious room at the Commodore Hotel.

The association grew out of a convivial group that met in Morton Prince's home and was formally organized in Washington in 1910 at a meeting of the American Neurological Association. Its function was to bring together the neurologists and psychiatrists of that day who were both concerned with the activities of the human mind and its deviations but were separated by administrative fences. Among the earliest members were G. Stanley Hall, Boris Sidis, Adolph Meyer and other outstanding men. It soon became a stronghold for the psychoanalysts whose movement was then in its infancy in the United States. The psychoanalysts became stronger and separated from the Association, leaving a small residue of hard-core psychopathologists which kept the organization together until Samuel Hamilton came on the scene. It was he who corralled the newer generation, including Paul, into the organization.

In the early history of the Association, as described by Samuel Hamilton, many individual papers and symposia, ranging far afield, were offered at its annual meetings, and it was not until the middle 1940's that the tendency developed to focus on a particular topic about which the entire meeting would be organized. Nor had there been any tendency to publish symposium papers as a unit, though single papers appeared in the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology—the journal, founded by Morton Prince, that became the official organ of the Association from 1910 to 1925. In Samuel Hamilton's words: "This long connection was terminated when it seemed to Prince unwise to jeopardize the eclectic character of the Journal by continuing it as the official organ of a society that had by 1925 many other outlets for its productions. In announcing the affiliation in 1910, Prince expressed the hope


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that medical practitioners would now find the Journal more serviceable than ever. At the same time he felt obliged to apologize to the general reader, whose sensibilities he feared might be hurt by the inclusion of franker studies in sexual pathology. Such studies, he explained, would henceforth be necessary owing to the new discoveries of Sigmund Freud. But there seem to have been no protests against the Journal’s departure from decorum.” It is interesting to note that just as Morton Price was instrumental in offering the American Psychopathological Association its first official organ, Paul Hoch later became the chairman of the editorial board of the second “official organ” of the Association—Comprehensive Psychiatry, which began publication in 1960.

A one-session symposium of the Association was held in 1939 on Trends of Mental Disease which was continued again in 1943 as the first full-dress symposium on this topic, and subsequently published by Columbia University (King’s Crown Press) as the first volume under the auspices of the American Psychopathological Association in 1944. The years 1943 and 1944 took Paul away from his desk and into the war effort. Thanks to Dr. Bernard Glueck, senior, the policy of a single symposium topic was continued. The 1944 symposium was on the topic of Personality Disorders and was published by Grune and Stratton in 1945. There followed a volume on “Epilepsy: psychiatric aspects of convulsive disorders.” Paul appeared in our publications for the first time in this volume with a chapter on “Some psychopathological aspects of organic brain damage” and also served as vice-president of the Association. The volume was edited by Hoch and Knight, under the persuasive aegis of Dr. Hamilton, after the volume had lain fallow for a long period.

The next symposium was truly Paul’s own and required the bravery, diplomacy and balanced point of view which Paul was so capable of. It was on “Failures in Psychiatric Treatment,” the first such symposium ever held in this country. He shone at his best in the critical summary which he gave at the end of the meeting, something which all of us still remember with great admiration. His evaluation is so trenchant and so true even today that I shall treat you to one or two selections.

“In this connection, I should also like to mention another important issue, namely, that there are some psychiatrists who, from the point of view of therapy, are more interested in maintaining principles than in evaluating factors undogmatically. We have psychiatrists who try to employ organic principles all through psychiatry, versus others who would like to explain every mental aberration purely on a psychogenic basis. This leads, in practice, to the following complication: Some, for instance, would like to treat every emotional disorder with shock, because they do not believe in psychogenic considerations for any mental disease; on the other pole are those who disparage any organic form of treatment in psychiatry because they believe that mental diseases should be treated only by mental means. It is obvious that these dogmatic attitudes lead to many therapeutic failures. It is inconceivable that such a highly differentiated organ as the human psyche has only one form of disease and that all individuals can be treated with only one therapeutic approach. Organs of a much lower organization, like the liver or kidneys, are subject to quite a number of diseases, and the therapeutic approach for each is different. I believe it will be very important to find out what kind of psychiatric case should be treated with what kind of therapy, instead of using generalizations and bending the therapy to some theoretic
principle which is actually nothing more than the belief in a selected set of hypothetical facts by the discarding of other equally obvious ones."

The final paragraph gives the quintessence of his views on evaluation.

"The symposium on failures in therapy did not definitely settle the question as to why one patient responds to treatment, and another does not, but it did raise many interesting points and it will serve as a basis and starting point for other researchers in the field. An assessment of the value of any therapy rests on an unbiased evaluation of all the facts. Every year startling claims are made, sometimes even by reputable persons, for some new therapy in organic or psychotherapeutic lines. Too often these claims are unfounded and demonstrate repeatedly the fact that the tendency toward spontaneous remission in many mental disorders, or the oscillations in the clinical manifestations in others, are not taken sufficiently into consideration. Many more follow-up studies should be instituted and methods of remission-predictability, such as those described by Penrose, should be utilized. It is lamentable that criticisms of therapeutic claims are usually voiced about work of the "other" psychiatric school. For claims of these critics, however, similar critical appraisal is usually not accepted."

With the 1948 meeting on Psychosexual Development in Health and Disease, the paradigm for our meetings was achieved. Paul coedited the volumes from the succeeding symposia, each of which was devoted to a specific topic in which each session took up a specific aspect of the topic and was followed by selected discussants. This pattern has continued to the present, and we now have 19 volumes published with two awaiting publication.

It is interesting to note that Paul began his career as program chairman and editor for the Association with the volume "Failure in Treatment" and ended up with "Evaluation of Psychiatric Treatment" in 1962.

Between these two volumes came a series which included:

- Relation of Psychological Tests to Psychiatry
- Current Problems in Psychiatric Diagnosis
- Depression, a classic volume which anticipated the current flurry of interest in depression
- Psychiatry and the Law, which foreshadowed Paul's recent successful revision of commitment procedure
- Psychopathology of Childhood
- Experimental Psychopathology
- Psychopathology of Communication
- Problems of Addiction and Habituation, which foreshadowed the creation of the Research Institute for Neurochemistry and Drug Addiction at Ward's Island
- Current Approaches to Psychoanalysis
- Comparative Epidemiology, which foreshadowed the International Study on Diagnosis of Mental Disorders in the U.K. and U.S., on whose steering committee he served
- Psychopathology of Aging
- The future of Psychiatry

and the most recent volume

The evaluation of Psychiatric Treatment.

Awaiting posthumous publication are:
Psychopathology of Perception and Psychopathology of Schizophrenia, the latter representing his other consuming interest, schizophrenia. It is noteworthy that the symposium on Schizophrenia, at which he gave the Hamilton Lecture, was the last one in which he participated.

Paul served as president in 1949, the year in which the Symposium was devoted to Anxiety. The volume resulting from this symposium has become a classic in the field, having undergone three printings immediately and a new reprinting in 1963.

The Association was close to his heart at all times. Never in his busy career as Commissioner did he fail to devote at least one Saturday morning a month during the preparation of the program to it, and never in all the 20 years or more did he fail to attend a council meeting.

To say that he was the mainstay of the Association would be an understatement. He did for the American Psychopathological Association what Churchill did for England and more, since he remained continuously at the helm of the Association, guiding it to the very end of his days. One of his last wishes was that the American Psychopathological Association be the agency through which any remembrance of him, if it is desired, should be established. What greater legacy can a man leave than a dynamic group that will continue to search for the solution of the problems he considered focal in man’s existence?

In Paul’s death, we have lost more than a program chairman. But thanks to his vision, careful planning and courage in experimenting with programs, we see our way clear to continuing the still unfulfilled task of the Association. The least we can do is rededicate ourselves to the high goal which he so clearly set.

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