FOREWORD

THERE WAS A TIME when books on abnormal psychology were primarily descriptive, theoretical, non-experimental, and qualitative. In recent years description and theory have given way to scientific models and the testing of their hypotheses by experimental methods. Even descriptive approaches have focused on objective measures of patient behavior rather than case histories or clinical interpretations of these behaviors. As a result the scientific literature of abnormal psychology has grown tremendously and, today, one textbook cannot contain all the findings except in an abstract encapsulated form. Such texts, however, important as they are as handbooks, do not serve the purpose of instruction. An instructive textbook must indicate why certain problems are important, what research methods have been developed for attacking them, what success has already been attained, and what problems are still to be solved. This, of course, forces the author to select from the vast amount of material available. The reader of this book will find that the selections made by the author are most fortunate, since they deal with urgent problems now in the forefront of research.

This book points up the essential differences between the clinical and the experimental approaches to psychopathology and their interdependence. If one were to choose a single characteristic that differentiates the two, I would recommend that it should be the tendency for self-reference in judgment. The clinician tends to depend heavily on intuitive, subjective self-reference in arriving at his judgments. His own feelings, experience, and emotions constitute an important basis for his conclusions. For example, some clinicians report that they rarely make a diagnosis of schizophrenia (or dementia praecox) unless they experience "that praecox feeling" while
examining the patient. The experimentalist tries his utmost to free himself from these self-referred moorings and appeals instead to external criteria whose objectivity, reliability, and validity are demonstrable operationally. These external criteria can not replace clinical judgment, but they can buttress it and confirm or disconfirm it. In this way the experimentalist can provide a bridge between the clinician’s intuitions and the verifiable aspects of patient behavior.

One of the difficulties of crossing such bridges is that the other side may have symbols and signs that are in a foreign tongue. Students of abnormal psychology will find that this book, steeped as it is in both clinical and experimental knowledge, attempts to provide them with easy passage between the two fields and with a common vocabulary that will permit them to get acquainted with both sides of the river. How well this has been accomplished may safely be left to the reader to decide.

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