

SCIENTIFIC MEETING

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October 1st, 1937

(901 S. Hudson)

Total attendance: 29

Guests: Dr. & Mrs. Evans                      Mrs. N. Cole  
          Mr. Heuckendorff                     Dr. Gassman & guest  
          Paul Levy                                Dr. Gingold  
          Mrs. Sniffen

Dr. D. Brunswick presiding

Speaker: Dr. Siegfried Bernfeld, San Francisco, Cal.

Subject: "Puberty, Youth and Adolescence"

Bernfeld defines YOUTH, a sociological concept, as the intermediate phase which is differentiated in terms of social realities from childhood as well as from adulthood. - ADOLESCENCE covers two different factors: 1. the physiological one of PUBERTY and 2. the sociological one of Youth.

The demarcation against childhood is given by the characteristic of puberty; the demarcation against adulthood by the lack of economic and sexual independence.

This study is limited to masculine puberty. Bernfeld constructs his various possible types of youth on the basis of two premises: 1) physiological puberty, 2) the social co-ordinate (historical time, geographical place, definite class of society). One characteristic toward which all social coordinates converge is, that pubescent is not permitted to give expression to his new libido situation through adult sexual activity. He is expected to postpone, suppress or repress his new desires. His pre-history determines whether he will submit or rebel to the social demands. Two major type-forms of adolescence suggest themselves: the submissive type - "quiet" type; and the rebellious or "simple" type. Both these types have no manifest inner conflicts. A third type is inserted here which is rebellious and submissive simultaneously: the "complicated" type. This third type he subdivides into a) the obstreperous, b) the dangerous type. In recapitulation:

1. QUIET type:	past and present accepted
2. SIMPLE type:	past and present rejected
3. OBSTREPEROUS type:	past rejected, present accepted
4. DANGEROUS type:	past accepted, present rejected

(type 3 and 4 constitute the COMPLICATED type)

Brief characterization of the four types.

1. The QUIET type. The struggle between instinctual demands and conscience, between libido and super-ego is settled (if the submissiveness is extreme and the libido comparatively small in quantity) by beginning to regress at the onset of puberty. Puberty passes unnoticed. In spite of his intellectual development the adolescent remains childish, sometimes even in his external appearance.

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2. The SIMPLE type. This type yields completely to his instincts. He accepts all their new ~~demands~~ desires and the means of gratifying them. He often pretends to be in complete accord with his milieu, but secretly he leads a more or less adult sex life. He exhibits the psychic effects of ~~abstinence~~ periodic abstinence and the usual reactions to the forms of sexuality open to him, such as intercourse with prostitutes or with girls who do not regard him as a real man. This type does not apply to specific (psychological) adolescence.

Both forms of puberty, despite their fundamental differences share one important characteristic: they are not stirred up and have no manifest inner conflicts.

3. The OBSTREPEROUS type. He is submissive to his present environment but rebellious towards his childhood environment. In the past he has wholly rejected those aims, gratifications and instincts which he now accepts in a limited, distorted and devitalized form at least in fantasy. He exhibits genuine courage in facing the demons and gods of his childhood, and rebels against them. He permits himself fantasies, masturbaton, or future expectations. Out of this background arise neurotic symptoms, some of them transient in nature. These adolescents often exhibit exceptional talent and idealism, youth is a brilliant, but generally brief period for them, and of the deepest mental and spiritual development. The majority of adolescents of this type are able to prevent their inner conflicts from going off at a tangent into some extreme pathological by-path. The conflicts, as well as their neurotic coloring, appear to be normal- even healthy and desirable manifestations of this particular age.

4. The DANGEROUS type. This type- in contrast to the obstreperous- rebels against his present milieu and is submissive to his past. Thus finding himself in grave opposition to the defence injunctions of his immediate environment, his condition frequently becomes critical. The fear and guilty conscience which arise from the external conflict in which he is involved become united with infantile anxiety and feelings of guilt, which for short periods completely control the situation. The rebellion against the present environment combined with the ~~submissiveness~~ to the past, that is to the super-ego, expresses itself either in actual crime or in the fantasy of committing a crime. This type has feelings of guilt because of his rebellion. The symptom of this type can be characterized as neurotic. The external conflict becomes an inner one, between the super-ego and the impulses accepted by the ego. This type often is closer to the delinquent than the neurotic. Primarily he is dangerous to himself, and under certain conditions, he may become dangerous to the public at large.

Summing up, Bernfeld assures that this brief survey covers in no way the number of known types nor all those possible. It must be kept in mind that firstly the various social coordinates have been inadequately treated because attention was concentrated on the one characteristic common to them all- DEFENCE. Secondly, youth extends over a period of time, it is not static condition, but a process, in the course of which many important changes may occur.

Discussion: T. Libbin, Brunswick, Gassman, Tolman, Leonard, Abraham, F. Leonard.

