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Dear Sylvia,

I've just finished reading the discussion section of your critical evaluation of psychoanalytic theories of infant development in the Quarterly. It's a splendid job that you've done there. I enjoyed reading it and learned a lot.

What you wrote about psychoanalysis and general psychology raises a question in my mind. Since Hartmann is long since dead, we can never know exactly what he had in mind, but my own idea is this. Until 1926 psychoanalysis or, better, psychoanalytic psychology, psychoanalytic theory, was a psychopathology. The aspects of normal psychology it had something to say about were those aspects that Freud labeled everyday psychopathology: slips and errors, dreams, even jokes. What they had in common was a return of the repressed, i.e., a failure of repression. Such little failures of repression are well within the bounds of normality, said Freud, but they're identical--or very similar--to the major failures that give rise to mental illness. Hartmann sensed that there's more to the contribution of psychoanalysis to normal psychology than just that and he tried to establish the connection with his essay on the role of ~~adapt-~~ the ego in adaptation in 1939. (Incidentally, he wrote an outline of psychoanalytic theory for psychologists--from the point of view of a psychologist--in 1929.) His effort fell short of his goal for two reasons, I think. One was the reason you point to: his idea of "ego functions," an idea that leads to a morass if one follows it conscientiously in one's thinking. The other was his increasing reliance on the concept of neutralization, something he conceived as an ego function, or the result of a special ego function. I agree with you that psychoanalysis can't become a part of normal psychology by following those routes, but that's what Hartmann was after, if I'm right. He wanted to make psychoanalysis more than just a psychopathology, he wanted to make it a general psychology, i.e. a part of normal psychology as well as a psychopathology.

Whether or not my speculation about Hartmann's goal is correct, I think that psychoanalysis is now a general psychology in the sense that it has lots to say about normal psychology as well as about psychopathology. As I see it,

the most important thing it has to say about normal psychology concerns the role of psychic conflict in normal psychic functioning. One should add, I think, that there is much that it contributes to the role of conflict and, more generally, the role of childhood instinctual wishes in normal psychic development, which is one of your points, isn't it? I admire the combination of clarity and tact with which you put what I read as your main point; one who investigates early child development must be both well informed psychoanalytically and expert as an observer of child behavior--or would it be better to say observational psychology? Anyway, well trained in both areas. How true, how true! And how rare!

Anyway, Sylvia, congratulations. You wrote a first rate review. It was a pleasure to be with you in Phil. See you again soon, I hope.

Best regards,

Charlie