

Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry: The First William Alanson White Memorial Lectures

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Abstract

The role of William Alanson White in the last four decades of American psychiatry was great indeed. To most of his students, the Professor was American psychiatry and a kindly benevolent father. In psychiatry he was a leader, a champion of progressive developments. He was a calm influence at the conference table and a wise counselor to those with whom he collaborated. In medicine, he was the foremost exponent of the doctrine of the Organism-as-a-whole.



the founder, organizer and executor, he was a tireless proponent of the true dissemination of psychiatry. His purpose and the purposes of psychiatry were one. Educator, collaborator, integrator, investigator humanitarian; he was a stimulus to great achievements, an ideal exemplarian of the doctrine of service. William Alanson White was admired and loved by all who came to participate with

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the Foundation and its Honorary President for life. Under his guidance the purposes of the Foundation took shape as directing research into human personality and interpersonal relations; evolving methods of benevolent intervention in the mental disorders of individuals and in disintegrating, deviant, or dangerous social processes; and providing postdoctoral training designed to produce psychiatrists of an entirely new level of competence.

To the latter end, on 8 May, 1936, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation caused the incorporation of The Washington School of Psychiatry. Despite his failing health, Dr. White participated actively in the

development of the nuclear plan of the school and lived to see his ideals embodied in its first Bulletin.

In 1937, following Dr. White's untimely death, the Trustees established the quarterly publication *Psychiatry: Journal of the Biology and the Pathology of Interpersonal Relations*, Number One of Volume One bearing the date of February, 1938.

In the Autumn of 1938, the Board of Trustees decided to provide a series of William Alanson White Memorial Lectures to present to psychiatrists, social scientists, and others, various important developments in the field to which Dr. White devoted his life.

Dr. Harry Stack Sullivan, one of the more distinguished of Dr. White's former associates—for many years Director of Clinical Research in the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital; thereafter for ten years in private practice—was chosen to give the first memorial lectures.

Held at the Auditorium, Interior Department, Washington, D.C. on five successive Friday evenings beginning 27 October, 1939, under the joint auspices of the Superintendent and the Staff of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital and the Board of Trustees of the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation the lectures drew a distinguished audience the continued attendance of whom was most gratifying. Responsive to many requests the series is here presented as the first article in Volume Three.

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