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The Glow of Synthesis

Twelve Beacons of Light in Social Psychiatry

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PART

1

Culturally Inclined Psychoanalysts

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CHAPTER

1 Karen Horney

Salman Akhtar



(1885–1952)

INTRODUCTION

A careful scrutiny of the relationship between psychoanalysis and culture reveals a century-long, gradual shift from what I have called "psychoanalytic anthropology" to "anthropological psychoanalysis."[1] The former era (1) regarded culture to be a product of the human mind; (2) mapped personality development in Eurocentric terms; (3) considered an individuated and unitary self to be universal; and (4) barred sociocultural variables from altering the views of psychopathology, treatment, technique, and therapeutic goals. The latter (and the contemporary) era (1) views the human mind as a product of culture; (2) regards personality development as culturally variable; (3) allows for enmeshed and communal selves as also being modal structures; and (4) permits, if not encourages, sociocultural variables to impact upon psychiatric nosology, treatment, technique, and therapeutic goals. Another important difference exists between the early "psychoanalytic anthropology" and the current "anthropological psychoanalysis." The former was the product of heuristic imperialism and deployed psychoanalytic theory in toto in explaining diverse social, historical, political, religious, ethnic, economic, and literary endeavors. The latter gives primacy to the bilateral flow of information between psychoanalysis and other disciplines of the humanities, thus facilitating their dialectical enrichment.

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TABLE 1: Notable publications.

- The Neurotic Personality of Our Times (1937)
- New Ways in Psychoanalysis (1939)
- Our Inner Conflicts (1942)
- Neurosis and Human Growth (1950)
- Feminine Psychology: Collected Papers, 1922–137 (1967)

This positive shift has taken many decades, however. Elsewhere,[1] I have elucidated in detail the steps our profession took in this tumultuous journey and the myriad dramatic personae who fomented, fueled, and facilitated this salutary transformation. To be sure, there are many others (e.g., Geza Roheim, Harry Stack Sullivan, Abraham Kardiner, Clara Thompson, Alan Roland, Stuart Twemlow, Dorothy Holmes, and myself as well) who contributed to such cultural rejuvenation of psychoanalysis, a towering early figure among them is that of Karen Horney (pronounced "horn-eye"). This essay is devoted to summarizing her personal and professional life[2-4] as well as the extensive body of her published work **(Table 1)**.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Karen Horney was born as Karen Danielson on September 15, 1885, in the small German town of Eilbeck, near Hamburg. Her father, Brendt Henrik Wackels Danielson, was a Norwegian sea captain who had settled in Germany, and her mother, Cotilde van Ronzelen, was the daughter of an accomplished Dutch architect. Besides the variance in their national origins, Karen's parents had other differences as well. Her father was a Bible-thumping conservative, while her mother was a freethinker. Her father was 20 years older than her mother and "seemed to have no other goal for Karen than having her stay home to help with the housework so that they could dispense with the maid."[2] Her mother, on the other hand, indulged her every wish and stood up for her when, at age 13, Karen announced that she wanted to be a doctor.

After a tumultuous adolescence, Karen moved out of town. She completed her preclinical years at Freiburg University and spent her clinical years at Göttingen and Berlin, graduating from medical school in Berlin in 1913. While still a medical student, in 1909, she married Oscar Horney, who was a budding political economist. A year later, she sought psychoanalytic treatment for depression and sexual difficulties from Karl Abraham (1877–1925), a distinguished analyst and a beloved pupil of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Over the next few years, both her parents died; she became a mother and—now known as Karen Horney—joined the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society. Learning from her own life experiences and from her analytic work, which female patients, Horney soon began to write a series of papers that were critical of Freud's patriarchal thrust. She dismissed the

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centrality of penis envy in female development, asserting that femininity is innate and so is the girl's identification with her mother. Freud was not pleased.

By 1923, Horney's husband began to flounder in his business and also developed meningitis. He grew embittered and argumentative. Their marriage suffered. Horney's only and much-loved older brother's unexpected death at this very time introduced further stress in the marriage. She became depressed and even suicidal but, wisely, sought treatment, this time with the Vienna-born President of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, Hans Sachs (1881–1947). She separated from her husband in 1926 and later got divorced. Her psychoanalytic work flourished, and she published many papers on female psychology.

In 1932, on the invitation of the highly influential psychoanalyst Franz Alexander (1891–1964), Horney moved from Berlin to Chicago. There she helped devise the local institute's training program and taught courses on analytic technique and on female psychology while seeing patients 5 hours a day. She also developed a very active social life, hobnobbing not only with renowned analysts like Karl Meininger (1893–1990) and Lionel Blitzstein (1893–1952) but also sociology's glitterati like Margaret Mead (1901–1978) and Eric Fromm (1900–1980); the latter became her lover. Fascinatingly, Horney's work on feminine masochism also appeared around this time.

Soon she fell out with Alexander, perhaps "because she could not bear being second in command to him."[2] Disenchanted with Alexander and attracted by the iconoclastic interpersonal views of Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) and Clara Thompson (1893–1958), Horney decided to leave Chicago. Being romantically involved with Fromm, who lived in New York, made the choice of her next destination easy.

Horney joined the prestigious New York Psychoanalytic Institute in 1934 and set up home in the wealthy Upper East Side of Manhattan. Fromm remained her constant companion, and their break-up a few years later was bitter and painful. Over time, she bounced back. Her circle of acquaintances grew. The eminent theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965) became a new friend. Psychoanalysts from the Washington Baltimore Society began to visit her, and she herself commuted to teach at Washington and Baltimore frequently. Her popularity grew, but not so much in the stodgy chambers of classical psychoanalysis. She became well-known among avant-garde psychologists, a teacher in high demand, a "regular" at the recently started New School of Social Research in New York.

She now began to use her own mothering experience to go beyond Freud and replace castration anxiety with the "basic anxiety" of getting or not getting mother's approval. She went on to reject the centrality of the Oedipus complex in the genesis of neuroses and declared that it is maternal

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neglect and abuse that gives rise to a child's hostility, and this causes guilt and low self-esteem. A child thus afflicted seeks love and protection from father. It is therefore not a biologically fated Oedipus complex but a clingy attachment bred of maternal deprivation that lies at the core of all neuroses. Horney diverged from the traditional Freudians in the matters of therapy as well. She emphasized the importance of focusing upon present realities and fantasies over the reconstruction and interpretation of childhood scenarios. Such disagreements, coupled with her great popularity with educated laity and envy-inducing lavish lifestyle, proved sufficient to make her membership in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and led to her resignation in 1941.

Soon afterward, she founded the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis and started publishing the American Journal of Psychoanalysis. For the next 7–8 years, Horney remained very active at the psychoanalytic training institute that evolved under the auspices of her association. She lectured, supervised candidates in training, and maintained a private practice of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. Gradually, she got tired and stopped teaching at both the New School and the American Institute of Psychoanalysis around 1951. In the last year of her life, she found herself increasingly lonely, got in the habit of reading detective stories, and, surprisingly, developed an interest in Zen Buddhism. It is surprising because of the philosophy's insistence upon transcending individuality, while her own work focused upon realizing individuality. Having met a fresh challenge, she visited Japan for a brief period of study in 1952, but soon after coming back from this journey, she was diagnosed to be suffering from cancer. She died at the age of 67 on December 4, 1952, and was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Ardsley, a short distance from New York City.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

It is hardly possible to summarize a prolific writer and influential theorist's lifelong work in a few pages. The presentation here, therefore, must be considered inherently telegraphic and even incomplete. With this caveat entered, it seems that Horney's contributions can be distilled into the following three categories: (1) Debiologizing human motivation, (2) positing the sociogenesis of emotional disorders, and (3) restoring dignity to female psychology.

Debiologizing Human Motivation

Readers of contemporary psychoanalysis have the benefit of viewing human motivation from the sophisticated prism of object relations theory,[5] attachment theory,[6,7] self-actualization perspective,[8,9] and separation individuation viewpoint.[10] This can lead them to forget that the original psychoanalytic theory was mostly biological in its postulates.

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Freud's[11,12] theory of human motivation was based upon "instincts," which he defined as "a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the physical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism, and reaching the mind, and as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body."[12] Freud's[12] first dual instinct theory proposed "sexual" and "self-preservatory" to be the two instincts, but his second dual instinct theory[13] changed this to the formulation of "life instinct" (which subsumed sexual and self-preservatory motives) and "death instinct" (which sought to return the living organism to an inanimate state and whose threat found dilution in being externalized as aggressive drive). Regardless of their reformulation, instincts retained their somatic origins. Their aim "was to find tension relief and their object" was any person (or thing) that facilitated the same.

In this theory, anxiety was caused by the threatening breakthrough of instincts, and defenses were patterned upon the body's aversive responses. Thus, denial was shutting one's eyes, negation was turning one's neck away, introjection was swallowing, projection was spitting, and so on. Phrases such as "oral erotism," "anal sadism," "urethral ambition," "penis envy," and "castration complex" abounded. Relief from bodily tensions was regarded to be the goal of everything people did or wanted to do. The fundamental pressure to act (or, to want to act, to imagine ways of acting) arose from biologically accrued tensions and epigenetic unfolding of preprogrammed, somatic, zonal excitements (e.g., oral, anal, and phallic) that determined the mental preoccupations of the growing human organism. A "sensual current"[14] underlay all motivation, even though its emergence was diphasic: First as polymorphous, partial, and changing pleasures in childhood and next as consolidated genital pleasure in adolescence and adult life. Fixations upon (and regressions to) infantile and childhood zonal expressions manifested as psychopathology; the inadequate advance from the "pleasure principle" to the "reality principle"[15] added to the problem.

Translated into plain English, this implied that the origins of excessive drinking, smoking, incessantly talking, and greedy acquisitiveness resided in an unsatisfactory oral phase; those of orderliness, parsimony, and rigidity were defensive strategies against the dirty pleasures of the anal phase; burning ambition betrayed fixation on the urethral phase; cockiness and exhibitionism emanated from the phallic phase; and so on.

While today's psychoanalysts and psychiatrists correctly regard such reductionism as outdated, the steps away from this kind of thinking was actually taken in Freud's own lifetime by by Alfred Adler[16] and then more forcefully by Karen Horney.[17-20] She questioned the need and the veracity of these assumptions. Instead of such compulsive and unverifiable reliance upon "biology," in her view, it was better to look for cultural origins of human motivation. Do people drink excessively because of an "oral fixation" or in

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order to relieve feelings of inferiority and incompetence in social situations, for instance? Does the pursuit of enormous wealth betray an anal-retentive pleasure or suggest a vengeful tendency to show off while also depriving others of their due?

Thinking along such lines, Horney delineated 10 basic human needs.[19] These included (1) the need for affection, (2) the need for a partner, (3) the need for recognition, (4) the need for admiration, (5) the need for power, (6) the need for exploitation, (7) the need for achievement, (8) the need for autonomy, (9) the need for perfection, and (10) the need for being inconspicuous. Clearly, some of these leaves were contradictory to others, and such schism, if exaggerated, became one source of neurotic distress. In a later work,[20] Horney condensed these 10 needs into three categories: (1) The need for compliance—this subsumed the first, second, and third needs of the 10 described earlier; (2) the need for expansion—this subsumed needs four through eight; and (3) the need for detachment—this subsumed the former needs nine and 10. Intensifications of these three needs, respectively, produced the tendency to go with people, go against people, and go away from people. This was Horney's foundational "socio-genesis," from which she evolved further refinements and nuances of psychopathology. Unlike Freud, termed "the biologist of the mind" by Sulloway,[21] Horney became "the sociologist of the mind."

Positing Sociogenesis of Psychopathology

In contrast to Freud's emphasis upon the persistence or revivification of infantile psychosexual drives in the causation of neurotic disorders, Horney declared that man's emotional conflicts arose from his struggle with attitudes prevalent in his culture. He described five such attitudes as potential true triggers or second conflicts: "first, attitudes concerning giving and getting attacked affection; second, attitudes concerning evaluation of the self; third, attitudes concerning self-assertion; fourth, aggression; and fifth, fear and sexuality."[18] Horney saw all neurotic suffering as arising from how an individual fails to cope with or becomes unduly compliant to such prevalent expectations of behavior.

Wisely, she cautioned that her portrayal was restricted to her times, and new patterns of neurosis might evolve in the future. Having entered that caveat, Horney delineated the neurotic features that developed in relation to these five cultural attitudes: (1) The need for approval from others grew into indiscriminate hunger for appreciation in the neurotic; (2) the need for an overall positive self-evaluation was defensively transformed in the neurotic feelings of inferiority or remained transparent as convictions "of incompetence, of stupidity of unattractiveness"[18] prevailed; (3) the need for self-assertion was inhibited in the neurotic persons; thus, afflicted could not

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express their wishes, do things in their own interest, and stand their ground when disputed by others; (4) the need to modulate one's aggression turned uneven, leading the neurotic individual to either becoming domineering and overexacting, or vulnerable to being abused, betrayed, and humiliated; and (5) the need for healthy and pleasurable sexuality ended up as either a compulsive need for sex or inhibitions toward it.

Distinct in Horney's conceptualization of these neurotic syndromes is their etiological linkage to the tension between what is culturally expected of an individual and what he or she is able to accomplish. At the same time, Horney remained mindful of the role of cultural relativism. For instance, she stated that a highly self-effacing and professionally reticent young woman and a laid-back artist who makes little effort to sell his paintings would be considered neurotic in the United States. This judgment would emanate from the culturally shared assumption that everyone should try to get ahead and be economically successful. Horney[18] unmasked the cultural relativism of such "diagnoses" by stating that "if the girl without competitive drives lived in some Pueblo Indian culture, she would be considered entirely normal, or if the artist lived in a village in Southern Italy or Mexico, he, too, would be considered normal, because in these environments, it is inconceivable that anyone should want to earn more money or to make any greater effort than is absolutely necessary to satisfy immediate needs." To be sure, Horney's turn of the 20th century observation seems outdated in today's money-driven world, but the spirit of her assertion lives on: What is neurotic in one culture might be normal in another.

Take, for instance, the following: If a married North American woman in her early 40s calls her mother every day on the phone to seek advice about this or that domestic matter or to simply chat, she is likely to be considered immature, dependent, and insufficiently individuated. However, if a similar woman of an Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghani, Iranian, or Turkish origin (even if she were living as an immigrant in the United States) shows such attachment to her mother, it is unlikely that she would be considered pathological. To wit, our two imaginary women (North American and Asian) might be next-door neighbors, behaving in the exact same manner, with one deemed morbid and the other normal, if not admirable. This cultural relativism is at its zenith, and Horney pointed it out in no uncertain terms.

Going a step further, Horney noted that what is considered normal not only varies with the culture but also within the same culture in the course of time and with different classes of society.[18] No culture is static. Shared patterns of behavior, coping strategies, celebrated and despised group memories, rituals, and forms of social stratification evolve over time. Degrees of sexual freedom, reverence toward authority, and modesty or flashiness of attire are particularly subject to changes from era to era.

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When marked, search differences can accentuate customary generational gaps in communication, cause interpersonal strife, and draw attention from mental health professionals. Culture as a given stable structure and as a shifting and changing dynamic both played a central role in Horney's theorizing about the genesis of emotional disorders.[17-20]

Restoring Dignity to Female Psychology

In a series of papers written during the 1920s and 1930s, Horney voiced strong disagreement with Freud's views of girls' psychic development and of women's psychology in general. During their earlier piecemeal appearance, these papers caused little stir, but their collected publication in a single volume[22] with the title Feminine Psychology, during the peak of the feminist movement in the United States and Europe, became a seismic event that shook up the rather darkly monolithic view of female psychology in Freud's writings.

To put it briefly, Freud proposed that, before discovering the anatomical difference between sexes, "the little girl is, it is a little boy,"[23] and after noticing her "organic inferiority,"[24] she developed penis envy and feelings of self-contempt for belonging to "a sex, which is lesser in so important an aspect."[23] Freud talked of the "inferiority of the clitoris"[25] as compared to the penis as a matter of fact. His scheme of female psychosexual development included the girl's repudiation of her lack of penis, anger at the mother for not giving her one, fixating on the clitoris, and developing a "masculinity complex,"[23] reluctantly making an emotional shift from the clitoris to the vagina, and changing the object of her affection from mother to father in the hope of obtaining a penis (or its substitute, a baby) from him. Not subject to castration threat, like boys, girls held on to her Oedipal strivings much longer. All this let them to remain sentimental, lack moral strength and independence, and grow up as individuals with a "lesser sense of justice."[25] If this were not enough, Freud declared that lacking sublimation, women had made few significant contributions to the mankind, with the exception of braid-making (as a penis substitute) and domestication of fire (owing to the prehistoric woman's inability to sit down upon it, urinate, and put it off).

Horney questioned the implicit psychoanalytic view of girls as defective boys and women as frustrated men. According to her, these views had evolved, because the theory was the product of a male mind operating in a male-dominated culture. Horney insisted that females have patterns of psychic development, which are inherently different from males. Drawing upon Horney's 1967 collection of papers on female psychology,[22] Kellman's outstanding survey of her contributions to this realm,[26] and my own careful reading of Horney's work, it seems justifiable to categorize her refinements of psychoanalytic theory vis-à-vis females in the following six areas:

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1. *Penis envy:* Horney did not as much refute Freud's concept of penis envy as she questioned its bedrock nature and its purely anatomical explanation. She suggested the penis envy was not ubiquitous and occurred as a metaphorical search for power and admiration only in a male-dominated society. Moreover, the theoretical preoccupation with penis envy detracted from the parallel concept of "womb envy," whereby a male child felt in awe of the mother's capacity to single-handedly bring forth babies in this world (since he knew little about the father's role in procreation). Horney argued that men's pull toward creative work could be seen as a compensation for their small role in making a baby. She concluded that envy was not restricted to girls; children of both sexes envied each other.
2. *The status of the vagina:* Freud[25] proposed that the little girl's focus is upon the clitoris, and her discovery of the vagina is a willy-nilly later developmental step. Horney disagreed. She asserted that the awareness of the vagina, sensations in it, and exploration of it by inserting fingers was evident in little girls from the very beginning. The significance of these observations was to free female psychosexual development from its linkage to a penis-less state and to accord it an independent psychological line of growth and maturation.
3. *Girls wish for a baby:* Contrary to Freud, who had attributed the girl's wish for a baby to her insistent quest for a penis, Horney saw the desire to be primary and hardwired in the female psyche. It reflected a joyous celebration of her body's capacities and a positive identification with a generative mother.
4. *Feminine masochism:* Freud[27] had divided masochism into three types: "primary" (which was the somatic substrate of the death instinct blended with the libido of the life instinct), "erotic" (which was the source of sexually arousing fantasies of being bound, beaten, and humiliated), and "moral" (which emanated from the unconscious guilt and led to chronic self-punishment). Curiously, he used the expression "erotic masochism" interchangeably with "feminine masochism" (even though the two cases from which this idea was derived were both males!). In fact, Freud went on to declare that women possessed an inherently passive and masochistic attitude in both sexuality and in day-to-day life. Horney questioned such generalization and also Freud's conflation of the pathological and normal phenomena. Besides, she felt that social anthropology could shed better light than human anatomy upon the roots of such tendencies in women. A culture's prevalent beliefs, upheld role models, and inherited traditions regarding women were far more responsible for their low self-esteem, submissive attitude, and vulnerability to exploitation and abuse; the latter was mistakenly taken to be their inherent masochism in a patriarchal sleight-of-hand by the medical profession and the public at large.

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5. *Women's appearing frightening to men:* Horney stated that that men hide their secret (and, sometimes, not so secret) dread of women by either overidealizing them or by "conquering" and dominating them. Underneath such defensive measures, men remain afraid of women. Horney[22] stated that a woman appears frightening to men "because she holds the secret of life and death; is particularly dangerous when she is menstruating; to deflorate her is most dreadful; and to penetrate her is to chance being castrated."
6. *Women's (apparent) disinterest in sexual intercourse:* Early psychoanalysis attributed women's seeming lack of enthusiasm about penetrative sex to the act being a reminder of her lacking a penis or to the guilt she harbors for wanting her father's penis. Horney considered such speculation to be strangely divorced from the Victorian puritanism in the cradle of which psychoanalysis was born and which looked down upon robustly sexual women. In her view, if a woman displayed disinterest or aversion to sex, it was owing to her internalization and unconscious compliance with the handed-down, erotically disparaging cultural norms.

Putting all these observations together, it is clear that Horney challenged the prudishness of psychoanalysis toward female sexuality and voiced a far more enlightened and libertarian view of women. The fact is that her views profoundly affected later developments in psychoanalysis. Blum,[28] in summarizing these changes, states that "the female super ego is now not regarded as weaker or deficient, and sex differences in the structure and function are not given value judgments. Libido is not masculine, neither are passivity and masochism regarded as essentially feminine traits. Penis envy is no longer considered the bedrock of a woman's disappointment and necessary pronunciation but has been subject to major reinterpretation. Neither masochism not envy is confined to women and are no more necessarily related to the absence of a penis." Instead of a weakness of conscience, one now speaks of a greater relational anchor in moral judgments of women.[29,30] Instead of a femininity that is reluctantly arrived at, there is a celebration of "primary femininity";[31,32] this implies that the girl develops an ego-syntonic (and not an ego-dystonic) mental representation of her genitals from a very early age. Her wish for a baby is no longer reductionistically traced to Oedipal fantasies; it is seen as psychically hardwired and multidetermined. That Karen Horney was the progenitor of these modern ideas goes without saying.

CURRENT STATUS

Horney is well recognized today as one of the earliest and most important "rebels" against Freud's phallocentric and biologically anchored theory of personality development. In the footsteps of Alfred Adler,[16] who had questioned Freud's exclusive focus on sexuality in the origins of neuroses but going many steps farther than him, Horney broadened the reach of

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psychoanalytic theory to include a vast swath of cultural variables in its developmental schemata, pathogenesis, and therapeutic technique. She downplayed the role of "instincts" and posited that both childhood and adult life anxieties emanate from real and imaginary threats from the interpersonal surround and the culture at large. Seeking approval, love, self-respect, and power are more important determinants of mental health or pathology than the somatic pleasures of the mouth, anus, or genitals. Horney also freed female psychosexual development from the phallocentric shackles of early psychoanalytic theory.

In all these respects, her work enriched that of many other post-Freudian psychoanalysts. The shadow of her description of the need for self-assertion can be discerned in Erikson's[33] ideas on identity. Her concept of "real self" antedated Winnicott's[8] proposal of "true self." Her interest in self-expression, assertiveness, and power has echoes in the self-psychological writings of Kohut.[9] And, according to Paris,[3] "Alice Miller's discussion of the loss and search of the true self in childhood often sounds like Karen Horney, as does R.D. Laing's account of ontological insecurity (which is comparable to her "basic anxiety") and the development of a false system in response to it."

Despite such pervasive influence, Horney's name has lost some of its original luster, and she has become more of a relic. This is because what she had so boldly proposed in the 1920s and 1930s (and what was widely celebrated in the 1960s) has now become all too accepted and commonplace in psychoanalytic theory and practice. One exceptional area in which her name is still taken with great admiration and respect, however, is in female psychology. Knighted as one of the "Mothers of Psychoanalysis,"[2] Horney figures prominently in the pantheon of the feminist critique of psychoanalysis. Her work has gone a long way in rescuing women from the caricatured and devalued portrayal in psychoanalysis, and the impact of her corrective assertions reverberates centripetally to general psychiatry as well, where terms such as "hysterical" and "female masochism" have been relegated to the dustbin of history. The Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis that Horney had founded in 1941 and the American Institute of Psychoanalysis, which emerged some years later in New York, continue to flourish even now. The association's flagship journal, The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, has continued publication over the last 80 years, and under the current editorship of the New York-based Hungarian emigre psychoanalyst, Giselle Galdi, is considered one of the topmost avenues of expression in the field.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Karen Horney was an early psychoanalyst of German origin who migrated to the United States in the early 1930s. She published many important works and, alongside Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson, and Eric Fromm, came

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to represent the Neo-Freudian school of psychoanalysis. The main thrust of her contributions was to replace Freud's biological orientation with the role of cultural forces in personality development and in the causation of psychopathology. She questioned Freud's biased and negative portrayal of female psychology and established a line of female psychic development independent of its male counterpart. With regard to psychotherapeutic technique, Horney recognized that addressing childhood conflicts was essential but placed greater importance upon the anxieties experienced by patients in their current lives, especially the tensions derived from their trying to (or failing to) live up to the normative expectations of their culture. For her, "there and then" paled in comparison to "here and now." In other words, the reconstruction of childhood trauma was less significant than the elucidation of current interpersonal anxieties. Horney's perspective was culturally anchored, gender-attuned, and open to both the old and new, the well-established, and yet to be discovered.

While covering a wide-ranging terrain of Horney's biography, theoretical innovations, and professional disputes, this discourse seems incomplete and peculiarly unsatisfying without shedding further light on two major milestones in her life. These nodal points involved her becoming a culturally focused theorist and her radical break from mainstream psychoanalysis in the last decade of her life. Following Horney's own lead, we can see that environmental factors played a significant role in both these developments.

Having been raised by two immigrant parents from two different countries in a seaport community of a third country most likely had sensitized young Karen to the importance of culture in day-to-day life. The facts that (1) her parents differed sharply in their degree of religiosity, (2) she undertook many long journeys with her seafaring father, (3) she was discouraged by him in becoming a physician, because she was a girl, (4) she married a man with a different ethnic background than both her parents, (5) she divorced when it was uncommon to do so, and (6) she migrated from Germany to the United States—all contributed to her astute cultural sense, affirming, in a circular fashion, her assertion that culture (far more than biology) is responsible for the vicissitudes of one's life.

Horney's disengagement from mainstream psychoanalysis also seems culturally determined. Surrounded by married, Jewish, Freud-worshiping, American and East European emigre male psychoanalysts, Horney, a divorced, Freud-refuting, Christian woman of Scandinavian ancestry, could hardly sustain her welcome. She had to leave. Culture, the cornerstone of her life's work, did not prove to be her ally in this decisive turn of events. Paradoxically, though, this proved the very point she had been forcefully making via her theoretical contributions: culture matters!

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