IN MEMORIAM

KAREN HORNEY, M.D.

1885-1952

KAREN HORNEY, Dean and one of the founders of the American Institute for Psychoanalysis, died in New York on December 4, 1952, at the age of sixty-seven. She was born in Hamburg, Germany, on September 16, 1885, the daughter of a Norwegian sea captain and a German mother. As a child she made sea voyages with her father. Her unflagging interest in life brought her in her sixty-seven years to many lands—Mexico, Central and South America, the countries of Europe, the islands of the Pacific and Japan.

In 1909 she married Oscar Horney, a Berlin lawyer, from whom she was divorced in 1937. Three daughters, Miss Brigitte Horney of New York, Dr. Marianne von Eckhardt of Bethesda, Maryland, and Mrs. Renate Crevenna of Mexico, survive her. She studied at the University of Berlin and received her medical degree in 1913. From 1914 to 1918 she studied psychiatry at Berlin-Lankwitz, Germany, and from 1918 to 1932 she taught at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. She participated in many international congresses, among them the historic discussion of lay analysis, chaired by Sigmund Freud.

Dr. Horney came to the United States in 1932 at the invitation of Franz Alexander, and for two years was Associate Director of the Psychoanalytic Institute, Chicago. In 1934 she came to New York where she began the most creative and productive period of her life. She was a member of the teaching staff of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute until 1941, when she became one of the founders of the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis and the American Institute for Psychoanalysis. She was

Dean of the latter until her death. In addition to her active program as teacher and therapist, she was Editor of the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*; a Lecturer at the New School for Social Research, New York; a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and a frequent contributor to the scientific sessions of that Association, and Honorary President of the Karen Horney Foundation to sponsor low-cost psychoanalytic service to the community.

Dr. Horney's creative interest in her chosen field was evident, not only through her assumption of teaching responsibilities, but through her original and extensive contributions to the literature. In the period prior to her coming to the United States she published the following articles: "On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women" (1924), "The Flight from Womanhood" (1926), "The Dread of Women" (1932), and "The Denial of the Vagina" (1933)—all in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. In the *Zeitschrift für Psychoanalytische Paedagogik*, 1931, she published "*Die praemenstruellen Verstimmungen*." In this country her first article, still dealing with the emotional problems of women, was "Psychogenic Factors in Functional Female Disorders" in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* in 1933. "The Overvaluation of Love—A Study of a Common Present-Day Feminine Type" (1934) and "The Problem of the Negative Therapeutic Reaction" (1936) appeared in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. She contributed "Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Analytic Method" to the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* in 1935, and "The Problem of Female Masochism" to

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the Psychoanalytic Review in the same year. In addition, she published "Culture and Neurosis" in the American Sociological Review of 1936.

This is only a partial list of the work of Karen Horney until 1936. They show a keen clinical and theoretical interest and the epitome of scientific curiosity. Starting with the Freudian concepts through which she had been trained, she attempted to apply herself to the emotional problems of women. Her search was relentless and arose from the eager wish to help her patients. As was natural, her interest in these questions led her to an examination of the influence of culture and a reexamination of the mechanistic and genetic roots of the orthodox theories.

In Dr. Horney's own words, which appear in the Introduction to *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1939), are one of the clues to the remarkable productivity of the last fifteen years of her life. "The greater freedom from dogmatic beliefs which I found in this country," she wrote, "alleviated the obligation of taking psychoanalytical theories for granted, and gave me the courage to proceed along lines which I considered right." This, coupled with the questing spirit which was Karen Horney's, was responsible for the publication of five books of her own authorship; one which she edited and contributed to, and numerous articles appearing in the American Journal of Psychoanalysis.

These books epitomize the healthy scientific advances which psychoanalysis has made in the past two decades. In her first book, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (W. W. Norton, New York, 1937), she acknowledges her stand on the fundamental discovery of Freud—the recognition of unconscious forces. She believed, however, that "deference for Freud's gigantic achievements should show itself in building on the foundations that he has laid, and that in this way we can help to fulfill the possibilities which psychoanalysis has for the future, as a theory as well as a therapy." In this book she develops further the deeper understanding of cultural influences on the

neurotic process which began with her earlier work on problems of female psychology. Out of these new emphases, Karen Horney proceeded to follow with strict scientific honesty their implications in her treatment of patients and her teaching. From this came her more systematic critique of Freudian theory in *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1939) and a further development of the affirmative theory which was begun in her first book. It must be emphasized that this was not the critique of a novice, but of a person who had practiced and taught for fifteen years on the basis of Freudian theory, and a person whose inquiring mind was coupled with a keen clinical sense and a deep desire to help her patients. She saw that the instinctivistic orientation was mechanistic and could not explain what was essentially a dynamic process—human life and neurosis. She recognized that while sexual difficulties were often obvious in the clinical picture they could not be considered the dynamic center of the neurosis. "Sexual difficulties are the effect rather than the cause of the neurotic character structure." In this book, Dr. Horney made a most significant criticism of the orthodox notion of the repetition compulsion, and in so doing indicated the direction her own theory and method was tending. And in this, one finds the roots of her realization that psychoanalysis must be seen in terms of the whole person, the analyst and the patient working together, rather than the analyst as a tabula rasa on which is writ the unconscious fantasies of the patient, repeated from unresolved infantile problems. She saw the current character structure as a consequence of development rather than of repetition, and this implied for therapy no need to "unearth" childhood experiences in detail. There was no question that experiences of childhood played a great part in the development of neurosis, but the therapeutic dynamic was seen to involve the current analytic situation, the patient's current character structure with its constructive and its obstructive forces. A truly new way was beginning to develop which placed the self—of the patient and the analyst—in the

center of the therapeutic process, and in the center of the essential problem of neurosis.

Self-Analysis (W. W. Norton, New York, 1942) presented further delineation of the neurotic character trends and their dynamic interrelationship. Here, Dr. Horney demonstrates too her deep realization that psychoanalysis is a helping discipline, not merely a theoretical system, by exploring other possibilities for constructive help available to a person. In all humility she affirms her belief that psychoanalysis is only one way a person may use to help himself, and that life itself may provide therapeutic aids. In this book she endeavored to define for the searching person ways in which he may become better able to guide his own development.

Our Inner Conflicts (W. W. Norton, New York, 1945) finally brought together in a systematic form the directions which appeared in her earlier books. No more truthful evaluation of Karen Horney could be written than that implied in her preface to this book. "It has grown out of my experience in analytical work with my patients and myself." She saw that every neurosis, no matter what the symptomatic picture, was a character neurosis. This, she knew was not a discovery, but a rediscovery. She honestly saw that Freud's pioneering work increasingly converged on this concept, and that others too were moving in this same direction. Her original contribution to the understanding of the neurotic structure was the recognition of the crucial importance of contradictory neurotic trends and the attempts at solution of inner conflict.

The next step was taken in her last book, *Neurosis and Human Growth, The Struggle toward Self-Realization*, (W. W. Norton, New York, 1950). Here, her affirmative belief that man wants to grow and is a purposing organism that can realize himself reaches its fullest expression. She explored the essential meaning of neurosis as a development which takes a man away from himself, which alienates him from his being and from others, which substitutes the quest for glory and the actualizing of an

idealized version of himself for his Self. But this was no mere speculative presentation. Like Karen Horney herself, it presented in early detail the constructive forces and the bright possibilities of the Self, and the neurotic obstructive forces which man creates for his own undoing.

But this survey of the published works of Karen Horney, a monument to herself and psychoanalysis though it may be, hardly does justice to the person. Her interests were broad and deep, coming as they did from her own depths. She grew as the oak from the acorn, an acorn not always on friendly soil. But she had her own inner compass which, reflection shows, kept her on a steady course. Her work and growth came through struggle. Hence, she could find in suffering and even in destructiveness the possibility for creation. She knew from her own heart and from her work with patients humility, compassion, love, the possibility for creativity in each person and in human relations. Her teaching, like herself, made no pretension to final answers. This is nowhere better expressed than in the paragraph introducing the course, "Psychoanalytic Technique," she gave at the American Institute for Psychoanalysis until shortly before her death. "These lectures do not intend to teach psychoanalytic technique, but rather to present and discuss viewpoints which may help those who so desire to develop their own ways of conducting an analysis."

Karen Horney loved life because she did not merely exist. A joy in living was one with her more serious questing and scientific spirit. Her searching took her on an extensive and intensive journey: Freud, Kierkegaard, John MacMurray, Balzac, Stendhal, William James, Suzuki, Lincoln, Sandburg, and her many professional co-workers were some of her companions. Many countries of the world and New York's own Central Park offered her their treasures. A native of another land, she came to be all that America means—democracy, hope, optimism, life affirming. This was her purpose, this was her life, and this is the meaning of her contribution to psychoanalysis.

—NORMAN KELMAN, M.D.