Henry A. Murray's Early Career: A Psychobiographical Exploration

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ABSTRACT This paper is a psychobiographical study of Henry A. Murray's early career. A formulation of his personality is developed, emphasizing his inner depressive tendencies, his sense of specialness, and his characteristic concerns in relationships. His decision to become a psychologist, his initial reaction to academic psychology, and his years of involvement with psychoanalysis are considered in the light of his personality. The final section contains an examination of the ways in which Murray's personality and his experiences during his early career shaped Explorations in Personality, his most influential work.

Henry A. Murray's reputation as one of the most creative and influential personality theorists rests primarily on Explorations in Personality (1938). 1988 marks the 50th anniversary of its publication. This article is an exploration of his personality as it manifested itself in the years leading up to the completion of his major psychological study. The purpose of the paper is to trace the main developments in Murray's early career, to examine the interaction between these developments and his personality, and to consider how his early professional experiences and his personality helped to shape Explorations in Personality.

The paper is organized into five sections. The first section looks at the origin of some of the main components of Murray's personality and attempts to discover the enduring, underlying pattern to his personality. The second section deals with the beginning of his interest in psychology and tries to explain why he abandoned a promising career in biochemical research to start again, at the age of 34, in a new field. The third section...

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examines his reaction to academic psychology and looks at how an understanding of his personality might help explain his immediate, intense disdain for academic psychology. As Murray became estranged from his fellow psychologists, he became deeply involved with psychoanalysis. The fourth section explores, in detail, Murray’s psychoanalytic years. His reaction to the psychoanalysts, his own experience of being in psychoanalysis and doing psychotherapy, and his evolving assessment of psychoanalytic theory are all considered. The fifth and final section examines *Explorations in Personality* and the part that his early career and his personality played in the creation of that work.

Psychobiography raises numerous complicated methodological issues (Anderson, 1981a, 1982b), not the least of which is the problem of interpreting an individual’s life “from a distance.” A methodological advantage of this article stems from my personal relationship with the subject. I have had a friendship with Henry Murray for the past 15 years, and I have interviewed him at length about his early career and about crucial aspects of the development of his personality. In this article I make ample use of the material derived from these interviews as well as that drawn from his unusually candid and insightful autobiographical writings.

**An Exploration of Murray’s Personality**

**The Development of His Personality**

Anyone who has met Murray even once knows how spirited and playful he is. Even in his 90s he seems constantly overflowing with ideas and enthusiasm.

There was one time, however, when I saw him in a radically different mood. It was in early 1979. Recovering from a series of strokes, he told me that day after day he had been going through “the tears.” He was constantly on the verge of crying. He said his mood had been dominated by “grief” and depressing memories kept coming to mind. He also had found himself dwelling on other, positive memories in what he saw as an attempt to protect himself against the overwhelming sadness (personal communication, 15 January 1979).

In an autobiographical article, Murray (1967, p. 299) explored his “marrow of misery and melancholy,” in other words, depressed feelings so deep and central to him that they seemed as if they could be in his bones. The mood that I encountered in 1979—he later told me—was an expression of those inner feelings. According to Murray’s reconstruction
of the events, he early came to a realization that his mother was preoc-
cupied with his older sister and his younger brother in preference to him,
"he could count on only a limited, third-best portion of his mother's
love" He thinks that he tried at first to protest He remembers saying,
with tears, "You make my feelings hurt me" But his efforts to get a re-
response from his mother "led only to frustration and shame" As a result,
"he proudly withdrew into a private, maternal-like claustroph of his
own making, where, bathed in narcissistic self-pity for a while, he could
lick his wounds until nature healed them." The "special bond of mutual
affinity" that often exists between mother and child was "forever sev-
ered," and Murray and his mother "were now dead to each other"

Murray has an early memory that he understands in the light of
these developments At about the age of 4 he saw a picture in a chil-
dren's book of a queen and her son, both looking sad The picture sug-
gested to Murray something about "death and separation" "It has to
do with a core of grief that I became aware of A sort of sudden aware-
ness of what a large part of life was related to grief, and this grief was
related to someone's death" (personal communication, 11 April
1981). His reaction to the picture—much like a subject's reaction to
a TAT card—reflected his inner feelings, in this case a belief that he
and his mother were dead to each other and the profound sadness as-
associated with that realization

He developed a way of coping with his plight organized around a pre-
cocious independence He told himself, "I can get along without you",
repressed "the residues of suffering"; and formed a tendency to displace
the "pity from the self to some sufferer in his environment" At first this
sufferer was none other than his mother, and he remembers feeling re-
ponsible for her feelings During his psychoanalysis he had the follow-
ing dream which, incidentally, his analyst, Franz Alexander, did not in-
terpret. "I was comforting my mother in my arms as if she were a baby,
while she was vomiting over my left shoulder." The dream reflected the
reversal of roles in which Murray felt he had to take care of his mother
(Murray, 1967, pp 299-300)

He formed a pattern, based on his childhood experiences, that re-
mained central to his personality throughout his life. Murray (1967,
p 300) outlined several of the components of this pattern. First, he re-
tained this "marrow of misery and melancholy," but it was "repressed by
pride and practically extinguished in everyday life by a counteracting dis-
position of sanguine and expansive buoyancy" In other words, his ebul-
lient, outgoing personality—which was probably based in part on a high energy level—served to protect him from his depressive feelings. These feelings, nonetheless, lived on inside him, and they continued to have a deep impact on his experience. Second, he felt, as he put it, “a hypersensitivity to the sufferings of other individuals, especially women, which inclined me towards medicine and psychotherapy with the sanguine confidence that I could restore their health and joy.” Third, he developed, “coming out of pride, denial, and repression, the conviction that I could get along well enough with a minimum of aid, support, appreciation, recognition, or consolation from others.” He further explained, “Anyway, I could never depend on it and should never seek it, in solitude and privacy I could be happily independent of all that.” One has only to pay careful attention to Murray’s choice of words to decipher the emotions that were a part of this pattern. His traumatically disappointing experience with his mother left him with weariness and trepidation about intimate relationships. And if his self-reliance were based on “pride, denial, and repression,” he could hardly have been “happily independent.”

As a child Murray probably would have seemed well-adjusted except for one unmistakable symptom, stuttering. Since he was forbidden from expressing his feelings—such as anger toward his mother and his discomfort with his forced independence—these feelings came out in the form of his stuttering.

The question that occurs at this point is why Murray did not turn more toward his relationship with his father. Often a child who has had a disruption in his experience with his mother develops a compensatory closeness with his father. The possibility of Murray doing this seems especially plausible when we consider that he consistently described his father as “a hell of a nice fellow” (Hall, 1968, p. 59).

In my talks with Murray I sensed that somehow his father’s jolliness was not the whole story. Murray said to me his father was “kindly all the time, towards his wife and his children and everyone” (personal communication, 11 November 1982). He saw him as “a very nice guy.” He elaborated: “He wasn’t competitive. He didn’t have extravagant ambitions. He married the daughter of his boss and was given a job in the bank which didn’t call for much originality or zest” (personal communication, 8 June 1981). As Murray was talking, I recalled the passage in which he wrote about his father having “a life of moderate, solid, predictable satisfactions.” Murray had also commented that the secret of his father’s
happiness "lay in the willingness of this man (who was no great shakes as a businessman and banker) to renounce in good faith unrealizable ambitions" (Murray, 1967, p 296) It occurred to me that Murray did not respect his father's way of life and did not share his values Murray conceded that he was the opposite of his father and felt it "much better to do one thing very well than a lot of things moderately well" (personal communication, 8 June 1981)

My impression was that Murray's father was dismissed in the family, that he was viewed as being nice but rather ineffectual and insignificant He could not have served as a replacement for Murray's mother Once Murray commented on how much more central his mother was for him She was "more resented" but also "more often the focus of attention, affection, and concern than my father was" (Murray, 1967, p 297)

It also seemed that Murray's disappointment with his father was a feeling lurking just beneath the surface of his descriptions In one interview I said that a boy often wants to be able to look up to his father and model himself after him and that he had missed that experience His association was to a scene in Tom Sawyer in which the boys all boast about their fathers "Maybe when my friends might boast of their father I would wish I had a father I could boast about, but I can't remember those things," he said During his years in school and college, as he was developing wide interests, Murray noted, "I didn't give my father the respect that he would have gotten if he had excelled in these various areas and activities" Murray recalled one "characteristic" incident when his father, his brother, who was then a medical student, and he sat together after dinner, and he and his brother talked about physiology. Afterwards the three of them joined the rest of the family, and his father said, "I was there for an hour, and I didn't understand a single word" (personal communication, 8 June 1981)

A constant theme throughout Murray's childhood was his search for someone he could idealize The explorer Nansen became his "first grand hero" when he was less than 4 years old He then adopted a number of other heroes, such as pioneers, explorers, and mountain climbers (Murray, 1967, p. 300) During his childhood he felt a need to idealize a person he actually knew but "couldn't find anybody" In medical school he finally found someone, the physician George Draper, but "it didn't go very far." "I'd admire someone for a while, and then it would fade, and it would be someone else These were all tentative things" (personal communication, 6 June 1981).
Murray also found that he was not comfortable when just one of a group but felt "healthier and better off" when functioning as a leader, and he described this tendency to me as one of the "manifestations of narcissism" (personal communication, 11 November 1982)

A Formulation of Murray's Personality

At this point I shall try to draw together the various components of Murray's personality discussed thus far into a formulation. The assumption behind such a formulation is that an individual develops a pattern to cope with the vicissitudes of childhood. The pattern continues to organize his experience in later years. In some ways such a pattern helps a person cope with what he encounters as an adult, in other ways it proves to have disadvantages.

The starting point in understanding Murray's personality has to be his sense of specialness, his need to see himself as extraordinary, as someone who would accomplish great things. Several different aspects of his experience combined to reinforce the importance of this disposition.

First, he retreated from close relationships because he found them so frustrating and painful. He found he had to rely, from a very early age, on himself. Second, he had what can only be seen as a number of innate strengths—a high energy level, a superb memory, a quick intelligence, and an unusual verbal facility. Even in childhood he sensed these qualities in himself and built a conception of his specialness around them.

Third, he had to avoid his father's debased role in the family, and the way to do this was to be the ambitious achiever that his father was not. Also, to protect his sense of specialness, he often could quickly perceive weaknesses in others and assert his superiority.

While he would have gotten a great deal from his sense of specialness, and it would help fuel his later accomplishments, there were also certain problems inherent in the pattern Murray formed. First, his need for closeness would not go away just because he had chosen an independent stance; everyone needs human intimacy and support. He had to find ways to get some closeness while still protecting himself from the danger of re-experiencing the pain he had found in his relationship with his mother. Second, he retained a need for idealizing other men, for looking up to men and modeling himself after them. But he could not sustain the belief that someone else was outstanding because it contradicted his own sense of specialness. Third, his "marrow of misery and melancholy" would
not simply disappear and, if repressed, would threaten to leave him feeling empty and lifeless because he would be out of touch with the feelings that were most deeply rooted within him.

In summary, the following are some of the most basic components of Murray's personality: (a) a sense of specialness, (b) a recognition of his intellectual gifts, (c) a powerful need for achievement, (d) a forced independence, (e) a desire for intimacy, especially with women, combined with a wariness about closeness, (f) a tendency to focus on his superiority over some men, (g) a need to idealize certain other men, combined with a tendency to become disillusioned with them, and (h) an inner depressive core—he had conflicting needs to defend against this depressiveness and to allow it a place in his life.

**Becoming a Psychologist**

**Murray’s Path to the Harvard Psychological Clinic**

In his characteristically playful fashion, Murray (1967, pp. 286–287) observed that an actuarial psychologist would have said the possibility of his becoming an academic psychologist was “virtually nil.” He noted that the record of his early life “consisted of nothing but items which correlated negatively, to a highly significant degree, with the records of the vast majority of professional psychologists.” Murray was making fun of correlational research by pointing out how inadequate it can be when applied to the individual case. But still, the question he raises needs to be answered: Why did he become a psychologist despite being from a background which would not seem to have disposed him to choose that vocation?

Among the items Murray noted as being unusual for a psychologist was his socioeconomic and class background. His family was wealthy and socially prominent. When he was born in 1893, his family was living in New York City in a brownstone where Rockefeller Center is now located. He graduated from one of the most exclusive eastern boarding schools, Groton, and then entered Harvard in 1911.

One incident he described to me captures the lack of psychological mindedness that was characteristic of his family and of his social class. He was visiting with his mother one time in 1934, shortly after his father died and while he was in the midst of developing the TAT. His mother seemed numb and was not expressing any feelings about her loss. Mur-
ray gave her some of the TAT cards without thinking through what her reaction might be. The stories she told, he recalled, were "almost as gross as this 'This woman has lost her husband,' and then she told how she felt." "My mother wasn't dumb," he added, "and I would have thought, 'She's teasing me,' but that's the last thing she'd have done." He learned much more about her feelings than he had up to that time and felt "almost guilty" for eliciting this information with the TAT (personal communication, 31 July 1980). The story illustrates his mother's disconnection from her feelings and her naivety about psychological processes.

Murray's first formal exposure to psychology came while he was an undergraduate and attended a course taught by the German-trained experimental psychologist, Hugo Munsterberg. "A bud of interest in psychology," Murray (1940b) later wrote, "was nipped by the chill of Professor Munsterberg's approach" (p. 152). He quickly withdrew from the course and never again attended a psychology course, as he later joked, until he taught one himself. What dismayed him in that first lecture was Munsterberg's denying that psychology "had anything to do with people" (personal communication, 5 June 1981).

His first exposure to psychoanalysis was no more promising. Murray heard some students talking about Sigmund Freud and wrote to Joseph W. Courtney, a neurologist on the faculty of the medical school, for his opinion. Murray looked up to Courtney, the father of a classmate, and often solicited his advice. In his reply, the neurologist compared Freud's ideas to vomit (personal communication, 21 August 1983). "I regard them," Courtney concluded, in an attempt at what he must have considered Freudian humor, "as the greatest psychologic phal- lusy of the age" (Murray, 1940b, p. 152).

After graduating from Harvard in 1915, Murray started down a path that would have led to a successful career as a biochemical researcher. He received his M.D. from Columbia University, completed an internship in surgery, conducted research on chicken embryos at the Rockefeller Institute, and, eventually in 1927, received a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Cambridge University. He published 21 articles in leading journals in the fields of medicine and biochemistry. But during the latter part of this period he was already undergoing the personal crisis that generated his decision to switch to psychology.

Beginning in 1923, Murray (1967, pp. 290, 293) underwent a "profound affectional upheaval." He suddenly and unexpectedly found himself "in a blaze, a blaze which would go on for three years and eventually
pressure him to embrace psychiatry and psychology.” He became convinced (as William James had claimed) that the cauldron of experience is “the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character.”

Influences from the realm of art played a part in introducing him to a whole world of which he had previously been ignorant, these influences included the works of Nietzsche, Dostoevski, Beethoven, and O’Neill. Melville’s *Moby Dick* had a profound impact on him, and to this day it has remained one of his central interests.

In 1923, with his curiosity about the inner world starting to develop, Murray was ready to respond to depth psychology. At just that time Carl G. Jung’s *Psychological Types* first appeared in the United States in English translation. “I found this book at the medical school bookstore on the way home one night,” Murray recalled, “and I read it all night long and all the next day” (personal communication, 26 May 1986). Jung’s book, he later wrote, “started me off in earnest toward psychology” (Murray, 1940b, p. 153). Murray also commented, somewhat mysteriously, that the other influences during this period included “a woman.”

When Robert W. White, one of Murray’s closest friends and collaborators over the years, read an earlier version of this paper, he told me that something indispensable was missing from my account of Murray’s early career, namely, an examination of Murray’s relationship with the “woman,” Christiana Drummond Morgan. I reported to Murray what White had said, and Murray spoke to me candidly about his relationship with Morgan (personal communication, 26 May 1986).

Just 2 or 3 weeks after reading *Psychological Types*, he met Morgan for the first time. Morgan not only had just the sort of passionate involvement with the inner world that Murray himself was in the process of forming, but she also had an intimate acquaintance with Jung’s perspective.

Murray developed a serious conflict. He was fond of his wife, the former Josephine L. Rantoul, whom he had married in 1916, and they had a daughter, who had been born in 1921. But he also fell in love with Christiana Morgan. Murray was at a loss as to how he would resolve this conflict.

In 1925, at Morgan’s urging, Murray traveled to Zurich to meet Jung. “This first encounter with an analytical psychiatrist of the new order,” Murray (1967) later wrote, “provided [me] with an exemplar of genius that settled the question of [my] identity to come” (p. 291). He intended to discuss theory with Jung but ended up delving into his innermost con-
cerns Murray (1940b) saw Jung as "the first full-blooded, spherical—and Goethean—intelligence" he had ever met. "We talked for hours, sailing down the lake and smoking before the hearth of his Faustian retreat. Within a month a score of bihorned problems were resolved, and I went off decided on depth psychology" (p. 153)

White pointed out to me that there was one particular bihorned problem that Murray resolved in his meeting with Jung, the dilemma of his involvement with both his wife and Morgan. Jung himself was married and also in love with another woman. Jung had arranged to have the other woman, Toni Wolff, live in a house nearby, and he openly continued his relationships with both women. According to White, Murray solved his own dilemma by adopting Jung's solution.

When I asked Murray (personal communication, 26 May 1986), he confirmed what White had told me. Jung described his own arrangement with his wife and Toni Wolff in the first hour of their meeting. Murray found Jung to be "very natural and very friendly", Jung shared personal concerns and was anything but formal and standoffish. During the course of their talks, Murray pondered the possibility of establishing an arrangement like Jung's. "Jung would say, 'It's up to you,'" Murray recalled. "'It's dangerous. You probably won't succeed.' He put all the things against it, so it would be something pretty strong in me to go through his negative warnings," Murray noted. "Jung said, 'You can't do it, it's too difficult. You've no idea what problems you're going to run into now. You're going to get people who resist you.'" "Most people won't do something unless they get a lot of encouragement to do it," Murray went on. "Oh well, he just persuaded me it was the right thing to do." But what had the most impact on Murray was that "Jung was an example." "He told me about himself and his problem," Murray said. "He came from three generations of ministers, and Zurich was one of the tightest, most moralistic towns in the world. His wife came from a very respectable family. He had plenty of difficulties." And yet Jung had managed to sustain his relationships with both his wife and another woman.

After his visit to Zurich, Murray began to read the literature of depth psychology tirelessly, especially the works of Freud, Jung, Stekel, Rank, and Adler (Murray, 1940b, p. 154). He felt that they spoke to his new interests.

In 1927 Morton Prince wished to hire someone as his assistant in establishing the Harvard Psychological Clinic, the person would also receive a faculty appointment as a psychologist. Murray saw the opportu-
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nity to shift fields from biochemistry to psychology and applied. But he thought it unlikely he would receive the appointment, he had had no formal education in psychology whatsoever. And, furthermore, one of his duties would be lecturing, yet he still suffered from stuttering. According to his recollection, his friend, a physiology professor named L. J. Henderson, was able to engineer his appointment while he was abroad at Cambridge University completing his doctoral research. Henderson argued (as Murray later paraphrased him), "Here's this brilliant chemist in England. You want a scientist, don't you?" Murray jokes that since he was out of the country he did not reveal that he was "entirely inadequate" for the job (personal communication, 18 August 1976)

**Why Did Murray Choose Psychology as His Vocation?**

The question now is how we might understand Murray's decision to become a psychologist in the light of the formulation of his personality presented earlier.

Murray (1967) has observed that, before his interest in psychology, "an assemblage of emotional potentialities had been denied adequate participation" in his work (p. 291). He was referring, in particular, to his "marrow of misery and melancholy." It was just this part of his personality that had "a profound attraction for tragic themes in literature" and "an affinity for the darker, blinder strata of feeling" (p. 300). His work in medicine and biochemistry came to seem increasingly rote and lifeless because it did not make a connection with the deeper wellsprings of his personality. As he gained a greater intimacy with his own inner life, he found himself dissatisfied with the minimal possibility of contact with the inner life of others that his work allowed. "Throughout [my] hospital activities, [my] emotions had been engaged in empathizing with the somatic discomforts and anxieties of each patient . . ., but these involvements were necessarily brief and superficial," Murray wrote, "and when it came to chicken embryos, lovely as they were, the opportunities for empathy were critically curtailed" (p. 290).

His "profound affectional upheaval" in the mid-1920s included not only his newly found acquaintance with the inner world but also his painful dilemma about his relationships with his wife and Morgan. As I have reconstructed it, his desire to avoid the frustrating, wounding disappointments he had experienced with his mother was central in his choice of
his wife She was friendly, positive, and matter-of-fact "She loved people, and they loved her," Murray recalled (personal communication, 26 May 1986) "She was a great person, very active in joining in all kinds of helping and caring organizations. My wife was very involved in all the maternal things—children, helping people. She was a great person but had few intellectual interests, almost nil." Murray's relationship with his wife gave him security, companionship, and a family. But it also served to wall him off from the deeper and more explosive feelings that come with true intimacy. Morgan was artistic, intuitive, and fervent. Murray found her irresistible because she brought out the part of himself that he had tried to repress.

His decision to continue both relationships makes psychological sense. He wanted the family life his wife offered as well as the stimulation and excitement that Morgan represented. One might ask why he did not become divorced and marry Morgan. Part of the answer may lie in his concern about the effect on his daughter. But the central reason, I would suggest, was his dread of finding himself in the situation he had experienced with his mother, the situation in which his whole emotional well-being rested on his relationship with one emotionally volatile woman. Murray's sense of specialness also played a role here. Like Jung (see Stern, 1976, pp. 129–142), he probably believed that the unusual creative man ideally should have relationships both with a "wife and mother" and with a "femme inspiratrice."

As Murray was suffering in the throes of his dilemma, he met Jung, and Jung suggested just the solution that felt right to him. It would be hard to overestimate the effect that this circumstance had on Murray's conversion to psychology. It would have seemed to Murray that he brought his most wrenching problem to psychology and psychology provided an answer. Nothing would carry greater weight, for someone trying to decide whether psychology had anything to offer, than a real-life experience like this.

The two issues that preoccupied Murray in the mid-1920s came together in his decision to abandon his career in biochemistry in favor of psychology. First, he saw that psychology engaged his personality—especially his interests in the inner world and the tragic side of life—in a way that his previous work did not. And second, psychology provided a realm that he could share with Morgan. His wife, in fact, had wished he would remain a medical doctor, and she had little interest in psychology. But Morgan had a gift for psychological thinking, and she and Murray
went on to become close collaborators. They worked together on the development of the TAT. Murray contributed the original idea, but she helped in the development, and they wrote the article introducing the TAT together (Morgan & Murray, 1935). Later they did further joint research and produced a monograph on values (Murray & Morgan, 1945).

**Murray's Initial Encounter with Academic Psychology**

**The Field at the Time and His Evaluation of It**

In 1927 Murray began as Prince's assistant at the Harvard Psychological Clinic and also received an appointment as an instructor of psychology at Harvard University. Within 2 years, Prince died, and Murray succeeded him as the director of the clinic; he also was promoted to the rank of assistant professor.

What was the nature of the field of academic psychology when he first encountered it in the late 1920s and early 1930s? An examination of the 1930 volumes of two major journals, *The Psychological Review* and the *American Journal of Psychology*, offers an overview of the field.

Narrow experimental studies dominate both journals. Many of the studies deal with technical issues related to the senses or to experimental apparatuses. Representative titles are “Relationship between the Absolute and Differential Thresholds for an Auditory Stimulus,” “The Use of Equality Judgments in Psychophysical Procedures,” “Apparatus for Studying Eyelid Responses,” and “A New Electrode for the Hathaway Galvanic Reflex Apparatus.” A number of papers illustrate that behaviorism already had become established in the field. The following are typical titles: “The Effect on Orientation in the Circular Maze of the Presence or Absence of Food at the Goal during Running,” “Conditioning as a Principle of Learning,” and “Experimental Extinction and Negative Adaptation.”

Psychodynamic psychology, in 1930, had virtually no impact on academic psychology, although the works of Freud, Jung, Jones, Rank, and others were widely read outside the field. It is surprising that there is even one article directly related to psychoanalysis, “The Self-Psychology of the Psychoanalysts,” by Calkins and Gamble, out of the 130 articles in the two journals. Besides that one article, there are no others that today would be likely to be classified as falling into the field of personality psychology. And there is only a single, 13-line note that pertains to social
psychology. It is a reply by Bentley to technical criticisms of some of Floyd Allport’s early social-psychological research. An important psychologist in his own right, Floyd Allport was the elder brother of Gordon Allport. The latter, one of the pioneers of personality psychology, joined Murray at Harvard in 1930.

As we have seen, Murray became a psychologist for a simple, yet powerful reason. He had undergone an emotional upheaval in the mid-1920s, and he now wanted to spend his life studying human nature, particularly the inner forces that seemed to motivate people. He was “vitaly interested in persons” and “intent on understanding each of them as a unit operating in his or her environment” (Murray, 1967, p. 292). Before entering the field, he assumed that psychology was “the science which describes people and explains why they perceive, feel, think, and act as they do” (Murray, 1935/1981, p. 338). But he was “taken aback” (Murray, 1940b, p. 154) when he suddenly found himself in the midst of academic psychology. “I was a very obnoxious person,” he later recalled, “because I didn’t have any respect for the psychology that was taught and for the people who taught it. They had trained incapacity. They were trained to have tunnel vision” (personal communication, 18 August 1976). He viewed academic psychology as “scientism.” His greatest shock was that the psychologists “weren’t interested in people” (personal communication, 5 June 1981).

He believed that psychologists were “militantly engaged in a competitive endeavor to mould psychology in the image of physics.” The rewards went to those “who could bring forth experimental findings with the highest degree of face-validity, statistical significance, and verifiability in all cases, obtained by the most reliable and precise methods.” To do well in this competition, psychologists limited themselves to “measuring the lawful relationships of narrowly restricted forms of animal behavior, of physiological processes in general, and of the simplest sensory and sensorimotor processes of human beings in particular” (Murray, 1967, p. 293). “The phenomena that intrigued me were not mentioned, since these were not susceptible to exact experimental validation,” Murray (1940b, p. 154) wrote. He continually observed “a mountain of ritual bringing forth a mouse of fact more dead than alive” (Murray, 1967, p. 305).

Murray also had an opinion of John B. Watson’s approach, which was based on the doctrine that psychology should be the study of observable behavior. “Watson’s proposal to limit the science of psychology to con-
cepts that pointed only to perceptibles struck the former biochemist—all of whose critical concepts had referred to imperceptibles—as a naive, juvenile perversity,” Murray (1967) wrote Murray—as I will discuss in the next section—had become deeply involved with psychoanalysis and was working with analytic patients, encouraging them to free-associate “A budding psychologist who was devoting fruitful hours listening to reports of the ongoing stream of consciousness—dreams, fantasies, memories, feelings, and thoughts—of other people,” he observed, “could scarcely have been disposed to adopt with zest the dogmas of those whose avowed conscious purpose was to convince us that consciousness and purpose were nonexistent” (pp 292–293).

Murray had little more respect for the early workers in the psychology of personality “Armed with questionnaires, rating scales, pop-guns, mazes, peg-boards and numberless other mechanical contraptions,” he wrote, “the testers have borne down on their subjects—so heavily, in fact, that the souls of their subjects have been forced to shelter” He argued that “the final results, arrived at by the most approved statistical methods” yield “nothing of importance” (Murray, 1935/1981, p 341).

Thoroughly disaffected with academic psychology, Murray (1935/1981) concluded that it “has contributed practically nothing to the knowledge of human nature” “It has not only failed to bring light to the great, hauntingly recurrent problems,” he went on, “but it has no intention, one is shocked to realize, of attempting to investigate them” (p 339).

Before he published the paper containing those conclusions, he showed it to Edwin G Boring, who was chairman of the department. “Right away he was down in my office shaking,” Murray recalled “He said, ‘If you publish it, you’ll be ostracized in the APA all your life’ He advised me never to let anyone see it.” Murray was surprised at the vehemence of Boring’s reaction “I thought I was making fun of and insulting some quite common aspects of psychology” (personal communication, 29 August 1985).

It is not surprising that Murray found himself isolated within Harvard’s Department of Psychology Although an atmosphere of “peaceful coexistence” prevailed, the other faculty members identified Murray with psychoanalysis and excluded him from the making of major decisions. During those early years, whenever the department decided on an issue, there would be, as Murray claimed, “five votes in favor of psychophysics and one vote in favor of psychoanalysis.” But, despite the faculty’s opinion, the students were excited about Freud and the other psy-
choanalysts, and "they wanted to hear about the new psychology." Murray believes that he was not an outstanding teacher but because of psychoanalysis he was flooded with students. Not long after he became head of the clinic, he found himself with seven graduate students, according to his memory, while all the other members of the department had just one student (personal communication, 11 April 1981)

Murray's comment that he was consistently outvoted five to one is an exaggeration because he was discounting the presence of Gordon Allport, who could never be mistaken for a psychophysicist. Allport made contributions in social-psychological areas such as the psychology of religion and the understanding of prejudice, spoke out on the value of studying the individual, and was one of the pioneers in the analysis of personality traits.

Murray and Allport had a curious relationship during their many years together on the Harvard faculty. They were often grouped together as personality psychologists and humanistic psychologists. And Murray was deeply grateful to Allport for supporting him forcefully when Karl Lashley joined the department in 1935 and tried to oust him from Harvard (see Triplet, 1983). But Murray seemed to view Allport as an opponent. One time students arranged a debate between the two teachers of personality, and Murray hoped he would have a chance to argue with Allport in public about their differences. But, as Murray recalls it, Allport acted in such a gentlemanly fashion that it was impossible to talk frankly about the issues. Murray gives the impression that he believed Allport was drastically wrong in two ways and therefore he, Murray, had no alternative but to dismiss Allport's psychological approach. First, Murray considered trait psychology to be destructive to psychological understanding because it tended to obliterate a conception of the whole person. Second, he was convinced Allport missed the vast importance of the unconscious. "He thought of consciousness as large," Murray (personal communication, 31 July 1975) noted, "and the unconscious as a little bit of a thing down here."

Murray is even more critical of Morton Prince than of Allport. Prince, an M.D. and one of the first psychotherapists in the United States, was a major figure in the development of American psychology. He was the founder of the Journal of Abnormal Psychology and the American Psychopathological Association. The Dissociation of a Personality, the study of a woman with a multiple personality, was his most widely read work. He helped create an audience for a number of new ideas, such as...
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the European theories of hysteria, the use of hypnosis as a therapeutic tool, and the unconscious. Murray recalls that he and Prince did not get along well during the brief time they worked together at the clinic before Prince's death. Prince hoped Murray would "just repeat what he had done and carry it one or two steps further," but he soon learned that Murray cared little for his perspective and was primarily interested in psychoanalysis (personal communication, 21 May 1981). Murray later wrote a sketch of Prince's life in which he managed to give Prince credit for his achievements while at the same time leaving the impression that he was severely limited as a psychologist. "Had there been as ingredients of his nature a pinch of artistic sensibility," Murray (1956) wrote, "he might have been what is so rare in America, a humanist of parts. But genes and fortune bent him in another course—a course of immense activity and expansion, which permitted little inner life" (p. 295). Murray leaves the readers to draw their own conclusion about the value of a psychologist lacking an inner life.

There may seem to be a contrast in Murray's attitude toward Jung, as compared to his attitude toward Allport and Prince. As we have seen, Murray was deeply impressed with Jung after reading Psychological Types and then spending that first, month-long period with him in Zurich. "He had so much to tell me about the unconscious," Murray recalled. "Whoever told me about it would have been given quite a lift on [my] totem pole of admired people" (personal communication, 6 June 1981). Murray expressed such admiration when he wrote Jung immediately after their first visit that Jung felt a need to caution him to moderate his enthusiasm. Jung (1973) replied to Murray's letter, "Don't say too many good things, as I have to be careful not to be swayed away by megalomania" (p. 42). But Murray's evaluation of Jung changed. He suggests that as his "critical facility" developed, he became aware of Jung's shortcomings. He had another five or six meetings with Jung over the years and appreciated Jung's contributions to psychology but came to the conclusion that Jung "wasn't too good with his concepts" (personal communication, 8 June 1981). "He'd believe anything I told him that was along the lines that he liked," Murray noted, "but he would overlook what did not fit his theories" (personal communication, 19 August 1975). Murray's eventual position on Jung is similar to his position on Allport and Prince. He could enumerate the contributions of each of them and claimed to respect them, but ultimately he was scathingly dismissive of them.
Murray's Reaction to Academic Psychology in the Light of His Personality

Implicit in Murray's comments about this period of his life is his own interpretation of his instantaneous disdain for academic psychology. He had a passionate desire to understand people, to learn about them as thoroughly as possible and especially to make sense out of the chaotic, tragic, emotional depths, a glimpse of which he had gained in himself. Freud and Jung and other European psychiatrists had shown him that psychology could shed light on the depths of the personality. But when Murray suddenly found himself in the midst of the academic psychologists, he learned that they had no intention of approaching personality as he thought it should be approached. His critique of the field is humorous, acerbic, and full of trenchant observations. And who could argue with the logic of his basic explanation for his disaffection with academic psychology? The particular way he casts his story, and the particular way he reacted to his plight, however, can be understood on the basis of the formulation of his personality which I have presented.

Murray depicts himself as a heroic loner, suffering by himself, at the hands of those who have treated him unfairly. And that is just the way he experienced himself in his early childhood. The implication is that he played a role in maneuvering himself into a situation that would allow him to view himself in this way. It should be noted that there were a variety of possible courses that he could have taken once he saw that academic psychology did not offer what he wanted. He could have left the field or he could have quietly accommodated himself to the expectations of his colleagues or he could have chosen some small area and developed it to conform with his interests. He also could have seen that there were trends that were consistent with his ideals and he could have aligned himself with other psychologists—such as Allport or Kurt Lewin—who shared some of his interests.

Murray's need to see himself as special also pervades his behavior during these years. He depicted himself not only as differing with other academic psychologists but also as having superior goals to theirs. While they were in a competition to gain the rewards that a simulation of scientific purity offered, according to his description, he was dedicated to the search for truth. Murray's dismissal of others is even more striking in his attitude toward men who were important to him and potentially competitive with him. He does not hesitate to
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Point out what he sees as the irremediable failings of both Prince and Allport. His attitude toward Jung reflects another related tendency. He idealized Jung initially and then became disillusioned with him, just as he did at other times with other men in his life. He had a need to find a man whom he could admire and after whom he could model himself. But his need to be independent and special was even greater and his heroes eventually had to fall.

Murray's Involvement with Psychoanalysis

With his interest in delving into the depths of personality, Murray was far more enthusiastic about psychoanalysis than academic psychology. University psychologists, he wrote, "have not contributed the ideas which have thrilled the imagination, nor have they provided the kind of answers that satisfy one's curiosity or meet one's needs." He argued that, by contrast, "the technic of research, many of the revealed facts, and a few of the theories advanced by psychoanalysts represent the weightiest contribution ever made within a short space of time to an understanding of human nature" (Murray, 1935/1981, p. 341).

In the late 1920s he sought out other people in the Boston area, most of them psychiatrists, who shared his interest in psychoanalysis. A group of ten people evolved, with Murray as one of the central members of the group, and this group, in 1928, founded the Boston Psychoanalytic Society. Murray served on the three-member committee which drafted the society's constitution in 1932, and he was chairman of the Educational Committee from 1932 to 1934. For about 2 years he also hosted the society's seminars and case presentations at the Harvard Psychological Clinic (Hendrick, 1961, pp. 14, 24).

In looking at Murray's involvement with psychoanalysis, I will examine his relations with other psychoanalysts, his own psychoanalysis, his experience of doing psychotherapy, and his attitude toward psychoanalytic theory.

Despite his initial hopes of a shared collegiality, Murray became disillusioned with the other psychoanalysts in Boston. As he recalls it, two of them, Ives Hendrick and M. Ralph Kaufman, "fought like dragon flies." Murray believes that each of them wanted to be "Freud's successor in Boston" (personal communication, 21 May 1981). The psychoanalysts acted like "zealous disciples," and they formed a "religious cult." At a typical meeting, if a person made a comment that was consistent
with Freud's doctrines, "they all took it for granted and cheered it or something like that." If someone brought up a more original idea, "they wouldn't listen to it" (personal communication, 19 August 1975). "The question was orthodoxy or heterodoxy—being able to support each statement by a sentence from Freud's writing," Murray noted (personal communication, 9 November 1982). He was especially offended by Isidore Coriat, the first president of the psychoanalytic society (personal communication, 21 August 1983). Coriat gave an address asserting, "We cannot accept any who have an ambivalent attitude, that is, the frequently encountered attitude of 'getting together' of analysis and academic psychology. Such individuals are far more dangerous to the cause of psychoanalysis than those who are out-and-out antagonists" (Murray, 1940b, pp 170-171). Murray felt that Coriat's outrageous criticisms were directed at just what he was trying to do. Murray hoped to find a place in the university for psychoanalysis and also to use basic academic methods, such as open debate and systematic research, in the psychoanalytic arena. "Ordinary discourse was absent," Murray (personal communication, 21 August 1983) concluded "They might as well have been engaged in astrology."

During the period of Murray's involvement in the Boston Psychoanalytic Society, he and several other members decided to invite Franz Alexander, the first graduate of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute and one of Freud's favorites among the younger analysts, to come to Boston to give them training analyses. Murray's psychoanalysis, which began in the fall of 1931, lasted for 9 months. The first 6 months of the analysis took place in Boston. Then, when Alexander moved to Chicago to found the Institute for Psychoanalysis there, Murray went with him for 3 months to complete his analysis (personal communications, 21 May 1981, 9 November 1982). It is necessary to examine Murray's analysis in some detail, not only was it central to his eventual disillusionment with psychoanalysis, but probably no episode during his early career is more revealing of his personality than his experience in analysis.

In one of his articles, Murray (1940b, p. 155) provided a short summary of his analysis. He wrote that "nothing very new [came] out of it." Alexander seemed "rather bored," but Murray "liked him from the start—he had a sense of humor and could tell good stories..." Murray never became truly engaged in therapy "I was too busy, otherwise-attached, and happy to be transferable." Although he felt that he deepened his understanding of his memories and his unconscious, he
concluded that his treatment ultimately did not help him, in particular, his symptom of stuttering, which was chosen for attack, did not yield.

In interviews Murray elaborated on the course of his analysis. He said he found Alexander to be "a good fellow and quite able but second order [compared to] Jung." He did not "resonate" with Alexander "You don't reveal yourself with someone who responds in a matter-of-fact way Jung would say new and surprising things." Murray never felt "involved in his treatment." "It was like going to a play and being able to make comments on the scenery and the lighting in the theater." Much of the conversation was on the surface. "He had quite a good sense of humor," Murray recalled, "and we did a lot of laughing and postponed a lot of questions until some indefinite time." (personal communication, 29 August 1985)

Murray speculates that he did not form a transference relationship with Alexander. He argues that Freud's psychological approach was "for people like Freud those who have a terrific unshakable attachment to the mother and a seething hostility to the father." As Murray sees it, since his father was "a very nice guy," Freud's approach, based on the Oedipus complex, does not apply to him. (personal communication, 8 June 1981)

During the analysis Murray believed he should be getting angry. "I thought analysis was to arouse all the malice you have in you, all the aggression below the surface." He tried—without success—to develop some anger about Alexander's "borborygmy." He found Alexander's consulting room in Chicago to be "very depressing, the color of feces." "I said, 'What a miserable room this is. It's enough to send a patient into a morbid phase'" (personal communication, 29 August 1985). Murray recalled that at the time he was thinking, "This is a very ugly room here. I can't feel that this man is sensitive enough to discuss anything I would talk about. Nothing will be gained. He won't understand what I say, and I won't like what he says." But Murray, according to his memory, just "pretended to make up reasons" for complaining and "wasn't mad at all." (personal communications, 26 May 1986, 29 August 1985)

In thinking back to his analysis, Murray could recall one topic that might have produced a reaction from Alexander. He remembered meet-
ing Alexander’s wife while arriving for a session “We looked at each other as if we’d explore what the possibilities were of a relationship,” he said. This flamboyant woman—she raced automobiles and had blonde hair—seemed to him to be “incompatible” with Alexander, who was “stout—more than stout—fat” and unemotional “I didn’t joke with him about his wife,” Murray noted “That was something that I could have joked about” (personal communication, 29 August 1985)

Murray not only avoided talking about Alexander’s wife, he also steered away from discussing his own love life, except briefly at the beginning. He considered Alexander to be “much too prudish for discussion into the details” of his arrangement with Christiana Morgan and his wife. “I didn’t think of exposing it to his opinion,” Murray noted “I didn’t care what he thought because I could see right away that he wasn’t the kind that would appreciate the best reason for my doing it.” He recalled that Alexander made one remark “that showed a certain keenness he called it ‘narcissism à deux.’” The remark referred to the relationship of Murray and Morgan and is a play on the psychiatric term folie à deux (see Deutsch, 1937/1965, p 237), which means a delusional system shared by two people. Murray interpreted the remark as meaning, “It’s just two people, and no one else can interfere. There’s nothing but love there backwards and forwards, so you aren’t being reigned by other considerations at the time” When Murray told me about Alexander’s remark, I pointed out that it has a negative and unaccepting implication to it. Murray replied, “I could turn it into that if I thought he had any way of knowing and understanding.” He added that it was as if Alexander spoke “another language” “You’re almost saying here,” I responded, “that the whole area of intimate heterosexual relationships is something he doesn’t know about and it’s outside the realm of what’s worth discussing with him” “Yeah, that’s it,” Murray said “That’s a pretty big area for an analyst to be ignorant about,” I went on “It takes out a whole chunk of what’s important to discuss in analysis.” Murray replied, “From the very beginning I had the same reaction as I had all the way through. He’s a very good guy. He had spent a year in the same laboratory where I had worked in Cambridge, England, so we had that in common. But I would also say that he’s written 3 or 4 books on sex, and he’s read about 20. But still, he doesn’t know” (personal communication, 28 May 1986).

One of Murray’s chief complaints was that Alexander was generally silent, except that “his stomach was making a lot of noise” (personal
communication, 21 August 1983) To the end of the analysis Murray kept expecting that Alexander would talk more. Three days before termination, Murray thought, “I’ve been with him for 9 months, and he probably knows me as well as anyone, so these last 3 days he’ll be telling me what he found and I’ll really learn something” (personal communication, 29 August 1985). Before each of the last sessions he kept expecting that Alexander would explain what he had learned about Murray’s personality. Even during the final session he expected to hear something from Alexander. As the time ran out, he thought Alexander would finally reveal his insights. Then the session ended, and Alexander merely shook his hand and wished him good luck (personal communication, 21 August 1983).

Sometime afterwards Murray talked with Alexander briefly about the analysis. Alexander acknowledged that he had had “a lot of troubles” himself and had not gotten “involved in the analysis much” (personal communication, 29 August 1985). Alexander also said, “I should have become more aggressive and aroused things in you” (personal communication, 21 May 1982). Alexander told Murray that if the patient’s father is a certain way and the analyst is not similar, the analyst should try “a little acting” or putting “a little more emotion” into what he says to encourage the transference (personal communication, 29 August 1985). One of Alexander’s best-known innovations in later years was his attempt to develop a briefer form of psychotherapy in which the analyst takes a more active role. He believed that at times a transference does not develop naturally and the therapist has to act deliberately in such a way as to elicit the transference (Alexander & French, 1946). According to Murray, Alexander told him that his “thinking about [Murray’s] analysis not being a great success” had played a role in his developing his new approach to therapy (personal communication, 21 May 1982).

Murray points to his narcissism as the chief reason why he accomplished so little in psychoanalysis. He has always been open about his narcissism and treats it as a favorite topic for humor. For example, he originally entitled his autobiographical article, “Narcissism Re-exhibited” (personal communication, 5 June 1981). In writing about “Narcissism” [Murray used the variant of narcissism] in Explorations in Personality (Murray et al., 1938, p. 180), he defined the term as designating that the individual’s “positive cathexes are localized” upon himself. He listed two chief components to narcissism. One has to do with the individual’s “self-absorption.” The other has to do with “superiority feel-
ings." It is primarily the former that he had in mind in seeing his narcissism as interfering with his analysis. In reply to one of my questions about his analysis, he noted, "I refer to narcissism as a force which is likely to make it difficult to attach free-floating admiration to anyone who comes along" (personal communication, 2 February 1983). In other words, what Murray was saying was that his personality made it difficult for him to become close to Alexander, to admire him and to trust him, and to share his deepest concerns with him.

Murray believes that he did not form a transference and the reason was that his father was unlike the harsh, threatening father of the Oedipus complex. But here Murray was limited by the psychoanalytic view of the time that the only type of transference fits the classical, Oedipal pattern. In fact, Murray did form a father transference. His view of his father and Alexander is strikingly similar, he saw each of them as being kindly but ineffectual and disappointing. When I presented this idea to him, he agreed that he saw both of them in this way but he did not see how such a transference might lead to change in therapy (personal communication, 29 August 1985). I believe that Murray has a point. The bare fact of his forming this type of transference was not therapeutic. It probably meant that a part of him had given up on Alexander and identified Alexander with his father, on whom he had also given up. His fantasy about having an affair with Alexander's wife, despite the obvious Oedipal implications, suggested retreating from Alexander, finding solace elsewhere, and hurting Alexander in the process.

Murray's conviction, early in the analysis, that he could not discuss his relationship with Morgan, is the clearest sign that he had resigned himself to merely going through the motions. Alexander's countertransference is impossible to reconstruct, but his remark about a "narcissism à deux" is an example of "pathologizing" instead of understanding. It usually means that the analyst is uncomfortable in some respect and has to distance himself by becoming subtly judgmental. Sensitive to the denigration implicit in Alexander's remark, Murray concluded that Alexander was incapable of seeing the world through his eyes and, as was his custom, withdrew.

Some small part of Murray probably did not give up. He considered teasing Alexander about how unsuitable Alexander was for his wife. The intent would have been to get a reaction out of Alexander. He also tried to arouse some anger in himself but was unable to do so. Even to the last
moments of therapy he maintained the hope that Alexander would finally show his interest and understanding.

Numerous manifestations of transference can be seen in Murray’s analysis. He dismissed Alexander as he had dismissed his father early in life. Murray viewed both of them as kindly but inadequate. He retreated from Alexander as he had retreated from his mother and probably saw him, like his mother, as being preoccupied with personal concerns. Murray established a situation in which he kept a distance and avoided making himself vulnerable. His basic stance would seem to be a way of protecting himself from the risk that would have been inherent in developing stronger and more immediate feelings about his analyst, and this stance was a habitual defense to which he often resorted during his life. Part of what he was avoiding may have been a repetition of a pattern that he frequently experienced, as in his therapy-like relationship with Jung, that is, a period of idealization followed by a period of disenchantment. And even his hope that Alexander would eventually reach out and offer something to him was a part of his transference. But his powerful, multifaceted transference never became a part of the analysis.

It seems, in retrospect, that Murray’s analysis was doomed from the beginning. Murray had internal barriers to forming a deep attachment with his analyst. Alexander was struggling with his own problems and hardly became involved with Murray. But the most insurmountable problem was that psychoanalytic theory was then inadequate to explain Murray’s transference and to provide guidance for treatment. Alexander probably believed—accurately—that an Oedipal transference had not developed, but he was not equipped to conceive of any other form of transference. The significance of Murray’s analysis for his psychological career is that he learned, first-hand, of the shortcomings of psychoanalysis. He may have believed that it was useful for some patients, but the lesson that he took away from his analysis was that it made no appreciable impact on him and offered no substantial help.

In addition to undergoing psychoanalysis himself, Murray also did psychotherapy and psychoanalysis for a limited period of time. In his early years at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, he treated some patients. He recalled one patient, a janitor at the clinic, who “made a com-

2 It should be noted that the Harvard Psychological Clinic was originally conceived as a home for both psychological treatment and research. Some psychotherapy took
plete recovery, better than any patients I had later” (personal communication, 14 August 1975) After finishing his analysis and returning from Chicago in 1932, he undertook two control analyses, as part of his psychoanalytic training, with Hanns Sachs as the supervisor. He estimates that in all he did extensive therapy with about 15 patients. Almost all his therapeutic work took place during a period of 3 years except for “two or three interminable cases.” He stopped doing therapy entirely when he began assessment work for the Office of Strategic Services in 1943 (personal communication, 9 November 1982).

Murray describes his experience of doing therapy as having been mixed. Observing patients increased his respect for psychoanalytic concepts. “I was surprised that among the seven or eight patients I had at the start,” he noted, “two or three of them (with hysterical symptoms) had dreams and associations which were almost identical to some that are found in psychoanalytic literature.” His cases ranged from “pretty complete failure to pretty complete success.” Two patients who had hand-washing compulsions particularly frustrated him. Neither patient overcame his compulsion, and Murray felt “[worn] down,” especially after some veteran analysts told him that such cases took at least 9 years. Murray soon found himself “repeatedly involved in shortening” therapy and “ridding myself of taxing and questionable procedural dogmas.” For example, he “gave up the routine of daily sessions of fixed duration.” His patients came to the Harvard Psychological Clinic and could not be charged for their treatment. Paying no fee, Murray gradually concluded, “made the hours so enjoyable to some of them that there was no great push to get rid of their symptoms” (personal communications, 9 November 1982, 23 February 1983).

Murray’s descriptions of his clinical work suggested to me that he did not find it rewarding to do therapy. When I mentioned my impression to him, he agreed. In his autobiographical article he gave a possible explanation. He noted that his “marrow of misery and melancholy” had made him hypersensitive to “the sufferings of other individuals” and had inclined him towards doing psychotherapy. “Later when new ideas began bubbling autonomously in my head,” Murray (1967) wrote, “these became the foci of my nurturant disposition and there was not much energy left over for the miseries of others” (p. 300). What he seems to be saying place at the clinic, but psychological research became the main activity. The term “clinic,” although misleading, was retained.
is that he could gain some comfort by helping other people who had inner suffering that was analogous to what he experienced but that he got more gratification from turning to his own intellectual creations.

During the period of his involvement with psychoanalysis, Murray also delved deeply into, and thought at great length about, psychoanalytic theory. He concluded that neither rejecting all of it nor "going in blind and swallowing the whole indigestible bolus" made sense. "I, for one," he wrote, "prefer to take what I please, suspend judgment, reject what I please, speak freely" (Murray, 1940b, p. 157).

The greatest contribution of psychoanalysis, in Murray's view, was that it "reveal[ed] the vast realm that an over-rationalistic psychology had neglected" (Murray, 1940a, p. 136). He appreciated the emphasis of psychoanalysis on the inner world because he was aware of his own inner world. He also thought that many of the basic orienting perspectives of psychoanalysis were useful, such as its assertion of the importance of sexuality, its focus on the determining influence of childhood experiences, and its recognition "that fantasies are almost as influential as actual events" (Murray 1940b, p. 160). He especially valued its grounding in "a theory of directional forces, forces which, if unimpeded, usually produce, in one way or another, results that are satisfying, positively or negatively, to the organism" (Murray, 1940b, p. 157). Behavior could be understood, Murray felt, only with the help of a motivational system.

Although one of the strengths of psychoanalysis was its assumption of the necessity of a motivational system, one of its shortcomings, in Murray's view, was the narrowness of the motivational system Freud had postulated. Murray (1967) saw Freud's "division of instincts into Eros and Thanatos" as "irrational, sentimental, and inadequately differentiated" (p. 304). A comprehensive personological approach should include additional needs, and Freud had not delineated even his basic sexual and aggressive drives precisely and clearly enough.

Similarly, Murray (1940b) believed that psychoanalysis had accurately pointed to the importance of many situations in life, with the triangular relationship between the child and his or her two parents being a prime example. But psychoanalytic theory "is clearly limited to certain spheres of functioning and is more applicable to some types and some conditions of men than to others" (p. 161). In reaching this conclusion, Murray was influenced by his own experience of having a father who did not fit the Freudian model of a powerful, threatening rival.
Murray (1940b) also criticized psychoanalysis for inadequately dealing with the environment. He believed psychoanalysis had made only a start at taking "social factors" into account, studying how widely these forces varied among different cultures, and examining their role in the development of personality (p. 167).

The last of his central criticisms was that psychoanalysis did not make use of systematic research. Murray (1940a) was impressed that Freud could derive so much from listening to patients during psychoanalytic sessions: "That out of a hundred thousand hours of free-association—a veritable Sargasso sea of psychic weeds—he saw and saved so much that was unobviously important is cause for wonderment" (p. 137). But Murray saw it as a blind spot of psychoanalysis that it did not make use of other ways of learning about personality.

Murray was convinced, from the very beginning of his involvement with academic psychology, that its approach to the understanding of human beings was not remotely similar to the perspective in which he believed. He saw in psychoanalysis some potential because of its emphasis on the inner world. He made a serious effort to learn about psychoanalysis. He underwent psychoanalytic training, became a psychoanalyst, and retained, throughout his career, his membership in the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and the American Psychoanalytic Association. In the mid-1930s, however, he turned away from psychoanalysis. He disliked the Boston psychoanalysts. He found them to be close-minded, inhospitable to research, and uncritically worshipful of Freud. He neither benefited substantially from his own analysis nor found much satisfaction in conducting psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. He was convinced that psychoanalytic theory itself had value. But, with his preference for independence and his aversion to being a follower, he was hardly likely to adopt it as a whole, accepting parts of it and rejecting other parts was far more consistent with his personality.

Murray's Early Career, His Personality, and Explorations in Personality

The purpose of the following section is not to give a thorough description of Explorations in Personality but to examine the relevance to this work of Murray's early career and his personality.

First, a summary of Explorations in Personality is necessary. The book reports on a project from 1934 through 1936 in which Murray and
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his co-workers at the Harvard Psychological Clinic studied 51 college-aged men. Murray devised a personological system to be used in analyzing the subjects, and then further refined the system on the basis of what was learned from applying it to the subjects. The most highly developed part of the system is an elaborate description of needs and types of "press" (the environmental forces that affect the subject), and the system also includes other variables of personality such as narcissism, the superego, anxiety, and emotionality. Murray and his co-workers used 25 procedures in studying each of the subjects. These included standard procedures such as interviews and an autobiography, tests already in use such as the Rorschach Test, and procedures developed for this research project, such as the TAT and Erikson's Dramatic Productions Test. All of this effort culminated in a case study of each subject. A group of researchers studied the results and rated the subject according to the variables. And, finally, one of the researchers integrated the information and wrote a case study of the subject. Explorations includes an example of a case study (written by White) and concludes with Murray's comments on the findings and shortcomings of the project. (For more extensive descriptions of Explorations, see Hall & Lindzey, 1957, Maddi & Costa, 1972; and White, 1981.)

Explorations reflects the different stages of Murray's career. His emphasis on case studies is an application in psychology of common medical practice. His taxonomy of needs and varieties of press is, similarly, based on the approach of medicine, chemistry, and biological science. Murray (1967) believed those disciplines "were launched on their careers as differentiated systems of knowledge by extensive classifications of the entities and phenomena that lay within the circumference of their responsibility" (p. 304). The whole of the project reported in Explorations is a study of subjects carried out in a university setting, and in that way the project reflects the influence of academic psychology. More specifically, Murray credits academic psychology, and especially Gordon Allport, with teaching him about "an orderly method of procedure and a proper statistical treatment of our findings" (Murray et al., 1938, p. 33). Finally, Murray adopted many psychoanalytic concepts, including the ego and the superego, projection, and repression, and relied heavily on psychoanalysis in developing a classification of childhood events. "We believe that we have had a glimpse of a most wonderous terrain for rewarding exploration," Murray wrote in the concluding chapter. "The paths made by the pioneers of psycho-analysis lie before us" (p. 729).
There are a number of ways in which *Explorations* can be seen as an expression of Murray's personality.

Murray was not comfortable as a follower, could not sustain an idealized image of another man, and was wary of closeness except in certain protected situations, such as in his relationship with Morgan. He created the kind of atmosphere in which he could function most effectively. He was the unquestioned leader of the project; some of his co-workers called him "The Skipper" (White, 1981, p. 4). And he had his own private bastion, the Harvard Psychological Clinic, separate from the rest of the Department of Psychology. With his charisma, he provided inspiration for his collaborators but was able to avoid having the kind of close relationship that would evoke memories of his relationship with his mother. In devising the list of needs in *Explorations*, Murray included the need for inviolacy, he later recognized he had been aware of this need because it reflected the importance to him of remaining safe from painful relationships (Murray, 1967, p. 300). This need refers to "desires and attempts to prevent a depreciation of self-respect, to preserve one's 'good name,' to be immune from criticism, to maintain psychological 'distance'" (Murray et al., 1938, p. 81). The project also provided him with a vehicle for continuing his safe but intellectually stimulating relationship with Morgan and drew on her artistic and intuitive talents. They worked together on the TAT during this period, she helped choose the TAT cards and also drew some of the pictures.

Murray expressed his preference for independence not only by working apart from the rest of the department but in an even more dramatic way. It is not an exaggeration to say that he founded a new approach within the field of personality psychology. "The study of lives," as he often called it (White, 1963, p. xiii), refers to the approach that emphasizes the in-depth examination of the individual life. It has continued as one alternative within the field, this special issue is in the tradition which Murray originated. Murray was dissatisfied with academic psychology and also with psychoanalysis; rather than adapt to either of those disciplines, he developed his own approach.

Murray's "marrow of misery and melancholy" also had a basic impact on *Explorations*. He felt deeply alive only when this central part of himself came into play. He deliberately designed the project so that he could gain access to the hidden inner worlds of his subjects. Studying subjects extensively offered promise of learning about this part of their personalities. But Murray went further and invented a new procedure, the TAT,
because of its ability to expose the inner world. The purpose of the TAT was “to get at unconscious processes, fantasies, wishes, fears” Murray wanted to “get the unconscious into” his study. He was troubled that “in academic psychology it wasn’t ‘in’, it was just mentioned. There never was any attempt to expose it, examine it, interpret it.” (personal communication, 31 July 1980). His inner depressive feelings had an additional effect on the TAT. Murray (1967) recognized later that these feelings “disposed me to select many gloomy pictures for the TAT” (p. 300).

Another part of his personality that played a determining role in *Explorations* was his desire to see himself as special and extraordinary. After the manuscript of *Explorations* was completed, Murray’s co-workers announced that there would be one more case presentation. They created a satirical analysis of his personality. Erikson imagined what Murray’s fantasy would be: to put a statue of himself in place of Napoleon’s on the column in the Place Vendôme in Paris. Murray remembered (personal communication, 26 May 1986) this incident with amusement and commented, “That could be put in narcissistic terms very well.”

It is also no coincidence that of the 28 needs in his scheme, the one that has had the greatest influence on subsequent personality research is the need for achievement. He was able to perceive this need and to describe it so clearly because it was so central to his own personality.

Murray’s desire to excel, in combination with his tendency to discern the shortcomings of others, provided him with a powerful motivation to succeed in just those areas in which he felt others failed. He criticized academic psychology for doing research on trivial questions and missing the person. Murray believes that his chief contribution was his insistence on the importance of a “holistic approach.” “Up to that point,” he commented, “psychology was a combination of subdisciplines: senses, perception, etc. When I got there, nobody even thought of the person as a whole.” (personal communication, 22 May 1986) In *Explorations*, he constantly emphasized the importance of studying the whole person, and the heart of the project was the individual case studies.

It almost seems as if Murray’s criticisms of psychoanalysis provided the organizing principles of *Explorations*. He felt psychoanalysis had a motivational system that was too narrow, nothing is developed more ex-

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3 For an analysis of Murray’s interest in “the whole of personality” and in “its many component parts” and how these interests relate to his own personality, see Elms, 1987.
tensively in *Explorations* than the taxonomy of needs. He thought that psychoanalysis was limited to only certain individuals and certain spheres of functioning, he tried in *Explorations* to be as comprehensive as possible. He pointed out that psychoanalysis did not sufficiently take the environment into account, in *Explorations* he developed the concept of press. And he pointed to the failure of psychoanalysis to rely on systematic research, *Explorations* is nothing but an experiment in the use of systematic research to gain a deeper understanding of personality.

The configuration of Murray's personality no doubt caused him pain during his early career. He found close relationships difficult, he was deprived of the experience of relying on other men whom he could admire, and he "outcast" himself not only from the department at Harvard but also from the mainstream of American psychology. But the configuration of his personality also seems to have been especially conducive to creativity. He wanted to accomplish something special, and he was powerfully motivated to succeed. His "marrow of misery and melancholy" did not paralyze him but enhanced his work by leading him to the hidden inner life of his subjects. And his urge for independence helped make him feel at home as he traversed terrain that earlier investigators had avoided.

**REFERENCES**


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