

THE ESSENTIAL BORIS SIDIS

Compiled by
Dan Mahony

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(Click )



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PHILOSOPHY

CHANCE AND MIND

Chance and not reason rules the world. Reason's function is of ten a kind of chance's handmaid to justify what has come to pass. (1905)

Not purpose, but chance is at the heart of mental life. (1914)

Thoughts that present themselves at any one moment are meaningless and purposeless; they are simply the accidental chance material which the given momentary, purposive thought selects as fit in order to succeed best in the achievement of its purpose. The ideas themselves as they present themselves are meaningless, purposeless, chance creations of the brain, like the phenomena of accidental variation. (1914)



“Sidis strongly emphasizes what he calls the chance aspects of life and mind. This concept is of fundamental importance in his psychology and emphasizes his divergence from the Freudian psychology which ascribes a meaning, a purpose and an adaptive value to every idea, to every fleeting thought, with the resulting highly artificial, far-fetched, often absurd interpretations of mental life. ... “

Linenthal, Harry S. Review of *The Foundations of Normal and Abnormal Psychology*. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1916, 11, 62-65

THE INDIVIDUAL

The individual is a composite,—a multiple individuality. (1904)

THE UNCONSCIOUS

There is no special controlling agency somewhere in the mind sending out orders, mandates, inhibitions, like a despotically ruling autocrat, like a psycho-analytic censor, or like an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, invisible deity. (1914)



[At Sidis Institute, Portsmouth NH, 1912](#)

SCIENCE

Science is the description of phenomena and the formulation of their relations.

(1914)

Science furnishes our knowledge of the external world, but science is essentially not self-conscious, and it cannot therefore on its own grounds answer the question as to the validity of its knowledge.

(1914)

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Distasteful as it is for me to do it, I find it my duty to enter a protest against the vagaries and absurdities of psychoanalysis which is nothing but a pseudo-science, the same as astrology, oneiromancy, palmistry and magic.

(1914)

PURPOSE

We are apt to overestimate the utility of organs and functions in the world of living beings. There may be organs which are of no use to the organism, and there may be functions which are indifferent and even positively harmful to life. (1914)

WE ARE FAR MORE CREATURES OF HABIT AND INSTINCT THAN OF REASON AND WILL. (1909)

THE TENDENCY OF LIFE IS NOT THE PRESERVATION OF THE SPECIES, BUT SOLELY THE PRESERVATION OF EACH INDIVIDUAL ORGANISM, AS LONG AS IT IS IN EXISTENCE AT ALL, AND IS ABLE TO CARRY ON ITS LIFE PROCESSES. (1922)

MEMORY

We cannot remember what we were not
conscious of. (1914)

If anything is of the utmost importance in mental life, it is surely memory. Memory forms a unity of our life, brings, so to speak, to a focus our life-experiences, which would have otherwise been disconnected, confused, and chaotic. I remember just now what I did an hour ago, a day ago, what I lived through many years ago. I remember the experiences of my childhood, boyhood, and youth. I remember my struggles and disappointments, my loves, my friendships, my enemies, my feelings, sentiments, emotions, ideas, and sensations. All these inter-connected, interlocked links of memories form the solid chain of my conscious personality. (1914)

THE SUBCONSCIOUS

The nature of the subconsciousness, whether it be physiological or psychological, or both, we may leave to the speculations of the philosophical psychopathologist and metaphysical psychologist. Our present object is to note the clinical facts, describe them accurately, correlate them into generalizations, and use provisionally limiting concepts, much in the same way as the mathematician uses space or the physicist uses matter and ether. .

(1909)

EDUCATION

The principle of recognition of evil under all its guises is at the basis of the true education of man.

(1909)

The cultivation of the power of habit-disintegration is what constitutes the proper education of man's genius.

(1909)

Ontogenesis is an epitome of Phylogenesis. This biogenetic law holds true in the domain of education. The stored-up experiences of the race are condensed, foreshortened, and recapitulated in the child's life history. This process of progressive precocity, or of foreshortening of education, has been going on unconsciously in the course of human evolution. We have reached a stage when man can be made conscious of this fundamental process, thus getting control over his own growth and development. We should remember that there is genius in every healthy, normal child.

(1919)

The aim of education of children is self-perfection. We should surround our young with the graceful, the true, the beautiful, the good, the kind, the lovely, and the loving.

(1919)

My boy plays—plays with his toys, and plays with his books.

(1910)

LAUGHTER

The highest point reached by laughter is intimately related with the highest intellectual, aesthetic, and moral development.

(1913)



THE WARDEN STUDIO
PORESMOUTH, N. H.

TREATMENT METHODS

For many years, day after day and night after night, I lived with patients who were under my care, observation, and treatment.—*Causation and Treatment of Psychopathic Diseases*, Chap. 11.

- a. My mode of hypnotization consists in forming a monotonous environment;
- b. the light is lowered, and a profound silence reigns in the room;
- c. then gently and monotonously stroking the skin of the subject's forehead,
- d. and in a low, muffled, monotonous voice, as if rocking a baby to sleep,
- e. I go on repeating, 'Sleep, sleep, sleep,' etc., until the subject falls into the hypnotic state.

(1898)

Great stress is laid on re-association, or synthesis of dissociated systems.

From a therapeutic point of view, synthesis is cure.

(1908)

Important, however, as the following-up of the history or of the psychogenesis of the symptoms may be, both to the physician and to the patient, for an intelligent and scientific comprehension of the case, it does not cure, as some are apt to claim, the psychopathic malady.

Most important, however, is the access gained through the agency of the hypnoidal state to the stores of potential subconscious reserve-energy, which, by a liberation of energy, bring about a re-association and synthesis of the dissociated mental systems underlying the symptoms of the disease.

TABLE OF CONDITIONS OF NORMAL AND ABNORMAL SUGGESTIBILITY

Normal Suggestibility	Abnormal Suggestibility
1. Fixation of attention	1. Fixation of attention
2. Distraction	2. _____
3. Monotony	3. Monotony
4. Limitation of voluntary movements	4. Limitation of voluntary movements
5. Limitation of the field of consciousness	5. Limitation of the field of consciousness
6. Inhibition	6. Inhibition
7. Immediate execution	7. _____

THE law of suggestibility in general, and those of normal and abnormal suggestibility in particular, indicate a coexistence of two streams of

consciousness, of the two selves within the frame of the individual; the one, the waking consciousness, the waking self; the other, the subwaking consciousness, the subwaking self.

The hypnotic state precedes and succeeds sleep. Chap. 9

In the study of sleep then we must devote our attention to the investigation of transitory subwaking states which form the transition between waking and sleeping. Chap. 4 AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF SLEEP (1909)

FEAR

The function of fear is quite clear. Fear is the guardian instinct of life.

(1911)

The fear instinct is the ultimate cause of the infinite varieties of psychopathic diseases.

(1916)



The phenomena that lie on the borderland of what is regarded as normal mental activity are of great interest and importance, because, being deviations or variations from the normal and the familiar, they are apt to call attention to the mechanism, causation and laws that govern mental activity in general—normal and abnormal, conscious and subconscious. (1914)

This characteristic of recurrence is of great importance in psychopathology, as it brings the subconscious activities under one perspective view, gives an insight into their nature and mode of manifestation; and *from a biological standpoint brings them in line with the mode of action of the lower mental types, which respond to special stimuli of the external environment with the same amount and quality of sensori-motor reactions.*

Recurrence is the result of dissociation. The system keeps on ringing until the energy of the current is either exhausted or inhibited.\

(1914)

One of my patients, who is very intelligent, tells me frankly that he uses others to squeeze out of them strength for himself. (1916)

The whole process is one of disintegration and reintegration of psychophysiological neuron systems with the awakening of dormant, reserve energy, resulting in a complete and permanent cure of the patient.

Great stress is laid on re-association, or synthesis of dissociated systems. From a therapeutic point of view, synthesis is cure.
Psychopathological Researches

My mode of hypnotization consists in forming a monotonous environment; the light is lowered, and a profound silence reigns in the room; then gently and monotonously stroking the skin of the subject's forehead, and in a low, muffled, monotonous voice, as if rocking a baby to sleep, I go on repeating, 'Sleep, sleep, sleep,' etc., until the subject falls into the hypnotic state. (1898)

SUMMARY OF BORIS SIDIS'S PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

The following principles may be regarded as fundamental in the development of psychopathic or nervous illness.

I. The Principle of Embryonic Psychogenesis

The mental states of psychopathic or nervous illness are of an infantile, childish type. In this respect the mental states simulate cancerous and other malignant growths of an embryonic character. The psychopathic mental states are not only of a childish character, but they are often associated with childhood experiences of early life. The psychopathic condition points to some early fearful-producing experience, or fearful-awakening shock.

II. The Principle of Recurrence

Fearful experiences tend to repeat themselves in consciousness, and especially in the subconscious states of the child. This repetition or recurrence keeps alive the psychopathic fear nucleus, and fixes it in the mind. Fixed fearful systems become further developed by the subsequent experiences of life. The aroused fearful instinct may either become weakened or strengthened. When the conditions of life are unfavorable and adverse, tending to further cultivation of the impulse of

self-preservation and the fear instinct, the outcome is a psychopathic disposition, ending in a nervous state with the typical symptoms of some definite nervous trouble, formed by the latest or ultimate fear experiences.

III. The Principle of Proliferation and Complication

With the growth of the child the fear experiences increase and multiply. These experiences become associated with the original child nucleus of fear and thus a complexity of fear systems is built up. Worries, depressions, and anxieties help to increase and develop the psychopathic system of groups of fear experiences. The morbid state grows like an avalanche in its progress downwards.

IV. The Principle of Fusion or of Synthesis

All the fear experiences become associated and grouped gradually around the original child fear experience which is of ten of a subconscious character. The long series of fear experiences becomes fused and synthesized by the central fear instinct and impulse of self-preservation, which are fundamental in every being, but which have been specially cultivated by the course of events and experiences in the neurotic patient. The experiences become fused, synthesized, and systematized, forming one complex network of closely interrelated fear

obsessions with the fear instinct and impulse of self preservation in the background.

V. The Principle of Contrast

Feelings and emotions follow by contrast. Excitement is followed by depression, enjoyment by disgust, exhilaration by disappointment. This is well brought out in the changes observed in the psychopathic self and fear states.

Fear may be followed by anger, especially against those who are sure to show no opposition, or may even manifest fear. The excitement of fear others is a way which diminishes fear in the patient and help him to have confidence in himself, strengthening his impulse of self preservation.

The fear of the psychopathic may even resort to love so as to gain safety and protection from the tantalizing agonies of the fear instinct. That is why some physicians are deceived, and ascribe psychopathic troubles to love instead of to the real fundamental cause of all psychopathic disorders, namely self-preservation and the fear instinct.

Similarly mysticism, a psychopathic malady of a social character, has its origin in the impulse of self-preservation and the fear instinct, and takes refuge in love or in union with the Infinite which serves as a rock of protection, security, and salvation from all

terrors of life. Psychopathic love is a neurotic fear delusion. There is nothing more deceptive and delusive than psychopathic love,—for it takes its origin in self and fear.

VI. The Principle of Recession

Experiences are blotted out from memory in the course of time. A very small percentage of impressions is registered by the brain, a still smaller percentage can be reproduced, and out of them a very small percentage carries recognition as memory, that is, of impressions experienced before. Forgetfulness is therefore a normal physiological function characteristic of the brain and mind.

Forgetfulness depends on at least three conditions, lack of registration, lack of reproduction, and lack of recognition.

There will correspondingly be at least three forms of amnesia or forgetfulness, amnesia of registration, amnesia of reproduction, and amnesia of recognition. The real problem of Psychology is not so much the lapses of memory, but the why and how of memory, and especially of cognitive memory.

This, however, we may establish as a law that when memory in regard to definite experiences weakens in the course of time, the lapse follows from recognition to reproduction, and finally to registration. Recognition fails

first, then comes the failure of memory reproduction, and finally memory registration of the special experience becomes blurred and wiped out. This may be termed the law of memory decay, or of memory regression. This is the principle of memory recession.

Some, though by no means all, child memories or infantile experiences follow this law of regression or recession. Child experiences, like all old experiences, tend to recede in their course of decay or of regression below the threshold of consciousness. The experiences are not recognized on reproduction, or are reproduced with great difficulty, or have even lost the function of being reproduced. When under such conditions, the experiences are said to have become subconscious, or have receded into the subconscious.

On the other hand some of those subconscious experiences, or subconscious memories may, under favorable conditions, once more regain their functions of reproduction and recognition, and become fully conscious. This may occur in various trance states, subconscious states, and in various psychopathic conditions.

Such states, however, rarely fix the experiences in memory, because the states are instable, temporary, and the memories lapse with the disappearance of the states. This principle of recession may be regarded as one of

the fundamental facts of the Psychopathology of the Subconscious. In fact, subconscious states also be termed Recessive States.

VII. The Principle of Dissociation

Recessive states, becoming marginal and subconscious, lapse from voluntary control, they cannot be recalled deliberately and consciously by the activities of voluntary, cognitive, associative memories, constituting the mental life of personality, and hence may be regarded as mental systems in a state of dissociation. The lapsed states are present subconsciously when not completely blurred and obliterated by the process of decay or regression.

Dissociated, subconscious states, when affected by the impulse of self-preservation and the fear instinct, tend to become parasitic, and like malignant growths may suck the life energy of the affected individual. Under such conditions we have psychopathic, subconscious, dissociated states.

VIII. The Principle of Differentiation and Diffusion

In the dormant, subconscious states the fear instinct gradually extends to other subconscious states. The fear instinct acts like a malignant growth, like a fermenting enzyme. The subconscious fear instinct gradually

infiltrates, diffuses, irradiates its affective state throughout the subconscious life of the patient, finally giving rise to a psychopathic disposition with its selfishness, apparent repressions, apprehension, anxiety, anguish, terror, and panic. This may also give rise to the general psychopathic character of doubt, indecision, and conflicting states, all being determined by the underlying fear instinct.

IX. The Principle of Differentiation

With the growth of the impulse of self preservation and with the development of an exaggerated fear instinct, the individual becomes more and more neurotic and psychopathic. This general, neurotic, mental state attaches itself to various events in the life of the individual. The psychopathic disposition keeps on progressing from one event to another. Each one may be regarded as a separate fear state, or phobia. Finally the disposition may settle on the last event in the patient's life experience. This last event may of ten become the nucleus, or rather the apparent nucleus of the neurosis.

The last experience appears to be central. As a matter of fact there is a great number of fear states or of phobias in the neurotic patient. A few only appear to predominate in the network of fear events. The network of fears is woven into an incongruous whole by the

impulse of self-preservation find the fear instinct. This network becomes differentiated into a tangle of numerous fear states.

X. The Principle of Dominance

The last fear states or Ultimate Fear States which stand out clearly and distinctly in the patient's mind become the leading, the dominant abnormal, pathological states. The patient thinks that they are the real source of all his troubles, and if they were removed he would be cured. As a matter of fact the ultimate states are not causes, but occasions. The real causes of the psychopathic constitution are the exaggerated impulse of self-preservation and the intensified fear instinct.

XI. The Principle of Dynamogenesis

Recessive, and especially dissociated systems, being dormant subconsciously, may become invigorated, may accumulate emotion, and when the opportunity comes, may react to external stimuli with vigor and energy. The attacks may occur like epileptic fits. They often so well simulate epileptic maladies that even good clinicians have classed such attacks under the term of larval epilepsy, psychic epilepsy, hystero-epilepsy, or psychic equivalent of epilepsy. This subconscious energy manifestation may be termed Dynamogenesis.

XII. The Principle of Inhibition

Self-preservation and the fear instinct inhibit associated mental systems, producing morbid states. Morbid mental states, however, are not produced by inhibitions, or repressions. It is only when the inhibitive factors are self and fear that a true morbid mental state, or neurosis arises. To regard self-repression as a bad condition and leading to diseases is to misapprehend the nature of man, to falsify psychology, and to misrepresent the development of humanity. The self should not become hypertrophied. Self-preservation should not become overgrown. The self must be kept within limits. The self impulse should be kept under control by the individual. For true happiness is to be a law unto oneself. As the great Greek thinkers put it: Happiness is in self rule. The unruly are miserable. In fact, self-control is absolutely requisite to mental health, to sanity. Self-repression is requisite for happiness. Self-repression never leads to disease. It is only when self-repression is produced and dominated by selfishness and fear that morbid states of a psychopathic, neurotic character are sure to arise. It is not inhibitions that produce fear, but it is fear that produces inhibitions. To ascribe neurosis to self-repression and to conflict is like attributing malaria or tuberculosis to air and light.

XIII. The Principle of Mental Contest and Discord

Mental states associated with intense emotions tend to take a dominant lead in consciousness. This, however, may be totally opposed by the general character of the individual. In such cases the whole mental set, being in opposition to the total individuality, is in contest with the character of the person who is then in state of discord. A mental set in contest with the make-up of the person is usually inhibited, becomes subconscious, and as a rule fades away from the mind, often leaving no trace even in memory, conscious or subconscious. In some cases where a compromise is possible, a reconciliation is effected. The mental set is assimilated, and disappears from consciousness as an independent, functioning state.

When, however, the opposing or contesting mental set is based on a fundamental impulse and accompanying instinct, such as the impulse of self-preservation and the fear instinct, a total inhibition is not always possible, even a compromise may not be successful, because the mental set is in association with the core of the individual,—namely self-preservation. The contesting mental set remains, in what Galton terms, the antechamber of consciousness. The mind is in a state of tension, in a state of anxiety, in restless, uneasy discord, due to the fear instinct, the companion of the

impulse of self-preservation. The contesting mental set, charged with intense fear emotion, presses into the foreground of consciousness, and a contest, a discord, ensues in the mind of the individual, a contest, a discord, a conflict which keeps the person in a state of indecision and lack of will power.

The partly inhibited, contesting mental set, when not fading away, may thus remain in the mind, and act like a splinter in the flesh, giving rise to a state of discomfort. This is just what happens when the individual has not been trained to assimilate fear states, and is unable to adjust fear reactions to the welfare of total psycho-physiological life activity.

In cases where the impulse of self-preservation and the fear instinct have become aroused, the contesting fear set of mental states presses a gain and again to the foreground of consciousness. When no compromise of the contesting states can be brought about, when the fear set cannot be assimilated, the mind is in a state of restless discord. It is not, however, the discord that produces the neurosis, it is the impulse of self-preservation and the fear instinct that constitute the cause of the psychopathic, neurotic condition.

XIV. The Principle of Diminishing Resistance

In proportion as the neurotic attacks keep on recurring the formed pathological system is gaining in energy and in ease of manifestation. The psychopathic attacks with their symptoms emerge at an ever diminishing intensity of stimulation. The resistance of healthy normal associations is ever on the decrease until a point is reached when all power of resistance is lost. The conscious and subconscious groups which enter into the psychopathic system, forming the neurosis, get control over the patient's life, and become an uncontrollable, psychopathic obsession.

XV. The Principle of Modification

The patient attempts to control or alleviate his fear state by a totally different fear state. In the long run this is a losing game. For the general fear disposition becomes ultimately reinforced. Finally he may land in the mystic regions of love or of an Infinite Love in which he expects to find safety, protection, and salvation from the miseries of exaggerated self impulse and intensified fear instinct. Such a course, however, leads to a swamp in which the patient's individuality becomes engulfed and obliterated. The end is mental suicide.

Himself first and last, that is the essence of psychopathic life.

These fundamental principles of neurodevelopment should be kept in mind in the examination and study of psychopathic cases. The cases adduced in this volume will help one to understand the mechanism of the main factors and principles of neurosis.

Principle of contrast
of differentiation
of diminishing resistance
dissociation
dominance
dynamogenesis
embryonic psychogenesis
fusion or synthesis
inhibition
irradiation or diffusion
mental contest and discord
modification
proliferation and complication
recession
recurrence



The mere mention that a work on the causation and treatment of psychopathic diseases at the hands of Sidis has made its appearance should be sufficient for the discriminating reader and for him who knows who is who in psychopathology to lead to an immediate purchase and reading of the volume.

There are few writers on things psychopathologic who are deserving of the consideration and attention of the average reader to the extent to which Sidis rightfully commands the same.

—Meyer Solomon

Political Psychology

A Study of the Mob (1895)

The Study of Mental Epidemics
(1896)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
SUGGESTION, PART II, SOCIETY
(1897)

The subwaking mob se lf slumbers
within the bosom of society.

Fear, Anxiety, and Psychopathic
Maladies (1911)

Neurosis and Eugenics (1915)

Foreword to A Remark on the
Occurrence of Revolutions by William
James Sidis (1918)

Time Crowding As A Factor in
Influenza (1918)

The Source and Aim of Human
Progress (1919)

Laboratory Works

An E xperimental Study of S leep
(1909)

The Na ture a nd C ausation of t he
Galvanic Phenomenon (1910)

I L aboratory I nstruments U sed by
Boris Sidis

SELECTED REVIEWS OF BORIS
SIDIS'S BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- The Psychology of Suggestion
Charles Sanders Peirce [?]
- The Psychology of Suggestion
E. B. Titchener
- The Psychology of Suggestion
Margaret F. Washburn
- The Psychology of Suggestion
Charles K. Mills
- The Psychology of Suggestion
Unsigned
- Neuron Energy and its Psychomotor
Manifestations
George Dearborn
- Psychopathological Researches
Joseph Jastrow
- Psychopathological Researches
Charles H. Judd
- Multiple Personality
Joseph Jastrow
- Multiple Personality
Isador H. Coriat
(Review of the literature.)
- Multiple Personality
C.W.B.
- Are There H ypnotic

Hallucinations?

Morton Prince

Studies in Psychopathology

Harry Linenthal

Studies in Psychopathology

Adolf Meyer

An Experimental Study of Sleep

Alice Pickel

An Experimental Study of Sleep

Shepherd Franz

The Doctrine of Primary and
Secondary Sensory Elements

Robert S. Woodworth

The Doctrine of Primary and
Secondary Sensory Elements

E. Weaver

The Nature and Causation of the
Galvanic Phenomenon

Knight Dunlap

The Nature and Causation of the
Galvanic Phenomenon

Joseph Breitwieser

The Foundations of Normal and
Abnormal Psychology

Harry Linenthal

Symptomatology, Psychognosis,
and Diagnosis of Psychopathic Diseases

R. H. Steen
Symptomatology, Psychognosis,
and Diagnosis of Psychopathic Diseases

Meyer Soloman
The Causation and Treatment of
Psychopathic Diseases

Meyer Soloman
Philistine and Genius
Meyer Soloman

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES



Dr. Boris Sidis

b. Oct. 12, 1867, Berditchev, Russia. d. Oct. 24,
1923, Portsmouth, NH

Dr. Boris Sidis was born in Russia and came to the United States when twenty years old. He won four degrees at Harvard, the A. B., A. M., Ph. D., and M. D. He is a widely known writer on psychopathology and kindred subjects. Experimental Study of Sleep, The

Psychology of Laughter, The Causation and Treatment of Psychopathic Diseases, and The Source and Aim of Human Progress, are among his books. He has been associated with various institutions, including the Pathological Institute of N. Y. State. He is fifty-three [56] years old and resides at Portsmouth, N. H.

American Magazine, 1923, 95, 14-15; 98-102.

Outline for The Sidis Story (Contains more biographical information about the Sidises than any other source found so far.)

The Sidis Story by Sarah Sidis, M.D. (1952)

Most thoughtful people today have come to realize that all effective psychologists must be as much an artist as a scientist. They must have a perception so delicate and acute that they can follow instantly along the twisting paths of the subwaking mind. Boris had the delicacy, the perception and the artistry that that takes. It made him not only a great scientist, but a great teacher and a great

man, and it made him a marvelous husband.

But his college teachers did not want him to be a college teacher. 'I am in a rut', said James. 'I teach the same thing over and over again year after year. I have to do little time to really study, or really contribute anything to the world. It is a question to me whether my teaching means anything at all to 90 percent of my students. You mustn't teach, for you can do greater things'.

...so Boris said to Morton Prince, who had inherited a million dollars, 'Look here, Prince, let's have a Journal of Abnormal Psychology'. Prince said, 'If you think it's a good idea, let's do it'.



[Boris, Helena, Sarah in Los Angeles, ca. 1920]

Boris Sidis's Harvard Medical
School Diploma

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL SCHOOL

Boston, Mass., 29 April 1952

THIS CERTIFIES

That Boris Sidis
A.B. (Harvard Univ.) 1894; A.M. (ibid.) 1895; Ph.D. (ibid.) 1897
received the degree of M.D. from this School on

26 February 1908

George Packer Berry

George Packer Berry, M.D. *Dean*



He matriculated in the Harvard Medical School on

1 February 1908.

Boris Sidis's Harvard Undergraduate Transcript

HARVARD COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Date: April 16, 1952

Record of BORIS SIDIS
Received the degree of A.B. in 1894.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

He was admitted in 1892 as a special student.

SUBJECT	Course	Grade	SUBJECT	Course	Grade
1892-93 Special Student					
English 12	A				
Philosophy 3	A				
Philosophy 15	A				
Political Economy 2	B				
1893-94 Senior					
Philosophy 2	A-				
Philosophy 4	A				
Philosophy 11	A-				
Political Economy 3	A-				

Biographical Sketches (1923) He did not encourage anything in the way of a 'following' of pupils to disseminate his findings and his doctrines. Nor was he in frequent contact with fellow-workers. Add an uncompromising intellectual honesty that impelled him to a blunt outrightness with regard to whatever seemed to him erroneous or mischievous, and it is not difficult to understand why during his lifetime Boris Sidis did not enjoy the full measure of recognition which he merited, and which it would seem certain will eventually be accorded to him. Harold Addington Bruce

Masters of the Mind (1910) Born in a city of southern Russia, he became involved, while still a very young man, in the Russian revolutionary movement; was arrested, clapped into a fortress, and narrowly escaped a sentence to Siberia. After his release the police made matters so uncomfortable for him that he fled the country, and, after a brief sojourn in Germany, came to New York, knowing not a word of English, friendless, and almost penniless.

This was in 1888. Less than a decade later—the young Russian having managed to put himself through Harvard, where he came under the stimulating influence of Professor William James, and was led to specialize in psychology—he astonished the veterans in that science by the publication of a striking book on *The Psychology of Suggestion*. In the meantime he had been appointed Associate in Psychopathology in the then recently established Pathological Institute of the New York State Hospitals. Here he remained several years, developing his method of hypnoidization and effecting many impressive cures. Harold Addington Bruce

BORIS SIDIS in H. A. Bruce's *The Riddle of Personality* (1915) A bitter controversy developed, and in the end he and his associates were swept from office with their work unfinished, and the institute was reorganized on a practical basis. For a time the little band of investigators found refuge in a private laboratory, but ere long lack of funds

caused their dispersal, Dr. Sidis removing to Brookline, Mass., where he continued his scientific work, to no small extent centering his efforts on elaborating the law of dissociation.

Letter to Prof. George Herbert Palmer from Dr. Sarah Sidis (1923) In fact we have some partially completed manuscripts on these subjects which we hope sometime to publish.

Letter from Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus to Dr. Sarah Sidis (1950)

There is no memory of any friend that I hold more dear than that of Dr. Boris Sidis. I need not tell you how close we were and how greatly I admired his ingenuity, his ability, and especially his character and personal qualities. He was a great pioneer in his chosen field of abnormal psychiatry...Hence I was very much interested to learn from you that the University of Miami is planning with you the establishment of a department bearing the name of your illustrious husband.

Sidis Psychotherapeutic Institute
Dr. Sidis will soon be in a position

to carry on his investigations more extensively and systematically than in the past, since, through the generosity of a wealthy New England woman, Mrs. Martha Jones, he has come into possession of a beautiful estate near Portsmouth, N. H., given for the express purpose of establishing a psychopathological institute—the first of its kind in the United States. American Magazine, 1910

The treatment is essentially PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC, based on the latest methods of medical research in the domain of Psychopathology. The psychotherapeutic treatment, however, is combined with general medical treatment of the patients along established and well accepted methods of medicine. Special care is given to the hygienic and dietetic regulation of the patient's life, and electrotherapy and hydrotherapy, et c., are used when requisite.

By psychotherapeutic methods is meant to indicate the practical therapeutic

results obtained by medical psychopathologists in clinics and laboratories. As a reply to many inquiring letters, the opportunity is taken here to state, although it ought to be needless, that Psychotherapy, based on Psychopathological research, has nothing in common with, and in its methods is, diametrically opposed to the superstitious and anti-scientific practices of lay healers and non-medical practitioners. This point cannot be too strongly emphasized. See Sidis Psychotherapeutic Institute.

Time may show that Boris Sidis was the first psychologist to accomplish most, if not all, of the following.

- proposed theories of political psychology (1895-98)
- identify the Laws of Suggestion (1898)
- identify and create term Multiple Personality (1904)
- distinguished psychology from psychopathology (1904)
- proposed Figure / Ground distinction (1908)
- lab study of sleep
- proposed early childhood education for all (1911)
- founded a residential treatment center (1911)
- utilized family therapy (1911)

- developed a psychology of laughter (1913)
- opposed Freud's theories (1906)
- proposed the existence of random mental processes (1914)
- more chance than order in the mind
- identified abuse of fear instinct in childhood education (1919)
- He wrote 17 books and 52 scientific articles
- He was first to earn both a Ph.D. and an M.D. from Harvard (1898, 1904)
- He was one of the founders of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*

