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# The Psychology of Clothing

By EVELETH PEDERSEN

"SOMETHING NEW," says Madame Fashion, and we all turn eager ears. This time it is science telling us that "something new" has been found about our modes of dress.

At the very beginning, one finds that the psychology of clothing is closely linked with the study of physiology. It is physiology that gives us many of the reasons for clothes, beginning with that of privacy or modesty. Man is naturally a naked animal. In clothing our bodies, it behoves us to respect and not ignore this natural nakedness. Closely related to this reason is the wearing of clothes because of a desire to be attractive. The age-old question of whether women dress to please men or not might logically enter here, but when great psychologists have been unable to answer that question satisfactorily, perhaps we had better pass on.

Should we be lacking in modesty, or even in a desire to be attractive, we should still need clothes to protect us from the elements. We are warm-blooded animals, and the garments we wear directly affect our ability to maintain the proper body temperature. Their texture, whether a loose or a tight weave, determines the amount of heat lost from the surface of the body. The material of which they are made, again, has its effect. Fur keeps us warmer than does wool; wool is warmer than silk, silk than cotton, cotton than linen, and finally the color itself has an actual influence on our body temperature. White tends to make the wearer feel cool, black gives warmth, red excites and so warms.

"The clothes proclaim the man; a cheap coat makes a cheap man," however, give us our most real reason for wearing clothes. They allay one kind of a fear or another. We are afraid of being considered immodest, of showing signs of poverty, of looking ridiculous, of being considered homely, or of losing the esteem of those about us.

We have come to believe that life is a reaction of the individual to his environment. In this reaction clothes play an important part. They have almost literally become a second skin. As such they are as closely related to the mind as they are to the body. Because we are more familiar to their relation to the body, let us consider that as a basis for a subsequent consideration of the influences of clothes on the mind.

Their proximity to the skin leads us to call to mind four of the functions of the skin which clothing may affect. These are: protection, regulation of body temperature, sensations of various kinds, and excretions of sweat. The skin must be allowed to breathe as well as the lungs. If it cannot breathe, but if moving air can also have access to the skin, the increase in well-being and efficiency is remarkable. Can you not remember how refreshing some cool, brisk breeze was on a sultry day last summer? A slight circulation of the air next to the body at any time has this same effect. Clothes that protect the body sufficiently may at

the same time be of loose enough construction or loose enough weave to permit this moving of the air.

Above all, our clothes must permit our bodies to function normally and comfortably. Our digestive actions, breathing movements, heart and arterial action are essential to life. Needless heavy and confining clothing is not only fatiguing, but often leads to disability. Have you ever been too tired to carry your heavy winter coat any longer, and find yourself forced to sit down and rest before doing anything more? From fatigue to disability is but a short step. Not long ago I read an account of a ship wreck from which only a few men survived. In telling about it, the men said they had tried to help the women climb the masts to safety, but the women were physically unable to climb and the men were forced to leave them to their fate. Their inability because of faulty clothes, took a heavy toll.

Altho our bodies are all built on the same general plan, when it comes to a consideration of clothes, we find that each body is individual. With each body also goes a unique set of bodily actions. In various ways your personality is evidenced in your actions, and in psychologically good clothes these individual actions are allowed to exert a noticeable influence. Each of us has our own way of walking, of moving our bodies, our arms, of expressing ourselves with the aid of the parts of our bodies. Our ages, our tastes, our dislikes, our occupations, our hobbies—all the things that go to complete our life may and do have a direct relation to the way our clothes should be made. Whether a man be a philosopher or a street cleaner, he needs clothes that fit his body and his body's set of actions—he cannot afford to have either of them cramped or hidden by his clothes.

We have long recognized this underlying principle in wearing old clothes for work. We are most comfortable in clothes that have worn long enough so that they have given here and wrinkled there so that they have come to really fit.

This perfect fitting of our clothes to our bodies and our personalities is the first step in the securing of empathy. Empathy has been spoken of as a feeling of exquisite delight—that feeling an expert dancer or skater experiences when dancing or skating beautifully. In the personal as well as in the social consciousness, unpleasant experiences actually are more vividly real and more memorable than pleasant ones. Moreover, psychologists tell us that they get as strong reactions in their laboratories by having their subjects think about pleasant things or unpleasant things as they do from the real experiences. Such being the case, how a person feels in his clothes, and how he imagines he looks in them is far more important than whatever the true cases may be. A cheap coat does not always make a cheap man, for if the man in that coat thinks he is dressed just right—thinks he looks "like a million," the effect on his mental

condition is just the same as if he actually were dressed in the best of style. He is happy. Being happy, he expends more energy, has more initiative, and is altogether more efficient than he ever could be when unhappy.

Truly, it is said that a philosopher can rise above his clothing—but how many of us are philosophers?

From this sense of empathy rises a pleasant anticipation and a self assurance so necessary if we are to make successful contacts with other people. The problem of the first impression is an ever present one. Who would venture to estimate the number of positions lost or gained solely thru the first impression made by the applicant? In daily life the impression we make on those we meet reacts in turn on us, giving us further strength and initiative, or breaking down our self confidence and lowering our ability to produce.

At the same time clothes are affecting personalities in still another way. The dandy with a cane has caused his personality to extend clear to the tip of the cane. Few men who wear high hats could deny that their personality filled the whole hat. The old fashioned bustle must have made for many an enlarged personality. Superfluous wraps or thick, fuzzy coats are a certain badge of enlarged personality. In a similar way, flowing clothes make one feel as tho he were in the graceful ends. A loose, draped costume gives a joyous sense of motion and will make many an awkward person more graceful. That is why the soft pliable silks are considered to be the ideal fabrics. The heavy silks that our grandmothers knew that could stand alone would give restraint, but the majority that we know today are not too precise. They flow with bodily motion, and as Dearborn says, "Soft, light-weight silks, therefore, are the most psychological material, so to say, for at least feminine dress, not only for their own beauty and warmth, but for their extension of the activity, real as well as imaginary; and not only for those of the wearer, but of the observer as well."

The influence of a heavy corset is naturally just the opposite. A stiff corset may make one feel firm and self reliant and in that way strengthen, but more frequently it acts as a discouragement, lessening self confidence, initiative, and action.

Clothes often go farther than affecting personalities. They even lie for us at times. I have never forgotten one lie in clothing that I stumbled on while I was in high school. Our physical education instructor had a wonderfully well proportioned body. Directly and indirectly she used to urge upon us that we perfect the proportions of our own bodies. One evening we stayed longer than usual for basketball practice, and in the rush to get home, I left my notebook in the dressing room. I was half way home before I remembered it, and by the time I got back all the others were gone and our instructor was taking her shower. On the bench lay her per-

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will save two pounds of meat worth forty-six cents out of six pounds thirteen ounces. He has worked out from this a table giving the weights of meat to be purchased if a certain weight of meat is desired for roasting, and figures that the saving can be directly calculated in dollars and cents.

This is a mistaken calculation since the saving which results is really but a saving in the water content retained in the meat. If two six pound thirteen ounce roasts are used to start with and one weighs four pounds after cooking in a gas oven, the other six pounds after cooking in an electric oven, there is not a saving of two pounds of beef, but of two pounds of water content of the roast. This saving in water content is very desirable since it gives a more moist and palatable appearance to the interior of the roast, but on the whole such an article gives the wrong impression, since it leads the reader to believe that there is an actual saving in the weight of the nutrient portions of the meat itself, dependent upon the kind of heat used in cooking.

While loss in water content is the chief loss, at the same time small amount of carbonaceous and nitrogenous substances are driven off and a little acid is produced which dissolves some of the constituents of the meat. The fat undergoes partial decomposition into fatty acids and glycerine, and a little is volatilized. Some mineral matter and extractives are also lost, as much as 2.47 to 27.18 per cent of the mineral matter present in the uncooked meat being found in the drippings.

In general, the various methods of cooking materially modify the appearance, texture, and flavor of meat and hence its palatability, but have little effect on the total nutritive value. Meat of all kinds has a high food value when judged by the kind and amount of nutritive ingredients which are present, whether it be cooked in hot water, as in boiling or stewing, or by dry heat, as in roast, broiling, sauteing or frying.

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fectly developed chest—a ruffled bosom. Tho this lie was intentional, all of them are not. Neat and spotless garments carry with them a thought of leisure time. Is that why the busy stenographer and the just as busy school girl like the immaculate blouses and fresh collars and cuffs? Is that why particular men wear white shirts a good part of the time?

Not only do we all like our clothing to portray this imaginary leisure time, but we also want it to tell others that we can afford at least a few things that we do not need. Veblen says that people will often go ill clad in order to appear well dressed. He goes on to say, "It is true of dress in even a higher degree than of most other items of consumption, that people will undergo a very considerable degree of privation in the comforts of life in order to afford what is considered a decent amount of wasteful consumption."

Veblen is also of the opinion that the high heel, the long tight skirt, the corset and the general disregard of women

for comfort in their clothes is an evidence that women are still economically dependent on men. He then includes long hair in his list of evidences. Perhaps his reasons will all be out of date some day?

Psychologically good clothing, then, must create empathy. To do this, it needs not only to clothe the body properly, but also to clothe the personality and the set of individual actions that accompany the body and personality. In addition to these things, the really satisfactory costume is both fashionable and beautiful. On rare occasions it is not

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possible to fully heed the call of fashion and have garments that are beautiful in line and color, but Frank Alvah Parsons sums up the situation adequately when he pleads with us to "Render unto fashion the things that are fashion's, and unto art the things that are art's."

## Iowa State Women in Rural Schools

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Rather, teachers must take an active part in the best social life of their young people, bringing to it the same genuine interest and enthusiasm that they might show among their friends at home. At the same time, they should observe faithfully the best social and moral standards of the community, being governed as to their personal conduct and even as to their companionships by these standards. And finally, if they show a desire to perform a helpful part in every possible way, regardless of how unpleasant or inconspicuous that part may be, they will have done much to insure that their great adventure will turn out well.

## Tea Room Accounting

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ording all receipts, properly caring for them, and recording all issues, or consumed stores.

One real small tea room uses this system to good advantage. A daily tally sheet is kept on the wall near the door of the store-room. On this sheet is placed all incoming stores provisions for the day, and goods taken out. The room is open only at stated hours, except in emergencies. The initials of the person receiving and taking goods are placed on this tally sheet and at the end of each day these tally sheets are transferred to the stores ledger cards.

When incoming goods are counted, inspected and recorded, notice is served to employees and merchants that here is a place where affairs are handled in a business-like way. If it is not desired to separate provisions into perishables, and stores, the perishables may be recorded with stores, but in studies of food control it has been found practical and desirable to separate them.

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