



Historiography and Causation in Psychoanalysis

IV, Edwin R. Wallace

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What do the psychoanalyst and the historian have in common? This important question has stimulated a lively debate within the psychoanalytic profession in recent years, bearing as it does on the very nature of the psychoanalytic enterprise. Edwin Wallace, a clinician with training in the history and philosophy of science, brings a ranging scholarly perspective to the debate, mediating between rival perspectives and clarifying the issues at stake in the process of offering his own thoughtful conception of the historical nature of psychoanalysis. For Wallace, the procedures, problems, and interpretive possibilities of psychoanalysis and history are strikingly constant and mutually illuminating. He insists, further, that the fundamentally historical nature of psychoanalysis poses no threat to its scientific dignity.

In arriving at this verdict, Wallace pushes beyond his expansive treatment of the many parallels between history and psychoanalysis to a systematic consideration of the problem of causation in both disciplines. Tracing the historical background of causation in science, philosophy, history, and analysis, he offers a logical analysis of determinism and a critique of causal language in psychoanalysis while adumbrating the historical character of psychoanalytic explanation.

Historiography and Causation in Psychoanalysis is a thought-provoking work that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. It will cultivate the historical sensibilities of all its clinical readers, broadening and deepening the intellectual perspective they bring to the dialogue about the nature of psychoanalytic work. Timely and rewarding reading for analysts, psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists, it will be welcomed by historians and philosophers as well.

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