



The Bifurcation of the Self (Library of the History of Psychological Theories)

Robert W. Rieber

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For more than a hundred years, dissociative states, sometimes referred to as multiple personality disorder, have fascinated the public as well as scientists. The precise nature of this disorder is a controversial one, dividing clinicians, theorists, and researchers. Challenging the conventional wisdom on all sides, Robert Rieber's *Bifurcation of the Self* traces the clinical and social history of dissociation in a provocative examination of this widely debated phenomenon. At the core of this history is a trio of related evolutions—hypnosis, concepts of identity, and dissociation—beginning with nineteenth-century 'hysterics' and culminating in the modern boom in Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) diagnoses and the parallel rise in childhood abuse/repressed memory cases. Rieber does not argue the non-existence of DID; rather he asserts that it is a rare disorder exaggerated by dissociation advocates and exploited by the media. In doing so, he takes on some of the most difficult questions in the field: - How crucial is memory to a person's identity? - Can two or more autonomous personalities actually exist in the same body? - If trauma causes dissociation, why aren't there more DID cases? - Why are DID cases prevalent in some eras but not in others? - Does dissociative disorder belong in the DSM? The book is rigorously illustrated with two centuries' worth of famous cases including Christine Beauchamp, Ansel Bourne, Eve Black/Eve White, and most notably the woman known as 'Sybil', whose story is covered in depth with newly revealed manuscripts. And Rieber reviews the current state of DID-related controversy, from the professionals who feel that the condition is underreported to those who consider it a form of malingering, so that readers may draw their own conclusions.

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