PSYCHO-ANALYTIC PRINCIPLES AND SOCIETY.

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"It is at least conceivable that our present complacent assurance that every individual must live and act within the arbitrary limits assigned by conventional and purely artificial standards of conduct, or else be segregated from society, may be fallacious and inimical to the best development of the race."

WHEN Sigmund Freud, in 1893, published his *Studien über Hysterie*, that part of the medical world which did not greet it with ridicule treated it with silent contempt. In this work Freud made a generalization which for breadth, depth and all-inclusiveness in its particular field may well be compared with the generalizations of Galileo, Copernicus, Newton and Darwin in their respective fields. The very magnitude of the generalization was, in a sense, stupefying to the medical world, and stupefaction gave place to virulent abuse when a few years later he published his *Traumdeutung* and his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, in which the principles enunciated in the first-named work were applied to the deepest workings of the human mind and shown to have therapeutic effects of the highest order.

Prior to this, other investigators had become aware of the close connection between the mind and the body with respect to certain diseases, but credit is due to Freud for combining the results of the investigations of others with those of his own, and developing a plan of procedure for the treatment and cure of sufferers from those previously little understood disorders of the mind known as neuroses and psychoneuroses. One of the strongest proofs that the principles formulated from these discoveries of Freud are based upon universal and fundamental truths lies in their application to the phenomena of everyday life. From the psychological point of view this should be so. Were the principles of psycho-analysis only applicable to the sick mind the element of doubt in its efficacy would be so large as to bring discredit upon it.

Psycho-analysis, whether considered from the point of view of the normal or of the abnormal mind, is based upon the fundamental verities of life. It postulates the oneness of body and mind, the latter term denoting the sum total of the functions of the nervous system, as the former does the sum total of the functions of the

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body; that is, psycho-analysis assumes the monistic theory of human nature as against the dualistic. Another postulate of psycho-analysis is that man is the inheritor of the ages both mentally and physically; that the phylogeny of the race is reproduced to a greater or less extent in the ontogeny of the individual; and also that the principles according to which mental operations are carried on are fundamental and universal, whether recognized or unrecognized. If it were not so society would be impossible.

These postulates do not, in the least, detract from the credit due to Prof. Freud. The laws of thought or the rules of logic in effect existed for millenia before Aristotle formulated them. Newton did not create the law of gravitation, nor Darwin the conditions of existence summed up in the word "evolution." They were discoveries in the domain of natural or, more properly, physical science, and "to discover" is but "to uncover" and make known that which was before unknown. Man has repressed painful ideas and thoughts for unnumbered ages, though with advancing civilization and ethics repression has increased proportionately and been accompanied by greater and still greater untoward consequences. Mankind is indebted to Freud for discovering and formulating the laws of psychical repression and showing their often deplorable effects on the individual.

The repression of painful thoughts and ideas is not "forgetting" in the sense in which that word is ordinarily used. The painful thought or idea cannot be repressed without a mental conflict. Psychic trauma, in the strict sense of the word, concerns the immoralities, not the moralities of daily life. In forgetting the things said and done yesterday there is no conflict. Such things are and remain on the verge, and are only crowded out of the field of consciousness by the exigencies of the ever-living present. The repression of painful thoughts and ideas presupposes a something akin to consciousness, but very different from it. It is a matter of very little consequence whether that something be labelled "subconscious" or "unconscious" so long as we understand and agree upon what the word does mean.

The subconscious mind is coeval with humanity, but its complete recognition has only taken place within the past hundred years. To Freud is due the credit for having recognized this biological fact, and formulated the means whereby the contents of the subconscious may be drawn out and its deleterious effects minimized, if not entirely destroyed.

The repression of painful experiences, thoughts and ideas does not necessarily imply a conscious act on the part of the subject. It may be assumed that whatever conflicts arise are present in

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consciousness. But merely ceasing to do evil is not enough. Freud's investigations have shown that. If "ceasing to do evil" be tantamount to the repression of evil thoughts, that is, painful thoughts, thoughts of an immoral nature, in a word psychic trauma, the result is inimical to the health and comfort of the individual.

The repression of the painful and unpleasant experience, that is, the psychic trauma, implies a wish to forget it, to force it out and keep it out of consciousness because it is painful and unpleasant, and that desirable end seems to have been attained if, in the subject's waking hours, it is not present in his consciousness, for in his waking hours he can build around the offending thought and experience a system of defences intended to be impregnable or, at any rate, to be in the nature of a penance without consciously realizing for what offence the penance is imposed. In the building up of these defences he is exercising an oversight of his thoughts and actions. Prof. Freud was the first of modern psychologists to recognize the importance of this oversight and in his nomenclature it became the censorship. The censorship operates in the field of consciousness. In sleep the field of consciousness is reduced to a minimum, and in just so far as the censor is off duty, so to speak, in dreams, all the defences being broken down, the repressed thoughts and ideas manifest themselves, and the subject's most secret wishes and desires, upon which his unpleasant and painful ideas are founded, have full opportunity to assert themselves.

In the interpretation of dreams Freud took the simple, commonsense view from the start, namely, that in the functioning of the brain you can get nothing out but what has been put in. If the painful experience, unpleasant thought or idea is based upon an unchaste, immoral wish or desire, it will show itself more or less plainly, according to the degree to which consciousness is lost during sleep. Thus if consciousness, which is the censor, is not entirely in abeyance, the unchaste, immoral wish or desire becomes symbolized under different aspects in an endeavour to hide its ugliness. Here again Freud's investigations, including the examination and interpretation of the contents of thousands of dreams related to him by his patients, have resulted in formulating a series of symbols in which the unchaste and immoral wishes and desires clothe themselves.

The words "unchaste" and "immoral" have been repeated several times in the course of this essay, and that with a purpose. Chastity has sole reference to sex and immorality is largely connotative of sexual matters. In the phylogeny of the race sex has been a predominant factor. In the ontogeny of the individual sex is supreme. The human race must be taken as it is. The

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individual must be considered as we find him. In the diagnosis and treatment of disease, either of body or mind, the subject is the paramount factor. The ills of society cannot be diagnosed and remedies applied if the physician has an ideal existence in mind, and, ignoring conditions as they are, seeks to apply ideal remedies. Nor can the ills of the individual be diagnosed and proper remedies applied if the physician ignores, wholly or partially, those fundamental conditions upon which the very existence of the individual rests. Sex is one of those fundamental conditions. The two primary factors of existence from primeval times have been hunger and love. Our world-wide economic and industrial systems rest fundamentally on the former, and just as fundamentally the perpetuation of the race rests upon the latter. Since the organization of the first speck of primeval protoplasmic matter, sex, or something akin to it, has existed. When, in the course of human evolution, the faculty of speech began to be developed, can there be any question but that the first articulated words primitive man used had relation to the two primal elements, hunger and love—words relating to the absolutely necessary bodily wants and desires? That civilization has, in a measure, tabooed sexual matters is beside the question just as much as it would be if society had tabooed all reference to hunger and to the means for appeasing hunger. To say that, just in so far as society has tabooed sexual matters, it has made the existence of certain diseases possible, is to say something which is by no means without its foundation in human experience. With such a history behind it, it should not be at all surprising that sex plays a most prominent part, not only in health but in disease. Grossness and sensuality are subjective before they become objective, and it is again to Freud's credit that he has shown conclusively that certain bodily ills, neuroses and psychoneuroses have their origin in suppressed and repressed sexual desires or wishes, desires and wishes that could not be repressed without a conflict between the two opposing influences operating in the mind of the individual—the repressed and suppressed influences being immoral in their nature and productive of painful consequences, such as disgrace and suffering, if not suppressed. This principle of psycho-analysis has been censured without stint ever since Freud published his *Studien über Hysterie* in 1893, and is to-day regarded with disfavour by many physicians, though it is a pleasure to say that their number is decreasing rapidly. The censure here referred to has its origin largely in the mind of a class of practitioners and professors, who, either through mental inertia or laziness, or by reason of bias and prejudice, are unable or unwilling to examine the claims of the psycho-analyst, or even to withhold

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their judgment. Every marked advance in medical science has met with the same kind of treatment. Such objectors may admit the truth of the findings of psychological investigators in general, and even concede that psychotherapy, as a means of relieving certain diseases, is not without value, but when confronted with the claims urged on behalf of psycho-analysis their antagonism is instantly aroused. The reason for this antagonism lies in the fact that, just as one psycho-analytic dictum postulates that influences received in early life are often found to be not only the remote but also the fundamental cause of bodily disorder many years afterwards; so "most of these criticisms have centred themselves around the prominence given by Freud to the sexual element as the cause of various forms of nervous and mental diseases"; it has "always been considered a disagreeable subject . . . and it has always had attached to it a moral reaction doubly emphasized by religion and education." To quote further: "What is psycho-analysis? Psycho-analysis is the name given to a method of investigation which has been developed for reaching down into the depths of the individual's mind to bring to light the underlying motives and determinants of his symptoms and attitudes which may reveal the unconscious tendencies that lie behind his certain actions and reactions, and which in turn may influence his conduct in sickness and health." As it has also been defined by Burrow, "psycho-analysis is a method of psychotherapy based upon the principle that where there is present a marked and persistent impediment in the life of the individual, whether it amounts to the blocking characteristics of nervous disorders or only to such obstructions to effectiveness as are represented in many so-called normal individuals, it is due to the existence, in the unconsciousness of the psyche, of repressed sexual affects regressing toward an early infantile mode. . . . Its basic postulate is that repression is the causative factor in the neuroses. . . . The essential idea of psycho-analysis is a personal analysis. It is not the analysis of our patients; it is the analysis of ourselves." Psycho-analysis involves the study of man's unconscious or unacknowledged motives and impulses to thought and action.

But even the most determined objector to psycho-analysis must admit, and does admit, that some parts of it are worthy of his acceptance. Such an objector, however, is very careful to add that no credit is due to Freud on that account. Says such an objector: Whatever is good in psycho-analysis is old; whatever is new is not good.

What are these condemned parts?

(1) That infantile sexual trauma is a cause of the neuroses.

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(2) That the sexual mental life is a fundamental fact of existence.

(3) That the repressed and displaced mental material is always sexual.

(4) That means have been discovered whereby the repressed material, by a particular process of analysis, is manifested by sexual symbolism.

(5) That certain neuroses are curable by such analysis.

In briefly examining these objections the words "sex" and "sexual" should be taken in the sense in which Freud himself uses them. "The snag which is met with in psycho-analysis is the meaning of the word 'sexuality.' Freud never meant it to be interpreted in the gross popular sense. Freud conceived sexuality to be synonymous with love, and love includes all the tender feelings, emotional reactions, ambitions, æsthetic reactions, ethical reactions, moral reactions, friendship, companionship, etc." Only in one aspect does it refer to the physical relations of the sexes which result in the perpetuation of the race, and which may be of the tenderest kind or of the grossest nature.

In offering a rejoinder to the objections just given I shall consider them slightly out of order for the sake of convenience, taking first the second objection, namely, that the sexual mental life is a fundamental fact of existence. To doubt the truth of this statement is to doubt one's own existence. Mental life and physical life are not separate entities. They are not merely interwoven, one with the other. They are two aspects of the same thing, namely, that living, breathing, thinking, organized integration, the interdependent parts performing their functions properly: this is considered a state of health. When one part or another is not performing its functions properly sickness is the result, and this notwithstanding the assertions of certain religious sects to the contrary.

The third objection is equally untenable. It is based upon the fallacy that the repression of an idea must be a conscious act, which is far from being the case. Men do not forget by an exercise of the will focused on the idea to be forgotten. A repressed thought or idea is one pressed back from the field of consciousness by other ideas and thoughts forcing themselves to the centre of the field of consciousness. That the repressed material is of a sexual nature is a matter of evidence, and the experience of the Freudian school shows this to be proven beyond the possibility of doubt.

The fourth objection is also a matter of evidence and experience that stamps the claim of Freud to be one of indisputable veracity.

We will now consider the first objection, namely, to the assertion

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that infantile sexual trauma is the cause of the neuroses. This objection cannot be summarily dismissed; nor would it be proper, within the scope of this essay, to elaborate the evidence tending to show that this objection is not founded on observation, but rather that it has its basis in that state of mind which refuses to accept any theory, whether well grounded or not, which to such objectors even remotely implies that the innocence of childhood may by any possibility be improperly influenced by ideas of sex and sexuality.

This objection ignores the surrounding conditions under which the child passes its earlier years. It ignores the all-prevailing evidence of sex which confronts the young child from its birth onwards; or, to be more specific, it ignores the differences which force themselves on the child's notice from the time when its powers of observation begin to be aroused, such as the superficial differences between its father and mother, its brothers and sisters, boys and girls, dress, language, play, the bodily functions, the difference in treatment accorded to it by men as compared with women, all of which impressions, as also the pleasures or pains attached thereto, become organized, psychologically considered, in the nervous system long before the age of puberty arrives. It is absurd to say that these things, the commonest of common things, have no effect on the child's mind. That the child does not understand these things, or any of them, may be conceded if by "understanding these things" means understanding them as an adult understands them. The complete organization of the child is born with it. In the ontogeny of man the peculiar sexual parts, internal and external, begin to be developed at an early period in uterine life. Knowing these things, as the objector must, he is faced with a dilemma: he must either reject the view that such an organization of the nervous system resulting from an infinitude of impressions, a few of which are suggested above, takes place, and assume that by some unknown process a knowledge of sexual matters suddenly flashes into the consciousness of the child at puberty without any preliminary steps; or he must agree that such a development does take place, but without the child being in the least aware of the fact until puberty. If the former, he necessarily must hold that a multitude of impressions repeated innumerable times are without effect on the child's mind; and if the latter, he reads into the child's mind the thought of an adult in violation of a primary rule of scientific research, which may be expressed in some such way as this: Never permit subjective influences (bias, prejudice) of your own to determine objective results.

The writer feels that he should not go into the details of the processes by means of which Freud has opened the mind of the child

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to inspection as it were. In a paper of this kind such details are out of place. By the writer it is conceived to be sufficient if he has established the fact of universal opportunity for sexual knowledge of some sort on the part of the child, for when that fact is established the conclusion is irresistible that that knowledge may be used either well or ill. If used well, then the further development of the child goes on normally; if ill, the foundation is laid for nervous troubles in adult life. Freud's investigations have proved the truth of this conclusion beyond a doubt.

Turning now to the fifth criticized point—that certain neuroses are curable by analysis.

The writer deems it inadvisable to undertake even a general consideration of the data upon which psycho-analysis as a system of therapy rests. Sufficient has been suggested already to justify the conclusion that certain of the neuroses are amenable to proper treatment by psycho-analytic methods. He suggests, however, that psycho-analysis has nothing in common with the schemes of so-called mental healing, nor of the hypnotic and suggestion schools of therapy. Experience has proved its efficacy, but for the procedure or *modus operandi* of treatment reference should be made to the standard works on psycho-analysis. To do even scant justice to this part of the subject is impossible in an article purposely cast in an untechnical mould. Suffice it to say that psycho-analysis is a highly important step forward in the evolution of the healing art. It is, as has been shown, based on fundamental psychological principles, and as such is bound to have more far-reaching results in the future than have yet been attained. To use a somewhat non-medical expression, but one full of meaning: It has made good in its own particular field and in that particular field it is without a rival.

One consideration concerning the individual as a social unit, which investigators in the domain of mentality cannot afford to ignore, and least of all the psycho-analysts, is in regard to the future. With a rapidly diminishing birth-rate in the leading civilized nations; with the persistent and insistent demand of women for higher education and political rights and equally persistent demands for equality with man in all respects, and with the necessary correlative sacrifice of child-bearing and domestic duties, the outlook for the future is indeed very grave. The phylogeny of the human race, during scores of thousands of years past, has impressed a stamp on men and women that cannot be erased during the course of two or three generations. The anatomy and physiology of the body, in all its parts, are inheritances from a past compared with which the time that has elapsed since our human ancestors deserted their arboreal surroundings and acquired the upright position is

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but as yesterday. To consciously, and in a sense, violently suppress those necessary mental traits which are intimately connected with, the bodily conformation thus acquired, must obviously result in an ever-increasing number of the mentally unstable. Drugs or other medication are powerless to rectify this condition. Such individuals must be taught right living, and right living is to obey the laws of their existence. Mere moral and religious teachings do not accomplish this. The history of the past two thousand years clearly and strongly supports this view, as witness the effects of asceticism in the early centuries of the Christian era as compared with industrial Europe, from the middle of the nineteenth century. The population of the British Isles in the time of Elizabeth was only about 8,000,000. At the accession of Queen Victoria it was in the neighbourhood of 20,000,000; and by the end of the nineteenth century was upwards of 40,000,000. Religious asceticism in almost all its branches had ceased to exist and had given place to industrialism. The era of social and political reform inaugurated in the early part of the nineteenth century is still with us, but intensified a thousand-fold. Mythological Eve, yielding to temptation, exchanged ignorance for knowledge, and was rejected from Paradise and had the pains of childbirth inflicted on her. The modern Eve aspires to regain Paradise by the aid of more knowledge—through birth-control, legalized or otherwise—and the consequence will undoubtedly be an ever-decreasing rate in births. But this cannot be attained without suppression of the instincts, impulses, feelings and emotions, inherited from a thousand generations of ancestors. When the suppression is complete, if such an eventuality is conceivable, the human race is ended. In the meantime, such forcible suppression will result in an ever-increasing ratio of the mentally unstable. It is not claimed that psycho-analysis is in any sense a system of morals, yet by directing attention to the causes of many mental difficulties it indicates their relation to the fundamental basis of existence and points the way out of those difficulties. In this respect it, in the truest sense of the term, lays the foundation for a higher and more nearly perfect system of morals than has ever before existed.

"It is the moralization, not the annihilation, of ambition and desire that is demanded—the bringing of one's sensuous nature into harmony with the realization of a rational personality."

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