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*Books by Theodor Reik*

THE RITUAL, with a Preface *by Sigmund Freud*

THE UNKNOWN MURDERER

SURPRISE AND THE PSYCHO-ANALYST

FROM THIRTY YEARS WITH FREUD

THE INTERNATIONAL PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL LIBRARY  
EDITED BY ERNEST JONES  
No. 32

FROM THIRTY YEARS  
WITH FREUD

By  
THEODOR REIK

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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

**D**ESPITE Freud's personal frankness in his writings he retained a deep inner reserve and so is likely to remain a man of mystery to future generations, who will greatly like to understand what manner of mind it was that was able unaided to penetrate so profoundly into its own secrets and into those of humanity. Any scraps of information, therefore, concerning his remarkable personality will be welcome, and the present book provides some of undoubted interest. Dr. Reik throws light on several aspects of Freud's personality, among which special attention may be called to the convincing evidence of Freud's fundamental hopefulness and the falsity of designating him a pessimist.

The author would be the last to deny that the glimpses he gives us are but partial ones, and that he does not pretend to paint a complete picture. He would further, I am sure, admit that the passage of years has brought an increasing risk of strengthening the subjective factor in some of his judgements and possibly also in his memories. Two little instances occur to me. He says that after Freud's serious illness the only thing noticeable was that he cleared his throat when he lectured. In fact, Freud never lectured after that date and only on one occasion did he ever even attend a meeting of the Society. Clearing the throat was a habit he had always had; what the illness brought was the difficulty of articulation. The second instance concerns Dr. Reik's quoting Freud's prohibiting the celebration of his

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seventieth birthday with the remark, alluding to Karl Abraham's recent death, "one cannot celebrate with a corpse in the house." In fact there was an important celebration of that birthday; I went to Vienna myself to attend it. And Freud's birthday was in May, while Abraham had died in the previous December. If Dr. Reik's memory is correct about Freud's remark, then it is certainly not to be taken as an expression of conventional piety on Freud's part—this would have been not in the least characteristic of him—but as an illustration of the way he would snatch at any pretext to avoid, or at least minimise, a ceremonial occasion.

While, therefore, we are grateful to Dr. Reik for his highly interesting contributions, we should advise the reader not to regard them as depicting a flawless or complete portrait of Freud's personality.



*Veni, creator spiritus:*  
. . . *Accende lumen sensibus.*

## PREFACE

### A PORTRAIT COMES TO LIFE

IT is just two o'clock in the morning. The last news summary on Station WHN reports the terms that Hitler and Mussolini will offer vanquished France. From Sixth Avenue comes the noise of automobiles. Now and then the voices of people returning from parties steal through my window. I am still sitting at my desk, struggling with the book that has occupied me for fifteen years. Always the work was interrupted, postponed—other books, like this one, were written and published in the interval—and always I returned to the work again, for it would not release me. I am discouraged and tired. My eyes are burning. I should like to bundle up the pile of manuscript and notes, stuff it into a file and be done with it. Then my eyes chance upon the portrait that hangs above my desk. The light falls on the head, and for a moment it seems as though Freud were alive again. I see him again at his desk, see him stand up, come forward and extend his hand to me with that bold, characteristic gesture of his. I see him shuffling the manuscripts on the desk aside, opening a box of cigars, and holding it out to me.

I have stood for nearly half an hour before this portrait, paced up and down the room, and now I have returned to it again, strangely moved. I remember the day the Viennese etcher, Max Pollak, first exhibited it at Hugo Heller's galleries.

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That must have been in 1913. A small number of the etchings had been executed on subscription.

A dimly lighted room. In the foreground, on the desk, antique bronzes and figurines, dug up out of the ruins of centuries, phantoms of the past. They stand out starkly against the picture's white border. Freud's head, bent forward slightly, outlined distinctly. The eyebrows lifted as though in deep attention. Ridges on the high forehead and two deep furrows running down from the mouth to the short white beard. The eyes gaze into the beholder and yet see beyond him. How often have I looked into those eyes. They have an expression of hardy quest, as if their gaze had wholly merged into their object; and yet they valued that object only for the knowledge it gave. One hand holds the pen loosely, as if the sudden vision of a long-sought answer has interrupted the writing. The other hand lies slack on the paper. The light from the window at the side of the room highlights but one side of the forehead. The face is in shadow, with only the eyes gleaming steelily. . . . There suddenly come to my mind some words of his. It was during a walk, and I had asked him how he felt when he first captured the psychic conceptions contained in *Totem and Taboo*. I probably spoke rather floridly, saying something about an overwhelming joy, for he answered, "I felt nothing like that; simply an extraordinary clarity." . . . He was an unusually keen observer with a deep respect for the data of the senses.

How often since that first momentous visit have I sat with him at this desk. (I remember that important occasion in 1912 when I announced to him that now that I had my Ph.D. I intended to study

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medicine. He advised me strongly against it, saying, "I have other things in mind for you, larger plans." He insisted that I go on with my psycho-analytical research work.) How often have my eyes wandered reverently over the antiques upon his desk as I discussed psychological problems with him. Here, in this portrait, the sculptures seem symbolic. For the life that Freud showed us was resurrected like them from the dust of centuries. This man had rolled away the stone from a wisdom that had lain long underground, utterly hidden. In unflagging, diligent archæological work, he had brought forth from the deepest strata precious finds whose existence none had suspected.

For a moment the figure in the etching seemed to be alive, seemed to step out of the past into the present. It was as if Freud himself stood up from the chair at his desk in his home in the Berggasse and made as if to approach me. For the space of a few quickened heart-beats I thought: he is alive.

I know, now that the impression has passed, that we are called again to the labour of sorrow, that unseen, prolonged process of separation in which we take leave of our dear departed. It is work against great odds, for so many objects, places, and circumstances remind us of the time he was still with us. How can we accomplish this work which takes place so heart-breakingly in the midst of memory. Yet this silent process of the psyche is necessary, for our energy must be dedicated to the demands of the day.

For me the demand of the day is to continue my work, to write those books which I have so long borne within me, to complete the researches I have begun. That moment when Freud's picture seemed to come to life now assumes more than momentary

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meaning. His memory has given me new heart, has set before me his example, his unerring and tireless striving.

Once more—and for the last time—I shall briefly interrupt the work on that accursed book, since I wish to preserve my memories of Freud, and I must look through what I have written and add to the old.

Tomorrow—no, this morning—the radio will announce what Hitler and Mussolini have decreed shall be the fate of Europe. But however they decide, the future of Europe is not a thing obedient to their decisions. The future of humanity will not be wrought by wars and conquests, but by the quiet work of the mind. The lamp that burns in the night over the scientist's desk gives more powerful light than artillery fire. Freud shall live long after Hitler and Mussolini are dust.

THEODOR REIK.

*June* 19, 1940.  
NEW YORK.

PART ONE  
FREUD AND HIS FOLLOWERS

CHAPTER I

MEMORIES OF SIGMUND FREUD

I

**I**N this chapter I have set down memories garnered through the thirty years of my closeness to Freud, years during which his work and his personality were an invaluable inspiration to me. Many great minds have cast their influence over me, but none more lastingly than he. It has been my fortune to meet many noble figures, and they have meant a good deal to me. But none meant as much as he, and no man that I knew was a source of so much happiness to me.

The memories and impressions recorded here are largely of personal matters. They dwell on Freud chiefly as man and scientist, and not on the substance of his scientific work. My own life work and my books may testify to what profound effect Freud's scientific work has had upon me. The achievements of the disciple are the laurels of the master.

Moreover, I have no ambition to write a biography of Freud. I wish simply to set down certain impressions of the days when he lived and wrought good. I hope that in these pages I shall have once more summoned him up to life through the sorcery of memory, memory which quickens the strangely mingled feelings of joy at having known him and grief at having him no longer. When I think of him I feel no definite sorrow, for his death is still too

close. Sorrow does not come until long afterwards, when we feel that he is no longer here. And yet I do not feel it; I merely know it. And, indeed, I do not always know it. Often, when I am musing over certain ideas, I surprise myself thinking that I shall write to him about them. I wonder what he will think about them—I find myself considering how to phrase the problem, and I hear myself murmuring the salutation under my breath, "Dear Herr Professor . . ." And then I remember. And sorrow stirs, the harsh feeling of loss. But it only stirs, like something that has not yet been born but is still maturing toward birth.

I am certain that the next few years will see a flood of books and articles on Freud. Scholars and laymen, writers and journalists, will chronicle the life and work of this genius. The cinema world has already announced several films which are to deal with psycho-analysis. (Freud had no great liking for the movies. Only the genius of Charlie Chaplin's pantomime appealed to him.) Yet most of these future biographers will have known Freud only a brief time and most of them will understand little of the man and his work.

Certainly I do not wish to vaunt an intimacy that did not exist. In his books and in conversation Freud often named me as one of his friends. But I myself have never ventured to claim that I was one. One is not "intimate" with a genius, however familiarly he may speak to one as a friend. In conversation with me Freud was never circumspect or aloof; he was always friendly and personal—more so than ever in the last years. But the separation was too wide. There was always a barrier. My friend Dr. Hanns Sachs, one of the most prominent

psycho-analysts in this country, admits that he had the same feeling in the presence of the great man. In the beautiful eulogy he wrote after Freud's death he closes with the words, "He was, so to speak, made of better stuff than ordinary people." In this, however, I am at odds with my esteemed friend. It would be truer to say that Freud was made of the self-same stuff as all of us. But he moulded and shaped and worked this paltry material with unceasing labour and self-education, strove until he formed himself into some greater figure, of a stature unique in our age.

## 2

Let us avoid making a legend of him. He himself would not have wished it. Some sixteen years ago in Vienna, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, his disciples were preparing a birthday celebration. Then came the sudden death of Dr. Karl Abraham, whom Freud perhaps considered his most talented follower. Freud had heard of our preparations and asked us to abandon them. "One does not celebrate a wedding with a corpse in the house," he said. He requested me to speak the funeral address for Abraham at the meeting of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society. Freud himself was present, of course, but because of his illness he refrained from speaking. After I had given the address he pressed my hand silently, but on the way home he commended me for mentioning not only the virtues of our friend, but his faults also. "That is just the way I should have done it, Reik," he said. "The proverb, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, is, I think, nothing but a relic of our primitive fear of the dead. We psycho-analysts must throw such conventions

overboard. Trust the others to remain hypocrites even before the coffin." And to illustrate his remarks, he told me one of those Jewish jokes which so unmercifully expose the psychic motives of our exaggerated eulogies of the dead.

No, let us have no legends woven around Freud. He was human, with human weaknesses, and we loved him even for these. His character was rooted in that black earth out of which all of us grow. But most trees remain small or of middling height, and only the rare ones grow from their underground roots to such astonishing heights.

His human weaknesses, or his human qualities, manifested themselves in little traits left over from his earlier development. They were never conspicuous. He was capable of much love, but he was also a good hater. He tried to suppress his desires to avenge injustices he had received: but often they broke forth in a word, a gesture or an intonation. In old age, despite his self-control, more than one bitter word broke through the bars. "Men are a wolf pack," he could say at such times, "simply a wolf pack. They hunt down those who would do good for them." Such remarks always startled us. But at such times he always spoke without strong emotion; these remarks sounded quite matter-of-course, like a final, calm judgement. Once—and only once—I saw him terribly angry. But the only sign of this anger was a sudden pallor and the way his teeth bit into his cigar. He could utter curses and vituperation as well as any one of us, but he preferred not to. Once, when I was railing against a certain professor of psychiatry for his shabby conduct, Freud merely smiled. He nodded in agreement when I used an expression that implied



the man came from no human ancestry; but he restrained his own anger. I once asked him how he had endured the hostility of a whole world for so many years without becoming enraged or embittered. He answered, "I preferred to let time decide in my favour." And he added. "Besides, it would have pleased my enemies if I had shown that I was hurt."

Let us not deceive ourselves. He was not insensitive to neglect or slights. It hurt him that he had not yet received official recognition in Vienna itself, at a time when the whole world already honoured him. But he would never air his feelings except in a casual joke. Once a Vienna tax collector challenged his income tax statement and pointed out that Freud's fame was spread far beyond the borders of Austria. Freud wrote in reply, "But it does not begin until the border."

He was not vindictive, but he did not forget injuries. For many years he kept away from the Viennese Medical Society, the members of which had once jeered at him when he lectured before them on the psychic genesis of hysteria. He once asked me to look up something in a magazine. I found that the volume containing this magazine could be obtained only from the Medical Society, and since I needed a letter of recommendation in order to use their library I asked him for one. He promised to write it for me, but forgot, which was very unusual for him. I reminded him, but he forgot again. Finally he confessed, "I couldn't bring myself to do it. My resistance was too strong."

He once said to me that character was determined essentially by the prevalence of one instinctual

impulse over others. In his personality, the particular impulse which would incline a man toward being a healer was not nearly so strongly developed as his impulse to knowledge. He had nothing of the *furor therapeuticus* that so many doctors manifest. He repeatedly said to us that three tasks were "impossible"—to govern, to educate, and to heal. By this he implied that these actions are wholly in the ideal domain. As a matter of fact, he was not overhappy about becoming a physician. But the desire to contribute some vital addition to mankind's volume of knowledge awakened early in him; this desire was already clearly defined when he was still in the high school.

His capacity for self-control was extraordinary. He once said that we are indebted for our greatest cultural achievements to great personalities, those with powerful impulses who had the gift of curbing them and turning them to serve higher ends. In his excellent essay on the "Moses" of Michelangelo he has shown us an example—or rather an ideal—of such an instinct-ridden genius who tamed his raging emotions.

He invariably expressed impatience or irritation by twisting these emotions into a wry joke. It must have been in one such moment of annoyance with us followers, with our rivalries and petty quarrels, that he cried, "Oh, if all of them had but a single backside!" With this parody of Nero's cruel sentiment he diverted his own anger.

## 3

Experience bears out that there is a kind of functional relationship between literary and oratorical gifts. Master stylists are seldom good speakers;

ability to express oneself in the one form seems to hamper expression in the other. Freud was a masterly stylist. His prose, with its lucid, tranquil, richly associative flow, merits comparison with that of the great writers. Freud revised the well-known maxim to, "*Style est l'histoire de l'homme.*" By that maxim he did not mean merely that literary influences fashioned the style of the individual, but that the development and experiences of an individual do their part in moulding his style.

Certainly, he was not a powerful orator; and, in fact, he disliked speaking. He always had to overcome a certain resistance before delivering a lecture. His speaking manner had nothing of the demagogic about it, nothing of the impulsive or the emotionally winning. In its sobriety and lucidity, its slow, logical development, and its anticipations of objections, it had none of the qualities that sway the masses. On the other hand, it possessed all the qualities that convince unprejudiced, sympathetic, thoughtful listeners. There was something curiously compelling about the very uncoercive manner of his speech. His lectures at congresses and scientific meetings could not be called lectures in the rigid academic sense; rather, they were free accounts of his experiences and researches. Their manner was conversational instead of formal. He once wrote to me that when he lectured he chose one sympathetic person from among his audience and imagined that he was addressing this person alone. If this person was absent from among his listeners, he would not feel at ease until he had found someone to understudy him, so to speak. This attitude explains the direct-address form of his lectures and the manner in which he anticipated objections, formulating the

doubts and questions of his audience as if he could read their minds. This direct approach is carried over into his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, where it can be easily observed.

He always spoke extemporaneously; he prepared for a lecture simply by taking a long walk during which he reflected on his subject. He never liked us, his assistants and disciples, to read our lectures from manuscript. He believed that the reading distracted the attention of the listener and handicapped his identifying himself with the lecturer. He thought this capacity for identification was encouraged if the lecturer spoke freely, developing the train of his ideas as they came to him at the moment. This would be true even if he had often reviewed these ideas in his mind, for in speaking he would be re-creating them. This kind of lecturing was particularly easy for Freud because of his astonishing memory, a memory which in his earlier years was almost photographic.

The impression left by one of Freud's lectures grew with the passage of time, deepened in retrospect. A born orator makes a quite different impression—his speech has an immediate, powerful effect, but does not create any lasting impression. All who have heard Freud lecture will testify that it was an intellectual pleasure of a high order.

Simple and clear at the outset, his lectures made rapid headway into presentation and analysis of a complicated psychic situation. Freud never shunned any difficulty. He never tried to present a completed, flawless system; he unhesitatingly admitted that he could not, or could not yet, solve a problem and would then point out the path of future research. He was both cautious and audacious in his formulations,

faithful to fundamental criteria even if these criteria might seem faulty at first glance, and altering his criteria if new facts opposed themselves to the old. He tried to lead his listeners to draw their own conclusions from the psychological material available. Freud assisted them by presenting and discussing every aspect of the material. His procedure, to approach the final conclusion step by step, to expose all that was doubtful, and to avoid all circumlocution and distortion, inevitably exercised an impressive and convincing effect upon his audience.

Sometimes, however, he would begin his lecture with an assertion that seemed patently improbable, and then he would so support this assertion by the citing of a number of cases that no attentive and just listener could disagree with him. I remember once that he made just such a statement, which sounded starkly unbelievable, and then went on to admonish his listeners not to reject it prematurely as paradoxical or impossible. "Do you remember," he said, "how in Shakespeare's play, when the ghost of the king cries 'Swear!' from within the earth, Horatio cries out, 'O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!' But Hamlet replies, 'And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.' So I too shall ask you first to give welcome to the things that here rise so strangely from the tomb of the past."

He lectured in a measured, firm, and pleasant voice, although in later years he was often forced by his illness to break off suddenly to clear his throat. His language was unadorned; he rarely used adjectives, preferring understatement; the rich current of thought flowed along without any marked rise and fall of his voice. I never heard him

become sentimental or emotional. He had so strong a desire for clarity that he could not help making everything clear to his listeners, and where he could not, he would frankly point out the obscurities of the problem. In order to make his points clear and concrete he was fond of adducing analogies from everyday life. In a lecture given in 1915, where he was discussing the place of onanism in childhood and in the life of the adult, he first waived all moral evaluations of this sexual activity and insisted on considering the problem only from the standpoint of purpose. He drew the following analogy: "Bow and arrow were once, in prehistoric times, man's only weapon, or at any rate his best weapon. But what would you say if a French soldier of today went into battle with bow and arrow instead of a rifle?"

In the discussions which followed lectures of the Psycho-Analytical Society he was usually the last to speak. He rarely failed to find a friendly word for the analyst who had lectured, but he also freely offered criticism which was always *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*. I remember a lecture by a young colleague which, instead of being an examination of the problem, presented merely pretentious plans for the treatment of scientific questions. During the lecture Freud, who sat next to me, slipped me a sheet of paper on which he had written, "Does reading menus fill your stomach?"

In the midst of a serious discussion he would often surprise us with a humorous remark. In a lecture before the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society the New York analyst, Dr. Feigenbaum, once showed that even the speaking of intentional nonsense, which often happens in card playing, for example, can by analytic study be shown to convey

unconscious rhyme and reason. Freud remarked that, though it is no easy task for men to produce deliberately absolute nonsense, still everyone knows that the books of German scholars are full of effortless and unconscious nonsense.

After a lecture he gave (some time in 1910) on the problem of sex, there was raised in the course of the discussion the question of a practical solution for the sexual dilemma of young students. For, on the one hand, psycho-analysis had shown that sexual abstinence was one of the most important factors in the formation of neurosis. On the other hand, the economic circumstances of most students made it impossible for them to marry early. Morality forbade the seduction of young girls, the danger of infection made sexual intercourse with prostitutes inadvisable, and so on. Freud's advice to the young students was, "Be abstinent, but under protest." He felt that it was imperative to keep alive the inner protest against a social order which prevented mature young men from fulfilling a normal instinctual need. He drew parallels between this attitude and that of the French Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century who, though submissive outwardly to the power of the Church which ruled their age, dedicated themselves to tireless protest against its overwhelming and unbearable force. Like Anatole France\* whose writings he loved,

\* He cherished not only the lofty wisdom of this writer, but the subtlety and wit of his art. I remember Freud laughing aloud when—to illustrate how extreme feminine sensitivity could be—I reminded him of a remark in a novel by Anatole France. In *Monsieur Bergeret à Paris* a young man attempts to seduce a lady. Anatole France, the connoisseur of women, concludes his description as follows: "He came to her again, took her in his arms, and covered her with caresses. Within a short time her clothes were so disarranged that—aside from any other considerations—shame alone compelled her to disrobe."

Freud did not believe in sudden and violent revolutions; he put more faith in the steadily mounting, continuous force of patient resistance to bring about ultimately changes in the social order. He believed, also, that psycho-analysis, by making men more straightforward and upright, was one of these reforming forces. He often reiterated that in regard to money and to sex men are hypocrites. In both these realms they refuse to confess their true needs.

He was convinced that an individual's sexual behaviour provided the symbol and prototype of his attitude toward other aspects of life. Once, while we were discussing a case of neurosis, he related an example he had met with outside his practice. This example was memorable because it involved two famous contemporaries. The mathematician and physicist, Christian Doppler, of the University of Vienna, had early done remarkable scientific work; it was he who made the discovery now known throughout the world as Doppler's principle. Later his scientific creativeness ran dry, or ran aground; his work became trivial; much of the time he busied himself working out riddles and was unable to publish anything of scientific significance. Freud traced this striking development to the fact that, though Doppler's marriage was extremely unhappy, for "moral" reasons he could not attain the inner freedom to seek a divorce. The psychic conflict arose out of Doppler's acquaintance with a young girl toward whom he was strongly attracted; but he had decided to resign himself and continue his life at the side of an unloved wife.

Freud contrasted this attitude with that of Doppler's contemporary, Robert Koch. Koch, who



was at first a young health officer in a small German city, had won considerable fame with the publication of his first scientific papers. He had made a good middle-class marriage with a woman whom he respected but did not love. Later he met a girl whom he truly loved and Koch resolved to have a frank and friendly discussion with his wife. He requested a divorce, and she finally consented. He married the girl, who proved to be a courageous and understanding companion through life. Happy and fulfilled in marriage, he pursued a scientific career that grew steadily in importance; he made great discoveries in regard to tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, and malaria, and contributed to medicine those theories and methods which will forever be associated with his name. Freud respected Koch's behaviour in the psychic crisis of his first marriage as a sign of greater strength of character. More than that, he felt that it sprang from a higher morality than Doppler's, a morality whose values were honesty and courage.

I was constantly amazed anew at the extent of Freud's reading and the diversity of his knowledge. He read in almost every branch of science. He followed with great interest the progress of medical and biological research, and read widely in archæology and history, keeping up with current developments in all these fields. Until almost the last he was a tireless reader. It was a thing of wonder to me how a man whose days were crammed with so many hours of exhausting analytic work, and whose nights were largely devoted to writing, could find the time for such extensive reading. Nor was this reading in the field of science alone. He loved biography and the best work of contemporary

writers like Romain Rolland, Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Werfel and Stefan Zweig.

I remember once talking with him about a drama of Stefan Zweig's, *Jeremiah*, which had just appeared. I expressed the opinion that a drama making use of related material, *Der Junge David* by Richard Beer-Hofmann, was far superior to Zweig's work. Compared to Beer-Hofmann's work, I said, the Zweig drama was very feeble. Freud was surprised at this criticism. He told me that such an attitude was altogether strange to him, for he never drew comparisons in matters of æsthetic pleasure. (As a matter of fact, I believe that this is an attitude he adopted later in life.)

For analogies in his scientific work he usually called upon physics, for that science deals with the interplay of forces; but he also drew comparisons with chemistry and biology, and with archæology, which particularly interested him. Let me recall a comparison he used when we were discussing the function of trauma in the structure of the neuroses. Freud made mention of the theories of Charles Lyell and George Cuvier, the great geologists. He disagreed with Cuvier's theory of cataclysms, which held that changes in the surface of the earth are wrought by great catastrophes. He inclined to Lyell's theory that such changes are produced by constant forces working imperceptibly over periods of thousands of years. I remember another time that he drew an analogy from geology. We were discussing how in psycho-analysis only the psychic reality holds sway, while the material reality is altogether minor—so that, for example, it does not matter whether a patient really dreamed a dream or only imagined it. From this we went on to discuss

the psychic significance of lies, particularly lies in children. Freud pointed out that children's lies are frequently composed for an imaginary gratification of desire. From this point of view it is psychologically unimportant whether we are dealing with lie or truth, since the boundary between them—in analysis, though not in life—is vague and shifting. He added: "Imagine that the human eye could behold at one glance all the changes that have taken place over æons in the surface of the earth. To such a vision the boundaries between hill and valley, water and land, would become vague and strangely immaterial."

## 4

Until ripe old age Freud was receptive to all new ideas and original thought in psycho-analysis. He met them without prejudice, even when he did not agree; but he required a long time to feel at home in new views. Although he always evinced a lively and open-minded interest in all intellectual changes, he left it to the younger generation to extend psycho-analysis beyond the specific limitations that he had set himself.

He impressed upon us that it was almost always a bad omen when a neurotic patient accepted with enthusiasm the results of analysis. The best attitude towards analysis or any other new and radical scientific views was, he maintained, a friendly scepticism. Consider, he would say, the way housewives tell a good oven from a bad one. The bad ones are those that heat up right away, but also cool rapidly; the good ones, however, grow warm slowly and hesitantly, but hold their heat for a long time.

This was his own attitude toward innovations in psycho-analysis; in his later years he usually avoided expressing an opinion on newly published analytic works. He needed a long time for a well-considered verdict. He was tolerant enough to appreciate others' efforts in analysis along paths that did not interest him, although he himself would never venture upon such paths. After a lecture by one of our colleagues on broad problems of character neurosis, he remarked that he had limited himself to narrower aspects of the subject, but that the new generation would wish to explore more remote regions. "I myself have always sailed upon inland lakes. But good for them who are striking out into the open sea."

Whence comes the view so prevalent in America that Freud was dogmatic? Throughout thirty years I never noticed a single trait of narrow-mindedness or dogmatism in him. In this book I have included a letter of his (his reply to my criticism of his Dostoyevsky essay) which testifies that he was critical of his own work and freely admitted weaknesses where they existed. He was intolerant only towards false tolerance. He insisted that psycho-analysis, as a science, should adhere to its own methods, and he tried to keep it free of the methods of other sciences.

## 5

Occasionally he was pessimistic about the future of psycho-analysis. I am told he once said that analysis would suffer a lingering death after his own death. Such a moody remark was certainly only the reflection of momentary bad humour. In later years he was always confident and optimistic;

he knew that the science he had created would not disappear. He knew also that the science would undergo modifications and corrections, would be supplemented and considered from new angles. But what Freud mined from the profoundest depths and abysses of the psyche will endure and his work will continue with ever more fruitful influence upon the life of individuals and of nations. Above all, his method of research will endure; that method which accords such critical attention to apparent trivialities, the method whose objects are the inconspicuous, the hidden, and the veiled.

A small circle of those who were his followers will teach the new generation. He knew that after a short period of lying fallow and of being overrun by confusion, disturbance, and obscurantism, psycho-analysis would come into its own in the lives of civilized peoples. In his last book he saw a great vision of the fate of Moses and his mission, a fate that may well be his own. Does he not prophesy the great work of his little circle? He recounts the tale of the Levites, who stood fast in all perils, defying all the forces that opposed them to save the intellectual heritage of a genius for the millenniums to come. Is this not an outline of the task of his little group of followers? Freud's death does not mean the beginning of the end of psycho-analysis, as his foes aver, but rather the end of the beginning.

None of us has the power to say what the future will bring to our young science. What will be its fate in the midst of the dreadful war that is devastating Europe? Probably it will maintain utter silence in Europe for a time. Probably it will have to emigrate as so many men have done. The position of science will be bad enough even if

England should win; disastrous if Nazism is victorious. In the light of this, America can become the sanctuary of psycho-analysis. America can be the future capital of the new psychology—if America wishes.

In these pages I mean to show Freud in his work, his conversation and his life; not as a statue in a Hall of Fame, but as a man. In these memoirs he speaks as he spoke when I first saw him and when I last saw him, as he spoke when he lectured. I see him still as he sat in the midst of our little circle of Viennese analysts, listening attentively while I discussed his *Future of an Illusion*. I can still hear his clear, calm voice as he praised and criticized my discussion. Here he came to our aid not only in our scientific problems, but in our personal, human pursuits.

In these pages I have tried to set forth what he meant to us Viennese analysts as a teacher—which is to say, as an example. I have reproduced some of his remarks and cited some of his letters, which even in a few lines convey the vivid image of his personality. I do not presume to think that I have given here a picture of his whole personality; only enough single impressions to make it clear how I see and how I saw him.

Frequently I can still recall to mind the very timbre of his voice; I can still see the expression in his eyes. But how communicate such impressions? And how much harder it is to tell what the man meant to us all for more than a quarter of a century. I shall be content if I succeed in showing merely a glimpse of his wisdom, his wit, his intellectual sincerity, his courage in the pursuit of truth, his profound human understanding, and his kindness.

## MEMORIES OF SIGMUND FREUD

The deepest and final memory he left with us is the memory of his utter sincerity. He dared to pursue to the end thoughts which some few had encountered, but at which most men had turned and run—thoughts on sex and the sexes, on life, love, and death, and on the powerful instincts that live beneath the pitiable artifices we invent to conceal them from ourselves and others. He faced the psychic processes in himself and others without fear or favour. He was more courageous than his time. And these qualities—talent, utter honesty, and the ability to consummate his thoughts—seem to me the qualities with which are endowed those rare human beings whom we call geniuses.

## CHAPTER II

### LAST VISIT TO FREUD

#### I

NEARLY thirty years had passed since, with pounding heart, I first ascended the steps of Number 19 Berggasse and stood face to face with Freud. At the time I was a student of psychology at the University of Vienna. About a half year previously our fine old professor, Friedrich Jodl, had for the first and last time mentioned Sigmund Freud's name in his lectures. Research into the psyche at the time was completely under the ægis of experimental psychology. When we thought of psychic processes, we thought of them in terms of laboratory work, tests, experiments with stimuli and blood pressure.

Professor Jodl had been lecturing to us for weeks on Wundt's laws of association. At the close of his lecture he mentioned off-handedly, with a keen ironic smile, that there was one instructor in our city who asserted that there was a type of forgetting that did not follow Wundt's laws, but the laws of a psychic process he called repression. We students also smiled ironically, for like our professor we were confident of our knowledge of the human psyche.

Some time later a book by this instructor fell into my hands. It bore the title, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. I began to read, but soon laid the book aside. It seemed altogether preposterous—was I not a student of Wundtian psychology? But a few days



## LAST VISIT TO FREUD

later I took it up again—I had left it lying on my desk next to Ziehen's textbook of psychology—and this time I read on and on, fascinated, to the last line. In the following weeks with growing wonder I read everything this author had published. Here was the psychology that had been sought so long, a science of the psychic underworld. Here was what I had looked for when I first took up the study of psychology in spite of all the warnings of practical people. Here was something derived not from psychological textbooks but from the premonitions and visions of Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche.

Some months later I stood for the first time in the room where Freud worked, stood by his desk, surrounded by Egyptian and Etruscan figurines—excavated trophies of a long-dead world.

In the following years scarcely a week passed without my seeing him. The lectures in the old psychiatry clinic in the Lazarettgasse, the discussions of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society and, later on, the Wednesday evenings at his home (for he was then already ill and received only his closest co-workers on these occasions—"From time to time I like to see the young ones," he said, modifying Goethe)—these are unforgotten and unforgettable times.

One who was not close to Freud cannot conceive of the stature of the man, for he himself was greater than his work, that work which embodies the profoundest insight into the psychic life of man that has yet been attained. Many, throughout the whole wide world, know how kindly, helpful, and loyal he was. I can still see his smile as he appeared unexpectedly one day in our apartment in Vienna,

after toiling up four flights of stairs. It was in 1915. I had just married and was poor as only a Doctor of Philosophy can be. Freud brought the news that the Psycho-Analytical Society had decided to award me the prize for the best scientific work in the field of applied psycho-analysis. It was like a fairy tale, and the most miraculous feature of it was Freud's smile. Clearly, it made him happy to hand me the sum of money, which was not large but to me in my circumstances at the time seemed like a fortune.

Only those few who were close to him were privileged to enjoy the beauty of his conversation, the profundity of his explanations, his quick wit, and his somewhat sly humour. None of us who were his disciples and colleagues went from him unrewarded; he extended to us all suggestions and a stimulus whose effect was lasting. In retrospect, words he had spoken in everyday conversation acquired undreamed-of significance; casual remarks echoed in our minds for years afterwards. There were no psychic secrets that were closed to his brilliant insight.

Shortly before Hitler's invasion of our Austria I saw him for the last time; this was after an interval of a year which I had spent in Holland. I still, at fifty, felt as I rang the bell the joyful expectation that had surcharged me as a boy of twenty. A conversation with Freud was always an experience.

I found him greatly changed, his skin withered and his eyes deep-sunken. His hands, as he opened a cigar case, seemed no more than skin and bones. But his eyes, his curious and penetrating eyes, were as lively and kindly as always. In conversation he showed all his old eager interest; every sentence he spoke was characteristically his. We talked of the

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problems of our science, and it seemed to me that the wisdom of old age in this man had revealed to him mysteries whose existence I had not even suspected. After a long discussion of psycho-analytic problems, our conversation turned to questions of the day. Freud realized how precarious was the situation of Austria, and he was very doubtful that she could maintain herself. He felt no fear for himself, but he foresaw a dark future.

Only a few of his remarks shall be recorded here. He knew that psycho-analysis might well suffer seeming defeat for a long time. But then its effect would be profounder than ever. He was not surprised by the brutality and blind instinctual cruelty of the Nazi régime. It seemed as if he had anticipated it and was armed to meet it. What surprised him, however, was the intellectual attitude of the majority of Germans, whom he had thought more intelligent and capable of better judgement. While we were speaking of race prejudice, he said smilingly, "Look how poverty-stricken the poet's imagination really is. Shakespeare, in *The Midsummer-Night's Dream*, has a woman fall in love with a donkey. The audience wonders at that. And now, think of it, that a nation of sixty-five millions have . . ." He completed the sentence with a wave of his hand.

We spoke of the Jews and their destiny. (At the time he was still working on the manuscript of the Moses book.) He was not downcast. "Our enemies wish to destroy us. But they will only succeed in dispersing us over the world." Although averse to nationalistic prejudices, he loved his people, and he did not believe that this persecution would break their will to live. When I commented on the

tragedy of Jewish destiny, he replied with a smile, "The ways of the Lord are dark, but seldom pleasant."

While on this subject, I should like to record Freud's reply when a London weekly requested him to express his opinion, to be published in a symposium, on the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Freud refused, citing a French proverb:

*Le bruit est pour le fat,  
La plainte est pour le sot;  
L'honnête homme trompé  
S'en va et ne dit mot.*

He did not show much surprise at the outbreak of hatred for the Jews. When he learned that in Berlin his books, together with those of Heine, Schnitzler, Wassermann, and so many others, had been solemnly consigned to perdition and burned, he said calmly, "At least I burn in the best of company."

A journalist reported in the *New York Times* Freud's comment on his own fate at this time. "'They told me,' he said, 'that psycho-analysis is alien to their Weltanschauung, and I suppose it is.' He said this with no emotion and little interest, as though he were talking about the affairs of some complete stranger."

It is well known that he was not indifferent to the fate of his own people. He hailed the reconstruction going on in Palestine and wrote to the Jewish organization, Keren Hajazoth, on June 20th, 1925, "It is a sign of our invincible will to live which for two thousand years has survived the worst persecutions. Our youth will carry on the fight."

If I here describe some more personal moments of this last conversation, I do so only to show how charmingly and spiritedly the octogenarian expressed himself. I want to give some hint of the graciousness of his mind and the modesty and kindness of his character. We were speaking of my latest book. He praised it in words that I still cherish in my memory. He freely criticized some of my ironic judgements of the ideas of certain colleagues. Later on I explained, "I don't care much what my colleagues think of my books. For me your opinion is the vital one. Only what you say to me is important." "You are very wrong, Reik," he answered. "You must regard your colleagues' opinions of your work. I am no longer important. I am already an outsider—I no longer belong . . . You know," he added after a short pause, "your position is so unreasonable. You remind me of the hero of a fairy tale I once read—where was it ?

"A barber in the Orient, let us say Bagdad, often heard his customers talking of a beautiful princess in a far-away land who was held captive by a wicked wizard. The brave man who would free the princess was promised both her hand and a great kingdom. Many knights and princes had set out upon the adventure, but none had succeeded in reaching her. Before the castle in which the beautiful lady was imprisoned there lay a vast, gloomy wood. Whoever crossed this wood would be attacked by lions and torn to pieces. The few who succeeded in escaping these lions were later met by two terrible giants who beat them down with cudgels. Some few

had escaped even this danger and after years of travail had reached the castle. As they rushed up the stairway, the wizard's magic caused it to collapse. It was said that one brave prince had nevertheless managed to ascend into the castle, but in the great hall where the princess was enthroned a fierce fire raged which destroyed him.

"The adventurous barber was so deeply impressed by these tales of the beautiful princess that by and by he sold his shop and set out to liberate her. He had singular good fortune; he escaped the wild beasts, overcame the giants, and survived many other adventures, until at last he reached the castle. He strode over the stairway, although it toppled beneath him, and plunged intrepidly through the roaring flames that were threatening to consume the hall. At the end of the great hall he could dimly see the princess. But as he rushed across the room and drew near the figure, he saw a grey old woman supporting herself on a cane as she sat, her face full of wrinkles and warts, her hair drawn back in sparse, snow-white strands. The brave barber had forgotten that the princess had been waiting sixty years for her deliverer . . . No, my dear Reik, you are wrong in setting such store on me and my opinion. You must listen to what the colleagues say about your work."

That was Sigmund Freud's way. We shall hear it no more.

## CHAPTER III

### FREUD AND HIS FOLLOWERS

#### I

ALTHOUGH our colleagues in psychology now recognize Freud's importance—with reservations—the term *Freud students* still has for them the overtone of a derogatory epithet. In fact, queerly enough, the recognition of Freud has helped discredit the followers. Freud student—the name connotes a singular compound of fanaticism and extravagance, idiosyncrasy and inanity. Where Freud is cautious, his followers are bold; where his views are trenchant and meaningful, theirs are abstruse and worthless.

Now, it has certainly never occurred to any one of Freud's students to put himself on the same plane as the master. But it is also highly improbable that just this particular teacher should be cursed with a group of collaborators who are all either visionaries or intellectual mediocrities. And why, when this or that follower later breaks with the views of the master, should he suddenly be spared the former harsh judgements? How is it that a man who was once a Freud student and is one no longer suddenly receives a kinder judgement from the critics? When the insurgent still grants Freud's importance, but naturally also mentions his limitations; when he says that this portion of Freud's doctrines is exaggerated, that part is based on error or a narrow conception of the human psyche; that this idea

of his is more ingenious than accurate, or that claim contradicts clinical experience—when he says all these things, has he thereby become cleverer and more discerning ?

One does not have to be an analyst to understand that this condemnation of Freud followers is prompted by unconfessed or unconscious affects; and one needs no especial keenness to recognize the nature of these affects. We have plenty of experience of similar tactics in everyday life. We all know that a man and his wife, when they quarrel, will disparage each other's friends and relatives, all the while leaving each other strictly out of the picture. The infallible effectiveness of these taunts proves that each knows the meaning behind them. It is wise not to trust the apparent peacefulness of married life so long as that particular tone is used for saying, "Your mother . . ." or "Your friends . . ."

It seems to us that the admiration and recognition Freud has received is not meant honestly so long as his co-workers and followers are disdainfully dismissed. Can Freud be a genius, his work be of permanent value, and the psycho-analysis he created be a revolutionary scientific achievement, when at the same time his collaborator's books are unreliable and far-fetched ? We could understand that a genius might tolerate the company of mediocre or stupid adherents. But how then can we explain why so keen a mind quotes in his own works from many of his followers and repeatedly demonstrates his high respect for the efforts of his successful co-workers ? How is it he concedes that this student's work has been an important contribution to the solution of a problem, or that another's



experiment represents a scientific advance? We cannot help feeling that all this loud emphasis on the difference between master and student, which previously no one thought to deny, betrays a hidden intention. And that intention is exposed when we observe that the same adjectives are now applied to the work of the followers as those which were formerly used to malign the master's work.

Moreover, we see the secondary motive behind these remarkable compliments to Freud. Psycho-analysis is made to appear not as an objectively demonstrable science, but rather as some ingenious system of one individual. If this is accepted, then it can never be more than the achievement of this one man.

This touches us at a sore point; we cannot deny it. Nor do we wish to. Our personal interest, however, does not prevent us from being objective. Even if we had not made the cause of psycho-analysis our own, we should still object to the conception of it as a limited, individual achievement.

But we have made it our own. We pledged ourselves to it when it was still unpleasant and ill-advised to do so. We protected it in its development both from its enemies and from its friends—which last was often far more difficult. Certainly we deserve no praise for that; it was an inner necessity, at once our duty and our glory.

2

Not so long ago psycho-analysts were called a sect. Even today they are reproached for their faith in authority, for the narrow-mindedness and dogmatism with which they follow their teacher through thick and thin. But we have not been blinded by

loyalty to any error or omission. Our love for the man and our admiration for his achievements have not precluded our criticism of details. They have simply made it impossible for us to offer this criticism irreverently.

The term Freud student has often implied an impatient and unteachable attitude in psychology. Yet certain critics will have it that those very students of Freud who have extended his views until they became bizarre and ludicrous, and have distorted them until they were unrecognizable, are no more than abject echoes of their teacher, that their books are nothing but tiresome repetition of his ideas. But, on the other hand, his oft-reproached students are allegedly also slavish copies of the original. Alas, it has pleased God to create a world full of contradictions!

The critics advance an explanation for this lack of intellectual independence, this complete absence of originality among Freud's followers. They say this comes from their identification with the master. Those who say this feel that their statement is profoundly enlightening and definitive. They speak as though it were something amazingly new and unknown that the assistants at a clinic identify themselves with the professor.

Of course a student identifies himself with his teacher. We are tempted to ask: what else should he do with him? But the essence of the process of identification is by no means as simple as it seems to the layman—and under that heading I include those critics who so lightly bandy about psycho-analytical concepts. It must be remembered that there are various kinds of identification. Further, we are dealing with an organic process which is

nearly independent of the conscious will. The process is not governed by tender emotions alone. Antagonistic and rebellious tendencies are also determining factors in the establishment of identification. All identification is partial, and the manner and direction in which an individual identifies himself with another serves to characterize him. It is significant, too, in what stages of the individual's development such a process takes place. Both the instinctual endowment and the experiences of a person have a decisive effect upon the manner and extent of identification. Finally, the person with whom one identifies oneself is certainly not chosen at random. Certain psychic predispositions are operating; it is a question not only of whether the psyche demands such identification, but whether it can attain it.

We know that psycho-analysis cannot be learned out of books. Here, more than in other fields, it is profoundly true that understanding must be hard-won if it is to be possessed.

*Was Du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast,  
Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.*

What from your father's heritage is lent,  
Earn it anew to really possess it.

We perceived psychic relationships gradually. Indeed, we must always exercise delicate insight into the play of forces which oppose such perception. We acquired understanding slowly and with difficulty, and as we penetrated into the deeper levels of the psyche we met with increasing resistance. This process made for a kind of common destiny with our teacher, since the things we know

and the manner in which we come to know them are a re-enactment of his labours, a sharing of his destiny. While making allowances for all reservations and differences, it is still true, as Goethe puts it, that "you resemble the spirit you comprehend." What is important is the depth and constancy of this comprehension.

The best and, for the future analyst, the sole way to understand depth psychology is by experiencing it. Psycho-analysis is an organic process which, once it has gained a certain headway, may not be voluntarily interrupted. As we seem to grow more detached from our own psycho-analytic experience, our knowledge of this process deepens. We gain in understanding as we examine a period of our own life and learn its psychic foundations and hidden aims. We continue to reach back into ourselves, even long after we have abandoned our own analysis. For this analytic process which led to self-knowledge is not abruptly halted with the completion of analytic treatment or a course of lectures.

Indeed, unconscious identification was fostered by still other things that we shared in common. Together, we endured the world's reaction against our efforts to convey to it the new knowledge that had been vouchsafed us—and that we had nevertheless earned. Together, we endured scorn and destructive criticism. The isolation which we felt was forced upon us; the disillusionment we met with was experienced when we appealed to the intellectual integrity of our contemporaries.

We began to have a deep psychological understanding of the conditions and limitations of our own selves and the selves of others. Together we

arrived at the point where we could freely handle analysis as though it were a system of knowledge we had been born into. It became increasingly integrated into our lives; and it bore within itself pain and comfort, tragedy and happiness. But it always offered us an original, clear understanding of ourselves and others.

All these things account for the possibility of identification. They conferred on us in thoroughly abbreviated and simplified form that alien experience, Freud's psycho-analysis, which was becoming our own and was teaching us to understand so many hidden elements in our beings. You resemble only the spirit you comprehend, and the more deeply you comprehend him, the more you resemble him.

All this points to another characteristic of the unconscious process of identification—deepening inwardness. Our more ranting critics have not troubled to notice the signs of this. A long path, which lies underground for the greater part of the way, leads from the stage where externalities are aped to that other stage where the follower strives to achieve the aims of the archetype because he has come to feel them as his own. First he acquires that certain manner his model has of clearing the throat, of gesturing. Then the follower unconsciously begins to make the same inner demands of his psyche. We see here a psychic development of decisive import. At the end of this process it is almost meaningless to attempt to decide what belongs to the object of identification and what to the transformed psyche.

The Talmud has decided that Moses, after his descent from Sinai, was so filled with the spirit of

God that he was justified in saying to the children of Israel, "I have given you the Law." A Hasidic rabbi was once asked by his students to interpret this passage, which seemed blasphemous to them. He answered with a fine parable. A merchant wished to undertake a journey. He hired an assistant to represent him in the interval and let him work at the counter. He himself made a practice of remaining in the adjoining room. From here he might often hear the apprentice saying to a customer, "The master cannot give it to you at that price." The merchant thought the time was not yet ripe to leave the shop to the mercies of the newcomer. The second year he heard the apprentice saying, "We cannot give it to you at that price." Still the merchant thought it would be wiser not to leave. At last, in the third year, he heard his apprentice in the next room declaring, "I can't give it to you at that price." Not until then did he feel he could safely go on his journey.

3

Some day a complete biography of Freud will be written, a detailed story of his quiet battles and the grudging, dogged war the world waged against psycho-analysis. Then men will recognize that his life was heroic in the best sense of the word; that he and this age of ours stood as far apart as Beethoven's *Eroica* and a jazz operetta. Only the least part of his intellectual labours is to be found among his collected writings. The greater part of them took place in the intervals when he was momentarily devoting himself to living subjects. These labours consisted in a struggle for truths that are ordinarily beyond our vision and grasp because everything in our

beings strives against them. The strongest forces of our egos resisted these truths because they were repugnant to our education and our accustomed views, convictions, and ideals. His was a hero's life, and the victories he won were no less glorious than the more clamorous triumphs of war. His achievements called for courage as high as that of the legendary knights who fought giants and fabulous beasts.

Nowadays it is fashionable to contrast the attitude of a closed circle of psycho-analysts who keep stubbornly to their strict, limited viewpoint with that of a wider group of intellectuals. These, it is said, take a far more independent view of psycho-analysis and see in it broader perspectives. The members of this latter group, of course, are deeply interested in Freud's life work and fully esteem it; but naturally their point of vantage is far loftier than could possibly be attained by any "clique analyst," as they term the Freud follower. Naturally, from so high a point of vantage it is easy to survey Freud's path and to be full of esteem and appreciation. That is easier than to follow after Freud. A writer, commenting on a group of Beethoven biographies, once said, "Anyone can babble, 'Through the night to the light.'"

Those of us who with proud modesty call ourselves students of Freud believe that we understand the implications of psycho-analysis better than others, not because we have been closer to Freud, but because we have devoted the best part of our own lives to the same laborious task. Freud's untiring struggle both to acquire and to apply each new bit of knowledge was a titan's labour, and those of us who worked beside him and with him can estimate

better than others the extent of that struggle and the sorrow and joy that went into it.

That great wrestling with knowledge is an example for the generation now coming to maturity. There is a lesson here which cannot be taught. It can be learned only by living it. And this holds true for so many of the things we have learned from Freud.

It is the same lesson that, more than a century ago, another thinker gave to his grandson as the best precept he had been able to derive from a long life. One day in April of the year 1825 the seven-year-old Walter von Goethe came with an album in his hand to his grandfather, the famous poet. Many ladies and gentlemen of the Weimar Court had already inscribed mottoes in the little book. Among them, for example, Frau Hofmarschall von Spiegel had written down one of the melancholy witticisms of Jean Paul: "Man has two and a half minutes; one for smiling, one for sighing, and a half for loving, for in the middle of this minute he dies." As he read these words the seventy-six-year-old poet let the book fall upon his knees. Something within him rebelled against the false emotional allure of the dictum; against the kind of Weltanschauung which accepted as the content of human existence "smiling and sighing and gentle loving." Abandoning himself to his inner protest against the sentimental wisdom of the aphorism, he took up his pen. And while Jean Paul's sententious apportionment of human life still echoed within him, he wrote in his angular, already somewhat shaky hand, with its free, generous flow:



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*Ihrer sechzig hat die Stunde  
Ihrer tausend hat der Tag;  
Söhnchen, werde dir die Kunde  
Was man alles leisten mag.*

Sixty of them in each hour  
A thousand in a single day;  
Child, may you soon discover  
All you can do along the way.

## CHAPTER IV

### STUDENTS OR SORCERER'S APPRENTICES ?

#### I

THOSE of us who are approaching the fifties or have already passed them have now become teachers of psycho-analysis ourselves, although we have never ceased to feel ourselves students of the master. A new generation of students has arisen, and these are presenting us with many difficult problems.

When we were children, we liked to sing a round which went like this:

If you want to be a soldier  
Put a musket on your shoulder;  
Load it up with powder tight  
And a leaden bullet bright.  
If you're going as recruit,  
Learn this song before you shoot.

With the greatest simplicity this song tells what equipment the soldier needs and what basic things he has to learn. If an adult should be possessed of the strange desire to be a soldier, there it was, all laid down for him. "If you're going as recruit, learn this song before you shoot." When we grew up, we learned how correct the song was. Those few who had not wanted to believe it were forced to believe.

Unfortunately, we are not in the same convenient position of being able to say accurately and

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unambiguously just what equipment the would-be analyst needs and how his training should proceed. What does the recruit need who joins the small group that makes up our movement ? And what is absolutely essential for him to learn ?

I doubt whether the soldier's profession is very difficult; otherwise millions would not be able to learn it in so short a time. A few months of exercise and drill are enough to make a soldier. If the need is especially great, a few weeks training will do.

In the profession we have chosen—or rather, which has chosen us—training is long and arduous. In fact, it never ends. The very masters whose scientific work we most admire admit that they are always learning, always encountering something new. In this respect, great scientists do not differ from great artists. Shortly before his death, during the writing of the late quartets, Beethoven finally said that now, for the first time, he knew how to compose.

Young music students fresh out of the composition class are, to be sure, a long way from such a view. They already know how simple apparently difficult things can be. But they do not yet know how difficult apparently simple things are. And we are wrong, from a psychologist's point of view, in requiring modesty of them. Only he who has already done significant work can be modest. You do not learn modesty until you have come to recognize that you must set yourself limited, modest goals.

Nevertheless, these students are ready to learn a great deal. It is the task of the teacher to give them instruction in the technique of their trade, and to be an example for them. Everything else they must

themselves bring to the task, and in the moil and toil of maturing they must develop everything within themselves and out of their own strength. The teacher of a class in composition cannot teach composing. Students who, when they entered the class, believed he could, soon learn better.

This principle applies to the possibilities of training in psycho-analysis. The students at an institution of learning can be taught the technical basis of analysis and they can be shown an example. There is nothing more that we can do for them. *Tertium non datur.*

This brings me to a thesis which I propounded and discussed in my book, *Surprise and the Psycho-analyst*. This thesis, which runs as *leitmotif* through the book, is as follows: The essential matter of psycho-analysis cannot be learned; it can only be lived. That is true of both technique and theory, therapy and research. By essential matter I mean that element which in the analogy of the music student is represented by composing ability—the creative as distinguished from the re-creative.

In other words, by instruction and demonstration through books, courses, and seminars, only the *technicalities* of the psycho-analytical profession can be learned. The most important aspects of *technique* must be experienced. This communicable material is indispensable and basic to the analyst. But that material which must be acquired by experience is decisive for the effective practice of his profession.

What can be learned will be imparted through methodological instruction, through suggestions on what the psycho-analyst must do, how he must work to achieve his heuristic and therapeutic goal. Such instruction will suggest also—and this is no less

important—what he must avoid and omit, lest he place unnecessary barriers in his way. Command of such mechanics of his trade is more than an indispensable prerequisite to the difficult work of the analyst. Not until he knows just how far these technicalities go, and knows them utterly, may he venture to overstep the bounds. Only when he thoroughly understands the peculiarities of his tools and has practised their use for a long time does he come to the point where he need no longer concern himself about them. Then he may use them with the sovereignty and assurance that only the master knows.

We have not the remotest intention of underestimating this craftsmanship. But there is another form of subtle underestimating which consists of assigning to craftsmanship tasks for which it is not fitted. Craftsmanship is degraded and abused when it is not properly esteemed for what it is. But it is also degraded and abused when it is confounded with art. It is always far better to be a first-class craftsman than a poor artist.

## 2

If our claim is true that the most important elements of analysis cannot be learned, but must be experienced, then there really can be no teachers of psycho-analysis. There can only be models, prototypes. We cannot, however, discuss this before we have answered the question: models for whom ?

Here I must consider a distinction which I myself have observed and acted upon and which, perhaps, can claim to be no more than a personal judgement. Nevertheless, it can serve us well as a means of clarification. In our courses and seminars and in

our personal association with the young men who wish to become psycho-analysts, we can differentiate two main types: the sorcerer's apprentices and the students. Granted, this sharp division is an arbitrary one, for in reality we seldom meet such distinct types. We can observe many students maturing like the butterfly out of the larva. It is a process which sometimes sets in early, in the years of apprenticeship, and sometimes much later. I fear most of us were sorcerer's apprentices before we became students. And many remain sorcerer's apprentices for ever.

What is a sorcerer's apprentice? We know that the epithet comes from Goethe's ballad. The poet shows us an apprentice who has a splendid aptitude for imitating the master's actions in externalities. When the old magician betakes himself off, the apprentice attempts to force the spirits to work his will and then vanish again. For the master had shown him how to conjure:

*Seine Wort' und Werke  
Merk' ich und den Brauch  
Und mit Geistesstärke  
Tu' ich Wunder auch.*

I am now—what joy to hear it—  
Of the old magician rid;  
And henceforth shall every spirit  
Do whatever be my bid.  
I have watched with rigour  
All he used to do,  
And will now with vigour  
Work my wonders too.

But alas, such mechanical observation of the words and the works will never make anyone a sorcerer or a psycho-analyst.

## STUDENTS OR SORCERER'S APPRENTICES ?

The "sorcerer's apprentice" will have a competent knowledge of all the accomplishments of psycho-analytical theory and of all that has been said or written about the practice. He learns everything that can be learned. But he does not realize how much of it cannot be learned! When he is at a loss for ideas, he will always be able to find the right technical term. And he will abandon this term only with the greatest reluctance, even when the word threatens to destroy the spirit. Later on, when he has become an analyst, he will be able to classify each impulse in the patient as pertaining to this or that instinctual component. He will be able to state precisely from what complex a patient "suffers." Towards a neurotic he will exhibit the same sort of superiority or pitying condescension that a doctor of a hundred years ago felt towards a lunatic. (The times have changed. Above the gateway of a modern institution are inscribed the words, "Not all who are within are insane, and not all the insane are within.") He will exercise the routine and mechanics of analytic interpretation; but he will not comprehend the meaning of it. He will know all the trifling secrets of the language of the unconscious, but the great mystery of the language of unconscious minutiae will remain a mystery to him. Without doubt, he will some day publish casuistic theoretic essays in analytical journals; perhaps he will even write books. Here, certainly, his style will betray that he is no magician, perhaps not even a magician apprentice. (If it be true that "le style, c'est l'homme," then no one can make the deduction that our present-day psychologists are bad. On the contrary, most of them are good, capable and mediocre people. Let us not imagine

that "externalities" do not count. The manner of expression of thought is inseparably bound up with the very nature of the thought.)

In a word, the sorcerer's apprentice will *know* so much about the unconscious side of the psyche that he will be able to understand very little of it. One of the signs by which we recognize him is his want of respect for the mighty forces of unconscious instincts. He knows everything there is to be known. He is not aware of the dangerous fallacy of underestimating the opponent. Only the man who first does homage to his opponent's might can hope to come away victorious.

The sorcerer's apprentice thinks he can illuminate and explain away all the unconscious elements in the human psyche. He would think differently if he realized how dark these depths still are, realized that we cannot hope ever to penetrate them completely. He who bears a torch through the night should not imagine he has changed night to day. Only men who have preserved or regained their respect for the all-powerful nightly aspects of the psyche are destined to be analysts.

The sorcerer's apprentice is proud of his acumen and believes that his mind can find out all things unconscious. He does not know that sensory keenness and great intelligence, precise observation and irreproachable logic, need not exclude the unconscious phantasy. He does not or will not recognize that there is much that is closed to reason and open to intuitive perception. After all, he pursues his orderly and shrewd reasoning about unconscious processes; he works everything out logically. Why should he traffic with intuition?



## STUDENTS OR SORCERER'S APPRENTICES ?

Secure and comfortable in the all-embracing extensions of his own consciousness, he derives therefrom all the certainties he needs. He knows, of course, from his study of analytical theory that the analyst should question his own unconscious if he wishes to understand the unconscious processes of others; but for him this dictum is never more than barren theory.

The sorcerer's apprentice sees the teacher merely as one who teaches; he sees the *cliché* and not the example. The teacher does not appear in the latter guise until the student has become a disciple. An example is no model. He is to be followed, not aped. It is not even necessary for an example to be exemplary in every respect. In his life and work he may easily have the weaknesses of faults of all men; he must be exemplary only in his inner truthfulness and the intensity of his efforts. In respecting him we appreciate not only the clarity, rationality, and tranquillity which he has fought through to, but also the demonic depths from which he wrested these qualities. If we are sensitive, we will perceive that the profound silence and darkness out of which the work was born have left their traces in it.

In the genius we revere not only the keen observation, the forceful logic, and the faithful reproduction of what he has seen, but the gift for intuitive perception, a gift which belongs to an obscurer realm. Rembrandt has been greater than any artist for strictness and exactitude of observation, yet the French have called him a "visionnaire." It was darkness that disclosed to him the effects of light. Of Freud, too, we may say what the painter and art critic Eugène Fromentin said of Rembrandt, "C'est avec de la nuit qu'il a fait le jour."

To my mind a student is one who not only wishes to understand the craftsmanship of the analyst, but who also feels analytic thinking as an inner necessity. It is for the sake of these that we teachers work hardest, for them we try to be exemplars. They will understand that they are dealing with living models and not wax figures. They will see that the model is fallible and full of faults; that the seeking not the finding is important. The model will not stand impressively like a bust upon their bookcases, but enter into their work as a living force. What they have learned in their "course in analysis" will be less important than the living experience they have had there. That will prove its usefulness when they are faced with the task of understanding from the psycho-analytical point of view the experiences of others. They will soon be free of the temptation to ape the model when they begin to feel great confidence in their own development, which has been fostered and shaped within them by their teacher's influence.

For their work the conscious memory of their teacher need not always rise to the surface. But the memory-traces and effects of that memory must be efficient. The individual clues the training analyst can give the student are not decisive. The teacher must show him the direction of his own development; show him the line that he himself followed. Undoubtedly, many remarks of the teacher will remain in the memory of the student, and will be remembered with pleasure. But the aims and ideas that those remarks stirred in the student, the direction in which they led him, are more significant.

## STUDENTS OR SORCERER'S APPRENTICES ?

The student who possesses such a model must not swear by the teacher's words. Rather, he must conjure up the living spirit in those words.

My initial comparison of the analyst with the student of a composition class may seem arbitrary to some. There is a wide separation between scientific and artistic endeavours, and the analogy must not be stretched too far. Nevertheless, it still has point, for both the analyst and the composer must listen to the murmurings from out of the obscurest recesses and profoundest depths of the psyche—in themselves as well as others. When their hearing is poor, they will never go beyond superficial understanding and shallow formulations. A sentence of Freud comes to my mind now which seems to justify this comparison—a sentence written in rejection of such reinterpretations of psycho-analytical findings as are, for instance, to be found in the writings of Jung. Freud wrote: "In truth, out of the symphony of world history they had heard only a few cultural overtones and once more disregarded the mighty original melody of the instincts."

I again assume and extend this comparison with musical composition. "The most important element in music is not to be found in the notes," Mahler once remarked. The most important elements in psycho-analysis are not to be found in the books. No one can make music who has not music within himself. And courses in analysis do exist, but they should aim at *developing* analysts; for what can be taught is only a small part of analytic education. (Is it not hard to believe that there were once "scholars" in the field of applied psychology? There is no room here for any but research workers.)

For the young analyst who has relearned and re-experienced through treating his own cases the subject matter of his formal education there exists a so-called control analysis. Many colleagues prefer the term analysis control. But what can be controlled? The analysis, perhaps? Basically, one can check only the technicalities, the outer aspect of an analysis. Its deeper levels, the revealing heart of the analysis, are exempt from all "control." A locksmith can check up on the key his apprentice has completed; he can show him how and where he has fashioned it wrong and how he should have made it. But the work of a poet or musician cannot be "controlled." We can only say what we have felt while reading or listening, what thoughts and emotions were born in us. With some reservations, the same is true of the heuristic and therapeutic work of the analyst—the probing of obscure psychic relationships. We can, of course, "check" the correctness and dexterity of the craftsmanship. That, although not the most important part, is still important enough to be learned thoroughly.

The student of analysis must find models rather than rules. He must not measure himself against these models, for that would dismay him. But he should compare his work with the work of his master, for the comparison will encourage him.

Those of us who have become teachers while still learning shall always be deeply grateful for our fortunate meeting with the creator of analysis. Our work will clearly demonstrate that we were and have remained students of Freud. But we will not allow ourselves to be categorized with sarcasm as Freudians.

To such sneers we reply as Schubert once did in a similar situation in Vienna. (How our minds still

turn again and again to the city that was ours!) The composer, who shyly revered the great masters as only another great composer can, was asked a question which was quite fashionable at the time, "Are you a Beethovenian or a Mozartian?" Schubert replied, "I'm a Schubertian."

It may occasionally flatter the teacher when his students are proud of him. But a real teacher hopes he may be proud of his students. If the work of the novice is to praise the master, it is necessary that the student be "his own man."

I often had long talks with Freud about the qualifications and education of the analyst. We were agreed that a medical education is inadequate for the profession of analyst. In the course of the conversation, Freud pointed out that poets (Shakespeare, Goethe, Dostoyevsky) and philosophers (Plato, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche) had come closer to the fundamental truths of psycho-analysis than had the physicians. He once informed me that the natural scientist, and philosopher, Paracelsus (1493-1541), had advanced a theory of neurotic therapy which was akin to that of psycho-analysis. This scientist, who had been persecuted as a quack, had recommended a strengthening of the ego as a counterpoise to the instinctual forces which are morbidly expressed in neurosis. "Just what he himself understood by it, I don't know," Freud added, "but there is no doubt about its correctness."

On the question of the education of the analyst Freud differed with me. He found my views too exacting and had more respect than I for the value of instruction. He admitted, however, that the personal inclinations and talent of the individual were more important than is generally conceded. In

a conversation on Dostoyevsky he smilingly granted my assertion that this poet had more psychological talent than the whole International Psycho-Analytical Association; but he felt that Dostoyevsky was a phenomenal case. I replied that all instruction and control analysis was in vain if it were offered to individuals who had no innate gift and did not possess that "psychic sensitivity" he had once spoken of. He nodded to this, but insisted that the talent of understanding unconscious processes was more widespread than I would have it, and that self-analysis and control analysis augmented and developed this talent. We finally agreed that the ideal would be for those who were born psychologists to learn the analytic method and be able to practise it. We have said we have to seek out such "born psychologists" not only in the circle of psychiatrists and neurologists. In my opinion they will be as few and far between there as anywhere else.

PART TWO  
AN UNKNOWN LECTURE OF FREUD'S

CHAPTER V

AN UNKNOWN LECTURE OF FREUD'S

*Foreword*

THE title of this lecture may be explained in quite simple fashion; the lecture was not published under Freud's name, but under mine, at Freud's express wish. It formed part of an introductory course in analysis which was given early in November, 1913, in the great auditorium of the Vienna Psychiatric Clinic. I was one of a large audience made up of both doctors and laymen, men and women. Freud spoke extemporaneously, as usual. The lecture was one of the last of the winter semester, which Freud had devoted mainly to the psychopathology of everyday life. In these winter lectures he often chose examples from the day's activities and made them the subject of analytic examination and interpretation. He wished to give his students a broad perspective of the analytic technique of interpretation. I took notes on many of these lectures, intending later to review and expand these notes.

After the lecture I walked home with Freud, as I usually did. I recall that I begged him to write out and publish the lectures. He seemed surprised and did not agree with me. As is well known, the lectures he did eventually publish were not those of this year, but those held during the winter semesters of 1915-1916 and 1916-1917: the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*.

## FROM THIRTY YEARS WITH FREUD

A few days later I had occasion to send Freud a review of mine, and I took this opportunity to remind him of our conversation. During the lecture it had occurred to me that Freud's analysis had failed to grasp certain logical explanations, and this opinion was reinforced when I went over the notes. From my notes I wrote out the core of the lecture as a review, and added my supplementary interpretations. In this review I remarked that it would be unfortunate if this beautiful analysis were to be lost and I again begged Freud to publish it. In a letter dated November 13, 1913, Freud replied: "Dear Herr Doktor, One of your two articles, that completing my analysis of Demolle (*sic*), is a very fine piece of work. I really had not noticed the parallelism:

Nicoud—Larin  
Vaschide—Freud

I suggest that you publish your comments on the whole analysis in the *Zeitschrift*, not as a review but as an essay, and thus utilize my remarks in the lecture." Some time later we talked over the matter and I remarked to Freud that his lecture had supplied all essentials for the analysis of the case and that my contribution had only the value of a vignette. He insisted, however, that without my additions the analysis was incomplete and urged me to follow his suggestion. The essay was published in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für ärztliche Psychoanalyse*, vol. II, 1914, p. 151 ff., under the title, "Ein Fall von plötzlicher Überzeugung." A footnote which no one noticed read: "The following analysis of a complex psychological phenomenon is only in part my own. I have here made use of a



## AN UNKNOWN LECTURE OF FREUD'S

lecture given by Professor Freud in November 1913."

The following is an attempt to reconstruct that lecture, which Freud gave twenty-six years ago. I have referred to my own memory as well as to the published essay. Naturally, I cannot claim to have faithfully reproduced the exact wording of the lecture, but I believe I have been faithful to the spirit. In many passages I feel sure that Freud's very words have been preserved.

For the sake of unity and continuity I have interpolated my supplementary remarks into the text of the lecture, inserting my name to indicate the origin of these remarks. By putting them in their appropriate place I believe I have rounded out the analysis as Freud would have done. He had himself made some small stylistic changes in my original essay and added the final sentence as it appears here. The following is therefore a reconstruction of the original lecture:

### A CASE OF SUDDEN CONVICTION

Ladies and Gentlemen: At our last meeting we considered all sorts of puzzling minor matters that admit of analytic interpretation. Doubtless any one of you might furnish similar incidents from his own experience. At one time or another all of us have been nonplussed by a peculiar combination of circumstances and have vainly sought to explain apparently supernatural happenings. These events usually bear little relationship to vital decisions or crises in our lives. Rather, they crop up into the routine of daily life, as if to point out to us that everyday events are not necessarily commonplace.

What are the psychic bases and motives of such puzzling incidents? We must heartily welcome any clues that may lead us to a solution. Recently, a young physician, Dr. V. Demole, writing in the Swiss journal, *Archives de Psychologie* (edited by Professors Th. Flournoy and Ed. Claparède), described a peculiar experience of this kind which invites analysis. I shall read a translation of Demole's account.

"One morning in October 1912 I awoke and lay, as I am accustomed to do, half dreaming, when suddenly I had a sharp and definite feeling of anxiety that a patient of mine had died. I thought immediately of checking this and automatically reached for my note book which lay close to the bed. I quickly noted down everything that had passed through my mind on awakening. Thanks to these notes, I can reconstruct my psychic processes and understand when and how I committed a psychological sin."

These are the facts as reported by Demole. He recorded his notes in telegraphic style. "I awaken, stretch—a moment of dreaming and suddenly I say to myself: Larin is dead. At first I am astonished by the news and then by my feeling of certainty. Why am I so certain that he is dead? I really have no grounds for thinking so. Is this a prophetic vision? Or, rather, a telepathic sensation? I feel pleased because here is a premonition I can test. Immediately literary references come to mind: a succession of flashing images succeeding each other with great rapidity. Vaschide (brown book jacket of *Telepathic Hallucinations*)—James (a sensation of the sea, vision of waves)—Swedenborg (green map of Sweden and Norway)—Freud (yellow map of

Austria, with Vienna a black dot on the Danube); his book, the *Psychopathology* which I finished reading only a few days ago. Freud . . . unconscious . . . quickly, I must analyze myself (I reach for the paper and pencil). What was I thinking? Immediately before the premonition I thought of the professor of pathological anatomy. Why? Because I want to ask him whether I may go to the Paris Congress with him. (I have had this project in mind for several weeks.) That is the first thought that has come to me this morning; before that nothing, nothing. I place my hand on the alarm clock. Yes, I should have asked him while we were working on that last autopsy. Now I see myself at the desk, taking notes as the professor, in a rubber coat, does the dissection . . . dissects Larin. Larin's autopsy . . . But that is impossible; Larin is still living. Who was it then? Can this be a second omen of death? How strange that I should twice think of Larin as being dead. I put down the pencil and think back. The last autopsy was on Nicoud—that is certain. Why, I remember wrapping a bit of the brain in celloidin and writing 'Nicoud' on the tag. Suddenly I think, Nicoud had his bed in the same room as Larin . . . again Larin. Astonished at this new confirmation of my obsession that Larin is dead, I again take my pencil and add to my notes. It is already quite late: I dress hastily and start on my rounds. I go to Larin's room. The door is still open; I ask: 'How is Larin?' The nurse answers, 'He died at four o'clock this morning.' I hold my breath, then breathe deeply again. I feel pleased that this is such an interesting case. Freud . . . Vaschide."

Demole adds that he had not seen Larin for two days. On his last visit to him the patient had been very weak and was curled up in his blankets. The nurse had said that for the last twenty-four hours Larin had refused all food. Nevertheless, Demole had not been concerned, for he knew that old chronic cases of this sort could drag on for a long time without nourishment. Some days before, Nicoud, whose bed was opposite Larin's, had died in this same room. Later Demole verified that the autopsy on Nicoud had taken place on October 5th, 1912. Larin died on October 9th. No other autopsy had been made in the meantime.

Like Larin, Nicoud had died of a lingering illness, finally refusing food and passing into a coma. Demole could thus find many analogies between the two patients; both were old, always bedridden, whining, wasting away, refusing food in the end, and dying under the same circumstances. These analogies appeared to Demole well calculated to bring about a confusion of the two.

Demole attempted to derive his explanation from these similarities. In his day-dream, as soon as his thoughts turned to the autopsy room, it was quite easy to substitute the corpse of Nicoud for that of his double. The essential differences between the two lay only in features and names. The physician rarely thinks about a patient who died some time ago. He is mainly concerned with a patient just before the end, for he wishes confirmation of his diagnosis. During life the patient is "cathexed with affects" and at the autopsy a kind of "abreaction" occurs. Demole here uses analytic terminology and thinks of my name. When scientific curiosity has been satisfied, the dead man is no

longer interesting. "The dead Nicoud is consigned to oblivion, while the dying Larin approaches an event that is at least as important as his birth." You see, Demole believed that this sudden conviction, this "conviction spontanée," had proved that an interchange had taken place, a substitution which was suggested by the similarities between the patients. The name of the one was almost forgotten, though Demole could easily recall that of the other. Thus it happens that the one who is deceased does not concern him any longer, while the second, who is dying, is uppermost in his thoughts. Here is another curious feature: Demole's superior had diagnosed Larin's case as senility with multiple areas of softening in the brain—and Nicoud's as arteriosclerosis. With Nicoud the diagnosis proved correct, but Demole was greatly surprised when the autopsy of Larin disclosed the same characteristic lesions that had been found in Nicoud. It was one analogy more.

To explain the strange experience, Demole turned to the concept of the unconscious. He conceived of the relation between the associations as something similar to the chemist's affinities between elements. Every feeling, every conscious or unconscious idea, has associations to other feelings or images, just as atoms mutually satisfy their valences. By means of this metaphor, Demole found it quite simple to explain the psychic mechanism of his "conviction." His first thought on awakening was anticipatory of the Congress at Paris. With this idea he associated the professor of pathology whom Demole had seen at the last autopsy. The remaining associations centred around the basic idea "autopsy room": the corpse of Nicoud reminded him of the

characteristics of the patient, whose name, however, was not called up. Larin had the same characteristics and therefore he was substituted for the true owner of them. Thereupon, there appeared the image of the dead Larin, in spite of Demole's knowing that Larin was still alive. The resultant affect was striking, and the idea "Larin—dead" suddenly became conscious as an apparently spontaneous and independent idea, for the preceding thought about the "professor of pathology in the autopsy room" had no obvious association with Larin. There was no recollection of the intermediary steps in the chain of associations, since these were unconscious. Only the prompt psycho-analysis afforded us evidence of their existence, says Demole.

Now you see that psycho-analysis meant no more to the physician than a method of uncovering unconscious associations. He ascribed to this method its definite heuristic value. The appreciation, however, stops here. But I should like to show you in this very case that the analytic method is capable of much wider powers in psychological investigation.

To repeat, Demole believed that his experience of sudden conviction was precipitated by an unconscious substitution. But this in turn was conditioned by the coincidence of extraordinarily favourable circumstances and the half-sleeping state after awakening. Demole supplemented his explanation with some general remarks on similar experiences.

Sudden conviction is usually accompanied by a strong affect of shock. The positive thought arouses astonishment, disorientation, terror; it is thus very understandable how in the religious sphere the

reaction to conviction is described by such forceful expressions as "revelation," "feeling oneself suffused with Grace," "touched by the Finger of God." Demole cited the case of a Polish philosopher who was leaving a bath when he suddenly found himself faced with emotions that converted him to Catholicism. Demole insists that it would be too daring to explain all the different cases of "conviction spontanée" as simple unconscious substitutions. There are, evidently, several psychological mechanisms which bring about the same result: but they vary from case to case.

I have thus given a broad outline of the young physician's own explanation. At the end of his essay Demole remarks that he had ascribed to the two patients a common feature which did not in reality exist: he had applied to both the term *gâteux*, bed-wetter. This was, however, true only of Nicoud; Larin was not subject to *incontinentia urinæ*. Demole comments that this mistake is consistent with his explanation, in fact, even reinforces it. To explain why he happened to make this incorrect designation, Demole takes into account the locality. Larin and Nicoud occupied opposite beds in a room on the second floor of the hospital. The room immediately below this one had exactly the same architectural features, the same number of windows and beds, et cetera. Even the patients in the two rooms were similar, old, bedridden, chronic cases. One might easily confound them. It had happened several times that Demole, intending to go to a patient on the second floor, had gone to one on the first—and vice versa. In the lower room, in the bed corresponding to the one occupied by Larin, for some months there

had been a patient whom Demole had catheterized many times and who often used to wet the bed. Demole had thus ascribed to Larin that symptom from which the other suffered; and this mistake was prompted not by some personal similarities but simply by the similarity of place. The interchange must have been facilitated by the fact that Nicoud, Larin's double, was also a bed-wetter. The doctor saw these phenomena of displacement as analogous to those we observe in dreams, where, impelled by more or less transparent motives, we transform objects, reverse situations, transpose characters, and ascribe to one person the weaknesses and characteristics of another.

You will agree with me that Dr. Demole's attempt to explain his experience psychologically has been made with conscientiousness and intelligence. Yet why does his explanation seem to us insufficient? In my opinion, he was too easily satisfied. He limited himself to description of the tangible phenomena, employing psycho-analysis only to discover the unconscious connecting ideas. This all-too-modest use of our method ends in Wundt's association psychology. The terminology is slightly different, but the substance is the same. Psycho-analysis, however, goes far beyond this. Our dynamic conception of the psyche leads us to the hidden intentions and impulses which underlie such an experience. The perception of unconscious associations is certainly indispensable to such an investigation. But it is no more than preliminary work which must be done if we are to gain a glimpse of the play of psychic forces which goes on behind the scenes of conscious phenomena.



We are not alone in our dissatisfaction with Demole's explanation. Flournoy, one of the editors of the *Archives de Psychologie*, appended to Dr. Demole's interesting study an equally interesting postscript. His point of departure is curious. He maintains that Demole's purely psychological interpretation would suffice if Larin had not actually died. But Larin's death suggests the possibility that Dr. Demole unconsciously perceived the event itself during his sleep.

"Is it not possible," Flournoy asks, "that early in the morning an unusual noise resulting from the death—say, a conversation of patients in the corridor—had penetrated to the unconscious of the sleeper?" In support of this view, Flournoy points to the combination of two factors: (1) The memories, regrets, and wishes connected with the autopsy of Nicoud, where Demole had neglected to speak to the professor of pathology. Why had the conviction of Larin's death occurred on the morning when it actually took place? Why not on one of the previous three days; why at all, in any case? (2) The information which Dr. Demole had given Flournoy that this was his first and only experience of this kind.

Demole writes to Flournoy: "I have never previously experienced anything similar to this. I can say this with assurance, for I have always been interested in psychology, even before I knew your name in connection with it. When I was quite small, everything having to do with the soul, the mystery of religion, tormented me unceasingly. If I had experienced such a feeling before I should certainly have written it down. Once, when I was thirteen years old, something I desired fervently

unexpectedly came true. Some years ago I dreamed that an uncle had married; several weeks later I learned of his betrothal. That is all."

Demole's one experience of this kind, then, was consonant with reality. Unlike most such experiences, it was not deceptive. It seemed to Flournoy, therefore, that such a double coincidence would justify believers in telepathy in claiming that Demole possessed telepathic powers. The conditions and circumstances of the "conviction" were such that a combination of psycho-analysis and supernatural psychology would seem to offer the best explanation. Adepts at the occult would suggest that the "omnipotence of thought" and the objective force of the wish might have at least hastened the death of Larin, even if they had not brought it about. Flournoy is surprised that Dr. Demole sought no explanation for the connection of his premonition with the actual fact of Larin's death. Demole was surely aware of the metaphysical problem, for he refers to telepathy several times, cites Vaschide, Meyer, and others. Yet he acts as if he had found Larin still living. Flournoy emphasizes in reference to this that Demole wants to investigate when and how he had psychologically sinned (*péché*).

Demole did his best to explain an error—and the upshot is that he shows he has made no error. Flournoy remarks that one would not expect such carelessness from so penetrating and keen a mind as that of Dr. Demole. Obviously, he is guilty of the kind of lack of attention with which we are concerned in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. This momentary psychic blindness reveals poorly repressed complexes which inhibit (or intellectually

anæsthetize) his awareness of occult possibilities. But our author shares this attitude with most scientists. They reject everything that hints at mysticism, miracles or superstition. This repression of the "mystical complex" is usually unsuccessful and acts as an irritant to consciousness, producing a kind of obsession which clouds the reason and is translated finally into various symptomatic acts. Thus, by way of over-compensation, the repression of this complex gives rise to hostility and sarcasm towards everything occult, and results in a narrowing of the intellectual horizon, in irritability, and in distorted judgements. The passage in the letter makes it quite clear that Dr. Demole has just such an "anti-mystical complex." Flournoy believes the influence of this repressed complex on the conscious mind is shown in the unexpected allusions to religious phenomena and in the mention of the Polish philosopher. By showing that the origin of his own "conviction" was purely subjective, Demole hoped to prove that religious experiences are also subjective, not objective, revelation.

In concluding, however, Flournoy confesses that he has given way to a complex of his own. "An observer free of emotional complexes, that is, absolutely neutral and impartial, free of any latent tendencies, any prejudices, any tastes and distastes, is humanly impossible. Such a man would observe nothing and learn nothing." Flournoy refers to the psycho-analytic practice which demands that every psychologist undergo self-analysis. He has discovered in himself a leaning toward the miraculous. Also, the Polish philosopher was one of Flournoy's friends and Flournoy was slightly annoyed at his being brought into the discussion. This annoyance,

Flournoy suggests, had prompted him to be so sharply critical of Demole's reasoning.

Demole defended himself against Flournoy's interesting commentary. In the next issue of the same journal, the young physician published a sharp retort. The double coincidence which is Flournoy's point of departure seems to him unimportant. He states that his unconscious did not have four whole days in which to work, but only forty-eight hours—the interval between the last visit to Larin and his death. There were only two short periods (the few moments after waking in the morning) which combined the necessary conditions of somnolence and daydreaming. The hypnagogic phase preceding sleep could be eliminated because he read until late at night and fell asleep thinking about his reading.

His preoccupation with the Paris Congress was the basis of the premonition. But in the daytime he thought about the Congress in an entirely different manner. During the day Demole had to make decisions, to write, to talk—in short, to act as a conscious man must. Demole admits he cannot explain satisfactorily why the thought of the Congress had not come on the first morning. He conjectured, however, that the intensity of this thought must have increased as the time for the Congress drew nearer. He firmly opposed any attempt to connect the premonition with telepathy, feeling certain that the true explanation was a purely psychological one. His own explanation seems to him so complete that any recourse to "suprapsychic" phenomena is superfluous. Demole adds further that he has had occasion to observe several similar coincidences since Flournoy's

criticism drew his attention to them. This too, he feels, this very frequency with which a premonition coincides with reality, is an argument against Flournoy's theory.

Well, what do you think about it now? I have noticed that you are inclined to view some of Flournoy's objections as justified, but not others. I do not know whether it is as offensive to you as to me that he drags in expressions like "the repression of the mystical complex." On the other hand, you will perhaps feel that Demole is right, that his experience is a phenomenon that can be explained by psychology alone. In this particular case there is no necessity to raise the clamour about telepathy or supernatural force.

His discussion was interesting and contributed to the elucidation of several points. Yet I believe that it has not satisfied us, who expected a total solution of this little problem.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Together we will attempt by means of analytic methods of observation and technique of interpretation to solve this essential problem. When we use these methods correctly, we shall be best able to demonstrate how excellent they can clarify dark psychic phenomena. Let us start our analysis of Demole's experience by taking the facts as stated by the author, and utilizing apparently trivial, but important, details from his account to explain the psychogenesis of the event. We are going to proceed with perfect liberty—freedom when the scientist makes his own self-analysis the subject of his communication he must give license to this. The author will not, we trust, take offense.

Let us assume, just as Demole does, that the immediate origin of the premonition is his thought

about the coming Congress. Demole had neglected to speak with the professor about this; he had failed to make his request. He longs for another opportunity to do so, and makes use of a memory in order to carry out the phantasy. The autopsy on Nicoud had been an opportunity that he had passed by. The next patient who seemed about to die was Larin. It is possible that this thought was already present in the preconscious of the young physician during his last visit to Larin. Demole had received an impression of the critical condition of the patient; this aroused the hope that he might be able to make his request when the professor autopsied Larin. This wishful nature of the premonition is derived from the quite understandable ambition of the young doctor. Indeed, it was this desire which made the visit to the Paris Congress appear so worth his striving after. Hence, the young doctor would already have wished that Larin might die soon, so that he might have an opportunity to speak with the professor.

We are thus inclined to point to Demole's ambition as the instinctual impulse which led him to his sudden conviction. You will recall his description of the first waking moments. His first thought was of the Paris Congress and the professor whom he would accompany. His further associations led to the autopsy on Nicoud. He thought, however: Larin's autopsy. This permutation of thought shows a small but significant slip. It implies that he had presupposed Larin's death in his phantasy because the autopsy would afford another opportunity to make his request of the professor.

Naturally, we do not claim to account for the coincidental agreement between the premonition

and reality, a matter which made so strong an impression on Demole and which Flournoy believed required explanation. In fact, we find nothing especially puzzling about this. We receive the impression, however, that Demole looked upon the event as a favourable presage for his secret wishes, and interpreted it in that way. It is as if he had said to himself : Since this mysterious premonition has proved true, my other, more important, wishes will come true. The feeling of pleasure experienced by Demole after he had learned of Larin's death certainly runs consistent with our assumption. We surmise that it arose from the increase of ego-feeling, from the confirmation of the omnipotence of his thought. He had good cause for this feeling, since he had conceived of his presage as an omen that his secret wishes would be fulfilled. Naturally, in this form it could not be admitted to consciousness. Demole's moral ideals would be outraged at the thought that the death of another should be required by his ambition. In consciousness this feeling of pleasure was replaced by a feeling of great satisfaction that he had experienced so interesting an event which he might investigate psychologically.

Shall we rest content with the results we have so far attained ? We can avail ourselves of two minor but striking features of Demole's story which will lead even closer to definite insight into the psychogenesis of his premonition.

Demole offers two pieces of data : first, his instant of sudden conviction, and secondly, an error in thinking which he reports as an afterthought to the first phenomenon. At this point I must remind you of the rule in the technique of dream interpretation

that such afterthoughts usually contain the most important part of the dream, and that they often provide the key to the complete interpretation. The dream behaves just like many women, who stow the most important part of their letter into the post-script. Is it likely that this is true also of Demole's account? You will recall what was in this afterthought: Demole remarks that he had made an error in describing to himself the patient Larin as given to bed-wetting. In trying to explain this error he cited external circumstances such as the location of the rooms, and he would have us believe that this is the only motivation for the error. But we think that this sort of interchange has deeper psychological roots and that such conditions as similar rooms and so forth do not cause it—although they may facilitate its occurrence. When we have found what motivated such errors, we shall perhaps have found the best point of departure for the total explanation. Let us recall also, without laying stress on it, that psycho-analysis discovered that infantile enuresis and adult ambition are closely connected. This question was referred to in a passage of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which Demole had just finished reading the day before his experience.

There is another point from which we might attack our analysis, one which had at first escaped my attention. We are indebted to the attentiveness of Theodor Reik, who pointed it out and gave it analytic evaluation. He draws our attention to the names which occurred to Demole immediately after the mysterious wave of conviction: Vaschide—James—Swedenborg—Freud. It is noteworthy that later on two of these names were omitted. After



the young doctor had received confirmation of his premonition he describes his feelings: "I hold my breath, then breathe deeply again. I feel pleased that this is such an interesting case. Freud . . . Vaschide."

There was a significant motive, Reik believes, for the selection of those names. Indeed, there is a motive behind the repetition of only two of them. What was it?

To further our analysis, Reik refers us to another point. In Demole's mind the words Nicoud and Larin seem to stand for some sort of parallel to the words Vaschide and Freud. Let us recall something that Flournoy had observed, for that many help us to get at the roots of this subterranean relation. Why does Demole, in his perplexity, use the word *péché*, sinned, erred? He asks himself where and how did he commit a psychological sin? The expression *pécher* is appropriate and its use is justified only if an unconscious evil wish stands behind it. In truth, such a strong wish does exist. Demole wishes the death of Larin, in order that he may have a chance to speak with the professor and gratify his ambitious wish to accompany him to Paris. But this same ambition may strive after a more lasting and higher aim.

Reik's further remarks proceed from the fact that Demole had just finished reading the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Reik also makes the supposition that the young investigator may have had, among other feelings, an ambitious desire to accomplish similar triumphs in science.

The parallel:

Nicoud . . . Larin  
Vaschide . . . Freud

becomes more lucid to us if we assume that Demole has combined the two last-named psychologists with the two patients, forming, out of four, two composite persons. The process is sufficiently familiar to us from our dream interpretations. Vaschide, who like Nicoud had recently died, becomes amalgamated with Nicoud into one person in the unconscious of Demole. Perhaps the association between the two is facilitated by a similarity in sound; Demole was well acquainted with the first name of Vaschide, Nicolas, a name whose first syllable is the same as that of Nicoud.

Freud becomes, in the same manner, one with Larin, who is soon to die. But the ambitious wish stirred up by the reading of the *Psychopathology* is directed to the death of the Viennese psychologist, who like the earlier Vaschide stands in the way of Demole's ambitions. This hypothesis gains force when we hear what emotions he bestows on the living and the dead patients. Nicoud is no longer interesting, he is finished; Larin, on the contrary, is interesting because he is going to die. "La malade pendant sa vie est donc l'objet d'une préoccupation, d'un intérêt, il est chargé de l'affect et à l'autopsie il y a une abréaction, comme dirait Freud." The Vaschide (Nicoud) who opposed the ambitions of Demole is dead. Now the feeling which has been lavished on him is directed towards Freud (Larin); he must die also so that Demole's ambition may have free rein. This unconscious substitution is covered up by another wish, one which attains to consciousness and which is impelled also by Demole's ambition: Larin shall die and his autopsy will give me a chance to speak to the professor about the visit to Paris. From this standpoint, the expression "sin "

is altogether appropriate; it was chosen by Demole's psyche to express his unconscious death wish.

But what inner associations of Demole's can have linked together two such people as Freud and Vaschide, who are at opposite poles in respect to both personality and significance? This question can be answered if we think of all four names which occurred to Demole: Vaschide, James, Swedenborg, Freud. The bearers of these four names have something in common, for they all have been concerned—though each after a quite different fashion—with the clarification of dark psychological phenomena (superstition, omnipotence of thought, telepathy). The last section of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* deals with such subjects, and Demole had just finished reading the book. When later on these thoughts are continued, only the two names of Vaschide and Freud are retained. We may surmise that the two psychologists are closer to the heart of Dr. Demole than are the two philosophers.

Now we perceive the significance of the attribute *gâteaux* with which Demole had characterized Nicoud correctly and Larin incorrectly. If our interpretation is valid, then this fact must fit into the explanation. Reik recommends that we consider the figurative as well as the literal significance of the concept. "Both patients soiled their beds. Vaschide and Freud, who are composite figures behind which appear Nicoud and Larin, soil their science." This, then, would betoken passionate opposition to Freud. Demole earlier directed his hostile and denigrating criticism primarily at Vaschide and his views on telepathy. Later, after he reads the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, this line of feeling and association is erroneously applied to Freud, as was the designation

*gâteux* to Larin. Later on, when he amends his error, the correction extends also to the figure hidden behind poor Larin. The impression that Freud's book made on Demole was not of one piece. Demole's attitude toward the founder of psycho-analysis must be regarded as ambivalent. Freud's book aroused in him mixed feelings of admiration and scorn. Dr. Demole tries to fight down the strong favourable impression Freud's book has made on him; he enlists the aid of the epithet-association "Vaschide." He, the man educated in exact science, criticizes Freud's investigations by scornfully comparing them to Vaschide's telepathic discoveries. Both investigators are "*gâteux*"; they dishonour their science. The very word *gâteux*, however, is frequently used as a circumlocution for a much more bitter epithet. It is used as an allusion to the fact that so many inmates of the madhouse usually soil their beds. In French, therefore, the word *gâteux* is equivalent to "demented." Such a criticism of Vaschide and Freud surely was far from Demole's conscious intention. But that does not exclude the great probability that unconsciously this was what the word signified.

Let me supplement these observations of Reik's with a few sentences. When we detect the psychic forces and counterforces which determined the genesis of Dr. Demole's premonition, we also discover that Flournoy's hypothesis of an "anti-mystical disposition" has a certain amount of truth. At first glance there appear certain things which speak against this: first of all Demole's concern with Swedenborg, Vaschide, and others who were students of extra-sensory matters—and secondly, a passage in the letter to Flournoy. Here he says:

“*Tout petit déjà, ce qui touche à l'âme, au mystère religieux, me tourmentait sans cesse.*” But why “tourmenter,” “to torment”? He evidently was at pains to defend himself against his anti-mystical inclinations. As we have seen, he was partially successful.

This early interest in religious and mystical questions and the later strenuous defence against all mystical hypotheses has visibly influenced the account Demole gives of his strange experience. Only consider the way in which he has used the method of psycho-analysis. When, after the sudden emergence of the conviction, his mind reverted to the reading of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, his thought was: “Freud . . . unconscious . . . quickly, I must analyze myself.” And he did attempt it, but the psychic countercurrent was too strong, and so he was prevented from penetrating deeper than the superficial level. He remained satisfied with an explanation which betrayed his antagonism to the content of the *Psychopathology*. For he had availed himself only of factors that psycho-analysis designates as propitious, not as motivating. Such factors are the dreamy state after awakening, the absent-mindedness, and the associations of sound which facilitate slips in speech and mistakes in reading. He was thus obliged to overlook the deeper psychic motivation of his premonition, how it had served as a wish-fulfilment of his ambition. But it was just this desire which made him picture the end of the persons whose existence stood in the way of his secret wishes. Larin was the most immediate and least-valued representative of this line of “obstructions” whom his ambition, by the force of the omnipotence of thought, had removed.

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from the path and relegated to the autopsy table. The poor Larin had the honour of being the symbol of all the others in his consciousness. Behind him stand the writers and thinkers whom he had rejected in anger, and possibly his direct superiors. And behind these there is the dreamer himself, whose guilt-feeling has found his desire out and condemns him for his ambition.

The psychic conditions and motivation behind this experience which Dr. Demole has shared with us in his stimulating essay have now become fairly intelligible. To close our little analysis, may we express this wish: that the esteemed author understand it is no disgrace to anyone if such secret motives are discovered in him, but that very often it is such motives which produce the inadequacy of the attempt at explanation.

### POSTSCRIPT

I have already said that this reconstruction makes no claims to be an exact, word-for-word reproduction of Freud's lecture of November 1913. It is open to the same criticism that any attempt of this sort might meet. It would be incorrect, however, to accuse it of attributing to Freud words he did not utter. I have, rather, restored here words which I had borrowed from him (for my essay). Such criticism of text aside, I trust that everyone interested in psycho-analysis will be glad that this beautiful analysis, a perfect jewel of Freud's analytic observation of detail and interpretative technique, is rescued from oblivion. The future biographer of Freud and the historian of psycho-analysis will find this lecture valuable as a forerunner of those preserved in the first two chapters of this book. Those

who have followed the development of Freud's ideas will be interested in comparing the views expressed here with the later ones.

After the war, Dr. Demole appeared once as a guest at a meeting of the Psycho-Analytical Society in Vienna. I had the pleasure of presenting him to Professor Freud who, after some difficulty, recalled his name and the essay. I do not know whether Demole visited Freud. It was then that the young physician, to his surprise, learned for the first time that his article in the *Archives de Psychologie* had once been made the subject of an analytical discussion.\*

Let me conclude with some psychological comments on Freud's interpretation and on the history of this lecture. It seems quite striking that Freud had not observed the parallelism—Nicoud—Larin—Vaschide—Freud—in Demole's thought processes. I explain it in this way: that this parallelism revealed the unconscious death wish against Freud himself in a veiled, but none the less analytically recognizable form. The thought of his own death (though later on it held no more terror for him) had inhibited his noticing the significant parallel, which ordinarily would not have escaped him. It did not occur to him that Dr. Demole's unconscious ambition was directed at the goal of somehow equalling Freud's achievements. This relation to himself acted in hindering his analysis of this aspect of Demole's experience.

The shrewd reader will detect that certain psychological conditions made just this aspect of the case

\* Naturally, it is not possible to clear up the motives behind Freud's misspelling of the doctor's name in his letter to me (Demolle instead of Demole). I venture the guess that Freud unconsciously had in mind the Berlin sexologist, Dr. Albert Moll, whose ignorant attacks on psycho-analysis had annoyed him.

most pointed to the writer. Unconscious wishes and ambitious strivings similar to those of Dr. Demole—and ones which later were brought to consciousness—attracted the attention of the writer to the presence of that parallelism which hides the repressed tendency.

I think it likely that it was this unconscious reference to his own death that made Freud object to my suggestion that he publish the lecture himself. There is another consideration, that his delicacy and tact forbade his publishing an article in which he played the main rôle as the object of another's unconscious rivalry.

The final sentence of the lecture (which he added to my original essay) shows with what great understanding he was able to treat the signs of this ambition in others.

When Freud insisted that I should make use of his lecture and publish it in the form of an essay, he surely intended that the beautiful analytic material should be saved. Why he should assign this task to me in particular—that is a question of the obscure interplay of unconscious impulses between two people. The great man was not blind to the silly and presumptuous unconscious wishes that dwelt in his young disciple (I was twenty-five at the time), wishes which betrayed themselves by the particular attention paid to that neglected aspect of the case. But Freud smilingly shut his eyes to these wishes. This time, as so often before and since, he gave testimony of his benevolence and humanity.



PART THREE  
FREUD AS A CRITIC OF OUR CULTURE

PREFATORY NOTE

Ever since he perceived the contradiction between sexual drives and cultural interests, Freud felt compelled to attempt a critical evaluation of our civilization. But at that time he did not care to publish his views. During this early period of his dawning understanding of the psychic forces which determine human destinies, his works show only a few traces of this interest. But these scattered comments reveal the same spirit, the same intellectual boldness, that characterized his entire life and work. If we study them attentively, we shall see that ideas which had previously touched the periphery of his work slowly groped their way toward the centre. Concepts at first dim or not yet articulate were later comprehended more keenly, clearly, and consciously.

It has not been my aim here to present the whole range of cultural-philosophical criticism to be found in Freud's writings. The following chapters deal only with Freud's papers on this subject in the 1927-30 period. Most of these critical essays were lectures given during those years in the Vienna and Berlin Psycho-Analytical Societies.

## CHAPTER VI

### “ CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS ”

#### I

THE last writings of Freud have caused many who call themselves his followers serious and even painful embarrassment. It was hard to assign them their proper place in scientific literature; they did not quite fit in. They had little to do with the actual theory of the neuroses. Instead, they were an unusual sort of interpretation and criticism of occidental civilization, reflections on culture undertaken from the same point of view as that of Freud's study of the psycho-neuroses. The disarming naïveté of some critics led them to believe that the only bond linking the one group of Freud's works with this new group was the identity of the author. They did not recognize that the bond was wrought within the mind of this personality who was accustomed to pursue his ideas to whatever end they led.

But it was not only the matter of these problems that aroused dismay. The manner of their treatment also was disquieting. It was indubitably true that in these last writings Freud was far more subjective than he had ever been. Here he betrayed something of his personal position on the great problems of this age and of the ages. This was quite different from the impersonal, objective attitude of former years, when his eyes were fixed exclusively on the subject of his research. Now he dared to express views that were personal and untraditional.

No doubt scientists will emphatically declare that they have nothing to do with all this; they will insist that the scientist cannot, as a scientist, presume to express personal opinions on the relations of happiness and civilization. But Freud does not choose to keep his beliefs to himself. *The Future of an Illusion* is substantially the *confessio fidei* of an unbeliever. *Civilization and Its Discontents* contains something of the philosophy of a scientist who generally kept himself detached from philosophic questions. We remember how Freud was upbraided by Abderhalden and other clinicians after the publication of *The Future of an Illusion*. That reproof was repeated even more sternly with regard to *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Civilization and happiness—these are not fit subjects of conversation for practical physicians.

To be sure, Freud's subjectivity has a quality uniquely its own; even in personalized criticism the suprapersonal is manifest. There is mingled with our feeling that Freud is personally concerned an impression that he nevertheless approaches these problems from a certain distance, with a certain longer view. The essence of his subjectivity appears to be the silent vow not to concede to tradition as an argument for anything. His followers have learned from his example and his work to combine with all scientific work a certain disrespect for the conservative spirit of science.

In another way, also, the character of these last writings is a departure from the earlier work. There still prevails the deep regard for detail, but along with it there is a strange interest in the larger perspectives. The microscope is often laid aside for the telescope. An adage from the Makamen of Harîrî

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is testimony of the justness, nay the necessity of such a transition :

Too close to the eyes is no better than too far—  
Thou seest not through thyself nor seest the universal  
star.

While clarity still pervades the work, Freud now indulges in contemplation. The observer in Freud is still dominant, but the speculative thinker shares the throne. Knowledge is still the goal of all his striving, but now wisdom will be included in the reward.

It may be objected that this appears so, simply because these last essays treat themes so widely removed from the earlier writings. After all, one cannot treat the struggle in and toward civilization in the same spirit and with the same methodical and impersonal objectivity as, say, a case of hysteria or obsessional neurosis. All this apparent change is merely an adjustment, analogous to the eye's power of accommodation to longer or shorter distances.

This objection merits some attention, although it is generally uttered with excessive triumph and belligerency. But as an explanation it still does not tell us why Freud in his later years should accommodate his vision to dwell upon just these particular problems—after he had always devoted himself to details, even to minutiae. Granted that the changed subject matter demands a different method, does this explain why the subject matter changed ?

All the ideas, theories, insights, and critical estimates in these latter essays appear to have sprung into being full-grown, as Pallas Athena sprang from the head of Zeus. All the wisdom

which is so astonishing to us does not seem to have been won laboriously, but rather to have emerged mysteriously from some hidden source. As a matter of fact, it was not won in the ordinary way by solid, scholarly diligence and taxing meditation. Freud's discoveries are finds. But that expression does not quite hit the mark. His “ finds ” matured silently for so long and at so slow a pace that when, at last, they “ occurred ” to their discoverer, they were practically mature. These cool draughts arose from a deep well; it was long before they brimmed over the edge.

After every book of Freud's we are left with the impression that he sees things as if he were beholding them for the first time. And there is truth in this, for Freud frequently contemplated things with such patient intensity that at last it was as though he recovered the first vision of them, because he had seen something profoundly new in them.

This is true of the thoughts in *Civilization and Its Discontents*; they seem to have been born the very day they were written down. Yet they are neither of to-day nor yesterday. They originated far back, and were merely reviewed once more yesterday and to-day. The vision itself is not recent; only the revision.

2

We have suggested that in *The Future of an Illusion* the author at first intended to survey civilization in general and then to look in turn at each of the illusions the evolution of civilization has engendered. Freud has not followed this intention in this new book, but he has done something similar. He has written a fugue on the theme of civilization

and human happiness, a fugue in allegro tempo at whose end we must cry out, "Maestoso!"

The introduction to the book follows most closely the original plan. I find it the weakest part of the essay. It only half succeeds, compared with the introductions to Freud's other books—which is to say, it does not measure up to the very highest standard. We wonder whether this section was actually first meant for an introduction to this work. Perhaps it was placed here after the essay had already been written. However that may be, it would be just as significant independently of the book. The relation of this introduction to the main body is a very tenuous one—if we look beneath the external connectives for the essential inner relationships. As an introduction it conveys no hint of what is to follow. It is more of a prologue that has, at best, a vague kinship to the drama itself than a prelude introducing the action.

Perhaps this separateness of the introduction has its reason in the point of departure. The section was stimulated by remarks of two acquaintances of the author. The first asserts that the real source of religiousness is a feeling of something eternal, an "oceanic" feeling, as it were. This feeling, the friend declared, had animated himself and many others. The other friend declared that by certain yoga practices like controlled breathing he could stir new sensations, universal emotions, in himself and could arrive, in this ecstasy, at knowledge hitherto hidden from him.

We may ask: are such statements worthy of being made the cornerstone of the whole structure? We have heard the sentiments concerned more often than we have ancient platitudes. Freud is not really

uncritical of these statements of his friends, but since he is using them only as *points d'appui* he might have made a better choice. The interest he lavishes on them is dictated more by friendship than by their substance. He is “quite willing” to grant that many men may experience such an oceanic feeling. I myself am rather sceptical. I suspect that what that friend is describing is more a sentiment than a feeling. And then, there is a significant lack of connection between the statements of the two friends and the subsequent statements of the third friend, who quotes them.

What is the vital point of this section? For it does not lie in the discussion of the oceanic sensation, wherein this rather questionable phenomenon is interpreted as part of the evolution of the ego consciousness. A bypath turns out to be more rewarding, leading to the problem of the preservation of the psychic content. Here, too, Freud extends hints rather than elaborated theories, suggestions of how to find the solution rather than the solution itself, doubts that are fruitful rather than barren certainties. The well-educated fools of all countries do not think much of such endeavours; they are fond of certainty in science. They look upon doubt as a menace to the order of things, human and divine.

The telling point of this section is reached in the course of this digression. Freud compares the phenomena of the psyche with the changing face of a city, where layer is buried beneath layer, but all are constantly present. It is not the first time that Freud remarks upon the permanence in change, the change in permanence of the psychic processes. Freud's analogy approaches most closely and

sensitively to a description of this phenomenon. Yet something is still wanting. It is concrete, and yet it ends in abstraction. It is like trying to shape a ball out of water by holding it in the hollow of the hand. It is too much, and yet not enough. The edifices of the "eternal city" which succeeds one another and also exist coevally are impossible to conceive, though only such a conception can clarify the nature of the psyche for us. We require a symbol that will enable us to see what we have at hand as though it were far away, and to see what has vanished as a present reality. Freud's analogy can be fully appreciated only by someone who has also attempted to express by symbols the character of the psyche—let us say by the popular analytical symbol of a palimpsest. I believe—although I may be quite astray—that this analogy of Freud's was prompted by an unconscious memory of speeches of Giacomo Bonis and Nicole Langeliers in Anatole France's *Sur la Pierre Blanche*.

What is important, however, is that this matter diverts us from the main theme of the essay rather than leads us toward it. Apparently Freud recognizes this, for he says explicitly that he would like to devote more time to it, even though he has "insufficient reason." Amidst the straight, towering lines of Freud's works, this introduction, for all its interest and significance, is a piece of flimsy architecture.

## 3

In the first section Freud meditates upon the possibilities of happiness within civilization. He shows us the sorry character of the happiness which men win by so much labour. He shows how civilization



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threatens happiness with heavy levies and restrictions. Then he demonstrates how by its very nature happiness is a fleeting thing, since it “ springs from the sudden gratification of long-restrained needs and is by its nature possible only as an episodic phenomenon.” The discussion, in its wealth of themes, is almost a rhapsody; but by and by the deep bare theme of it emerges—the understanding that the pathways to happiness are multitudinous, but they are all alike in their failure to reach the goal. For no path leads to supreme happiness. And yet this matter of happiness is a pressing problem of libido economy which everyone must solve in his own fashion.

Freud sums up the psychological means that men employ either to escape pain or to attain happiness. He names three opiates for pain: diversions which make us mock our life; substitutive gratifications which make us degrade our life; and intoxicants which make us insensible to our life. (“ They thrice showed me how, when our lives are at dusk, we fritter and sleep and sing our lives away, in threefold mockery.”)\*

Nowhere in his essay is the tone of the scientist and detached observer overwhelmed by that of the prophetic leader or the philosophic counsellor. Freud remains objective and tranquil, no matter how poignant the subject. At times he seems even deliberately impassive when he is writing of matters that rend every man at the heart. There is one single note that sounds a somewhat didactic overtone: “ As the prudent merchant avoids putting all his eggs in one basket, so wisdom may advise us not to expect all gratification from a single striving.” This

\* Lenau, *Die Drei Zigeuner*.

admonition, so reminiscent of the Greek concept of Sophrosyne, is a self-evident truth—but Freud knows perfectly well how vain an ideal it is. For it seems that each new generation must have its own illusions and plunge of itself into ruin, as though no man had a heritage of sad experience. Man's earthly travail seems ever the same and youth never learns from the past generation. The knowledge and values of the past are drowned in the tempest of the present. And the wiser elders who are satiated with life cannot understand the young who are all hungry for life—and this is only one instance of the reciprocal lack of understanding upon which society is ever founded.

He reflects upon sexual love, its content of happiness, and its promise of sorrow, a promise which is always fulfilled. Unquestionably the relation between man and woman has been a great incentive to cultural evolution. But it is equally clear that there is a painful contradiction between civilization and love. As this contradiction is sharpened, it happens that women set themselves in opposition to the cultural stream and there is exacted from men ever greater sublimation. (“*Souvent la femme nous inspire les grandes choses,*” says Dumas fils, bowing low; but drawing himself up he adds, “*qu'elle nous empêchera d'accomplir.*”)

That other solace of us wayfarers, that casual companion called friendship, hardly comes in here. Freud never quotes with approval the aphorism, “*Call no man fortunate till he is dead.*” It would seem that Freud has no proper respect for the bliss that reigns after the sacrament of extreme unction.

Freud now takes up another theme: he considers closely that mechanism of pain and sorrow we

commonly call civilization. We encounter here a remarkable paradox. Civilization, our weapon and our shelter, which we have devised against pain, instead has become a house of suffering. It is at once medicine and poison. Here, in the most succinct form, Freud presents a kind of history of culture, a history of the achievements of civilization and of the losses civilization has inflicted. There are few things in literature comparable to this panorama of the evolution of culture. Here are a few pages replete with enough suggestions to occupy a generation of researchers. It embraces the past and the present and reaches forth to comprehend the future.

4

Freud propounds the theory that civilization brings about a lessening of sexuality. One reason for this is that so much vital force is expended by men in conquering and subduing aggressive instincts. And at this point Freud incidentally gives his estimate of that movement whose philosophy rests upon the belief that all unhappiness of civilized man comes from the institution of private property and that the abolition of that institution will bring about a paradise on earth.

Naturally, Freud recognizes that to abolish private property will be to remove one of the instrument's of man's aggressiveness, "certainly an important instrument, and certainly not the most important." But he does not abandon himself to the simple-minded optimism that all evil in the individual and the community can be eradicated by removing this single institution. He who has seen many human lives unfolded before him cannot share an uninspiring faith in a new world order as the last

and only salvation. Organizations for the fostering of human happiness do not seem too promising, while the organized effort to make men unhappy has been successful in all ages and lands. Man is like the little evergreen tree that always longed for different leaves; and I have no doubt that it will still want different leaves even after all its foliage is red.

When Freud described the psychological basis of communism as a "groundless illusion" he certainly lost the sympathy of many, and many worthy, men. It seems to be his fate, however, to find his views, at any given time, in opposition to those views which have become popular among his contemporaries. The theory of repression had just begun to enjoy widespread acceptance, a new era was dawning when even physicians began to accept the theory of the sexual etiology of the neuroses, and then Freud upset the applecart. He undermined the confidence that many were slowly beginning to confer on him by declaring that religion was a kind of illusion. Especially those men who had been reared in the natural sciences could not forgive him for the disappointment he had been to them. For most free-thinkers nowadays are believers in the deepest sense of the word. It is a sign of the true natural scientist that he confines himself strictly to the subject matter of his studies. He stoutly rejects any attempts to form hypotheses transcending empirical knowledge. And just as stoutly he persists in his unshaken belief in the Absolute. At the present time this seems to be the only possible basis for a free and unprejudiced science.

Upon the publication of *The Future of an Illusion* great indignation raged, especially in medical circles. The priests of the various religions were

tolerant and quite calm about the whole matter, but a number of our medical authorities declared that Freud was trampling into the dust everything men hold sacred. There may be a great many doubting priests, but after reading the criticisms of Freud's book we shall no longer question the immaculate religiousness of many psychiatrists and neurologists.

The communists, who were greatly pleased with Freud's conception of religion as superfluous in our social order, had already taken Freud unto themselves. And then he intimated that he doubted whether the abolition of private property meant the dawn of happiness for all mankind. He did not have long to wait before feeling their anger. He is destined to please nobody. Anatole France remarks, “ Il est dans la nature des vrais sages de fâcher le reste des hommes.”

Freud is not doctrinaire; he is not unyielding and uncompromising. He prefers to be honest. In a private conversation which touched on political subjects he once said that he could not see why people must be all red or all black. It was enough if a man were flesh-coloured.

5

Obviously, men do not easily surrender their aggressive desires. Freud points to the advantage obtained by a smaller cultural group, which can find a release for aggressiveness, an emergency exit as it were, by attacking outsiders. But such a cultural group will also be the victim of the aggressiveness of the encircling forces, and its own culture will hang in the balance of destruction or advancement. Should this group attain power, it is able to carry its aggressive instinct into execution and it will perform

the great cultural feat of annihilating the outsiders. World history shows that every nation, upon reaching a certain cultural level, was conquered, enslaved, and humbled by another nation, in this way partaking of the questionable blessings of a higher culture.

There are surely other possible ways to tame the aggressive energies of mankind, other avenues of escape which we have, perhaps, not yet sufficiently examined. But here, too, society has imposed too high an ethical imperative, one which must remain unattained. Any manifestation of human aggressiveness surely has a just claim to gratification. Even the mildest of men, who is worshipped by men as their Saviour, did not spare harsh words and even drove away with blows the money-changers from the temple. What can be required of us ordinary mortals? The logical action must be for us to try to canalize the aggressive impulses of man rather than to extinguish them, since they are always with us. Dreamers and optimists adjure men to love one another. Yet it is extremely doubtful whether even the more moderate advice, "Hate one another less!" would evoke any response beyond a purely theoretical interest.

It seems to me there is an intimate connection between the fate of sexuality and of aggressiveness throughout the evolution of civilization. Aggressive tendencies are also enfeebled as a culture ages. This is generally true, even though we may encounter a great many exceptional cases where aggressiveness appears in its primitive force and in its ancient forms. At any rate, a mature culture makes provision for the aggressive instincts to find new and more humane forms of expression. We might say

that a new form of aggression arises, one which has been mitigated by civility.

With the growth and expansion of a culture, there is presented another danger besides the growing restriction on the impulses. This danger Freud called “ the psychological misery of the masses.” It appears as a menace wherever the social union is maintained mainly by the members’ identification with each other, while at the same time leading personalities are either absent or deprived of their proper due. Let it be emphasized that this respect for personality as against the masses has nothing to do with the banal question of egoism and altruism. The example of America shows how false such an equation would be. Freud believes that America, especially in its present state of culture, stands on the brink of that peril. America, in whose slang the term “ number one ” stands for “ I,” is a terrifying example of a poverty of great individuals. Here the culture has standardized the people and standardized their thoughts.

Solitude is certainly pregnant with sorrow, but it is open to question whether community always confers happiness. And it is possible to be social and yet remain isolated, just as it is possible to be alone and yet participate in society. Neurosis tends to withdraw men from society; but perhaps such solitude is one of the essential conditions of any great cultural achievement. Civilization seeks to establish ever wider and more encompassing union. But perhaps, in its larger sense, civilization is not possible without alternation between solitude and community. It seems to me that it is one of the requisites of civilization that men be able to endure solitude and to welcome it; that they be not forced to

estimate themselves as a mere component of the masses. Perhaps some future age will develop a culture of the individual and a culture of the masses.\*

## 6

While making a study of a special, autonomous aggressive instinct, Freud seizes the opportunity to review once more the psycho-analytical doctrine of the instincts. He pursues this trend until he encounters the opposition of the death instinct and the life instinct. Here we come to some of the most intricate problems about the relationship of the instincts to civilization. Freud believes the meaning and law of the evolution of culture lies in the struggle between Eros and Death, the life impulse and the destructive instinct. In discussing the means culture employs to inhibit the aggressiveness which is its foe, Freud alludes to the problem of guilt-feeling—that problem which has long been investigated by analysts and still remains so obscure. With a wonderful richness of thought Freud here traces the development of aggressiveness, how it turns against the ego, what are the functions of the super-ego and how guilt-feeling differs from repentance. Freud does not claim that he has answered all the questions of this kind—nor even that he has proposed all the questions. He was always averse to disguising the flaws in our knowledge by erecting an impressive system.

What is the significance of the super-ego in neurosis and in the fate of the individual; what is the underground relation between defiance and guilt-feeling; how are narcissism and indulgence towards one's own instincts bound up?—these are problems

\* This subject is treated at greater length in Chapter XIV.



of the sort. Freud shows us the perpetual and unbreakable connection between civilization and guilt-feeling; the inevitable swelling of guilt-feeling in the course of cultural progress. It impresses us somewhat like the profound doctrine of original sin. Here there is much worth our questioning and much that is questionable. We cannot accept all Freud's points unreservedly. But even where we feel we have grounds for doubts and criticism, we are moved to honour the inner logic and sincerity of Freud's ideas.

This is the picture Freud presents: The increasing pressure of guilt-feeling drives the individual toward the community. But in living together with other men new conflicts arise so that both aggressiveness and guilt-feeling are further augmented. It is a vicious circle. Or rather, it is a spiral evolution which reproduces the beginnings on a higher plane. The end of this development (or the new beginning) will probably be marked by the downfall of a civilization. What, then, is the price of progress in civilization but the forfeit of happiness through intensification of guilt-feeling? What small happiness remains to civilized man after this is perhaps the faith that he, as an individual, has helped the many—the joy of personality in the service of society. Perhaps that is wisdom's last decree. To be sure, it is a limited, tremulous and half-hearted decree, this word of human wisdom. But we know of none better.

And there remains what Mephisto suggests:

*Was soll uns denn das ew'ge Schaffen,  
Geschaffenes zu Nichts hinwegzuraffen!  
"Das ist vorbei," was ist daran zu lesen?  
Es ist so gut, als wär' es nicht gewesen.*

*Und treibt sich doch im Kreis, als wenn es wäre!  
Ich liebte mir dafür das Ewig-Leere.*

What good for us this endlessly creating?—  
What is created then annihilating?  
“And now it’s past!” Why read a page so twisted?  
’Tis just the same as if it ne’er existed,  
Yet goes in circles round as if it had, however:  
I’d rather choose, instead, the Void forever. \*

The close of the book is optimistic, but only to a certain extent. Freud sees the present time as rushing headlong towards a decision. Having mastery over the forces of nature, men now have their hands free for destroying each other down to the last man. We may now await that eternal Eros to attempt “to prevail over his likewise immortal adversary.” To prevail? Certainly only for a more or less brief span. It could not be more than an interlude. Then the destructive instinct would once more be conqueror, and the old sport would begin again, until, at the end, the works of Eros (who is also but “a part of that part which once was all”) † would sink down again into the night and the cold which is the future of our planet. Still, this lies in the remote future, and Freud’s optimistic hopes are founded on the near future, on our posterity. He is quite right when he says that, fundamentally, all of us, the wildest revolutionaries as passionately as the godliest ones, are praying for consolation which he cannot offer. For they all love life; even when they despise and renounce life’s gifts they do so out of *dépit amoureux*.

\* *Faust*, Part II, Act V, translated by Bayard Taylor.

† “Ein Teil des Teils, der anfangs alles war.” Thus Mephisto describes himself in Goethe’s *Faust*.—Translator’s note.

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Freud is not one to play the prophet, but the close of his book expresses at once a kindly doubt and a gentle hope: *In dubio mitius*.

## CHAPTER VII

### “ THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION ”

I SHALL not attempt a précis of Freud's essay, but rather an interpretation of the main themes. I hardly think it valuable to restate Freud's ideas here; I shall more or less play the accompaniment to his melody.

When we carefully study Freud's essay, we shall become aware of three main divisions. The first concerns itself with present cultural conditions, the second discusses religion, and the third offers a picture of a future culture. We feel that the first division was originally intended to be the outstanding one—that Freud meant to develop it further. One passage seems to confirm this supposition.

The composition of the whole, proceeding from broad problems of civilization to a single cultural question, is admirable. Artfully, and yet with utter naturalness, everything inexorably centres around those problems which are most dear to the author. There is the eloquent overture, expressing the wish that we may get some inkling of the remote destiny of our culture. Then follows a passage dealing with the general cultural situation, mainly from the psychological point of view; the consideration of the conditions which engender culture; the description of the psychological requirements of civilization—the renunciations, prohibitions, lacks, and compensations. Finally, Freud indicates what is the most significant element for the psychic inventory

of a culture—its religious ideas. If we prefer to imagine this work as a symphony, this introduction represents the first movement. Here Freud sets forth a comprehensive psychological picture of the present state of culture. Sterling clarity and wisdom informs this picture, which for us serves the purpose of a cross section, disclosing all the strata formations of a culture. *Totem and Taboo* gave us an analytical account of the dark origins of our institutions; here the institutions themselves are characterized.

The future may judge this introduction, this all-embracing, serene portrayal of our culture, to be the most important essay Freud ever wrote. But not for the sake of its discussion of religious problems, for these will be problems no longer. Critics, fettered as always to the present, may embroil themselves with Freud's attitude toward religious questions. But we can afford to take the longer view. Unmoved by opposition from analysts and non-analysts, we will continue to insist that this rich and profound introduction rather than the discussion of religion is the most valuable section of Freud's book.

Let us compare this book with the one preceding it. Wherein lay the special value of that study about lay-analysis? What part of its content will be considered its most significant one after twenty or fifty years? Perhaps the penetrating discussion of the problem and the elucidation of Freud's point of view? Not at all. Its significance will lie rather in this fact, that the essence of analysis is here represented with an impressive clarity never before reached. The whole realm has been looked at closely by eyes that have not overlooked anything.

The main section of the new book treats first the singular nature of religious ideas. It contains nothing with which we are not familiar from other writings of Freud. Even the role of infantile helplessness in the genesis of religion is not new, for Freud had discussed it previously in *Leonardo da Vinci*.

What follows is a dialogue, handled with the same conversational grace and sharpness that we have come to know from personal association with Freud. An opponent is introduced who follows the author's thought processes and extends or contradicts them. This opponent and gainsayer is no stranger to us; he played the same part in Freud's earlier essays. He was not always personified, but he was always present. In all his works Freud anticipated objections, replied beforehand to arguments. This alternate examination and self-assertion was a sign of his strict self-criticism.

Let us consider the opponent for a moment. As always, the interlocutor is a cultured intellectual with the highest moral sentiments, accessible to reason, and not intolerant of strong emotions. Still, our impression is that this time Freud has treated his opponent somewhat cavalierly. The opponent might have raised more cogent objections and questions. Freud might have chosen a sounder opponent—say, from among the real opponents of his ideas. I could, for example, conceive as a really competent opponent one of those subtle Catholic priests with whom it is a delight to debate. These are men full of life's wisdom and gifted with a remarkable intellectual sensitivity. They have been pupils of the stern logic that derives from Thomas Aquinas.

At one point in Freud's debate there is no longer any basic cleavage between the two opponents. Suddenly Freud writes that their disagreement is not irreconcilable; it will vanish with time. He could never have forced such a conclusion in a dispute with a priest trained in the dogma. Here the end would have been unrelenting disagreement. But perhaps Freud deliberately wished to present a cultured, worldly scholar as the type of his opponent. We must not anticipate his intentions.

But even accepting this type of opponent, the discussion still should have taken a different turn. The attitude of an intellectual of our times toward the religious question is insincere, and it cannot be made straightforward through discussion. The cultured class of mankind, or more strictly, the intellectual upper class, evince the same shamefacedness and evasiveness towards their religious needs that they do toward their sexual and economic needs. Indeed, in the religious realm these needs are often more equivocal, harder to name for what they are. The pious man and the freethinker are frequently not so far apart as they seem. They have their insincerity in common. The religious man believes and does not reflect too much on his faith. The freethinker does not reflect too much on his lack of faith because he does not reflect very much about anything. We might sum up this strange attitude toward religion by saying that most educated people do not believe in God, but they fear Him. Although science has proclaimed that God is dead, he lives on underground. And this is where scientific analysis must begin its work. The corpse must be exhumed and we must determine whether it is really dead. “ Ce sont les morts qu'il faut

qu'on tue." There is little doubt that official disbelief can live very comfortably alongside of unofficial belief.

This unconscious insincerity regarding religion would naturally alter the course of the conversation. The opponent would probably accede to most of Freud's arguments and demonstrations, declare that he was himself an atheist, and yet cling unconsciously to the faith he had denied. It would be especially hard to reason with him just because he apparently shares our views. Similarly, many obsessional neurotics will accept fully all the results of analysis, but will nevertheless cling to their illness.

Freud assures us that he himself considers his book quite harmless. He warns, however, of the fierce reactions it will call forth and of the discrediting effect it will have upon psycho-analysis. Since the appearance of *The Future of an Illusion* I have heard all kinds of objections to it, and none of them has been from the religious point of view. I am prepared to refute them all, but I shall spare the religious objections, for these contradict themselves. The first assertion is that religion is unimportant today and that Freud exaggerates its importance for the human psyche. I do not believe this. I think the importance of religion in the psyche has not yet been sufficiently appreciated or investigated by psycho-analysis. Freud is still arguing in the spirit of the eighteenth century, these objectors claim; his reasoning continues the direct tradition of the Enlightenment. It is all so old-fashioned. Note that here, for once, psycho-analysis is attacked for lacking originality. *O quae mutantio rerum!*

Freud has, of course, emphatically indicated that views similar to his have been the common property



of many great men. Nevertheless, that objection is all at sea. What a difference there is between Voltaire's passionate “Ecrasez l'infâme!” the trenchant, rationalist phrases of the French Encyclopedists, and the quiet, objective argumentation of Freud. And where, in the literature of the Enlightenment, do we find a study of the psychological source of religious ideas? Where do we find an analytical explanation of them and an appreciation of the human meaning behind them?

Like the former objection, also the second is voiced by people who are apparently completely in agreement with Freud's religious views. And they accept Freud's presentation, but immediately they point to the metaphysical value of religion; they claim that it contains transcendental truths in symbolic form; that it expresses the Absolute.

This argument brings back through the window what has already been thrown out of the front door; for what here appears as a transcendental absolute is nothing but disguised, emasculated, and intellectualized religion, in its true form an object of shame. Moreover, it is easy and convenient to make statements about the transcendental because they need no proof and by their very nature admit of none. These objectors know everything about the transcendental that has ever been known; that is, nothing at all.

The last objection grants the logic of Freud's reasoning but challenges his right to extend to the collective psyche conclusions that have been derived from individual analysis. Now, psycho-analysts have often discussed this methodological question. What precautions are necessary in translating the results of individual research to the realm of folk

psychology? What limitations must be imposed on such translation and what heuristic justification does it nevertheless have? We certainly do not wish to overlook methodology. But it is gradually becoming clear that up to the present methodology has always been the best scientific excuse for doing no scientific work at all. Nowadays it is possible to devote oneself to restful vacancy of mind without danger of reproach; for it is easy to impress the philosophic layman with the declaration that one is busy with considerations of methodology. It has become a pretext against all unequivocal statements. Methodology is the most convenient haven for intellectual sterility.

I have expounded these objections because they represent the position towards religious problems of many cultured persons. What is common to all of them is the sidetracking of the main question. Moreover, we see that these objections all correspond to typical defence reactions that we meet in analysis. The first, which holds that religion is unimportant, is the exact counterpart of the minimizing defence mechanism, the reduction to triviality. The second, which insinuates metaphysics to the fore, corresponds to dual conviction in obsessional neurosis. The third objection, which emphasizes the methodologic point of view, represents the forepleasure stage of intellectual activity. This is a sort of Hamlet compulsion which inhibits all real scientific work by continuous delay of action. But all these objections show the common feature of the first: acceptance of Freud's reasoning. None of those who raised these objections took issue from the standpoint of the believer; but every one of them unconsciously was a believer.

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To my mind, then, the enemy acts, not so much by frank resistance to Freud's essay, but otherwise; paradoxically, by that very preliminary intellectual acceptance which is his façade, a fortress behind which resistance can develop. A concession is made so that it will not be necessary to draw the logical conclusions. This implies that the book will not alter the mental indolence and inner insincerity which dominate our society.

Since we are in the midst of considering religious problems, it will not be inappropriate if I remind you of the miracle of Saint Anthony's fish sermon. It is recounted in the Book of Saints, and we also have it in the simple, lovely verse of our great collection of German folk poetry, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The saint finds the church empty and goes to the fishes to preach to them. The carp come swimming up, and the pike, the cod, the crab. The tortoise,

. . . as a rule  
A slow-enough fool,  
Rose from the depths in a hurry  
To hear the saint's story.  
Each and every word  
Delighted the cod.  
Fish great and fish wee,  
Of high and low degree,  
Turned their head to the east  
Like reasoning beasts.

And then the close, so powerfully and bitterly expressed in Mahler's F Major chords:

FROM THIRTY YEARS WITH FREUD

The sermon now ends;  
 Each on his way wends—  
 The pike remain thievish,  
 The eels much love lavish,  
 Backwards walks the crab,  
 Carp eats all he can grab—  
 The sermon was nice  
 No one thinks of it twice.  
 Each goes on as he begun  
 And my story is done.\*

There is another point we must raise. Freud emphasizes that psycho-analysis as a method of research is impartial and that the defenders of religion may also use it to determine the affective significance of religion. Certainly we shall all agree with this. But analysis depends upon who practises it; and the situation is considerably changed when we are attempting to analyze the content of truth in religion. When a priest practises analysis, he does not cease to be a spiritual shepherd, and gradually the original aims are displaced, the ideational base shifts and contradictory tasks arise. When this happens, psycho-analysis pays the piper. Undeniably, many priests have shown a broad understanding of analysis. But along with this is an inflexible, though cleverly concealed, desire to put it to work in the service of the only Holy and

\* . . . sonst langsame Boten  
 Steigen eilig vom Grund,  
 Zu hören diesen Mund.  
 Kein Predigt niemals  
 Den Stockfisch so g'fallen,  
 Fisch' grosse, Fisch' kleine  
 Vornehm und gemeine,  
 Erheben die Köpfe  
 Wie verständ'ge Geschöpfe.

Die Predigt geendet,  
 Ein jeder sich wendet.  
 Die Hechte bleiben Diebe,  
 Die Aale viel lieben.  
 Die Krebs' geh'n zurücke.  
 Die Stockfisch bleib'n dicke,  
 Die Karpfen viel fressen,  
 Die Predigt vergessen.  
 Die Predigt hat gefallen,  
 Sie bleiben wie allen.

Apostolic Church. For the first we thank them; for the second we say, no thank you. Everyone who has followed the literature knows that the Church is preparing to take over psycho-analysis. But it cannot be denied that the Church is one of the strongest repressive forces in our society. When it utilizes analysis, it places it in the service of repression. In our practice we have often noted how an obsessional neurotic not only cleverly weaves newly acquired knowledge into his system, but often uses it to enlarge his obsessional pattern. This is precisely what happens to analysis in the service of religion.

It is all very well to be tolerant toward the religious view, but we must guard against extending our tolerance also to analytic aberrations. One of our Berlin colleagues recently wrote that analysis, like religion, has the same basic belief in goodness; both demonstrate how powerful and triumphant the good is in us all. Certainly we cannot object to this, providing we stipulate that analysis can also demonstrate precisely the opposite. One might believe in a world order in which the good is unmercifully punished and evil is its own reward. If our distinguished colleague clearly sees the hand of God guiding human destiny, we shall not venture to question him. But we may add mildly that the direction in which that *digitus paternae dextrae* points is extremely dubious.

At another point in Freud's discussion we should like to expand on his remarks. He points out that religion also may give license to sin freely once more after repentance. The brooding Russians have concluded from this that it is necessary to sin in order to partake of divine grace. But this is the

attitude not only of certain Russian types. Long ago, in the beginnings of Christianity, there were many gnostic sects, such as the Gnostics, the Samaritans and others, who regarded it so far that they determined in order to destroy it. Many medieval priests of the East valued her husband, a thing which was to her eternal salvation, which often emphasized that the man of wanton pride was the eternal curse of the whole world, the only hope of the whole world, the inscrutable counsel, the gift of Adam. The *Extra ecclesiam non es*.

Freud's passages on the future of religion and its slow, fateful dissolution are so clear and impressive that we need only draw the reader's attention to certain portions. There are sentences here which in their courageous directness, their monumental weight, and diamond-hard clarity, are reminiscent of the opening of the Beethoven C Minor Symphony. Thus destiny knocks at the door of a culture.

We turn now to the last section of Freud's book. Here he considers what the future will be like after religion disappears as a significant element in our cultural complex. The ideal of psychology, the supremacy of the intellect, will then take hold; education for reality will begin. The man of the future will confront with resignation the limitations of his own nature and will renounce all illusions.

Here, together with the opponent, we recognize the logic and importance of Freud's ideas; but our scepticism prevails. We feel inclined to counter not

with a harsh “ no,” but with the gentle “ Je doute ” of Renan. While we cannot but agree with Freud that religion is doomed, that it has run its course, we cannot help doubting the suggestion that men are capable of living without illusions. Education for reality is certainly a consummation most devoutly to be wished; but the most striking attribute of reality is its unpleasantness. We secretly feel that reality is something others should accept. The illusion of religion will vanish, but another will take its place. The supremacy of the intellect which Freud foresees would never be more than superficial; basically men would still be guided by their instinctual desires. We do not deny the possibility that men will some day be ruled by science. But they will still be men, which is to say, frail, inconstant, more or less unreasonable beings who are the slaves of their instincts and who will never cease to strive after ephemeral pleasure. And men will continue to pray, “ Lord, give us this day our daily illusion.”

Experience must have convinced Freud that science has not made the scientists any better; that they are neither more patient nor happier nor even wiser. Science is by no means identifiable with the scientists. Freud himself once wrote the following lines which indicate that this view was not entirely strange to him. “ If another form of mass education replaces religion, as socialism seems at present to be doing, the same intolerance against outsiders will persist. And if the scientific viewpoint ever gains a similar hold over the masses, the result will be no different.” The rule of reason was instituted once before to the accompaniment of “ Ça ira,” and in its honour several thousand heads fell under the

guillotine. The supreme intellect will at best be established as a puppet king for the powerful government of the instincts. I am afraid that the rule of reason will never prevent anyone from being utterly unreasonable. Freud overestimates both the extent and the strength of human intelligence. It is, in essentials, hardly different from the animal's intelligence; and in many instances even this comparison seems a low form of flattery.

Freud points out that the supremacy of the intellect is only possible if mankind undergoes a profound change. He emphasizes the fact that the human psyche has certainly undergone a development since earliest times and is no longer what it was at the beginning of our history. He counts among these changes the introjection or "internalization" of the outward compulsion, the creation of the superego. No one denies this development, but development does not necessarily mean progress. What appears as progress subjectively is succeeded by retrogression, by reactions which annul all that has been attained and which distort its shape. The course of human history may be compared with a gigantic pendulum which swings back and forth as senselessly and unpurposefully as the life of the individual. The sceptic will even venture to question whether the strengthening of the superego is indeed such a valuable achievement of civilization. Perhaps this very internalization of outward compulsion has given birth to ego impulses which either gradually smother the ego or break forth in a destructive explosion. At any rate, we see that in neurosis the demands of the superego restrain the individual from the work of civilization as effectively as the demands of the ego. Indeed, these demands not



infrequently coincide. The main question is one of proportion. The over-severe superego is just as cruel as external compulsion. It has ruined just as many lives and prompted just as many murders. The differences are not so fundamental as appears at first glance. We must remember that metamorphosis of the instinctual impulses from outer to inner compulsion does not imply any decrease in intensity. In fact, the process of repression itself strengthens these impulses. Further, in an organism which has been refined and differentiated by cultural evolution, stimuli of lesser intensity bring about the same effects which in a cruder, more resistant organism must result from extremely powerful stimuli. God has provided that the elephant can bear loads which would break the back of a horse. A blow which to a primitive man would have been like the prick of a needle would overwhelm a modern civilized man like a hammer blow. Perhaps man would actually be better off if God had not granted him the right of reason.

In discussing the possibilities of cultural evolution Freud points to woman's intellectual limitations, which result, perhaps, from sexual prohibitions. But the peculiarity of feminine mental processes does not imply inferiority. Analysis tells us, of course, that sexual censorship exercises a significant influence upon the thought functions. However, that is not conclusive proof that it alone is responsible for the special character of feminine intelligence. Perhaps here, too, peculiarities of the psychophysical structure, anatomical differences which prevent their using their intelligence in the by no means always reasonable manner of men, account for the fact that women do not think as

men do. Certainly, they have their feet more firmly on the ground and are far more submissive to reality than men. We should not have much trouble finding both religious men and unbelievers who agree with the opinion of St. Jerome, "*Tota mulier in utero.*"

We suspect, however, that the supremacy of the intellect must fail because of the fundamentally unchangeable nature of man and the powerful resistance this will offer to any attempts of the intellect at aggrandisement. Freud has shown us clearly that religion makes many claims which it cannot prove. Nevertheless, in all justice we must admit that there are exceptions to this. Religion tells us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." And this assertion is by no means hollow. Many believers splendidly demonstrate the truth of the maxim. We need only summon to mind the many pious men and saints who were especially beloved of God. But life itself also testifies to the truth of this precept. I shall never forget the happy, indeed rapturous, expression of a poor idiot at a psychiatric clinic, and the reflection of it, also so faint, upon the face of the physician who was treating him. Nay, I do not believe that, for the sake of intelligence, men will renounce stupidity. Like "liberty, equality and fraternity," unreason is a sacred, inalienable human right. The history of all countries, and especially of our beloved Austrian fatherland, proves that men know how to defend this principle, if necessary with sword in hand.

Freud believes that the voice of the intellect, faint though it may be, will eventually make itself heard. And he believes this will be a great event. He also foresees that the great god Logos will not be

all-powerful. But, unlike his opponent in the dialogue, he does not feel that this is sufficient reason for despairing of the future of mankind and renouncing all interest in the world and in life. Here we may venture to interject that renunciation does not follow from a less optimistic conception of the future, for our interest in life and in the world is stirred mainly by other than intellectual factors. It is fed by powerful instinctual aspirations. Even though we believe that after us comes the deluge, we may still retain intense interest in this life—perhaps even more intense because of that belief.

We feel inclined to say that in the first part of this essay Freud has imparted knowledge; in the latter part he has made a confession of faith. We shall not withhold our great admiration for this brilliantly delineated picture of the future; but it seems to us less compelling than the foregoing. Moreover, it is admittedly more dependent on subjective factors than the rest. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that this picture of Freud's will become reality; but it is certainly striking that his view of the future in the main seems to conform to our wishes. Whereas the main section of Freud's essay shows the future of an illusion, we may say with little exaggeration that this last section presents the illusion of a future.

We might presume to sketch another picture of the future, without abandoning analytical principles. Human civilization is essentially constructed like an obsessional neurosis; it begins with reaction formations against the suppressed instinctual currents. The longer a civilization lasts, the more successful are these restrained impulses in gaining the upper hand; the scales tip steadily in their favour. We can

study this process in the decline of Graeco-Roman civilization. On the one hand, the Logos as represented by Socrates, and the doctrine of Sophrosyne in Greece and by Marcus Aurelius and by the Stoics in Rome, was literally the highest principle. On the other hand, the instinctual forces which had been so long damned up began to overflow the walls which reason had already undermined—and wrought the destruction of this civilization. Other peoples of unassailed vitality, less spoiled by civilization, following their instincts with untroubled confidence, not yet exhausted by the struggle with the forces of repression, were then able to deal this civilization the death blow. Then the cycle begins again, for all that is here brought forth anew “deserves in the end nonentity.” There is nothing to oppose this assumption that our civilization faces the same destiny; that the culture of our little peninsula of Asia will also collapse within a measurable space of time and that more vital and primitive peoples will bring about its end. It is one possibility among many others, and no more unlikely than the others. It is well to remember, of course, that Freud also has presented his picture of the future not as a prophecy but as a suggestion worthy of consideration. He emphatically warns us against taking these reflections for more than just that.

The future is closed to us; we labour on our corner of civilization like those weavers who never see the tapestry they are weaving. We do our work because we have no choice and—we will not deny it—because it gratifies us. The ultimate wisdom remains, “Cultivons notre jardin.”

Mankind, in the course of its historical development, has suffered three great disillusionments and

humiliations. Let us compare the positions which the representatives of these three disillusionments have had toward religion. Copernicus, who proved that our planet had small claim to be considered the centre of the cosmos, closes his book with an impassioned hymn to God, the creator of the heavens and the earth. Darwin, who forced man to surrender his title of the “ crown of creation,” clung for a while to religious belief as a sort of reservation against his theory of evolution. Freud shows religion as an illusion which should be eliminated from our concept of culture.

The devout and cautious Copernicus did not dare to publish his work. But during those same years a liberty-loving man, Florian Geyer, became the leader of a movement which demanded freedom from the compulsion of the Church and justice and equality for all men; a movement which abjured all the consolations of heaven and stood stoutly for the principle that our kingdom is of this world. His plain, straightforward, uncomplicated mind had not yet grasped that profound necessity which, in the words of Anatole France, decrees that “ the law in its majestic equality forbids both rich and poor to sleep under bridges and to steal bread.” Because of his outrageous ideas he was hunted and cut down like a mad dog by the henchmen of the throne and church. Within these four hundred years there has been no real change; despite all appearances we still live in an era of intellectual coercion. But through those four hundred years the words I have seen engraved on the sword of Florian Geyer still glow with fire, and these words might well stand as motto for Freud’s essay, “*Nulla crux, nulla corona.*”

The foregoing critical discussion was first delivered at one of our Wednesday meetings in Freud's home in December 1927. He was in complete agreement with me about my condemnation of methodological evasions and said: "Those critics who limit their studies to methodological investigations remind me of people who are always polishing their glasses instead of putting them on and seeing with them."

However, Freud rejected my pessimistic outlook. Although he admitted that his more favourable prophecy did not apply to the immediate future, he said that "in the long run" he had faith in the critical and intellectual capabilities of man. He thought these would not fail to fulfil themselves. In the discussion he also conceded that there were useful illusions which advanced civilization; he granted that in the past religion had been valuable as a force for education and progress; but he believed that now it had become a brake upon the progress of civilization and must be cast aside. After the meeting he said smilingly to me: "You are not at all the sceptic you think you are. I should call you a positivist, because you are so thoroughly convinced that man will not progress."

## CHAPTER VIII

### NOTE ON "A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE"

#### I

HERE I am going to discuss Freud's interpretation of a religious experience and generalize on the religious-psychological significance of his little essay.

It must be emphasized that the material on which his interpretation is based is extremely scanty. It consists of a brief epistolary communication. The facts are as follows: One day Freud, in the course of an interview, expressed his indifference to the life after death. Shortly afterward an American physician wrote to him recounting a religious experience which he hoped would have some telling effect upon the sceptic. The physician told of how, when he was yet a student, he had been profoundly moved at the sight of the corpse of an old woman with a serene, lovely face; and how this event had determined his religious views. When he saw this corpse on the dissection table the thought had suddenly flashed through him: No, there is no God; if there were a God he would never have allowed such a sweet-faced, dear old woman to lie dishonoured in the dissection room. This was not the first time he had doubted the teachings of Christianity; but on this afternoon he resolved he would never enter a church again. An inner voice had admonished him to think well before he denied God. And his mind had replied to this inner voice: If I can be shown with certainty that

Christian doctrine is true and that the Bible is the Word of God, I will accept it.

In the course of the next few days God instructed his soul that the Bible is God's Word, that all the teachings about Jesus Christ are true and that Jesus is our sole hope. "After this clear revelation I accepted the Bible as the Word of God and Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Since then God has revealed himself to me by many indisputable signs." The young physician then expresses the hope that God will reveal the truth to Freud's soul also.

Freud, in attempting to interpret the story on the basis of this scant psychological evidence, takes the situation in the dissection room as his clue. The corpse of the old woman reminded the young physician of his dearly loved mother. The mother-longing of the Oedipus complex is aroused, and is accompanied by revolt against the father. The unconscious desire for the destruction of the father found its way to consciousness in the form of doubt of God's existence. This is possible because of the associative and affective connection of the two concepts : God—father. The mother-longing could be translated to the reason as justifiable rage at the abuse of the maternal object, especially since the child's mind believes that the father abuses the mother in sexual intercourse.

This new impulse, then, is no more than another guise of old emotions which have been transferred to the religious realm. And this impulse suffers the same fate as the old emotions—it subsides under the tremendous pressure of inhibition. The psychic conflict ends in complete submission to the will of the Father-God; the young physician becomes and remains a believer.



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This remarkable interpretation has been met with the criticism that the paucity of material disallows such far-reaching conclusions concerning the psychic processes of the young physician. I think, however, that, in spite of this handicap, Freud has successfully and lucidly established the psychic connection between the impression at the sight of the corpse and the subsequent religious conversion. We must admit that the insufficiency of the material obviated an investigation into the details of the psychic process. For psychological analysis it would certainly have been preferable if we had possessed more exact and exhaustive information about the mysterious conversion. However, it may be in the nature of things that the conversion remains mysterious. Dogma maintains that conversion is a process which is psychically and psychologically all but incomprehensible, since, for the most part, it is a manifestation of God's Grace. St. Augustine has impressively described how, at death, Grace inclines the soul of the sinner toward the Faith (if this be his destiny), and how divine *virtù* takes possession of the human will "*indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter*" so that it is transformed into a new will.\*

The physician's letter was written a long time after the experience ; nevertheless, in this case the analysis was unable to take into account either the later changes induced by memory or the psychic stratification, both of which would be necessary for a thoroughgoing analytic investigation.

### 2

Let us try to explore some of the lesser elements which Freud's more general analysis passed by.

\* De corrept. et grat. 12/38.

Whence comes the profound impression made by the naked corpse of the woman? Freud's answer is that the sight of the naked old woman reawakened the mother fixation. The memory of the mother, therefore, stirs up mingled feelings of tenderness and sensuality. When we consider that the corpse is lying on a dissection table, we see good reason for inferring that there is also present a strong sadistic component of the sexuality of the young man. This sadistic element, transformed into intellectual aggressiveness, later proceeds to question the divinity. When, at the sight of the corpse, there flashed through his mind the thought that there is no God, not only was the mother-longing completed by the revolt against the father, but there was also a transference of the sadistic impulse back to the original object of childhood.

In other words, the sight of the dead woman, who here unconsciously appears as a mother-surrogate, did more than revive longing for the mother. It also stirred the negative Oedipus complex and permitted the counter-impulses, intensified by reaction, to press to the surface of the psyche. Only after that sadistic reaction does the mother once more appear to the physician as the "sweet-faced, dear old woman." Not until then is the old Oedipus reaction allowed to appear in its original intensity and form: as revolt against the father. It is by no means immaterial that it was a dead woman, a naked corpse which prompted the old emotions. The sight of the corpse, by reawakening the unconscious sadistic impulses, also caused the revival of the whole psychic constellation of the child. As soon as the one instinctual goal

had been attained by the revolt against the Father-God, this regression could take place.\*

It is noteworthy that the religious conversion of the physician proceeded from an experience which is pre-eminently a visual experience. The analyst is well acquainted with the intimate connection between the peeping impulse and desire for knowledge, the investigatory impulse. The child frequently experiences the frustration of the earliest forms of this impulse when he is punished for improper desires to look at what he is not supposed to see. Thus the little boy is scolded for his sexual curiosity

\* Abundant analytic evidence bears out our contention that the sight of a dead person typically arouses the sadism of early childhood. It is fairly common for these impulses to be bound up in the unconscious with tendencies to rebel against God. The humility prescribed by the Church in the words: "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away, praised be the name of the Lord"—is in itself nothing but a perversion and compensation of the bitter rebellion against a cruel God. We may compare the case of this American physician with a little story of Alexander Dumas about the death of his father. In his *Memoirs* Dumas tells how he had adored his father, the famous cavalry general and comrade-in-arms of Napoleon. When the general was dying, the four-year-old boy was taken to the home of an uncle. "Awakened after a very restless night, I heard, entirely bewildered as I was, the words: 'My poor child, your father who loved you so dearly is dead.' I considered for a moment. Although still a child and of limited understanding, I nevertheless felt that this was a fateful event in my life. The next moment, since no one was watching me, I slipped away from my uncle and ran straight to my mother's home. The doors were open; I entered without anyone seeing or taking notice of me. I reached the little wardrobe where the weapons were kept. There I seized a rifle that had belonged to my father and which he had promised to give me when I grew up. Burdened with this rifle, I dragged myself up the stairs. On the first floor I met my mother. She was just coming from the room where the corpse reposed. 'Where are you going?' she exclaimed. She was very surprised to see me, since I was supposed to be at my uncle's. 'I am going to Heaven,' I replied.—'What? You are going to Heaven?'—'Yes, let me go, mother!'—'But what do you want to do in Heaven, my poor boy?'—'I want to kill the dear Lord because he has killed our father. Uncle said that God took father to himself and that God lives in Heaven.' " God, against whom the boy wanted to take revenge for the death of the father, is Himself a substitute for the father. All the son's unconscious hate turns against God, while at the same time his love for the father, intensified by loss, is expressed in the desire for revenge.

about the body of his mother or his nurse. There is a regression to this early experience in the situation at the dissection table. Along with the unconscious memory of the mother, the old rage against the father is also aroused. The father always represented interference and prohibition to the child's sexuality.

It is significant that, in the psychic processes the physician describes, the sexual strivings appear to focus in the eye (Shakespeare calls the eye the "match-maker of love"), while the forbidding and repressing forces take the ear for organ. The profound impression the sight of the woman's corpse made upon the young doctor was succeeded by doubts which manifested themselves in the form of an inner dialogue. A warning voice speaks within him and his mind replies to it. It is not hard to understand what aspects of the development of the child are here repeated. The inner voice is a manifestation of the superego, of the father of childhood who has been absorbed into the ego. It is he who warns against the release of the impulses and the defiance to God. Here, then, the uprising of obscure impulses is put down by the memory of the father's voice and of the voices of his representatives whom the child revered and dreaded: the teacher and the priest. There is a curious reaction to this prohibition. The ego ("my spirit") responds: If I can be shown with certainty that Christian doctrine is true and that the Bible is the Word of God, I will accept it. Such demand for proof is an old story for theology. Again and again characters in the Bible and in the other holy books plead for some proof of religious truths which will be accessible to their senses. They want signs and miracles

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—and signs and miracles are always vouchsafed them.

The counterpart of this religious phenomenon is to be found in obsessional neurosis. Often enough, in the treatment of obsessional neurotics, we meet with those characteristic dependent clauses which are presumed to establish the strange connection between such an omen and an expected or dreaded event. Psychologically, there is no great difference between the religious pattern of the American physician and the obsessional idea that seizes upon a neurotic patient as he walks down the street: "If the street-car passes that lamp-post before the automobile does, my father's operation will be successful." Cause and effect notions of this kind derive their affective value from the belief in the omnipotence of thought. Such ideas are always arising out of the inexhaustible reservoir of the unconscious; yet in this case we may also assume that preconscious memories of the tradition of Christianity were responsible. At any rate, the profound, lingering influence of Christian doctrine is indicated by the fact that three times in close succession the Bible is spoken of as the "Word of God." (If I can be shown with certainty that . . . the Bible is the Word of God"; "In the course of the next few days God instructed my soul that the Bible was God's Word . . ."; "After this clear revelation I accepted the Bible as the Word of God . . .") This inconspicuous, though for the analyst pointed, repetition serves as an unconscious confession. It leads us to believe that the reactionary tendencies may be traced back to the religious doctrines which were dinned into the ears of the child.

We can now reconstruct what went on in the psyche of the physician during those anguished days when God revealed to him that the Bible was His Word. By reaction, the religious doctrines of childhood have been lent increased effectiveness in the unconscious memory. This effectiveness is based originally on familiar phrases heard so often about the parental household and carrying with them powerful affective overtones. This is particularly interesting in this connection because it is these very religious doctrines which contribute, at a certain age, to overcoming the infantile Oedipus complex, thus paving the way for the child's entrance into the social order. Freud remarks that the conflict in the young physician seems to have manifested itself as a hallucinatory psychosis. We might add that this aural hallucination of the young doctor's was a regression to religious phrases with an aura of strong emotion. The conversion took place through unconscious affective cathexis of childhood impressions, especially those pertaining to childhood doctrines and symbolism.

The poet, wishing to present such an experience in dramatic form, quite justly reproduces in objective action the process which appears here as subjective. Though he can rely on symbols only on sense impressions, he will nevertheless manage to convince us that his character has been experiencing profoundly affective childhood impressions. The young doctor's mysterious conversion, with its undercurrent childhood religious impressions, may remind many readers of the Easter Eve scene in Goethe's *Faust*. Here the sound of the Easter bells in the church and the singing of the

Easter choral, "Christ is Risen," makes the doubt-ridden and despairing Faust remember the days of his childhood :

*An diesen Klang von Jugend auf gewöhnt,  
Ruft er auch jetzt zurück mich in das Leben.*

This sound, habitual to my dearest youth,  
Now summons me again into this life.

It is these childhood impressions that make the sound of the bells and the choral song powerful, soothing, heavenly tones. In both situations the "holde Nachricht," the "sweet message," is reinforced by the overtones of the childhood feelings it once aroused.

Though the release of the impulses has been accomplished and the unconscious memories re-awakened, our young physician is once more seized with the old yearning. The religious teachings, the childhood fables which had gone to oblivion, become real to him again and he believes as fervently as he once had. The mother-longing is here isolated from the longing for the loving and protecting father.

This, then, is the inevitable result of the conflict; love alone cannot resolve it. Freud's conception of the psychic processes may be schematically outlined in this way : Sight of the naked body of the dead woman—(unconscious) reawakening of the mother-longing; revolt (wish for the death of the father)—(conscious) doubt of the existence of God; revulsion against this and conversion by reaction. This outline requires a psycho-analytical supplement: the wish for the father's death (in the displacement: doubt of God) unconsciously provokes the release of intense affects in the young

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man, which essentially are nothing less than fear for his own life (fear of castration). These affects could not reach the consciousness; but they evidence themselves first in the emergence and later in the triumph of the admonishing inner voice. If we may translate unconscious psychic processes into the language of consciousness, this is, roughly, the train of thought: "If I revolt against the father and kill him (the Father-God), I shall be punished just as this woman was, who now lies on the dissection table." Our analytical experience gives us ample justification for these deductions that fill in the gaps in the psychic process. For analysis has indicated that fear is a reigning factor in the psyche.

Once the death wish has emerged (i.e., the doubt of the existence of God), the prevailing attitude is now no longer determined by ambivalence, but also by the alternation of defiance and unconscious anxiety. This vacillation between hatred and affection, defiance and anxiety, lasts for days. The *dénouement* is a crisis in which the hate impulses, intensified by fear, attempt to force themselves into the consciousness in all their primitive might. And, involved as they are with the Oedipus complex, they threaten to drag this complex to the surface. At the height of this crisis the aggressive and hostile impulses are then thrown back upon themselves under the influence of the unconscious fear of castration. This is a re-enactment in a telescoped form of what took place when the Oedipus complex was first suppressed. Submission to God and the religious tradition are, therefore, conditioned by the re-emergence of the fear of castration.

The overpowering homosexual tendency of the young physician, in its highly sublimated, religious



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form, now makes him a proselytizer; he strives to unite his brothers (" brother physician " in the letter to Freud), to unite all mankind in love for the father. The " saviour-tendency " is a well-known peculiarity among certain educated classes of the American people; how much stronger must this tendency become when the individual in question commands such profound and mysteriously won knowledge of the Absolute. But it cannot be completely concealed that even this all-embracing love is essentially nothing but a reaction to extreme rebellious impulses. Its explosive quality, its eagerness to convert, derives from those repressed aggressive impulses. Just so an unconscious desire betrays its intensity by the severity of the inhibition. The very violence is diverted to the service of the opposing factors. We can now understand the development in the unconscious of the young doctor's conversion as a regressive process. Thereby we have cleared up much of the mystery. Now we can also proffer a better evaluation of the psychic situation which prevailed when the letter was written :

*Entschlafen sind nun wilde Triebe  
Mit jedem ungestümen Tun,  
Es reget sich die Menschenliebe,  
Die Liebe Gottes reget sich nun.\**

His religious faith, which has been gained at the cost of so much conflict and which is retained despite all the arguments of reason, is therefore the

\*The wild desires no longer win us,  
The deeds of passion cease to chain;  
The love of Man revives within us,  
The love of God revives again.

counterpart of the extreme rebellious tendencies from which it was wrested. The fathers of the Church would doubtless describe the psychic experiences preceding his eventual enlightenment as one of those salutary ordeals which so frequently precede the *conversio*.

Once more there wells up from the hidden sources of the psyche a wave of rebellion and anger, finally to be engulfed in the undertow. The young man's revolt against a cruel and tyrannical God yields under the pressure of psychic reaction. "Die Träne quillt, der Himmel hat ihn wieder." ("The tears burst forth, and Heaven has regained him.")

## 3

So much for the psychological analysis of this case. Wherein lies the more general scientific significance of Freud's essay, the broader implications of this individual case? I believe that these four pages of Freud's essay analyzing this religious experience are a great advance towards a deeper general understanding of the conversion process. Modern religious science has collected a wealth of material on the psychology of conversion. These works treat of some of the points we must consider here.\*

William James finds the unconscious—which he conceives in the old, static fashion—of considerable significance in conversion. More recent literature on the psychology of religion deals with psychoanalytic findings as well. Nevertheless, the fundamental psychic processes of conversion were not

\* Cf. Joh. Herezog, *Der Beruf der Bekehrung*, 1903; W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1903; E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, 1910. Further, the well-known more modern works of de Sanctis, Girgensohn, Oesterreich, etc.

clarified. However, we can understand them if we, disregarding the features peculiar to the case Freud has discussed, reflect upon the essential result of his analysis. It is well to proceed from cases just such as this, which are characterized by a sudden, mysterious illumination. When we arrive at an understanding of what motivates such "*conversione fulminea*" (so de Sanctis terms these cases, in contrast to the examples of "*conversione progressiva*")\* we shall also approach an understanding of the psychic processes in slower, more gradual conversions.

Analytic psychology now presents the remarkable conclusion that the most important prerequisite for conversion is the unconscious emergence of powerful hostile and aggressive impulses directed against the father; that these undergo displacement and are expressed as doubts of God. The essential feature of the conversion process consists in the psychic reaction against this uprising in the unconscious of hate and revolt. The affection which has been born out of reaction to the "bad" impulses will then express itself in utter submission to the love object and faith in the doctrines, commands, and prohibitions it represents. The close resemblance between the affects of love and the phenomena of religious conviction will undoubtedly seem strange to consciousness psychology; but pastoral theology for several centuries has accepted it as a matter of course. The turning point of the psychic process is the appearance of the unconscious fear (fear of castration) which follows in the wake of the emerging hate impulses.†

\* Sancte de Sanctis, *La Conversione Religiosa*, Bologna, 1904, p. 53.

† We may point out here that God influences through threats those who prove somewhat negligent about their conversion. "If ye turn not, he will whet his sword; he has bent his bow and made it ready." Ps. vii, 12.

Freud's little essay has great significance because it clarifies this process. Within his discussion of the individual case there lies the solution to the enigmatic universal case. Conversion arises out of an eruption of the impulses which provoke unconscious hate tendencies towards the father. This in turn sets in motion a whole mechanism of reaction through fear and affection. All the various metamorphoses of conversion—and the literature on the subject shows how many these are—can be included under this psychological explanation. Whether the psychic process is instigated by any special event, as here, or whether it results from prolonged conflicts, the ecstatic state of the ego is the product of that unconscious reaction.

This essay of Freud's has also opened broader vistas for religious science. Conversion is so closely related to revelation that the two expressions are frequently used interchangeably. It would be more accurate to say that the core of many cases of conversion is a kind of mysterious revelation. We do not realize the scope of Freud's little essay until we extend the results to the fields of folk psychology and cultural history. The conclusions of this analysis prove to be valid also for phenomena of the collective psyche. Every revelation arises out of revolt against the divinity, and evinces that powerful reaction which results from fear and affection. The tradition of the Revelation on Mt. Sinai, upon which Jewish and Christian religion is based, tells how the Israelite tribes revolted against their chief, how they were intimidated and ultimately subjected. Here we have a personal, intrapsychic event represented as an external, historical happening; as uprising followed by threats and punishments

which compel the people to obey. The voice of Jahveh becomes audible and pronounces the commandments, the "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Psycho-analysis has shown that these at heart are nothing but the suppression of unconscious incestuous and insurgent impulses. What appears as "*veritates a coelo delapsae*" are distinctly of earthly origin and earthly motivation. Freud's theory about the case of conversion is equally valid for the Revelation on Sinai. The same psychic history holds true for this momentous event in the religious experience of nations.

For this reason I have hopes that the young psycho-analysts of religion, whom the official religious psychologists superciliously contemn, will come to even more revealing, and perhaps conclusive, discoveries. We are still a long way from a thorough psychological understanding of the arcane ways of religion; but analytic research has come closer to piercing the mysteries than all previous religious science.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STUDY ON DOSTOYEVSKY

THE essay "Dostoyevsky and Patricide" served as preface to that great Dostoyevsky edition in which the sources, outlines, and fragments of *The Brothers Karamazov* are compiled and critically evaluated.\* Unquestionably, this was the proper place for this study which offers such original and important insight into the life and creation of the great novelist.

In their preliminary remarks the editors express their gratitude to Freud for composing "specially for the occasion this deeply penetrating analysis of Dostoyevsky and his *Brothers Karamazov*." Does this mean that the essay was merely an occasional piece? In more than one sense it was. Certainly, the occasion gave Freud the opportunity to put old reflections into an appropriate form. And it is equally certain that the occasion did not evoke these reflections. But while we welcome the stimulus that led him to embody his thoughts in writing, it would have been preferable had they not been composed "specially for the occasion." For in that case, there is little doubt that Freud would have added some very welcome material and would have gone far beyond the bounds set by a preface. And some of his remarks which now seem somewhat forced interpolations could have been developed within a broader framework.

\* F. M. Dostoyevsky, *Die Urgestalt der Brüder Karamasoff*, Editors: v. René Fülöp-Müller und Friedrich Eckstein, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München.

Freud first pays tribute to the richness of Dostoyevsky's personality. He describes him as a poet, neurotic, moralist, and sinner. It is as though Freud had slipped open a fan to reveal the curious lettering and interesting pictures on the folds. Little space is devoted to Dostoyevsky the artist, and Freud intimates that psycho-analysis must lay down its arms before the problem of the poet. But, we may assume, only before the biological aspect of this problem, before the question of special innate gifts. For psycho-analysis has a great deal to contribute in questions of artistic creation. It can explain much about unconscious instinctual forces and mechanisms, as well as the obscure psychic predispositions which govern conception and form. Indeed, it has already done a great deal in this field. We have found that the processes of artistic creation are far less inscrutable than has been thought, although they are still mysterious enough.

Freud feels that Dostoyevsky is most vulnerable as moralist. When we consider him as a moral man, we must seriously object to his ideal that only one who has experienced the lowest depths of sinfulness can attain the highest morality. He who alternately sins and then, in repentance, makes lofty moral demands of himself, has in reality greatly simplified matters. For what is morality but renunciation? Dostoyevsky's own life, Freud continues, was torn between alternate outbreak of the impulses and repentance.

Our first impression of this judgement is that it is stern, but just. On second thought it seems sterner than just. Yet why does Freud's discussion of the concept of morality strike us as dubious and

inadequate? It is because his negative statement seems to have more truth than his attempted positive formulation. We freely grant that his is not the highest stage of morality who alternately sins and then sincerely repents. But, while once upon a time renunciation was the sole criterion of morality, it is now but one of many. If it were the sole criterion, then the upright middle-class philistine, to whose shabby imagination submission is natural, and to whose blunt senses renunciation is easy, would be morally far greater than Dostoyevsky. If we pursued this sentiment we should arrive at the proverb: A good conscience is the best rule of health. This is all very well, but it merely explains why there are so many sluggards, so many contented and satiated men who have gained "wretched self-complacency," as Nietzsche puts it, out of renunciation. Renunciation in itself is, after all, not so important; what we respect is renunciation that is the victory over powerful impulses. We cannot overlook the intensity of temptation in our concept of that compromise we customarily call morality. Where there is no sin there is no religion. Religion would not last for a day if the heart of man were relieved of guilt (and affiliated ideas like taboo, unclean, and their like).

Let us not succumb to shallow and conventional judgements; we must perceive that morality resides in the struggle with the instinctual forces and not in the victory over them. In this sense the criminal who abandons himself to his vicious instincts can in many cases be considered more moral than the solid citizen who escapes his instincts by renouncing them. Satan, too, was an angel like the others and he remains a great theologian before God—and



against God. The concept of renunciation seems obvious only in the most superficial sense; its full meaning unfolds to us only when we understand the part played by the instinctual goal. For, psychologically, renunciation is another method of gratification of the instincts, a method which sacrifices crude material pleasure for the privilege of enjoying that pleasure in phantasy. The instincts are again victorious, but in sublimated form, and the victory can be attained at small cost. The differences between this kind of gratification and others are only quantitative.

Freud believes that Dostoyevsky's kind of compromise with morality is a typically Russian trait. In reality it is a universal human trait. Only in the extremes between one emotional state and the other is this a national peculiarity, that is, a quality dependent upon the history and destiny of a people. Such a struggle between the demands of the instincts and the requirements of society will take a certain form and have such an outcome according to the period and the culture of the community. In the case of Dostoyevsky, these two factors have left their unmistakable imprint on his compromise with morality—which is in itself a compromise. Throughout his life the great artist unconsciously stood in the heavy shadow of that unfortunate error which nineteen hundred years ago separated mankind into saints and sinners. The dominance of this view in his psyche explains the hypertrophy of his conscience and the radical swings between sin and repentance. We children of another age, which appears as a progressed one to simpler spirits, are no longer capable of fully understanding the psychology of the Russian people

of this period. No one who has not grown up in this cultural milieu and has not early undergone the profound influence of Christianity can project himself into the feelings of these people. Religious upbringing added a new, more refined form of gratification of the impulses to the old ways: the voluptuousness of giving oneself up for lost, of knowing that one was damned. It is very hard for us to comprehend emotionally the orgies of passion and suffering which were the psychological aftermath of this attitude.

It was such factors that prescribed the fate of Dostoyevsky's instincts. They also were responsible in part for his moral views. Dostoyevsky would never, for example, have admitted that a man, however moral he be, can experience inner temptation without that experience being a surrender to it. He would take an even sterner stand than Freud's, declaring that the very appearance of forbidden impulses is in itself immoral. He would insist upon the letter of the Saviour's parable—he who merely looks with desire upon his neighbour's wife is an adulterer. This urgent moral imperative leads us to a strange fatalism, for sinning in thought is inevitable. Therefore, the sinful act does not matter; in fact, the unconscious guilt feeling requires it. Whoever knows himself damned has no reason to shun any of the byways on the road to hell. Nor has the hangman who is leading a murderer to the gallows any reason to expect that the condemned man will be docile and make no trouble. Dostoyevsky's life shows that he harboured such temptations and wish phantasies always with a deep feeling of guilt, and with spells of violent abandon.

To Freud's moral ideal—the complete renunciation as soon as the temptation appears—Dostoyevsky would rejoin that it was certainly the purest and most beautiful, but that God in His inscrutable counsel had not designed this way for mortal man. Numerous saints of the Church are precedents, he would say, that above all he who attains virtue through sin and repentance is pleasing to God. In the light of human frailty, Freud's moral programme would seem superhuman to Dostoyevsky. And how the pharisees would distort and make a mock of it, extolling their own renunciation to God, and putting by all suggestions that they have anything in common with sinners.

It is understandable that, with such psychic predispositions, Dostoyevsky resolved this inner conflict by bowing completely before all secular and ecclesiastical authority. We may regret this, but we cannot condemn it. Freud points out that Dostoyevsky failed “to become a teacher and liberator of mankind; instead he joined forces with humanity's jailers.” Freud adds, “The cultural future of mankind will have little to thank him for.”

Now it is perfectly true that Fyedor Michailovitch Dostoyevsky sought the shelter of the old jail that he was used to from childhood. In keeping with his time and his milieu, he was not eager to inspect the spick-and-span new ones. Loving the old illusion, he did not care to exchange it for a modern one with the fine-sounding name of freedom. He saw that progress was marching stoutly along on the wrong track, and he chose to remain outside of the procession. He shared the admirable prejudice about a more splendid future for mankind; but he

felt that life without religion would be as empty and meaningless as is reality. He preferred to cherish the old illusion—and we cannot take him to task for this.

“The cultural future of mankind will have little to thank him for.” Very true, for that future will probably be concerned with the improvement of telescopes, poison-gas warfare, air-war, boxing, and baseball. Everything points to this, that the men of the future will look upon thinking as a kind of infectious disease which prevents the possibility of being happy. (Perhaps they will discover with some satisfaction that already many of the scientists of our time have acquired immunity to this serious malady.) But whatever may be our opinion about this future, it is clear that gratitude will not be one of its virtues. (And what if it were?—“Posterity exists only for the living,” says Schnitzler.) We know that the men of our time are mediocre, capricious, petty, mean, and wretched; we know that they were thus in earlier times; and we have no reason to think that in the future they will be generous, resolute, noble, helpful, and good. If they should turn out so, they would have to thank Dostoyevsky from the bottom of their hearts. Not, however, for the religious and political goals he sought. (The Russian soul will not be the redeemer of the human race any more than the German soul.) The future will have very little use for his Christian or national programme. But then, neither do the ethics of Homer, the Bible, or Shakespeare govern our lives any longer. Today Goethe’s political views seem provincial and antiquated to us; the close of his *Faust*, in which the Catholic Heaven opens, impresses us as a painful discord amid music of the

spheres. Schiller's nationalistic and social ideas have meaning only for adolescents. For the apostolic life of the older Tolstoi, whom we revere as a poet and psychologist, we have only pity and an almost superior tolerance.

The political and religious opinions of great poets are simply not important. Reforming mankind is not their task on earth, nor do they hold the future of humanity in the hollow of their hands. Heavy industry and munitions works are much more influential. Any petty boss in a political party can advocate political and social programmes. The ward heeler's smile is mightier than the pen. Every statesman and political leader of today who helps the insulted and injured to win their rights has a juster claim to the title of ethical liberator than the writer whose art portrays their wretched fate for us.

But the poet can show us human beings who are mirrors of ourselves and to whom we are mirrors. And on this stage of the world he presents the drama of the human condition, its coldness and darkness and effort, the rise and decline of our fates. He extracts some meaning from the earth's nihilism, from the misery of man as well as from his absurd aspirations and desires. Who can do this but one blessed of God—a poet like Fyedor Michailovitch Dostoyevsky, whose political and religious ideas seem so abstruse, limited, and foolish to us? That future civilization which may owe nothing to Dostoyevsky should nevertheless honour him for his creation of characters whose terrible and calm genius shakes the utmost depths of our souls. He has offered the men of the future insights that are almost visionary. He has offered them wonderful and strange emotions which surely are beyond the

power of social reformers or apostles to give. His religious and political beliefs have come to nothing—his God has been dethroned long ago. But the prayer that was breathed by his creative spirit will be mightier than all the prayers he addressed to the God of the Christians. That prayer, in the words of the hymn of Hrabanus Maurus, goes:

*Veni, creator spiritus :*  
*. . . Accende lumen sensibus.*

Freud's critical attitude towards Dostoyevsky, for whom, certainly, he had no great love, becomes gentler and more objective as soon as he leaves off making evaluations and steps to his own field of depth psychology. Here there is no more caution, no more feeble argument, and he masterfully opens the hidden way to the psyche. All philosophical differences cease to matter, all divisions of period and culture disappear, and a man stands naked before us, shipwrecked in a tempest, but stranded on Prospero's island, where his most secret thoughts are recognized. Where Freud thinks as a psychologist and not as a moralist, he no longer bothers his head about the commandments. He sees the man alone, suffering at the insufficiency of human existence, his genius caught in the snares of his environment.

It was merely by chance that a great writer was the object of this analytic study. The advantage and desirability of such an object is that the man reveals himself as other men cannot. Those revelations are often oblique and obscure, sudden flashes which illuminate one corner of his being, leaving the greater part in even deeper shadow.

But, according to Freud's analysis, Dostoyevsky's unconscious attachment to his father fell like a long shadow upon his impressionable ego and coloured for ever after the nature and effects of his malady. The father's mysterious influence ruled his life and work; it was this force that drove him into the abyss and exalted him to the heights. With a few short strokes Freud draws a picture of the history of a man's psyche, of the determinants of his illness latent in the psyche and the meaning of the symptoms. Freud has thrown more light upon Dostoyevsky's being than has any literary critic or biographer.

The crowning point in this analysis is the explanation of the poet's malady. Freud shows how a powerful instinctual desire may turn about and attack the desirer himself; how in an epileptic fit the "other" enters the ego and how the death of this other is well-nigh an experience of the death of the ego itself.

From this point the analysis broadens and by subtle degrees Freud approaches the major problem, the psychic essence of this personality. He provides the long-sought explanation of the daemonic elements in Dostoyevsky's life and work. He shows them to be the play of hidden instinctual forces against opposing impulses. The daemon is not alien to the ego, but merely alienated. Daemonic impulses are not newcomers in the psyche; they are merely the reappearance of old, submerged drives. The inner relation between Dostoyevsky's fate and that of his characters becomes clearer; in both there is waged the same struggle between elemental instinctual forces and the forces of conscience, that conscience which is the perpetuation of the more

ancient struggle between the still feeble ego and the outer world.

Freud has wonderful insight into how such conflicts were bound up with Dostoyevsky's religious and nationalistic views, however apart they may seem. He shows us how they figured in both the personality of the poet and of his characters, for these latter are personifications of the potentialities of the ego ; they are the developed offshoots of the ego. When Freud links up Oedipus, Hamlet, and the Brothers Karamazov, drawing comparisons between them as various facets of the same latent content, he thereby contributes profoundly to our understanding of the basic human instincts which impel men's lives, whatever the times, the culture, the race or the person. The laws have been obscure, but they are becoming ever more accessible.

The last section of the study concerns itself with an extremely interesting interpretation of Dostoyevsky's passion for gambling. Freud's surprising, but persuasive, theory is that this passion is derived from the onanism compulsion in the child. The unsuccessful efforts to overcome the habit and the resultant self-castigation find their parallel in the compulsion to gamble. This observation illuminates a complex and little-understood aspect of Dostoyevsky's life.

We may notice an abrupt transition between this section and the main theme. Perhaps our impression is that the author has turned arbitrarily to this new subject because it interests him and not because it has any special connection with the whole. And yet there is a very definite organic connection. What inspires the efforts to suppress



the onanism is nothing else but fear of the father. This Freud intimates in a single word at the end of the section.

Unfortunately, Freud breaks off his analysis at this point. Had he continued, I believe he would have pointed out how the gambling passion later assumes a form whose psychic motivation and mechanisms are akin to certain obsessional symptoms. Gambling, which never had as its end money or gain, becomes a kind of question addressed to destiny. It is a form of oracle which the modern psyche readily accepts, although this latent meaning does not become conscious. Now, recalling that destiny is the ultimate father surrogate, we see the significance in the unconscious of this questioning. Originally it sought to discover whether or not expectation of evil was justified. In other words, would the threatened punishment for the trespass be carried out or would the angered father forgive the son's disobedience? Good or bad luck stands as symbol of the answer. Observing the rules of the game is the psychological equivalent of obedience to the compulsive neurotic symptoms. Uncertainty plays the same role in gambling as it does in the compulsion complex. Take, for example, a game like patience. Here we can see clearly the oracular meaning, which is obscured in other games where new players may enter late and where the prime purpose seems to be gain.

We have certain criticisms to make, even as we realize that this is the most valuable psychological work on Dostoyevsky we possess. Our first criticism is directed to the section just discussed. In this section Freud adduces the example of a story by

Stefan Zweig.\* Which are the connecting links? the following: here the gambling compulsion of Dostoyevsky, there the same passion in one of the characters of Zweig's story. Stefan Zweig has devoted himself to a study of Dostoyevsky. We must confess that there are few and very loose connections. They serve as the barest possible reason for dragging in such an illustration, but there is certainly no reason for the lengthy summary of the Zweig story. It seems strange that Freud, usually so good at ordering his material economically, should devote four pages out of a twenty-six page study of Dostoyevsky—nearly one-sixth, that is—to a parenthetical illustration. With all due respect to Zweig's literary merit, we cannot help feeling that this is an error in proportion. It is as though a medieval artist painting the Passion of Christ should place in the foreground of the picture the bishop of his native diocese.

There is another criticism, perhaps equally minor. In his introduction Freud separates Dostoyevsky's personality into four principal aspects: the poet, the neurotic, the moralist, and the sinner. Should he not have given recognition to another aspect, that of the great psychologist? (Perhaps Freud includes the psychologist with the poet, yet it would seem worthy of special mention.) Ours is a time when every mediocre psycho-therapeutic practitioner thinks the psyche is an open book to him—and every lowly assistant at a neurological clinic who has read Freud with happy carelessness and thorough misunderstanding believes he knows the human mind up and down. In such a time as this, we feel, it

\* Our analytic interpretation of this short story is facilitated by the fact that the very next story in the volume treats (in transparent disguise) of the incestuous and tragic relationship between father and daughter.

## THE STUDY ON DOSTOYEVSKY

would be fitting that one of the greatest psychologists should salute the poet who was one of his great precursors, a salutation out of his own solitude to the other's solitude.

In this study the rapid, compressed style of Freud's last writings is evident, but here, in harmony with the subject, it is fluid and emotional in spite of its density. Many of his phrases are stamped forever in my memory because they were expressed in a language which was a rare union of succinctness and comprehensiveness, forcefulness and delicacy, directness and richness of association.

Our ultimate impression remains that this study of Freud's has an honoured place in the scientific literature on Dostoyevsky—and more. For this penetration into the deepest levels of the psyche, this revelation of a man's unique, hidden qualities and of the qualities he shares with all men—such vision is something new in applied psychology, something which did not exist before psychoanalysis.

FROM A LETTER OF FREUD'S

4/14/29.

. . . I have read your critical review of my Dostoyevsky study with great pleasure. All your objections are worth considering, and certain of them I admit have hit the nail on the head. However, there are some points I can advance in my own defence that are, you understand, not quibblings over who is right and who wrong.

I think you have applied too high a standard to this trivial essay. It was written as a favour for someone and written reluctantly. I always write reluctantly nowadays. I know you have observed that this was so. Naturally, I

am not saying this to justify hasty or distorted judgments, but merely to explain the careless architecture of the whole. It cannot be disputed that the parenthetical Zweig analysis disturbs the balance. If we look deeper, we can probably find what was the purpose for its addition. Had I been free to disregard the place where the essay was to appear, I should certainly have written: "We may diagnose that in the history of a neurosis characterized by so severe a guilt-feeling the struggle with onanism plays a special part. This diagnosis is completely confirmed by Dostoyevsky's pathological passion for gambling. For, as we see in a story by Zweig . . ." That is, the attention devoted to Zweig's story is not dictated by the relationship of Zweig to Dostoyevsky, but of onanism to neurosis. Still, it did take an awkward turn.

I will hold to my belief in a scientifically objective social standard of ethics, and therefore I should not contest in the least the upright philistine's right to call his behaviour good and moral, even though he has attained it at the cost of little self-conquest. At the same time I will grant your subjective, psychological view of ethics. Although I agree with your opinions on the world and present-day man, I cannot, as you know, share your pessimistic rejection of a better future.

Certainly I subsumed Dostoyevsky the psychologist under the poet. I might also have charged against him that his insight was so entirely restricted to the workings of the abnormal psyche. Consider his astounding helplessness before the phenomena of love; he really understands only either crude instinctive desire or masochistic submission and love from pity. You are also quite right in your assumption that I do not really like Dostoyevsky, despite all my admiration for his power and nobility. That comes from the fact that my patience with pathological natures is completely exhausted in my daily work. In art and life I am intolerant toward them. That is a personal trait, not binding on others.

## THE STUDY ON DOSTOYEVSKY

Where do you intend to publish your essay ? I think very highly of it. Scientific research alone must work without prejudices. With all other thinking it is impossible to avoid choosing a point of view, and naturally there are many possible ones. . . .

Freud gave me permission in 1929 to publish this fine letter. It serves as an excellent refutation of the stupid allegations about Freud's dogmatism and his pessimistic view of life.

The remark on Dostoyevsky's limited understanding of love gives me a welcome opening for quoting another of Freud's comments on love. "Les Cahiers Contemporains" published in Paris in 1926 a little book called *Au delà de l'amour*, which contained a questionnaire on the essence of love beyond the realm of sex. Here is Freud's answer :

MY DEAR SIR:

It is quite impossible for me to fulfil your request. Really, you ask too much. Up to the present I have not yet found the courage to make any broad statements on the essence of love, and I think that our knowledge is not sufficient.

Very truly yours,

FREUD.

PART FOUR  
ESSAYS ON DIVERSE SUBJECTS

NOTE

It was my habit to dedicate and to send a little analytical essay to Freud on his successive birthdays in token of my regard. What follows is a selection from such little articles.

## CHAPTER X

### EMBARRASSMENT IN GREETING

IT is not long now before some analyst of our group must undertake an investigation of the psychology of greeting. However, there is so much material interesting from both ethnological and psychological points of view that this future investigator will have quite enough on his hands. Perhaps he may overlook one aspect which is not unimportant: embarrassment in greeting.

Freud has already pointed to the difficulties besetting obsessional neurotics in regard to greeting. He has called attention particularly to those difficulties which have to do with removing the hat. But embarrassment in greeting is a more general phenomenon. By it we mean the embarrassment felt by many persons on meeting someone whom they are obliged to greet. They are troubled not so much by whether or not they should greet the other person, as by how to do so. One patient brooded constantly on how high to lift his hat and how low to bow, that he might not be either too familiar or too humble. Uncertainty about the greeting itself is a manifestation of ambivalence, particularly in obsessional neurotics. The aforementioned patient, in an ordinary handshake, had difficulty in finding my hand; he kept groping for it, touching the sleeve of my coat, and making similar mistakes. Our hands were in the dilemma of the lovers in the song who could not come together.

The content and form of the greeting are the cause of manifold individual difficulties and uncertainties, even when the relationship between the persons appears superficially to be sailing smoothly. It is as if the unconscious impulses have concentrated upon this isolated detail of personal intercourse, as though this were the sole outlet for the repressed elements. One of my patients had the habit of unconsciously ignoring people toward whom he consciously bore no grudge. Later on he would greet them heartily. It was as if they had fallen into disgrace for a short period and were then received back into his favour. Analysis was necessary to explain this apparently causeless periodical snubbing of people. The same patient had established a greeting ritual which consisted in his first overlooking a person who greeted him, passing by and then turning round as though he had just recognized him—an act analogous to what does occasionally happen. If he had to speak to someone in greeting, he felt a mild embarrassment, as if he ought somehow to be ashamed. This feeling often expressed itself in stuttering. Clearly, he had come, by regression, to colour the greeting with its primitive sexual significance. He would often anxiously prolong a conversation with an indifferent stranger because he dreaded the difficulty he would have in bidding good-bye.

All this points to the fact that the greeting must unconsciously have greater significance than we are willing to admit. When someone greets us carelessly and impolitely, although we think we do not really give a hang, we are offended. And do we not feel a burning sense of shame when, as sometimes happens, an older person, towards whom we



cherish particular respect, is the first to give the greeting. It is as if we had committed an unpardonable error—although we are prepared to swear that we actually had not seen the person in time.

But putting aside pathological intensification and coarsening, it is true that embarrassment in greeting also attacks, though to a lesser extent, normal people. We are not at a loss for an explanation. What happens is that sexual and aggressive tendencies, acting unconsciously, interfere with the social conventions. The sexual significance is easily seen when we imagine the shy boy who blushing trails after "her" and suddenly finds that he must greet his beloved; or the girl who must respond to the greeting of her admirer. When it is the aggressive impulses that provoke the embarrassment, they lead to numerous inhibitions and alterations of the greeting, as well as to slips in the act of greeting. They may ultimately exact the total suppression of the greeting.

We perceive readily that the greeting, though a trivial detail of social life, holds an unconscious affective value for us which we do not consciously ascribe to it. But how did this affect settle upon a trivial detail? Such a displacement would be impossible if that detail had not once had a certain vital importance. Once we realize this, we see the greeting in a different light; it would seem to have developed from the primitive, undifferentiated, instinct-governed form of first approach which was expressive of either hostility or love. From this it developed slowly to its present more friendly meaning. Gradually it took over the function of assuring the other person that the greater will

forgo the gratification of aggressive desires. Finally it became crystallized to a conventional gesture. *Homo homini lupus*—the primitive stage of the greeting, which is practised by dogs who approach one another and warily sniff about, has still survived in the nose-greeting of many peoples.

Remembering that the greeting originated in this way, through inhibition and repression of aggressive and sexual impulses, we see clearly why in cases of regression the greeting becomes complicated by so many uncertainties and embarrassments. The repressed emotions and desires in the greeting have not yet entirely been killed. In the cool or aughty greeting these repressed elements break forth. Nestroy has one of his characters say : “ How nice it is that you have to lay your hand in someone’s hand, when you’d like best to lay it across his face.”

Unconscious hostility and mistrust have other revealing places besides the greeting; they are the secret behind other initiating ceremonies of social intercourse, for these were once tantamount to defence measures, securities against the dangers that threaten from all sides, against the universal hostility of men to men. The introduction, which has become the accepted method of making acquaintances in our society, is certainly one of such conscious pacts—unfortunately often insufficient. Here, too, embarrassment betrays the inhibitions and uncertainties which arise from the same source.

Society has created these necessary defensive measures, which are analogous to those of the individual obsessional neurotic, similar in structure and equally applicable to so many equivocal

situations. Sometimes an accident exposes the truth that in our society men become utterly at a loss when they are forced to dispense with these ceremonies. Robbed of their guaranty, they feel as anxious and helpless as the obsessional neurotic whom the pressure of outer circumstance has forced to abandon a ritual. There is the well-known anecdote of the first meeting of Livingstone and Stanley. After surmounting countless difficulties and following a hundred false trails, Stanley finally found the long-lost Livingstone in the midst of the primeval African jungle. When the two Englishmen first stood before each other under such romantic circumstances, they remained stockstill, as if enchanted, for a moment. It was a moment full of doubt and embarrassment. They had not been introduced.\*

\* Dr. Reik's version of this episode is, of course, quite fanciful.—Ed.

## CHAPTER XI

### ON THE NATURE OF JEWISH WIT

IT is more than fifteen years since, in Reinhardt's theatre in Berlin, I saw a play called *The Jews* by a Russian author I did not know, Eugen Tschirikov. It describes the life of the Jewish settlements in northern Russia around the turn of this century. I remember the plot only rather hazily. In my memory the characters have few personal qualities. The three acts take place in the dwelling of the watchmaker, Leiser Fränkel. This old man will soon be left solitary—his son has joined the revolutionary socialists and his daughter has given herself to a Christian student. The struggle between the generations is here waged all the more bitterly because the family feeling of these people is so much deeper, more fervent, and more tenacious.

My memory still retains the picture of the moment when news arrives of pogroms having broken out in the neighbouring villages. Impressions: the swelling noise, the screaming of a fanatical, goaded mob becomes a bestial roar, the fear of the helpless people in the watchmaker's shop grows, until the mob bursts in like a torrent, tearing and killing, assaulting the dying daughter and cutting down the men—and, at last, when everything has been destroyed, how the cossacks ride up and disperse the mob.

The impression of these dramatic scenes was profound. But it is tarnished by time. In memory these figures no longer seem more than *dramatis*

*personae* ; they are hardly living human beings. They are types: the gentle, but strong-willed daughter, who loves her father but nevertheless must tear herself away from him; the son, who is expelled from the university because of his revolutionary activity; a liberal doctor who still clings to religion ; a wasted, ailing teacher, who defends Zionism with as much ardour as the son and his friend give to the socialist cause. The arguments and debates which fill the three acts seem as shadowy as these characters. The impressions would have been more memorable had the drama been other than a competent and crudely theatrical piece. With its simple-minded propaganda and its strong effects, true to the events of the time, it is an execrable piece of work; but it is not without skilful dramatic pitch.

Why then, when I wish to write about a particular theme, does my memory resurrect this trivial play? What remains besides the outline of the plot, which exhibits, though with little art, the vital problems of the Eastern Jews? What rises out of the darkness, what words still echo, when after fifteen years one again recalls the performance? There come to me two scenes; or rather, phrases in these scenes, words and the silences in the dialogue—nothing more. But these, unlike the others, are not the stock-in-trade of a hack playwright; they are the stuff of life.

In the first scene the watchmaker's brother, Aaron Fränkel, who has come on a visit from the neighbouring village, converses with his niece. The girl tells him that she and her brother have been expelled from the university because of the riots. "Ai-ai-ai," Aaron cries sadly, "you were always

such a quiet girlchik." And when the pretty niece assures him that she is still quiet, adds he, "You'd do better to marry. Then you'll have children and your own rebels on your hands."

He goes on to tell her what has happened in his settlement. Every city and every village of this region includes another little settlement within whose bounds only the Jews may live. Packed together, they vegetate in this tiny, doubly imprisoned district. To be sure, they are very poor, "but, thank God, they have many children."

Because of the many children their quarter became too small and their cemetery stretched out into the city. They hope to buy property for a cemetery outside of the city, but the authorities have refused permission, on the grounds that this property would extend beyond the prescribed settlement area. The authorities have so interpreted the law that a dead Jew is also counted in the population. After many efforts on the part of the Jews, the Ministry finally consents to their buying the property and burying their dead there. But then a new obstacle arises: the cemetery must have a watchman. But the watchman is a Jew, and he may not live outside of the ghetto. Somebody who is listening to the story interjects, "There is only one way out; take a dead man as watchman." But the situation gives rise to still other difficulties. While the authorities do not permit a watchman to be assigned to the new cemetery, they also no longer allow the Jewish sanitary officials to bury the dead in the old cemetery. And there still rings in my ears the Yiddish intonation of the next sentence, "But the Jews couldn't wait and one of them took the liberty of dying."

The other scene is at the close of the first act ; it is in the watchmaker's shop, a low-ceilinged room in the basement. The walls are hung with watches and clocks, big and small. The pendulums beat out an incessant tick-tock throughout the scene. In this room an ardent debate is going on. The son of the family and his Christian friend are hotly arguing that the teachings of Marx are the only solution to the Jewish problem. The nervous little teacher insists that Zionism is the only way. Every possible argument, both intelligent and foolish, is introduced, and the quarrel becomes ever more passionate. It leads from allusion to direct attacks, from fine sarcasm to crude insults, from laughter to the nervous sobbings of the fanatical teacher. Then all the clocks in the shop suddenly begin to strike twelve, one after the other. In the silence that follows comes the tranquil voice of the old watchmaker, Reb Leiser, who with his long white beard and bushy brows looks like an ancient patriarch: "For ten years I've wanted all my clocks to chime out at once. And yet it never would work. They are like human beings—they can't get together."

The human and artistic mediocrity of this drama robs it of any lasting effect. What it said had often been said before. Still, how is it that the drama of the ruin and defeat of those people who are so closely related to me by blood and fate did not have a more profound effect ? Where is bred that psychic reaction that goes beyond the moment, that outlasts the immediate excitement of the theatre ? I believe it has taken refuge in these few remembered phrases, in my memory of these few jesting words. The affect was unconsciously transferred to them. The anger and sorrow, the fear and sympathy that

arose while I looked at these scenes out of the life of the insulted and injured were not, in memory, associated with the plot of the play. These emotions had broken away from the plot, as though that were unessential, and had become fixed to these three sentences, as containing all the psychic significance of the play. The *tua res agitur* was here not born from the tragic experience but from the humorous side-light of the experience. In our smiling at this jest is latent all our sympathetically shared experience, and all our sorrow is concealed in it. Memory seized these fleeting words instead of the great tragic events. In these secondary matters, however, reside the human qualities of Tschirikov's play. The transference of the affect in the unconscious is not voluntary, nor is it accidental. It means a change of its capital, but no loss of power. These characters speak to me more poignantly in their jokes than in their complaints and accusations. Otherwise they are puppets dangled here and there by an all-powerful hand and then struck down. But when they joke, the figurines are transformed into men. Jehovah has forbidden the Jew of our time to speak His word to cajole the hostile world. But by giving him the gift of wit, his God has conferred on him the power to say what he suffers.

The unconscious affective transference in me follows a familiar pattern. Moreover, the psychologist understands Jewish wit to have undergone the same process of affective transference from its origins. This history of transference provides us with an explanation of one quality of this wit which has largely passed unnoticed and is therefore all the more notable. We laugh at it, but usually it is not comical. In the best examples of this humour there



lurks behind the comic façade not merely something serious, as in other witticisms, but something horrible.

It is no accident that now, when I wish to muster up some impressions on the nature of Jewish wit, I can call to mind none of the countless anecdotes ("Two Jews meet on the street and . . ."). It is no accident that, instead, fearful pictures of pogrom scenes from a forgotten play flash through my mind and a few phrases from that play come back to me. These phrases do not clarify the nature of Jewish wit so much as they do the circumstances from which it is born, the peculiarities of its psychic origins. These witty sentences, which are spoken out of the darkness of a destiny unique among the peoples of earth, give us a clue to further psychological insight. For we see that the unconscious affective transference which motivated the creator of Jewish wit was repeated in the generations of listeners and determined the psychic effect.

Perhaps these examples will also serve to give a first impression of the character of this wit; they are selected for their type value and not for their æsthetic value. Although only examples, they may stand for large classes of Jewish wit. The uncle's advice to the pretty student that she marry instead of mixing in university riots ("Then you'll have children and your own rebels on your hands") is an example of the charming and idyllic wit of this people. There is—particularly in the East where the Jews form a fairly unified cultural and social group—a surprising wealth of jokes and witticisms of this kind, springing up afresh every day and vanishing with the day. This kind of harmless, friendly, and teasing remark flourishes best in the atmosphere

of a family; but the Jews find it natural to extend that atmosphere. Here, allusion, joke and witticism often merge with one another until they are indistinguishable. The familiarity so natural to their soul is testimony of mutual confidence and good faith. This kind of Jewish witticism is often inspired with a practical sagacity and knowledge of human nature which one does not recognize until long after one has smiled at the joke. A witty proverb like this Eastern Jewish one, "When the father gives to the son, both laugh; when the son gives to the father, both weep," reveals behind the words a rare insight into the psychic depths, one which surpasses the run of proverbial wisdom common to all the folk.

Aaron Fränkel's tale of the cemetery incident in the ghetto and the authorities' decision that a dead Jew may not rest beyond the pale of the ghetto, is pointed at the end by the remark that a poor Jew, unable to wait for the end of the litigation, was so bold as to die. This story is typical of another kind of Jewish humour. The type hangs on the borderline between the merry and the bitterly satiric. In it the pathos—in the Greek sense: suffering—is inverted and seeks expression in laughter, in a grimace of mockery and revolt. Here Ahasuerus speaks and falls silent; here is the wandering, ever-persecuted Jew whom distress has taught how to pray—and also how to joke. Here a man murmurs a jest or shrugs in an ironic gesture, instead of screaming aloud and striking out in his rage and desperation. But this kind of wit also strikes with the keenness of the sword. We see this in the Bible and in Jewish writers down to our own day. Their sword is wielded by the mighty hand of hatred.

But when, after the fierce, passionate argument, old Reb Leiser stands up, points to the clocks, and utters those three remarkable sentences, it is no longer hate that speaks. It is the power of love. When the old watchmaker takes advantage of the momentary silence to say that for ten years he has tried to harmonize all his clocks, but in vain, for like men they cannot get together, he is speaking with the wisdom of untold lines of ancestors behind that of his own long life. Behind this man in the caftan there stand priests and prophets, a long line of men who hearkened to the laws of human destiny. These three plain sentences, this analogy which shows us its comic face, bridge the gap of several thousands of years to the proverbs of the Fathers and the impassioned words of an Isaiah. While our lips are still smiling we feel the mounting awe. From a jest we are here conducted straight into the realm of the sacred, and a banal, everyday snatch of tune is transposed into eternal melody. In a word lightly spoken, which sounds like a joke and possibly is intended as a joke, we overhear the ultimate longing and sorrow of man. There is something in this kind of Jewish wit which makes us bow our heads.

This is the self-same wit in wisdom and wisdom in wit which, generation after generation, the Jews have salvaged out of their own lives and the lives of others; the same which illuminates the Talmud and the writings of its commentators, the legends and parables of the Hasidim and the addresses of so many rabbis. There is no essential difference between witticisms of this kind, which spring from the deep fund of ancient experiences, and the profound thoughts of the sages of this people. Rabbi Mendel Kozker, answering a boy who had asked,

“Where does God live?” replied, “Wherever he is admitted.” In such an epigram there dwells the same spirit that speaks out of the remark of the watchmaker, Reb Leiser.

Now, at last, looking back upon these single examples of the charming, bitterly ironic, and worldly-wise classes of Jewish wit, I perceive how it is that the unconscious affective transference came about. What do these witticisms say so brilliantly but the very things which the drama on the stage vainly tried to say with brutal effects. When, in the course of the play, a storm of pillage, murder, and destruction sweeps away all that these poor people possess, the tragedy rings loud. But it is more emphatic in the overtones to the witticisms. The news that so and so many people have been slain in a pogrom excites us to rage and disgust, and even to despair of the progress of human civilization. But the things that are said in these jokes, and more important, what is not said in these jokes, shake us to the roots of our selves.

Aaron Leiser tells his story of the cemetery, the grotesque tragedy of this small group of human beings, persecuted, deprived of a corner of land in life and of six feet of land in death. And this story makes tragedy clearer to us than any blood-and-thunder pogrom scene can make it. He advises his niece to bear children, and with rebels in her own home to be distracted from the imperative urge to rebel against the state; thus his humorous remark preaches the ephemerality and insignificance of political movements more clearly than all the hot debates in the play. And beneath this advice is whispered an inkling of the real values of personal life: it is the instincts which govern the fate of all the generations. Is it really so important to revolt

against the form of government, to overthrow this régime or that, when after all our lives must describe the little circle of joy and sorrow in the same unalterable way ?

It is this that was insinuated first in the comparison of the clocks—but now it has gained a more solemn beat. Here, too, is a warning of the shortness of our span on earth and the folly of our little quarrels over what we imagine are such irreconcilable matters. But here this thought is expressed more poignantly and with greater grace. Those clocks which the old man has vainly essayed to harmonize are, perhaps, each convinced of the infallibility of his time, and each is proud of his own manner. But it is not long before their works run down. The rest is silence.

The affect produced by the re-enactment of ugly persecution was quite properly transferred to a few witticisms. For these jests say what the author wanted to say and say it better than the rest of his play.

And in these examples we see the essence of Jewish wit, with its inseparable joining of thought and emotion. Here, too, a heavy shadow falls across the brightness of the words; sorrow is the usurper of the kingdom of jest. Here, too, the tragic countenance of the world is reflected along with its comic mask. One face often lurks concealed in another, as in a puzzle picture. Jewish wit, like great art, never palls, for it deals with human passions which it conceals and at the same time unveils. Its comedy is intensified by the dumbshow of another force—tragedy.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

#### I

AS psychologists we find much of interest to us in the poetic imagination; its prerequisites and goals, the ideational material upon which it is founded, and the psychic processes that shape it. Certain questions of artistic creation lie beyond the scope of psycho-analysis; others have as yet not been touched by the science. But it is psycho-analytic research which has explored furthest toward the sources of artistic imagination. Our approach to poetic creation as something comparable with the dream and the daydream has proved especially fruitful. But although both the unconscious motives and the dynamics of poetic creation have to a large extent become accessible to our understanding, there still remains much that is cryptic. We shall welcome all new ideas, even fragmentary ones, should they afford us some new insight into the inscrutable activities of the poetic imagination.

I recently chanced in an odd way upon just such a new piece of insight. It seems to me that it not only clarifies the origin of a poetic idea, but also describes the underground and intricate phases of this idea before it came to its final form.

Most Shakespeare lovers must feel that Ariel's song in *The Tempest* is one of the most beautiful and enchanting products of the poet's imagination.

Mysteriously consoling, the sprite speaks to the grieving Ferdinand:

Full fathom five thy father lies;  
 Of his bones are coral made;  
 Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
 Nothing of him that doth fade  
 But doth suffer a sea-change  
 Into something rich and strange . . .

Here in the sea the rotting corpse of the king is transmuted bit by bit into priceless treasure. And what we admire in this is the effortless power, the wonderful richness of imagination, the "imagination complete" which Taine praises in the incomparable poet.

To my knowledge, no biographer or commentator has yet compared this beautiful song with Hamlet's meditations in the graveyard scene, thoughts that are in direct contradiction to Ariel's. Earlier in the play Hamlet has already spoken of the fate of the dead. The king asks him where is the corpse of the murdered Polonius? "At supper," is Hamlet's reply. And he adds, "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: . . . we eat all creatures else to eat us, and we eat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end." Pursuing this notion, Hamlet's imagination leads him to the thought that "a man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm." He wishes to show "how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar."

In this conversation between the king and Hamlet, what does it matter where the body of Polonius lies? If he is not found within a month, the dead

courtier would be "nosed." What the prince intimates by this pointed and intentionally equivocal information is this: that even the king who has seized the throne and the queen—that is, all earthly goods—must go the way of all flesh. It reminds him that the fat king and the lean beggar are in the end but two dishes upon the worm's one table. Here is the threat, the satanic mockery that comes into the open, mockery which is more terrible than the terrors of conscience in besetting the ultimate solitude of man. The attack does not pause this side of the concept of death. It does not shrink before this stark picture of dissolution. Hatred stalks its object far beyond the grave. With something close to reverence, Hamlet's hatred muses upon every aspect of rotting and putrescence.

These same ideas, stripped of all that is temporal and extended beyond their personal source, appear again in that graveyard scene, whose atmosphere is thick with terror of mortality. The dialogue of the two gravediggers and their conversation with Hamlet, the horrible jokes played among the graves, make up one of the most glorious scenes the great poet ever created—this poet who wrote: "For I am shamed by that which I bring forth." (Sonnet LXXII.)

Again and again there starts forth the mysterious curiosity the prince seems to feel about decay. "How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot!" When he looks upon the skull of Yorick, his imagination runs swiftly over the long years since he kissed these lips to this moment when the dead man, nay, leath himself, grins at him out of the empty sockets of the eyes.



## THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

Here, out of unsearchable imagination, there issues a sublime and bizarre thought. "Dost thou think," he asks his friend, "Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?"

*Horatio.* E'en so.

*Hamlet.* And smelt so? pah!

*Horatio.* E'en so, my lord.

"Why," asks Hamlet, "may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?" From there it may come with "likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?"

Imperial Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!

Here, in this churchyard scene, the transitoriness and vanity of man's life has become word. Not gravestones, but the bones themselves have their say. Those who have once lived return to poke fun at the belief in immortality, as in that incomparable sketch of Goya's of a dead man rising out of the grave and writing with bony finger the word, "Nada."

If from the philosophy of his main characters we may construe something about the poet's own ideas, we must assume that Shakespeare underwent a profound change in the period between *Hamlet* and his last work, *The Tempest*. But is it not rash to postulate a psychic change from this evidence that he

changed his conception of the state of the human body after death? This is, after all, but a solitary instance. There are a bare ten years between the statements of these two opposing conceptions—ten years which may mean so much or so little to a human life. What do these contradictory views tell us of the man, William Shakespeare?

What we know of his life is scanty and uncertain. The few dates of his existence, which was such a strange compound of romanticism and sobriety, rebellion and complacency, afford us little satisfactory information. And we psychologists are hardly interested in the outward events, as such, of this life. They are nothing but a scaffolding to help us erect our structure. Psychic processes alone are important; we are concerned only with details of his psychic biography.

## 2

Since we proceed from this special standpoint, we have the right to choose our own paths in following the genesis of the poet's idea. These paths lie off the beaten track of æstheticians and historians of literature. Since we are concerned only with psychic processes, why may we not compare Shakespeare's imagination with that of a patient suffering from obsessional neurosis? What does it matter that more than three hundred years have passed since Ariel's song was first composed? The misery and the happiness of men spring from the same sources; their essential ideas are unchanged, despite their aeroplanes, telephones, and radios. And all the divisions and distinctions that men wear fall from them like scorched rags in the fire of the inexorable fate that all must meet.

The patient we have in mind is an ageing woman who has suffered much. Now that she has been disappointed in her hopes, separated from her husband, become poverty-stricken, been deserted by her friends (those whom she herself has not alienated by her bitterness), much of her time is occupied with thoughts of death. At first she aimed a fierce defiance against a fate which external circumstance and certain psychic bents had brought upon her. But later she spent many hours considering suicide. At one time she had envisaged another possibility—that her life would end in insanity. Her mother, after the menopause, had become melancholic and had died many years afterward in an insane asylum.

In the course of analysis it became clear that her troubled marital life played a main role in her psyche, as did her tendency to identify herself with her mother. Her thoughts had turned early to the mystery of death, even when she was a girl. Now the thought again became prominent in the mind of the ageing woman from whom so many sacrifices had been exacted. The question of immortality, and a transcendental survival of the ego after death, came to the fore. The prevailing attitude of her social group was that death was an end, but that seemed insipid and senseless to her; she refused to listen to such rationalistic views of the nature of growth and dissolution, and endeavoured to gather strength to commit suicide by denying the reality of that great boundary line.

In the course of the analysis she constantly referred to this theme. Although voluntary renunciation was the only possible way, she could not bring herself to relinquish the things she had lived by. Instead she defiantly resisted reality, preferring to

die rather than submit to a fate which had treated her with so much less justice than other women. She spent most of her days experiencing a wealth of phantasies on dying and the state of the soul after death. Literary reminiscences may have been the sources for some of these phantasies. But many of them are indubitably original, and their beauty and intuitive clarity is undeniable. Death meant to her only a transition from one kind of living to another; she compared the process to the working of leather in a tannery in order to prepare it for different uses. It was like turning off an electric bulb in a room in order to switch on another in the same room. When earthly life is extinguished, the self is transported to other universes; perhaps it shines as a new star in the sky.

But I thought the most beautiful of these metaphors was the following: "A zoologist once told me what he did with a viper he had killed. He put it into a big, strong cardboard box and buried the box in the earth. After several weeks he dug up the box. During the interval the ants had eaten away all the flesh and muscle-fibre of the snake. The skeleton was perfectly whole and untouched. Every part of it gleamed like a pearl in the sunlight. Who can say? Perhaps, when I die, I shall become like this and sparkle as a bracelet, or as a necklace upon the throat of some great goddess."

Here we have the same metaphor that Shakespeare uses for the father of Ferdinand.

## 3

What can psycho-analysis contribute to psychological understanding of this beautiful image which emerged from the death phantasies of a sick woman?

We have already learned that all these phantasies revert to a youthful concern with the problem of death.

When the patient was a little girl her fully developed obsessional neurosis had consisted mainly in inhibitory reactions to death wishes which had her mother for object. These partly repressed obsessions, in a later stage of development, did not stop at death. They led to brooding on the state of man after death. All the while, the hate tendencies struggle against the love tendencies. In these psychic conflicts the idea of the progressive dissolution of loved persons became paramount. Again and again there rose in her mind terrible visions of the decomposition of the body. Analysis showed that these obsessions, which the patient fought with all her might, recurred constantly in spite of the repression ; they bore all the marks of the battle of ambivalence. The ego took flight from these terrifying obsessions in manifold conceptions of the immortality of the soul and the body. We see these reactions to be the expression of love for the mother and also of the unconscious fear of death, a fear which has animated the first phantasies, turning against the ego in a form of self-castigation. This terror of dissolution is later replaced by the strengthened conviction that death cannot be the end. The ego needs to picture the beloved mother as immortal and indestructible; and it must also protect itself against complete annihilation. After the death of another beloved person, the woman turns to far-reaching metaphysical speculations, which are constantly stimulated anew by the reading of various scientific works.

In the course of analysis the memory of these hostile impulses threatened to break through to consciousness. As a reaction against such memories the unconscious fear of death began to operate, seeking to overwhelm the psyche by the old devices. The woman's phantasy of the necklace shows how she inverts the idea of her own dissolution into a glamorous vision. The mother appears as a goddess, this signifying that the woman now welcomes death as atonement for unconscious death wishes against the mother. In fact, now that she is an ageing woman who has suffered greatly, she has identified herself so closely with her mother that her beautiful vision can be explained in terms of affection also.

It is not difficult to see how we progress from an analysis of this case to Shakespeare's phantasy. I submit that similar psychic processes were unconsciously at work in the poet. Hamlet's melancholy thoughts in the graveyard are in form and content strangely similar to the obsessions of neurotic patients. Horatio chides the prince when he is brooding over dissolution. "'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.'" What appears to be a diligent desire for precision and thoroughness is in reality a result of the same unconscious affects that we have seen behind the meditations of the obsessional neurotic. The same unconscious hate, the same concealed hostility, and the same death anxiety of the ego operate in the thoughts of the prince and in the thoughts of our patient.

The obsessions of the neurotic woman are full of the same concern with dissolution and with the contrast of death and life. In her girlhood she looked for traces of death everywhere, in "the

falling of leaves, the bodies of animals and the faces of those dearest " to her. All things had but one meaning—how ripe were they for death! It is like some modern synopsis of Hamlet's meditations that she must constantly repeat the thought that all earthy greatness, all the ingenuity of statesmen and the imaginativeness of poets, must end in a little pile of ashes in an urn; that this is all that remains of men. We perceive more clearly the hidden motives behind these obsessional reflections when the patient tells us that she must think incessantly of death if her fear of dying is not to become overpowering. Her imagination ever calls back these thoughts in order to overcome her terror of death. Alluding to the hero's preparations in Schiller's ballad, " The Fight with the Dragon," she describes the psychic process thus, " I urge on the hounds of my fancy closer and closer to the frightful sights to overcome the fear."

A few years later her fear dwindles. The woman herself is older and has become calmer; she feels herself closer to death. And now the darkest angel slowly takes on a more amiable countenance. " I do not come to punish," Death says to the girl in the Schubert song. (To all of us, unconsciously, Death comes to punish.) The presages of death are now welcomed; he who was once so dreaded is now desired. It is now that she begins to speculate upon the afterlife of the ego. Narcissism that was in danger has found an asylum. The ego has burrowed out a refuge from the inexorable foe.

It is now that she sees those beautiful visions of the transmutation of the ego which serve so successfully as a denial of death, and even convert it into its opposite.

Is it not apparent that Shakespeare's views on life and death followed slowly but profoundly an analogous transformation? *Hamlet* was written after the death of Shakespeare's father (1601). All the emotions of childhood were revived by this death, all the fears of childhood reawakened. The Dane meditates on the dissolution of the great men of this earth, and this reflects the poet's dual feelings of unconscious triumph at the death of his father and longing for him. Some ten years later *The Tempest* was written; the poet is weary of his revolt; the fame he has won has become meaningless. He has returned home to Stratford, and there is something about him now that suggests he is preparing for that other homecoming. Now that youth is over, now that he is slowly and heavily turning his steps toward the final peace, the prospect of death and his attitude toward it change. His phantasies sound wearier and more poignant now, and mellower, like a noble old violin. It is less of a victory over life than a laying down of arms before it. Death is now welcomed; it no longer means the terrible tyranny of fate, the dreaded end of all things. Children have been born to him; his daughter is of marriageable age; he has put his house in order. He himself, gathered closer to both his father and his forefathers, scarcely feels defiance any longer toward the authorities who represented the father. Now that he himself is an ageing father he sees the position of the father differently, for now he comprehends it. All the conflicts have slowly faded away, and the end is not triumph but resignation. (As Hanns Sachs has put it in his study of *The Tempest*, "The puppets are now hanging on slack wires, for the puppeteer



will soon go to his rest.") These, I believe, are the well-springs of the feelings which inspire Ariel's beautiful song.

The poet wrote his moving epilogue with deep emotion. It has the sad ring of farewell, and coupled with his longing for peace and gentle renunciation there is every mortal's melancholy, a knowledge of the last solitude before the end. The reconciliation with the father is consummated. Death is no longer terrible. . . . "I do not come to punish."

The echo of Hamlet's thoughts haunts the poet's own epitaph, as he blesses those who let his bones rest and curses those who stir his dust. As the obsessions of the Dane imply, Shakespeare's unconscious desires once pursued the hated object even beyond the grave. The epitaph he is supposed to have chosen for his own body seems to be prompted by an unconscious fear of retaliation:

Good frend, for Jesus sake forebear  
To digg the dust enclosed here  
Bleste be the man that spares thes stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

4

When we compare Hamlet's reflections with the phantasies of our obsessional neurotic we detect a similar structure of the psychic pattern of the two. The obsessional pursuit of an imaginative train which characterizes Hamlet is also manifested repeatedly in the sick woman's brooding. It does not seem important whether the mind follows the path of things forward or backward. Let us compare the logical path which leads from

the corpse of great Alexander to the final incarnation, where his dust stops a beer-barrel, with a similarly constructed phantasy of another obsessional neurotic. On a bill-board the patient has seen an advertisement for the Austrian cigarette brand, "Sphinx." The picture showed the Egyptian Sphinx holding a package of cigarettes in her claws. In a daydream the patient pursued the following obsessional train of thought: On the package of cigarettes he could clearly see the picture of the same sphinx, also holding a package of cigarettes in her claws. On this miniature package there must be a smaller picture of a smaller sphinx, and then a still smaller sphinx, and so on. He tried to follow them all down the line. There is a striking similarity between this obsessional train of thought and the incessant questions of children at the age that they are preoccupied with the mystery of birth. And we have observed that this problem, in later stages, almost invariably involves the question of death.

We have further testimony of the inner linkage of the two concepts in the cosmogonies of the ancients and of primitive peoples. Here, too, a world is born out of the body of a great god or a mighty hero. The heavens and the earth are formed of his different parts. The dead giant, Ymir, in the Edda, supplies the stuff for the formation of the world; the earth is created out of his flesh, the mountains out of his legs, his skull forms the arch of Heaven and his sweat fills the seas. According to Hindu mythology, the primitive being, Purusha, was sacrificed by the gods. Out of his brain arose the seas, his breath formed the ether, his feet became the earth, and warriors

were fashioned out of his arms. Varuna undergoes a similar transformation: his eyes shine as the sun and moon, and so on. Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Orphic cosmogonies narrate the same myth—the cause-effect history of the death of a god and the beginning of the world. They express a vestige of that tremendous act of parricide which all have forgotten, but whose psychic result once led to the great beginnings of community living. The myths give an explanation of the creation of the world which is the same as that expressed in idealized form in Ariel's song.\*

Our little discovery, in itself of small importance, nevertheless led us far afield. We have been guided towards a comparison in which the cathexis of an effective conception is shown to have existed in the mythical thought of the past, in the imagination of the poet, and in the obsessional ideas of a neurotic. The ultimate extension of this phantasy, however, is to be found in the domain of religion. For in all these domains deepest affection and admiration arise out of hostile and cruel impulse.

Let us not forget that these same unconscious impulses carry with them their profound psychic reaction; one instance of this reaction is the belief that the corpses of revered and beloved human beings acquire miraculous powers. Thus remains become relics.

\* Freud cited Ariel's song as a trace of an unconscious memory of primal parricide (*Totem and Taboo*).

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE LATENT MEANING OF ELLIPTICAL DISTORTION

FREUD was the first to analyze the goals and the technique of omission in both obsessions and wit. Omission seeks to distort the actual words of an obsessional idea and so protect it from the reason. Here is, for instance, the obsessional idea of one of my patients who applied a great deal of psychic energy to stifle such blasphemous thoughts as, "*If I tie a shoelace, I must curse God.*" Since this idea soon became involved with all shoelaces, he found himself compelled to walk in the street with his shoelaces untied. In order to understand this obsessional idea the analysis had to uncover the omitted intermediate steps. The sexual symbolism of threading the shoelaces through the eyes is apparent. The mechanism is the familiar one of displacement upon an insignificant act. If we re-create the train of thought, we see this, "If I wish to indulge in sexual intercourse, I am troubled by the thought of my father; I wish to curse him, and this curse might come true." This obsessional idea is transferred to God, as He is the supreme one who forbids sexual activity. Here, therefore, are the leading facts for the solution.\*

Let us compare this obsession with a witticism which also employs the technique of omission. The Viennese athlete and boxer, Jagendorfer, is

\* During puberty the father, with strong threats, had forbidden the son to practise onanism. At this same time other persons who were close to him had called onanism a sin and a crime against God.

in a café with friends telling them of an experience that happened during the day. "Imagine! When I come to my coffee house to-day, wanting to play a game of billiards, my cue isn't about. I look everywhere and can't find it. Then I sees a fellow playing at another table and sees he has my cue. So I goes over to him and I says, 'Mister, that's my cue.' Says he, 'No, it's mine.' Says I, 'Mister, when I tell you that's my cue, you hand it over.' But he wouldn't give in and he kept saying it was his cue. *So while they were getting a beefsteak for his peeper I saw that it wasn't really my cue.*"

We may well ask whether there is any witticism here at all. Is this not rather a comic story? Let us examine it more closely. Our first impression might be that it is comical; we laugh at an uncouth giant who knocks down a fellow man over such a trivial matter—and a man who is innocent, at that. Here we have that type of the comic where we contrast the expenditure of energy (in this case physical and affective energy) in other persons with what we should expend in a similar situation. It would seem to be this exaggerated expenditure that makes us laugh. It is as if we were to say, "What a fool! Couldn't he have been more careful and found out whose cue it was?" But as we suggest this explanation, we see how uncomical the situation really is; in reality we ought to be made indignant by this absence of self-control and this brutality.

Let us try the story in another version. "Then, when I'd hit him in the eye and knocked him out, I saw . . ." We see immediately that, although something of the comic survives, the story is shorn of anything which would give us grounds for calling it a witticism. Here, then, is one of the cases

where the comic serves as a façade for a witticism. But the wit depends just on the element of omission and the succeeding allusion to what has been omitted. To continue the story with the "beefsteak" implies that the boxer considers knocking down the other man such a matter of course that he simply did not have to mention it; in fact, he even mentions the beefsteak fleetingly, as part of a dependent clause.

We perceive now that it was this technique which upheld the comical element, this very naturalness and nonchalance which characterize the assault. This element, together with the overwhelming success of the attack, operate together to subdue our indignation at such brutality, and instead make us laugh. The effect is reinforced by the point of the boxer recognizing his error, for this underlines the aimlessness and hastiness of his action; we laugh at this in the way we laugh at the aimless and hasty movements of children.\*

We have not forgotten that the comic here is a cloak for the witticism. The comic is fulfilled when we laugh at the boxer; the witty side of the story persuades us to laugh with him. What is more, we laugh at his narration of the incident for another reason: concealed by the fore-pleasure, there are released deeper unconscious impulses in us. We feel that these savage and violent impulses are really within everyone of us; we, too, like the boxer, should be capable of giving vent to them if we were graced with his physique, and if we were not restrained by cultural inhibitions. Our identification with the boxer acts to gratify our aggressive and sadistic impulses, for all inhibitions are released.

\* Freud, *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*.

## LATENT MEANING OF ELLIPTICAL DISTORTION

Therefore we laugh from pleasure at having saved inhibitory energy.

However, we do not want to treat of the psychogenesis of wit, but only of the special technique of omission. I should say that the latent meaning of omission technique, or elliptical distortion, is that it aims at the removal of an object. The omission is tantamount to expressing an unconscious desire to eliminate or kill the person in question. The technical device of omission corresponds to a successful psychic effort to dispose utterly of a hated object (or a hated institution which has become symbolized in a person).

To illustrate this connection between a technique and its latent content, we shall have to go far afield. Psycho-analytical literature has not yet appreciated how common it is for the psyche to utilize successfully a certain technique or form to express its hidden content. As Freud has shown, the dreamer often employs a similar technique when he reports his dream and conceals a part of its latent content by the device of a comment or a judgement. Often the truth of the dream content is secreted in just such a casual matter of form. In the same manner, ideational mimicry serves to express the ideation content, as Freud has described in his section on "Ideational Mimicry."\*

We therefore rest in the belief that we have proved the hidden connection between the use of the elliptic distortion technique in obsessions and in wit, as well as the connection between this technique and the specific content of the omitted material. Our thesis is that the omission must be a manifestation of the suppressed tendency to

\* *Ibid.*

annihilate the object. We cannot say whether this is universally true, or only characteristic of individual cases. But let us experiment with our hypothesis, applying it to the examples we have at hand.

My patient, whose obsession is expressed in an elliptical form, displays a prominent annihilation tendency; his goal is the destruction of the father. Nor can we mistake this same intent in Jagen-dorfer's story. This story belongs in the same class as the exaggeration and boasting of street boys. I once overheard a half-grown butcher's boy in a quarrel with another boy cry out, "If I just touch you, there'll never be a coffin that will fit you." In other words, not only would he injure the other boy, but he would so radically deform him—and this by just touching him—that his enemy's shapeless corpse would never fit into a coffin. Here, too, there is an omission; but, corresponding to the less inhibited milieu, the content behind the omission—violent destruction—is expressed immediately in the following clause. If we contrast this example with others, however, we shall find that the threat does not always appear so openly on the surface. Usually the content behind the omission is given only feeble allusion in the next clause.

We can actually trace this in our previous examples by examination of the clause which follows the omission. In the patient's obsession, this clause was, "I must curse God." In the boxer's story the power of the blow, that is, of the aggressive tendencies, is expressed in the dependent clause, "so while they were getting a beefsteak for his peeper." It is as if the omission must find some



adulterated, milder expression in the very next clause; a kind of substitute which only hints at the originally coarse content of the omitted words.

Although mindful of the deficiencies of our explanation, we will describe the psychological situation as follows: the preconscious content behind the omission has the same ideational range as the substitutive formation (the following clause or allusion); the unconscious content can be guessed at by the extent of the omission itself. The substitutive formation or allusion therefore serves only as a field sketch, not as a complete map. The resulting clause, then, informs us of the aggressive and hostile character of the omitted material; we know that what lies between the conditional and the resulting clause is charged with anger and hatred, but we are ignorant of the intensity of these emotions. Also, the goal, the annihilation or slaying of the object, is not admitted to our consciousness.

The best analogy to this is afforded by the analysis of obsessional neurosis. Patients often confess that certain occasions or certain persons spur them to irritation or anger, but how deep are their affects and how fierce their senseless rage (which indeed often leads to intense death wishes against the hated person) remain inaccessible to their consciousness. The result-clause of the obsessional idea (for example the one cited by Freud, "If I marry the lady, my father will have an accident,"\*) is extremely indefinite. The

\* Freud: *Remarks on a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*. The analysis of this particular case shows that behind the elliptic distortion there actually are unconscious death wishes directed against the father, which by virtue of the omnipotence of thought might be realized. The witticism Freud cites, "When X hears this, he will receive another box on the ear," does not

counterpart to this is the allusion in the witticism ("while they were getting the beefsteak for his peeper"). This sinister ambiguity is proof of the effort to conceal the real content of the obsession and of the witticism—which is death. The substitutive formation brings back the omitted matter in a toned-down, emasculated form which is admissible to the consciousness. In special cases, when there can no longer be any doubt about the shocking content of the omission, this substitutive formation seizes upon hypocritical or ironic defences, as in the terrible words, "The only excuse for God is that He doesn't exist."

We have therefore established the fact that the concealed significance behind the elliptic technique is the expression of violent destructive tendencies, unconscious death wishes, which cannot be expressed aloud without inciting the indignation and aversion of the social group. Where this technique of omission is applied to obscene expressions, we may remark that the intensive destructive tendencies are by no means absent; the strivings are

apparently admit of such a content behind the omission. But if we consider the unconscious aggressive tendencies betrayed in the result-clause, we would perceive another case of the same annihilation desire directed toward the person who is derided. Freud has himself pointed out that there are similarities both of form and content between obsession and wit.

Freud has shown that omission (which he calls a variety of condensation without substitutive formation) is also a form of allusion. "For in every allusion there is really something omitted, namely, the trend of thought that leads to the allusion. It is only a question of whether the gap, or the substitute in the wording of the allusion, which partly fills the gap, is the more obvious element. Thus we come back through a series of examples from the very clear cases of omission to those of actual allusion" (*Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. by Brill).

To contrast a clear case of omission with a witticism of allusion, we cite a scene in a play by Maurice Donnay. There a lady escapes the snares of a Don Juan and flees to the home of a friend of her husband. The gentleman calms the frightened woman with the words, "Si vous êtes chez moi, vous n'avez rien à craindre—des autres."

there organically strengthened by sadistic tendencies directed against the object, something which is frequently the meaning behind the bawdy joke.

We can regard the omission that occurs in wit and obsessions as equivalent to those evasions of actual statement which become themselves the expression of the suppressed content. The emasculated allusion in the result-clause, which is in reality a substitutive formation, may consequently be compared to the euphemisms we frequently use for dying ("pass away," "depart this life," and similar expressions). This comparison, however, must not be drawn too far, for what the omission in wit or obsession actually expresses is an unconscious death wish. The omission is only a more veiled form of the wish, "Oh, if he were only out of the way, dead, gone!"

Perhaps our first example—the obsession with blasphemy—will encourage us to venture an assumption on the origin of this technique of omission. On the monuments of the ancient Orient, and in the ordinary language of certain Semitic peoples, there are such expressions as: X.Y. (a name) with the appended phrase: "May Tanit, Allah, etc., destroy him, may He blot out his name!" These, then, are names which are accursed. We may conceive that as centuries passed and repression mounted, the curses would gradually be suppressed and in their place a substitute formation would arise. (As a transition stage we might have, "He, whose name may not be mentioned . . .") This suppressed, and eventually repressed, curse employed precisely the mechanism of omission to attain expression. It is like a soldier deserting to the enemy in order to fight against his former comrades.

Thus, omission as a method of suppression eventually became a method for the expression of the suppressed material. As a precondition of omission there must be the suppression of the destructive impulses, but in this way omission itself became a psychic compromise, an instrument both for the repressed and repressive impulses. This also accounts for its becoming a "short circuit" of a witticism and its assuming the form of an apparent contradiction in an obsession. Just as in the psychology of the dream-work, absurdity here becomes a gesture of challenge against the repressing forces.

We shall cite but one additional example of elliptic wit technique. The famous Viennese comedian, Girardi, once gave this reply to a colleague who had asked him for money, "You know what, my friend. Let's both quarrel straightaway."

At first this seems to be pure nonsense, but after a moment's reflection we see that it demonstrates the profound worldly wisdom of the actor. The meaning is: "If I lend you money now, I'll be doing it against my will and so I'll be angry with you. My annoyance will increase if—as is likely—you don't return the money. But it is impossible that this feeling will escape showing some outward traces; somehow it will find an outlet, and we shall become enemies. . . ." We can continue this psychological interpretation in the other direction. The borrower is already unconsciously hostile to his more fortunate colleague because he has been subjected to the humiliation of asking for money. This feeling is aggravated by the reaction from the guilt-feeling that he may not ever return the money. Therefore, on his side also, there is no doubt how

the affair will turn out. If they follow the friendly advice to get angry at once, they will not only save money, but also will be spared a series of unpleasant events and emotions.

Here, to be sure, the unconscious death wish is not expressed. It is only the elliptical form that testifies to its presence. But the actor's advice betrays the fact that powerful hostile feelings have already been aroused toward the borrower by the very prospect that the money would not be returned. The unconscious consequence of these affects, however, is the death wish. And, as a matter of fact, "being angry" really means no longer existing in each other's regard. Do we not say of a bitter enemy, "He no longer exists as far as I'm concerned," or "For my part, he is dead"?

Thus, in the technique of wit and in the formulation of obsessions, we unconsciously confess our vicious thoughts by the very omission which is intended to conceal them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MAN'S DUAL NEED FOR SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE

IT may be daring to remind the world that solitude and society are not absolute opposites, particularly at a time in which so many of our best minds are fervently pledging allegiance to collectivism. Whoever wishes to be intellectually creative must submit himself to a peculiar rhythm: he is bound to withdraw from other men and he must return to them again. Only in solitude can the mind work creatively. A man who seeks only among other men will never find himself. Yet the dichotomy between the demands of the community and this need for loneliness is only an apparent duality. Whoever wishes to influence men has need of them; he must speak their language and he cannot do without their help.

These are dangerous alternatives. For many, society becomes bondage; and for many, solitude is fatal. Some cannot find tranquillity, and many who have found it cannot find their way back to the world of men. Some are so deafened by the tumult about them that they can no longer hear their own inner voice; and many hear only this and have no more communion with the world.

The life of every free, fruitful spirit moves like a pendulum between these two poles. He dares not live only for the others; something always drives him back into solitude. And he dares not live only for himself; something always drives him back to other men.

## MAN'S DUAL NEED FOR SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE

Long ago psycho-analysis clearly showed us how such a rhythm impelled the artist, and particularly the poet. The poet withdraws in disillusion from reality, yet it is his very work that is a touchstone back to the world of men. And the poet has an even happier gift than the Lord Jehovah—for the poet's words satisfy both creator and created, as well as the onlookers who identify themselves with these created beings.

It is otherwise with the work of the scientist. The word he brings forth from his solitude does not appease the passions or satisfy the needs of the many; does not fulfil man's desires with that swiftness and variety which is the peculiar faculty of art. It does satisfy our need for knowledge of causes and effects, but this need is not particularly urgent in most human beings. While violent and vague desires dwell in all of us, reason is a rarer thing. Moreover, the scientist fails not only to satisfy our constant desires; he may make himself unpopular by questioning the value of such desires and destroying our most cherished illusions. When the scientist publishes the results of his work, he has often forgotten that many of his contemporaries prefer the two birds in the bush to the one in the hand. And he who forgets that men's views are often only shadows cast by their desires will suffer scorn and rejection.

We are often told that all true happiness is to be found in society. That is certainly false. Solitude, too, gives promise of much happiness. ("Lass dies Herz alleine haben seine Wonne, seine Pein."—"Let this heart possess alone all its joy and all its pain.") But this happiness needs to be voiced. How strong must this inner need have been in many men,

who spoke out in spite of the scorn and anger they aroused; and yet, how powerful must the inner voice have been which lived so long without echo !

Here I am led to an intuition that seems to me deeper than Nietzsche's cry, " All joy wants eternity ! " Perhaps the child and the savage, as well as those in whom psychic ills have caused a reversion to these earlier stages of development, are content with solitary pleasures. But for adult man the truth is that all joy wants society.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE ECHO OF THE PROVERB\*

Mein Kind, wir waren Kinder . . .

*Heine.*

#### I

IT was rather strange how we felt, my younger sister and myself, every time we overheard a proverb in the conversations of grown-ups. Some of them we could understand immediately. When someone said, "However you throw a cat it always falls on its feet," then, of course, the meaning was quite plain. We knew that, for we ourselves had tried the experiment time and again. But why was this proverb used when one of the partners in the conversation would keep on obstinately coming back to the same point?

Many proverbs were quite unintelligible to us and remained so for a considerable time. For instance, what was the significance of the phrase: "Drag me by force, I'm willing to come"? It was an allusion to a girl who made a great deal of fuss about keeping a suitor at arm's length. How peculiar and utterly absurd for us children was the proverb: "Every mother is a mother." Naturally, every mother is a mother since she has got a child. We could not then realize that the psychological importance of motherhood was driven home by the obviousness of the remark.

\* Reprinted from *Life and Letters Today*, Vol. 21, Nos. 22 and 23, June and July 1939. Translated by Gerd Abraham.

For simple folk as well as for children it is, I think, but one step from the unusual and incomprehensible to the farcical. The Jewish proverbs and sayings which at an early age we heard at home, seemed to us for the most part more or less funny—we just laughed at them as we did at a joke.

The dissimilarities between a joke and a proverb are so evident that we are led to shut our eyes sometimes to the fact that both phenomena are neighbours in respect of their actual origin and their result. There exists a genetic connection of a distinct kind: many a proverb can be proved to have crystallized from a comical anecdote or a joke. "Rotten fish and a thrashing to boot" was an occasional saying. Its origin, obviously, is an anecdote or a funny tale of a man who buys worthless goods and, voicing his discontent, gets a thrashing into the bargain. On the other hand, a number of jokes owe their popularity to a witty presentation or a distortion of well-known proverbs and phrases.

In Jewish everyday life, the line of demarcation between the contiguous phenomena of the proverb and the joke often becomes indistinct. There is evidence of the fact that proverbs and precepts of talmudical or biblical times were subjected, later on, to farcical applications or variations. It might be argued at this point that we should leave to the momentary psychical effect the decision whether the matter in question be a proverb, a funny story, or a joke. But even this criterion often becomes uncertain: what are we dealing with in this case, for instance—is it an otherwise reputable proverb which has been disguised by a picturesque costume, or a fool's cap, or merely a joke pretending to be didactic

and posing as a proverb? We smile, as if the difference were but of small importance.

## 2

Indeed, most of them seemed to us funny. Was it not funny to be told: "Wash me, but do not wet me"? However, as often as not the fun left an after-taste, for we found many of these sayings detestable. They were in strong contrast to our feelings, but also to the ethics and views imparted to us at school and at home. There was, for instance, the phrase: "To kill a chicken and not hurt it." To us children it was a matter of course not to inflict pain on an animal unnecessarily. It was only many years later that we found out the real meaning of this phrase: that to attain a definite goal one must not have an exaggerated delicacy of feeling. Qualms must not deter you if you are bent on success. Another phrase seemed even more strange. A person who was generally disliked was being discussed, and somebody said: "If God is so fond of him he had better take him." This was utterly incomprehensible. There was nothing peculiar in that God should take to Him some person He was fond of. But why was it said in such a strange tone? We recognized much later that it was a euphemistic expression of a desire for the person's death, and we took exception to it, all the more because it was uttered in connection with "our Lord." In the same way we strongly objected to the saying: "He who is kind to himself is kind to others." We had been taught not to try to promote our own welfare, but that of others, and to repress in their favour our own self-seeking interests. This proverb recommended almost the reverse. It took us a long time

to comprehend the psychological justification of the words. The study of one's own life and of the lives of our fellow men proves that it is impossible to neglect one's own interest to an excessive extent in favour of that of others. Too much consideration of others must lead to an inordinate desire to revenge one's self on those others for such self-denial and for a sacrifice that was too great. Unconsciously free play will be given to all evil or revengeful impulses. However, such a maxim must by no means be mistaken for a pronouncement of "sacro egoismo." It is rather a reactive egoism which crops up, a warning originating from the endopsychic perception and coinciding with the findings of analytical empiricism. We must try to tolerate our own egoistical impulses, too, to a certain degree, lest we treat our neighbour badly and even maliciously, instead of kindly.

Exceptional attention was given to proverbs which referred to the family—most of them also incomprehensible or contradictory to our childish feelings. For instance, it was said of a couple who were eternally quarrelling, "They do not really quarrel, but their 'dalles' will fight." The Jewish word "dalles," which we had heard before, meant indigence, actual want. Life showed us later on how great a part is played by a strained financial situation in the origin of conjugal conflicts. Plain commonsense made us refuse to admit that the wish in the phrase, "You shall be the wealthiest in your family" is equivalent to a malediction. Was it not something devoutly to be wished, to be the wealthiest of the family? Was it not the best opportunity to support poor members of the family, to make life less of a burden to them? We did not know then that to be the wealthiest in a Jewish family means to

be worried for ever whether the existent means will suffice to help every one of them; never to be able to enjoy one's own wealth, because family feeling will not permit a man to enjoy the pleasant things of life that are denied to his relatives. We were much disgusted by a saying like the following which was quoted over and over again: "If the father shares his money with the son, both may laugh; if the son shares his money with the father, both may weep." We had a distinct feeling that this view was utterly wrong. Most certainly we were ready to give up everything for our beloved father, to make whatever sacrifice might be demanded from us. And yet the proverb would have it that it was only the father who enjoyed helping his son, while the son would be sorry if he had to care for his father. As frequently happened, this proverb refers to unconscious psychic impulses.

Much to our astonishment we overheard proverbial phrases about our staff. Our highly esteemed cooks, for instance, were characterized as "paid enemies." In this connection a hypothetical possibility of God's having a family suddenly arose. "If God's sister was a servant, she would be not better than this one," which meant that our present maid was not much good, but it was no use sending her away; the next would be the same.

On the whole it was astonishing what a strange part God played in these proverbs. One phrase confirmed God's omnipotence when it said: "If God will it, a broom will fire shots." The broom's function as a gun was indeed a funny idea. After all, it was not quite clear why God should use a broom when He was able, in His omnipotence, to make a gun or a revolver go off. On the other hand, there

was a phrase which seemed to express serious doubts about God's omnipotence. It sounded like a sigh: "All right, God will help, but who is going to help us until He does?" Who but Himself should give help in the meantime, if need should arise?

## 3

In recalling those proverbs and phrases heard in early youth, the memory of the people who used them is easily evoked. Many beloved phantoms rise up from the shadowy past, and many hated ones as well. These proverbs were uttered on various occasions by our parents, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, but most of them, by far, came from our grandfather. I must now relate a few things about him.

In my memory he lives on as a very old and tall man with white hair always covered by a small cap, and with spectacles over the top of which he looked. I can still see him in his old-fashioned, somewhat untidy dressing-gown, slouching through the house, as often as not taking snuff out of a small black snuff-box and talking or shouting in the Jewish-German idiom. I was told later that he was a well-known, even famous, Talmudist. I myself can remember Jewish scholars and pious men coming frequently to see him in order to study or argue with him—until late in the night we could hear, in our bedrooms, their loud voices which they made no efforts to lower.

My grandfather had spent the best part of his life as a business man and Jewish scholar in a village situated near the Austrian-Hungarian frontier, where there was still a sort of ghetto. We children had frequently spent our holiday there (Nagy-

Marton, to-day called Mattersdorf, in Austria), and we had often wondered at the strange practices and habits in the small Jewish community. Our grandfather encouraged us to take part in the religious rites which we could only imperfectly follow, but by which we were deeply impressed. New Year, the Day of Atonement, beginning and end of Sabbath left their lasting marks on our minds. Very ancient synagogue choral music which I heard in those times comes to my mind even now.

After his wife's death my grandfather, already old and frail, found himself alone, without sufficient means of subsistence. He moved to Vienna and came to live with us in our rather small flat. I well remember the day of his arrival, because his first action upset us a good deal. There was a marble bust on a sideboard representing either Venus or Apollo. Our grandfather must have been struck by it when he first walked through our rooms. He seized a chair, climbed on it rather clumsily, and with a hammer struck off the bust's nose. This incomprehensible act had, of course, a religious motive: my grandfather, who was fanatically devout, would on no account tolerate images in rooms inhabited by him, since those images were strictly forbidden by the Jewish commandments. ("Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.") This act was the beginning of a bitter struggle, lasting for many years, between grandfather and father, interrupted only by short or long truces. Long and violent debates were fought out on religion, its object and justification, its attitude towards civilization and progress. There was no bridge from one shore to the other—from the standpoint of a God-

fearing proselytizer to an agnostic, from a medieval to a modern mind.

But the point in question was not merely theoretical. Many excited discussions were held with regard to the observance of the religious laws in the kitchen, and my grandfather insisted with obstinacy upon its ritual strictness. Since my father would not submit to this dictatorship, and since there was but one kitchen, it was extremely difficult to keep a strict division between "pure" and "impure." It was almost impossible to prevent plates for meat coming into contact with those for milk, and not even the slightest of any such transgressions escaped my grandfather's relentless observation. Each such discovery ended in a scene in which he tried to enforce his despotic will upon the household. But my father—revolted by this tyranny and, all the same, pitying the old and lonely man—could not forgo his advanced views. In the conflict between father and husband it was my mother who suffered most. Yet she could not make up her mind to send the old man to a home for old people. We children gradually began to detest our grandfather. Yet there are many memories from our earliest childhood which show that in spite of all that we loved and admired him, and that his strange tenderness towards us must have found an echo in our minds.

It did not always happen that those disputes between grandfather and father took such a violent turn. Now and then there were peaceful, even friendly conversations, and I know that some of the funny or witty sayings of the old man made my father laugh heartily. But generally the contrasting views brought about all too soon a rupture in the discussions. If matters came to this point it would



frequently happen that my father felt upset and declined to talk to his father-in-law for several days. In that case the two men who, after all, felt the need of expressing their views, would live like strangers side by side. Our grandfather then remained in his room for the better part of the day, moodily playing the part of King Lear. His sense of guilt and his wish for reconciliation must apparently have been fairly strong, for he always managed to make my father, who was irritable but good-natured to the extreme, start talking to him again.

I remember during one of these periods of a temporary breaking off of diplomatic relations we happened to hear strange sounds in my grandfather's room. He was walking up and down talking to himself: "ba, ba, ba, ba, ba . . ." My mother and we children rushed into his room crying, "What is the matter? What are you saying?" "Nothing," he replied. "I am giving myself some practice in order not to forget how to talk altogether. Nobody else will talk to me."

I can still see the figure of the old man at the hour of my father's death. Praying aloud he entered the room where the man, by many years his junior, was lying in his last sleep. In accordance with the religious rites, my grandfather first of all covered up the mirror and opened the windows, so that the soul of the dead man might ascend towards heaven. After that event he seems to have grown even more laconic and gloomy. He died not long afterwards in a persecution mania full of religious delusions. It was from this tyrannical, detested, and yet much admired grandfather that I heard a great many of those Jewish proverbs.

Something said in passing often reappears after many years like an echo. The hoard of proverbs and idiomatic phrases overheard by us children long ago was quickly "forgotten"; it sank down into the deepest regions of the soul from where it emerged only very much later. Just as mysterious as the causes which determine their disappearance are the motives which force these phrases up to the surface again. Very frequently no connecting links are discernible in the actual situation. Our introspection does not remind us that we have searched our memory for those sentences; they simply turn up. That the after-effect of those proverbs overheard in early youth may prove more significant than the effect itself, the echo more important than the first sound, will be shown by a single example.

In my analytic research my attention had been drawn to the effect of a psychic tendency which I pursued in its manifestations both in nervous and healthy individuals. There is a conflict between strong impulses emerging for biological reasons and opposing forces caused by the development of civilization and bent on suppressing and displacing the former. In this conflict the forbidden impulses have provided for themselves an unconscious outlet. Under the effect of the two opposite forces there arises a possibility of utterance and expression recognizable in content and form as a compromising action, as an unconscious admission of those hidden impulses. The psychic tendency breaking through by such compromising actions I have called unconscious compulsions to confession. Their compulsory character becomes evident, for the greater

part, from the instinctual nature of the original, repressed impulses, and also from the strong pressure of the reactive sense of guilt. The striving to give expression to the impulses suppressed by the conscious mind had—under the influence of certain cultural factors—led to the development of compulsions to confession, which clearly exhibit all the characteristics of their origin and present themselves as something intermediate between concealment and representation.

Some time after I had formulated my experiences and views in a book, *Compulsions to Confess and the Desire for Punishment* (1926), I suddenly remembered one of those sentences frequently used by my grandfather and completely forgotten up to that day. When my father, hurt by some of my grandfather's remarks in one of those excited discussions, had left the room, we often heard this phrase. The old man would sigh deeply and mutter: "When we are alive we are forbidden to talk. When we are dead we cannot talk." We children laughed secretly, since we only understood the literal sense of this saying which we considered a commonplace. We little thought that from this statement followed the question: When, after all, is talking permitted? When are we allowed to express our views? It was that phrase which prompted me to recognize the psychic development of my theory of compulsions to confess whose character takes the form of a compromise owing to the co-operation and opposition of biological and cultural factors.

Sounds that we heard around us in early youth we hear again in us in later years. We do not show enough surprise, I think, when phrases from the time of our childhood turn up again after a long

interval; when all at once we give utterance to expressions heard in years long gone by and never heard since; when sentences usually unfamiliar to our consciousness come to mind and idiomatic proverbs that we had entirely forgotten, and for which we should have searched our memory quite in vain. We are surprised just as if we had unexpectedly met after a long time a childhood friend. It appears to us as if somebody else uttered those words, and yet it was the Ego, a part of the Ego that has become estranged to us. Those part-comical part-serious sentences, asleep for a long time in unknown depths of our minds, will return more and more frequently the older we grow. They demand that we should listen to them and obey them. What is their purport? To remind us of our childhood, or our parents and grandparents who once upon a time pronounced them? They are a warning to us that we are to set out on the way they have gone. They summon us to our forefathers long before we are gathered to them.

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