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Sigmund Freud

The Making of a Pseudo-Scientist

HARRY K. WELLS
The Jefferson School of Social Sciences,
NEW YORK

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PREFATORY NOTE

The Freudian rocket was made in Vienna but launched in the United States. It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, for an American to attempt to evaluate the teachings of Freud. In my country psychoanalysis penetrates all aspects of national life and culture, and at the same time comprises an important item of ideological export to the rest of the world. It is of no little importance, then, to weigh the validity of the Freudian approach to the human mind and human nature.

The present booklet gives an account of the rise and development of psychoanalysis in terms of Freud's life story. The latter is at once an illuminating and fascinating tale. It revolves around the confrontation of Freud, the young scientific neurologist, by the myth-making creator of psychoanalysis which he became in the second half of his life. It is the story of the making of a pseudo-scientist and a pseudo-science.

The little book is, however, taken by itself, incomplete and inconclusive. For it is an attempt to evaluate Freud in terms of his own work, without comparison with a scientific psychology and psychiatry. A full treatment of the subject is contained in a work to be published in the near future, Volume II of *Pavlov and Freud*. In this forthcoming book the Freudian depth psychology and psychopathology are confronted point by point by the Pavlovian science of higher nervous activity.

It is hoped that in the meantime the present booklet will serve a purpose in opening the way for a fuller treatment. I am happy that it is appearing in India, and trust that it may help a little in the struggle to clear away the cobwebs of mysticism and confusion that have beset the vital fields of psychology and psychiatry the world over.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a hand in warm friendship and admiration to the champions of science and progress in their work of building the new India.

New York
November, 1957

HARRY K. WELLS

1

INTRODUCTION

PSYCHOLOGY was one of the last great areas of human knowledge to break away from philosophy. For two thousand years and more the nature of mindor soul had been the subject of speculation and conjecture on the part of philosophers, theologians and poets. But it was not until the closing decades of the nineteenth century that it became a separate professional study.

In the United States, for example, prior to 1870 there was not a single department of psychology in any university in the land. If studied at all, psychology was taught by theologians, and for the most part by theologians who were also presidents of their institutions. This fact bears testimony to the importance attached to the question of human nature. The doctrine that "you can't change human nature," the soul that God gave you, was, and is, of course, a cornerstone of bourgeois, as of all class ideology.

Between 1870 and 1900, beginning with Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Yale Universities, departments of psychology sprang up in institutions of higher learning across the nation. Psychology in the United States, and elsewhere, became an independent academic discipline toward the close of the century. This fact must be considered in conjunction with two others.

First, the disengagement of psychology from philosophy coincided with a hiatus in the development of cerebral physiology. By 1870, as I. P. Pavlov noted, science had come to an almost complete halt in the experimental study of higher nervous activity. There was sufficient evidence that mental processes were a

function of the brain, but *how* nervous activity could give rise to acts of consciousness remained a mystery. Thus at the time psychology became a separate branch of knowledge with the view to becoming a science, there was not adequate physiological knowledge of the organ of mental life. For to study mental processes without knowledge of cerebral physiology would be like studying economics without the labor theory of value. Such study could at best be descriptive and speculative.

Secondly, the birth of psychology, and the absence of the condition for its birth as a science, coincided with the rise of imperialism in the United States and Europe. Monopoly capitalism required additional forms of apologetics for its super-profits, super-exploitation and oppression and its doctrines of superiority and inferiority of peoples, nations and races. To this end it found ready at hand a new-born discipline, fresh from philosophy and not yet a science. Psychology was a "natural" rallying point around which to build the requisite additional forms of imperialist ideology. The lack of scientifically established facts and laws was ready-made to meet its fantastic requirements.

Deprived of a science of the brain as a basis, the new field of psychology was wide open for improvisation of all kinds of theories, including those which conformed more to the ideological requirements of the capitalist class than to any objective reality. A characteristic of these latter theories was to carry on a super-militant struggle against the old religious conception of an unchanging God-given, immortal soul, and to do this by maintaining that the brain is the organ of the human mind, but then to proceed to pack the brain full of inborn mental traits of unchanging *bourgeois* man. In this way the content of the old religious approach to human nature was retained, while only the form was altered. It was possible to do this in large part because there was no adequate science of the brain and its functions which contradict it.

A striking case in point is the psychological system devised by William James, generally credited with being the father of American psychology and with having no peer in our country down to the present time. In his *Principles of Psychology*, published in 1885, James begins by denying the existence of the soul and asserting that the brain is the organ of the mind. He then goes on to construct a theory of "the front door" and "the back door" of the brain. The front door is an undifferentiated stream of consciousness coming from the senses, while the back door is the inborn instincts, emotions and even the habits of bourgeois man. This hereditary and unchanging human nature includes: the instinct to acquire private property and to fight for its possession; the collection instinct; and pugnacious and aggressive instincts. The habit of being a gentleman or a worker is likewise inborn and hereditary. Regardless of the intentions of the author of such a theory, its effect is to apologize for monopoly, war and the existence of classes by making them appear as the inevitable outcome of inherent mental traits of man in general. Nothing can be done about it, man is just that way.

Thus psychology, unhampered by scientific laws and facts, can be made to serve the interests of a class rather than objective truth. But a psychology such as that of William James serves purposes wider than the limits of the field itself, for it becomes a foundation-stone for the construction of bourgeois ideology on many levels. In each case, the class function of this type of psychology is to take the attention of the people off the search for real causes, off the economic, political and social conditions, and direct it inward to the mind and its supposedly inborn mental capacities and traits and conflicts. Psychologies based on instincts furnish much of the material from which the various forms of imperialist ideology are fashioned.

Psychology arose and developed along with the rise of imperialism and at a time when science stood

powerless to resolve the mystery of the brain. These three facts combine to account for the central role played by psychology for the past fifty years and more in the ideological superstructure of U. S. capitalism.

It is against this background that the true significance of Pavlov's work is revealed. He laid the basis for solving at long last the mystery of the brain as the organ of mental life. Much remains to be done, but the mystery is gone. The way is open for further objective experimental work which will reveal in detail how an external stimulus can be transformed into an act of consciousness. The time for description and speculation is over. No longer does science stand powerless before the brain. It now has a theory, a method and already an impressive body of facts and laws with which to proceed toward full understanding of the most complex organ in all living matter. The science of higher nervous activity today cuts the ground from under the James type of psychologizing.

In Austria, when Sigmund Freud was constructing his system, generally similar conditions existed as in the United States when James developed his theories. Freud made his "discovery" of psychoanalysis during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. His system thus took shape in the period when imperialism was putting forth new ideological demands and when psychology was struggling to become a science despite the absence of its prerequisite, the science of higher nervous activity.

One could suppose, therefore, that Freud's psychology might be similar in kind to that of William James, namely descriptive and speculative with instinct playing a central role.

2

SIGMUND FREUD

SIGMUND Freud was born seven years after Pavlov, on the sixth of May, 1856, in the little town of Freiberg, Moravia, then a province of Austria, now a part of Czechoslovakia. He was the first child of Jacob and Amalia Freud. Jacob was a wool merchant and Amalia was his second wife, less than half his age. The Freud family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and half-brothers and sisters made up a significant segment of the two per cent Jewish population of Freiberg.

By the time Sigmund was born, his father had become a "free thinker" and no longer attended the synagogue. He believed firmly that all wonders could be explained by science and that human reason would some day make a world free of prejudice in which all men would be equal. Jacob's forebears had been forced to migrate back and forth across the map of Europe in the face of persecutions and pogroms, but Jacob was convinced that the ideas of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood," would finally be realized. For three years following the revolution of 1848 there had seemed to be progress in this direction, but then came the Restoration and Austria was crushed under the iron heel of reaction, including a violent wave of anti-Semitism. Under this pressure, Jacob moved his family, first to Leipsig for a year and then to Leopoldstadt, the Vienna Ghetto, for life. Sigmund at the time was four years old.

Reading, writing and arithmetic were learned at home and young Sigmund did not go to school until he was ten years old, when he went directly into what would correspond to junior high school. Throughout

his school years he brought home all the first prizes and was graduated from high school with highest honors at the age of seventeen. He was interested in anthropology and ancient history, but his first love, that continued throughout his life, was philosophy, particularly the works of Kant.

He was now ready for the University of Vienna, but he did not yet know in what department he wanted to study. Then one evening he heard a reading of Goethe's essay on *Nature* in which the great German poet wrote that "Nature, nature, nature gives the answer to all secrets!" When he returned home he told his father he had decided to make science his life study and work, only he did not know what field. For two years he ranged the science courses at the University, but found none for which he was especially equipped. Then he entered the physiology laboratory of Professor Ernst Brücke, noted throughout the world as an authority on nervous structure, and there he felt he belonged.

For five years Freud studied the nervous systems of eels, frogs and fish under the guidance of Professor Brücke. The work was not experimental, rather it involved careful observation of the microscopic structure of nerves, staining cells and tracing fibers. Several of his papers on highly specialized aspects of the microscopic anatomy of the nervous system of eels were presented by Brücke before the Viennese Scientific Society. The professor thought very highly of Freud, and there was general expectation that he would be appointed Brücke's assistant as soon as a vacancy occurred. But when the time came, Brücke called him into his office and told him that he could not appoint him because of one big obstacle to his continued work in the science of physiology: the science was not open to Jews at the University of Vienna. Anti-Semitism blocked the way in his chosen field. Only law and medicine among the

professions admitted Jews to practice, and Freud chose medicine.

He had already been at the University seven years at his father's expense by the time he enrolled in the Medical School, and he was impatient to be on his own. Especially was this true since in the meantime he had met Martha Bernays and they were engaged to be married. Martha came from a family of scholars and intellectuals, including a socialist. One of her close relatives, Ferdinand C. Bernays, had been a contributor, along with Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Heinrich Heine, to the single issue of the *Deutsch-Franzosische Jahrbucher* in 1844, and had edited a publication called *Vorwarts* for which Marx, Engels and Heine had written articles. Martha was from Hamburg, Germany and the two met and fell in love when she was paying a visit to an aunt in Vienna. But now the wedding had to be postponed until Freud could pass his medical examinations and open his own practice.

After completing the necessary co rses at the University Medical School, Freud received his M. D. degree in 1881 and began his internship at the Vienna General Hospital. There he was surrounded by the misery and suffering of the two thousand charity sick of the city. The building included a tower in which, until recently, had been chained the mental patients, the so-called insane. With his background of study of nervous structure under Brücke, he naturally elected to specialize in organic nervous disorders, those caused by actual injuries, lesions or diseases. His years of training in precise microscopic observation of nervous anatomy stood him in good stead and he soon became a skilled neurological diagnostician.

As a result Freud was given a class to teach at the hospital. It was a class in the diagnosis of organic nervous disorders. By this time Freud was pretty sure of himself, but it was not long before he made a mistake in a diagnostic demonstration — a mistake which was

to be the initial push in the direction of his future profession. He presented to his class a patient suffering from severe chronic headaches and diagnosed it as a case of chronic meningitis, inflamation of the brain. Chronic meningitis has a certain course of development manifesting a specific chain of symptoms. But in this case none of the symptoms developed and Freud had to admit his mistake before the class. He had mistaken a neurosis for an "actual disease."

At the time, in the early 1880's, neurosis was the term applied to all cases in which no physical cause could be discovered. Neurotics were patients ill without organic cause and doctors more often than not laughed at them. They were not considered to be *really* sick. For the most part they were treated with neutral pills or liquids containing no true medication. Neurotics were called malingerers. Thus when Freud mistook a neurosis for an organic disease, it was, in the eyes of his students and the hospital staff, as though he had been taken in by a fakir. So serious was the error considered to be that Freud was relieved of his teaching assignment.

From that time on he concentrated more and more of his attention on patients suffering from nervous sicknesses existing without a physical cause. Here indeed was a challenge. People were sick but the cause was completely unknown. The symptoms were real enough, however : paralyses, tics, tremors, nauseas, spasms, failures of vision, hearing and taste, heart-throbbing, choking, pressure in the head, limbs in weird contractions, and epileptoid seizures. As a trained scientist, Freud knew that where there is an effect there must be a cause, and he set about the task of finding it.

At first he thought that in cases of neuroses there must be some organic injury or disease of the brain cells which had simply not yet been discovered. With this in mind he entered the Institute of Cerebral Anatomy at the Vienna Hospital, directed by the famous brain

specialist, Dr. Theodore Meynert, one of the leading psychiatrists of the time. For five months he dissected brain masses under the guidance of Dr. Meynert in search of some softening or malformation which might be the cause of the "uncaused" neurotic symptoms. He found no such signs and the conviction grew that he would have to look elsewhere than to physical causes for the solution of the riddle of the neurosis. If he had not discovered what he was looking for, he had at least impressed Dr. Meynert as a highly competent scientific worker, for the latter tried to persuade him to continue in his Institute with a view to making cerebral anatomy his life work. Knowing the anti-semitic policies of the University which made an academic career for a Jew all but impossible, Freud resisted the persuasive arguments of the doctor. Instead, he applied for and won a travelling stipend to study under Dr. Charcot in Paris.

Jean Martin Charcot was one of the most noted psychiatrists of the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was Professor of Pathological Anatomy in the medical faculty of the University of Paris and Director of the famous Salpetriere Neurological Clinic. Students came from all parts of the world to study under him.

At the Salpetriere, Freud made a study of hysteria, particularly the paralysis that so often accompanied the illness. He learned to distinguish between organic paralysis and the functional form, and soon could recognize an organic or an hysterical paralytic almost at a glance. He knew the cause of the former, a physical trauma or injury, but what kind of trauma caused hysterical paralysis ? He asked this question of Dr. Charcot and received the answer that it was a *dynamic trauma.* The only clue to the meaning of "dynamic trauma" that he could elicit from his teacher was that it was a trauma that *could not be seen.* How could an injury exist which could not be seen ? How could there be a lesion without existence or location ? Underlying these questions, how could there be an illness without a physical cause ? *Dynamic trauma* sounded scientific,

but what did it mean? Freud spent the following decade, from 1885 to 1895, trying to discover the unseen injury, the non-existent lesion, the dynamic trauma which his teacher had said was the cause of neuroses.

3

IN SEARCH OF DYNAMIC TRAUMA

ON his way home from Paris Freud stopped over in Hamburg where in the spring of 1886 he and Martha Bernays were married. The two then went on to Vienna to set up housekeeping and open an office where Freud could treat those suffering from nervous diseases. His office was actually one room of their small furnished apartment, for the young couple had little money with which to start either a home or a medical practice. He hung out his shingle as a specialist in nervous disorders, and settled back to wait for patients.

Freud, however, had worries other than financial ones. He knew that very few of the patients coming to a nerve specialist's office would be suffering from organic lesions. Most would be ambulatory cases of neurosis of one kind or another. How was he to treat them when the nature, not to mention the cure, of this non-organic, functional illness was not known, to him or to anyone else. Behind this practical worry about treatment lay the theoretical question : Why do people without actual injury or disease fall ill ? To solve the practical problem of treatment of neurotics, the theoretical question had, of course, first to be solved. But Freud was faced with the necessity for immediate prescriptions and so he had to fall back on the pragmatic approach. He had to try this and that without theoretical guidance to see if he could find something which would somehow work to alleviate suffering. He knew in advance that every prescription in the textbooks was futile, but he had to try them since there was no alternative : sulphate of quinine, oil of turpentine, rest,

exercise, hot baths, cold baths, massage, colored glasses, electric sparks. None produced the slightest results. The patients paid their fees and went on suffering.

For two years Freud floundered from one failure to another in the treatment of his neurotic patients, then in 1888 he read a book which turned him once and for all away from physical and medicinal forms of therapy. It was a volume on hypnosis entitled *Suggestion and Its Application as a Therapy* by Dr. Hippolyte Bernheim. Dr. Bernheim was one of Charcot's former students now practicing in the General Hospital in Nancy, France. He had discovered a country physician, Dr. A. A. Liebault, who was treating neurotics by means of hypnotic suggestion. In his book Dr. Bernheim described in detail how Dr. Liebault used hypnotic suggestion as a form of therapy and reported that he, himself, was convinced of its efficacy. Here for the first time since the days of the famous Mesmer, hypnotic suggestion was being taken seriously by a respectable member of the medical profession. Freud, with his uninterrupted record of failures using other methods, was greatly impressed by Dr. Bernheim's book, and he at once decided to try the method on his patients. The results were startling. In the first few weeks he achieved some overnight cures bordering on the miraculous and word quickly spread around the city of Vienna that Dr. Freud was a miracle-worker. Neurotics flocked to his office, business sky-rocketted, and he at last was busy, booked day and night for weeks ahead.

After the first flush of success, however, the old pattern of failure began to show up more and more often. It turned out that some patients simply could not be hypnotized at all, while others could be put into only a very superficial state of hypnosis. Freud concluded that his technique was at fault and that he needed experienced help. Thus he decided to pay a visit to Bernheim and Liebault in Nancy. He spent several weeks in the summer of 1889 at Nancy watching Dr. Liebault at work among the rural poor and

Dr. Bernheim in the hospital. He was greatly impressed by what he saw. Patients were put under hypnosis reaching the stage of somnambulism with amnesia and then it was suggested, or sometimes commanded, that they would no longer feel their symptoms. Upon awaking, the symptoms for the time being at least were gone. Freud returned to Vienna with greater enthusiasm than ever for the method of hypnotic suggestion, but more important for his future, he had, in his own words, "received the profoundest impression of the possibility that there could be powerful mental processes which nevertheless remained hidden from the consciousness of men."[1]

Back home and at work with his patients once more, Freud's enthusiasm gave way gradually to scepticism. Although he had occasional brilliant successes, he found that even in these cases the cure tended to be short-lived. The conviction grew that hypnotic suggestion was in fact a fraud practised upon the patient. Still more serious was the realization that the method was a groping in the dark with success or failure as the only criterion, and that it tended to prevent any real scientific study of neuroses and their causes. It was not helping him in the slightest to discover that *uncaused cause*, that *dynamic trauma* of which Charcot had spoken, and which was the real passion of his life.

He began to realize that he had become wholly engrossed in the immediate problems of his practice and had, for a period of five years, 1886 to 1891, lost sight of his scientific goal. Although, for lack of anything better, he continued to use hypnotic suggestion, he was now wholly convinced that he could make no real progress in therapy until he had discovered the cause of the uncaused disease. What was the dynamic trauma underlying functional mental illness ? He had

1. Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, London, 1950, p. 29.

first to answer this question. But where was he to turn for help ? All paths seemed blocked.

Just when the impasse in the search seemed completely impenetrable, Freud recalled a conversation he had had years ago with an old friend, Dr. Joseph Breuer. Dr. Breuer had told him about a case of hysteria which he had treated in an unusual manner and with amazing results. Freud at the time had been deeply impressed and when he was in Paris had spoken to Charcot about it. But the old master had not shown the slightest interest in it and Freud had dropped the matter there. Now, in 1891, however, Freud in his desperation turned once more to Dr. Breuer and made him recount the entire case history. The patient had been a young woman who had fallen ill while nursing her dying father, and when Breuer had taken over the case she was suffering from paralysis, inhibitions and states of mental confusion. By accident Breuer discovered that the states of confused thinking disappeared whenever she was able to express in words the paticular fantasy that had hold of her at the moment. From this he devised a new method of treatment. He put her into a deep hypnotic state and made her tell him each time what it was that was oppressing her mind. In this way, he reported, he eventually dispelled the confused mental states and then went on in the same manner to eliminate, after a long and painful process, the various paralyses and inhibitions from which she suffered. This was the famous case of Anna O.

Breuer told Freud that the patient was completely incapable in the waking state of making any connection between her symptoms and the various experiences of her life. But under hypnosis she was able to supply the missing links. According to Breuer, all her symptoms went back to events connected with her father's illness and were in fact reminiscences of these emotional situations. Most of the reminiscences, he held, centered around some thought or action which under the circumstances had to be suppressed, and

Breuer viewed the symptoms as substitutes for the suppressed impulses the patient had experienced. Breuer's theory was that a symptom took the place of an impulse which could not be carried into action under the circumstances of nursing her father. For example, when she had an impulse to dance, localized paralysis took the place of actual dancing. Here, at last, Freud felt, was the dynamic trauma for which he had been searching. A psychic injury was caused by the necessity to repress a strong impulse, while the physical symptoms were substitutes for the action that would have been appropriate to the impulse. Freud's excitement and enthusiasm were boundless. Breuer's discovery, he felt, was the solution to the problem of the uncaused disease known as neurosis. But that was not all, for Breuer claimed also to have discovered a way to cure the illness. He reported that when the patient recalled the situation, under hypnosis, and when she went through all the emotions appropriate to the suppressed impulse, the associated symptom was abolished and did not return. Breuer called this form of therapy "catharsis."

From the moment he grasped the significance of Breuer's case history, Freud used the method to treat his patients suffering from hysteria. In a period of two years he could add four histories of his own to Breuer's, and the two doctors collaborated on a book entitled *Studies in Hysteria*, published in 1895. In addition to Anna O. and Freud's four cases, Miss Lu y, Mrs. Emmy, Miss Elizabeth and Miss Katherina, there was a joint introduction in which the authors outlined their theory. Not yet psychoanalysis, but a step in that direction, it was a theory of the origin of hysterical symptoms and their relief through catharsis without attempting to establish the nature of the illness. It stressed the significance of the emotions and the importance of distinguishing between conscious and unconscious mental acts, and it introduced a dynamic factor by *assuming* that there is a constant amount of

so-called "psychic energy" which must find an outlet; if it does not find an outlet, if it is dammed up, as it were, the equivalent energy emerges as a pathological symptom. The therapeutic aim of the cathartic method was to provide that the "psychic energy," which had been diverted to originating and maintaining the symptom, should be directed back on the normal path along which it could be discharged. When this was accomplished, the symptom, drained of "psychic energy," disappeared, according to the authors. Here was the seed that was to germinate in the mind of Sigmund Freud and emerge eventually as the full-fledged theory of psychoanalysis.

Freud, however, was not yet prepared to abandon completely his scientific training in neural anatomy, physiology and neurology and to ascend into the outer spaces of *pure* psychology. One month after the publication of *Studies in Hysteria* he set to work feverishly on what is now known simply as *The Project.* There was a temporary lack of patients in the summer of 1895 and he wrote day and night for a period of several weeks. The manuscript was sent to his friend, Wilhelm Fliess, and lay buried for years. The English translation was not published until 1954. *The Project* was Freud's final, and desperate, attempt to keep his feet firmly planted on the ground of natural science, particularly the science of the brain, such as it was at the time.

In his introduction to *The Project,* Freud wrote that "The intention of this project is to furnish us with a psychology which shall be a natural science: its aim, that is, is to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles and so to make them plain and void of contradictions." And he added that "the material particles in question are the neurones."[1] His manu-

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Origin of Psycho-analysis*, New York, 1954, p. 355.

script, some ninety pages, is an attempt speculatively to construct a physiology of the brain in terms of neurones and their functioning. For our purpose it is not necessary to follow the details of his reasoning, but it is interesting to note that he allocated central roles to the processes of excitation and inhibition. The latter he called "the principle of neurotic inertia," and the only evidence he cites for it is that some such process is required if there is to be a science of the brain. The entire work is an attempt to *deduce* a theory of the physiological functioning of the brain, completely without the aid of experimental facts. But it is a highly interesting attempt. It reminds one to a certain extent of the work of James Rush, the American psychologist who tried in a similar speculative manner to work out a physiological approach to the human mind. On the basis of what little was known of the brain, Freud, like Rush before him, constructed an entire theoretical edifice in an attempt to account materialistically for all the major aspects of the psyche, from sensation and perception to thought and the emotions. But as the manuscript clearly shows, Freud was painfully aware of the arbitrary nature of his construction and soon gave up the task, never to return to it.

When James Rush wrote his treatise on the *Human Intellect* in 1863, speculation about the physiological processes underlying mental activity was a necessary and helpful stage in the development of the science of the brain. Anatomy, neurology and physiology had not progressed sufficiently to make possible a fully experimental approach to cerebral functioning. But in 1895 the situation was quite different. All the scientific requisites were present which made the development of the science of the brain entirely feasible. As a matter of fact, at the very time Freud was writing his speculative physiology, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov was beginning those experiments which were to lead to the discovery of the physiological basis of man's mental life. To rely on speculation when a science is not yet

possible is one thing ; to make speculative constructions when the conditions exist for the birth of that science, is quite another thing. Thus the theoretical speculations of a James Rush or an I.M. Sechenov in the 1860's were mileposts on the road to the science of the brain, while Freud's 1895 *Project* was in effect a substitute for the experimental work that needed at the time to be done.

This is not to say that Freud should have, or could have, carried out the experimental tasks requisite for the establishment of a physiology of the brain. Indeed he could not in any event have accomplished the feat, for he was in no sense a trained experimental physiologist. His scientific work had all been in neurological anatomy where observation through the microscope, not experimentation, had been the main reliance. The plain truth is that Freud was not equipped by training to discover the laws and facts of brain physiology. *The Project* bears witness that Freud was enough of a scientist to know where the real answers could be found to his questions about the "uncaused disease" of neurosis. His tragedy was that he was not able to do the necessary work. He could only theorize, which he did in *The Project.*

All Pavlov's training, on the other hand, had prepared him to undertake the monumental task of establishing the science of the brain. By 1895 he had already worked more than twenty years as an experimental physiologist concerned with problems of nervous regulation of internal processes such as blood circulation and the work of the digestive glands, and he was to receive the Nobel prize for the latter in a very few years. The logic of his life and work led him almost inevitably towards the discovery of the laws of motion of the brain. Each stage of his development as a physiologist raised the questions leading to the succeeding stage. He by no means set out to determine how a stimulus from the external world could be translated into an act of consciousness, but in the course of time the pro-

blems arising in his laboratory confronted him with just that task. In accomplishing it he was led eventually to discover the cause of what Freud had called the "uncaused disease," functional mental illness in the form of neuroses and psychoses.

Freud's abandonment of his *Project* bore witness to two stubborn facts : that in 1895 there was as yet no established physiology of the brain, and that Freud himself was not equipped to embark on his discovery. But at the same time he was consumed with a passion to discover the cause of neuroses. The logic of his life and work, in the years immediately preceding the abortive *Project*, led him inexorably to seek the answers beyond the borderline of experimental science, in introspection, and especially in dreams. It was not after all such a great step from hypnotic suggestion and the cathartic method to dream analysis. In making it, Freud created what the world knows now as psychoanalysis.

4

THE DISCOVERY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

FROM 1895 on, Freud was of necessity a dualist with regard to body and mind. On the one hand, he consistently maintained that the brain is the organ of man's psychic life, that without it there could be no thoughts or feelings. But on the other hand, he held with equal consistency that, since little was known about the functioning of the brain, psychology had to be pursued as though it were a study entirely independent of brain physiology. Thus in 1898 he wrote: "I have no inclination at all to keep the domain of the psychological floating, as it were, in the air, without any organic foundation. But I have no knowledge, neither theoretically nor therapeutically, beyond that conviction, so I have to conduct myself as if I had only the psychological before me."[1]

Throughout his life Freud made many similar statements all contending that psychology had the right to pursue the study of the human mind untrammelled by brain physiology so long as the latter was inadequately developed. The clearest of these statements is to be found in a paper he wrote in 1915 on *The Unconscious*. Speaking of the dependence of mental activity on the brain, he says: "Research has afforded irrefutable proof that mental capacity is bound up with the function of the brain as with that of no other organ.... But every attempt to deduce from these facts a localization of mental processes, every endeavor to think of ideas as stored up in nerve-cells and of excitations as passing along nerve-fibres, has completely miscarried....

1. Freud, letter, 1898. Quoted by Ernest Jones in *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, New York, 1953, p. 395.

Here there is an hiatus which at present cannot be filled, nor is it one of the tasks of psychology to fill it. Our mental topography has for the present nothing to do with anatomy; it is concerned not with anatomical locations, but with regions in the mental apparatus, irrespective of their possible position in the body. In this respect then our work is untrammelled and may proceed according to its own requirements."[1]

Freud was convinced that science would one day discover the nature of the cerebral functioning underlying mental activity, and never tired of cautioning psychologists that they "must keep free of any alien preconceptions of an anatomical, chemical or physiological nature, and work throughout with purely psychological auxiliary hypotheses."

With *The Project* out of the way, Freud once more turned his full attention to his neurotic patients, who by the Fall of 1895 were again flocking to his office. He was now treating them exclusively by Breuer's cathartic method, urging them, under hypnosis, to relieve the emotions which supposedly had led to the illness and thereby draining away the "psychic energy" supporting the neurotic symptoms. But as time went on grave doubts grew in his mind with regard to hypnosis as a means to catharsis. He found that apparent cures could be completely wiped out if his personal relation with the patient became disturbed. From this he concluded that the personal emotional relation between doctor and patient was stronger than the whole cathartic process. When a woman patient awoke out of hyponsis and threw her arms about his neck, he decided to give up the hypnosis method entirely. But where was he to find a substitute.

In searching for an answer he recalled an experiment he had seen Dr. Bernheim perform. Bernheim had insisted that memories lay hidden in the human mind and that if sufficient patience and insistence were

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, London, 1953, p. 107.

employed they could be brought to consciousness. To prove his point, he had made one of his patients recall, at first hesitantly and then in a flood of words, some traumatic experience which had until then been forgotten, and he had done it without the use of hypnosis, simply by insisting and by gently laying his hand on the subject's forehead. Freud decided to try this method on his patients.

In giving up hypnosis as a means to catharsis, Freud continued the practice of having the patient lie on a couch, only now instead of sitting in front of him, he sat behind, where he could see but not be seen. Here, of course, was the origin of the famed psychoanalytical couch.

Speaking of Bernheim's experiment, Freud wrote: "I determined that I would act in the same way. My patients, I reflected, must in fact 'know' all the things that had hitherto only been made accessible to them in hypnosis; and assurances and encouragement on my part, assisted perhaps by the touch of my hand, would, I thought, have the power of forcing the forgotten facts, and connections into consciousness.... So I abandoned hypnosis, only retaining my practice of requiring the patient to lie upon a sofa while I sat behind him, seeing him, but not seen myself."[1] Freud called this "the urging method," later to give way to "free association."

Substitution of the urging method for the method of hypnosis put Freud on the highroad to psychoanalysis. "Insights" came rapidly. The first fruit of the change was the theory of repression, the cornerstone of his entire system.

The question now before Freud was "How had it come about that the patients had forgotten so many of the facts of their internal and external lives but could nevertheless recollect them if a particular technique (the urging method) was applied?"[2] He turned to

1. Freud, *Auto-Biographical Study*, p. 49.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

his practice for an answer, and found, to his satisfaction, that in every case what had been forgotten was in some way or other painful to the person under treatment. The thought or the impulse had been either alarming, shameful or disagreeable to the subject's personality, and therefore had not been allowed to remain in consciousness. On the basis of this "observation" Freud proceeded to construct his elaborate theory of repression.

The first step was to account for the normal or healthy mental process, and from that to reconstruct the development of a pathological condition.

Freud represented the normal mental process as following a prescribed course: When an alarming or shameful impulse arises in a person's mind, it is at once opposed by other powerful tendencies. The two forces, the impulse and the tendencies resisting the impulse, would, Freud conjectured, struggle with one another in the full light of consciousness until such time as the impulse was repudiated and the "charge of psychic energy" was thereby withdrawn from it. In the normally functioning mind, this would be the end of the matter. No ill effects, no repression, would ensue because the charge of psychic energy was fully withdrawn from the unacceptable impulse.

In a neurosis, on the other hand, the outcome of the struggle between the shameful impulse and the resisting tendencies, as depicted by Freud, was quite different. Instead of a more or less protracted conscious struggle between the two forces, the impulse would be debarred from access to consciousness almost as soon as it arose. The "charge of psychic energy" would not be withdrawn from it and therefore the now unconscious impulse would retain its full force. The psychically-charged unconscious impulse would remain to haunt consciousness, and would always, sooner or later, find circuitous ways to discharge bits of its energy. These circuitous ways of discharge would, according

to Freud, constitute the symptoms of the neurosis. He called this process *repression.*

Here at long last, Freud felt, was the dynamic trauma of which Charcot had spoken. At the base of neurosis was no physiological state, but a purely mental one, repression. Repression was the cause, the mechanism, of the so-called "uncaused disease." Freud was jubilant. His great search had, he was convinced, ended in complete success. It remained only to fill in the details of the theory.

The *shameful impulses* of this early stage of Freud's thought were soon to become the *instincts* in his matured theory, particularly the sexual instinct; and the *other powerful tendencies* were later viewed as inherent in the so-called super-ego, the conscience derived from social, ethical and religious standards. Unconscious as an adjective was replaced by The Unconscious located spatially somewhere in the mind. Thus the theory of repression was elaborated in the years following 1895. But its central concept remained unchanged, the concept of "psychic energy." It was this concept which constituted the mechanism of the neurosis according to Freud. In this view, the cause of neurosis lay in the failure to withdraw the "charge of psychic energy" from the rejected impulse.

In his *Autobiographical Study* Freud says that "The theory of Repression became the foundation-stone of our understanding of the neuroses" and that "It is possible to take repression as a centre and to bring all the elements of psycho-analytical theory into relation with it."[1] Repression is at once the corner-stone and the centre of psychoanalysis, and the corner-stone and centre of repression is the concept of "psychic energy." And yet in all the discussions by Freud of repression, no attempt is made to produce evidence for the existence of "psychic energy." Neither experimental

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

nor observational evidence is forthcoming anywhere in his voluminous writings. Psychic energy is a *pure* concept, an assumption. And yet without it the entire theoretical edifice of psychoanalysis collapses.

Freud had started from the observation that neurotic patients show a persistent tendency to forget painful experiences and to resist their recall to consciousness. It was to account for this phenomenon that he assumed the existence of "psychic energy." The latter is thus a pure speculative construct, and since psychoanalysis is built on the foundation of "psychic energy" the entire system is characterized by speculation. As with all speculative system-building, once the key assumption is granted the superstructure erected on it has a certain logical cohesiveness. But withdraw the key assumption and the logic flies apart into irrationality. Bereft of the concept of "psychic energy," the theory of repression, corner-stone and centre of psychoanalysis, makes no sense whatever. Without a "charge of psychic energy," a rejected impulse would be completely harmless, could not lurk around to haunt consciousness, and could in no way produce symptoms of any kind. It would follow that there would be no need whatever to go on to posit instincts, sexual or otherwise, or an Unconscious, a super-ego, or any of the other details of the system. Freud, however, appears never to have questioned his concept of psychic energy. Indeed he went on to construct the system of psychoanalysis on the basis of it.

Freud's most immepiate concern at the time was to develop a new form of therapy for his neurotic patients, and the theory of repression held some obvious implications for just that. If a person was suffering from neurosis, it meant, according to Freud's theory, that repressed unconscious, impulses and thoughts retained their original charge of "psychic energy." The task of therapy was clearly indicated: the "psychic charge" must be withdrawn, or at least provided with an acceptable manner of release. To accomplish the

neutralization of the "charge of psychic energy," the repressed impulse had first to be uncovered. This latter process involved considerable analysis of the psyche. Such probing introspection Freud called *psycho-analysis*.

In this way psychoanalysis was not so much "discovered" as constructed. Its immediate forbears were *hypnotic suggestion* and the *cathartic method* employed by Breuer in the case of Anna O. But in 1895 only the bare skeletal frame of psychoanalysis saw the light of Freud's brain. Some forty years were required to round out the body of the system and to apply it to other fields of study.

5

THE ELABORATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

FROM the "discovery" of psychoanalysis in 1896 until 1902 Freud worked alone. His isolation was almost complete. On the one hand, he was cut off from the medical profession by his non-medical approach to functional mental illness, and on the other, he had not as yet found the disciples that were later to gather around him in such ample numbers. It was a solitary six-year period devoted to the first elaboration of the theory and method of analysis.

He had constructed his theory of repression in the course of employing the urging method of probing his patients' minds. He soon found, however, that this method was inadequate to cope with the resistances to the recall of repressed material. Impulses that had been expelled from consciousness but had retained their so-called "charges of psychic energy" were found to be exceedingly difficult to bring back into consciousness. The method of hypnotic suggestion had concealed the resistances, while the urging method had proved powerless before them. Some method had to be found which could break down, or at least circumvent, the resistance of the patient to what he had previously forced out of his consciousness.

In rapid succession Freud found three such methods of introspection: free association, interpretation of dreams and transference. All three are supposedly ways in which repressed material in disguised forms can enter consciousness through circumventing the resistance. Together, they constitute the exclusive psychoanalytical technique employed down to the present time. They are, indeed, the stock-in-trade of

psychoanalysis. All three are logically deducible from the skeletal theory of repression, for they are held to be means by which so-called psychically charged repressed memories can catch consciousness off-guard and gain entrance at the gates of mental awareness.

Under the method of free association, Freud invited the patient to recline in a comfortable position on a couch while he himself was seated on a chair behind him and outside his field of vision. He then instructed the patient to say whatever came into his head without giving any conscious direction to his thoughts. He was to report literally everything that occurred to him and was admonished not to give way to critical objections which would seek to put certain associations on one side on the ground that they were unimportant, embarassing or painful or that they were altogether meaningless. Above all, he was pressed to be completely candid. This latter Freud viewed as the fundamental rule, the precondition of the whole analytic treatment.

The aim of free association was to collect those ideas which ordinarily are neglected because they tend to interrupt a given train of associations or thought. By getting the patient to follow his associations wherever they led regardless of coherence or continuity, Freud meant to find access to those unintentional thoughts which are regularly pushed aside whenever they intrude. In this way he aimed to circumvent the resistance and find clues to the character and meaning of repressed and unconscious memories. These clues are never signposts clearly indicating the repressed material, according to Freud, but rather are vague and distorted symbols. To make use of the enigmatic clues required what Freud called "an art of interpretation which takes on the task of freeing, as it were, the pure metal of the repressed thoughts from the ore of the unintentional ideas."[1] Here it becomes clear that Freud's method of

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. I, p. 268.

free association is not a method of analysis but rather a means of gathering cryptic clues which then have to be interpreted. The interpretation itself is said to be an "art." Nowhere in Freud's writing is this so-called art described in detail. Not even rules-of-thumb are given to guide the would-be practitioner. Only in the case histories and in the analyses of dreams do we find the art at work, and there we see it consisting primarily of symbol-reading. "Thus the work of analysis involves," Freud says, "*an art of interpretation*, the successful handling of which may require tact and practice but which is not hard to acquire."[1] Apparently this art is to be acquired from study of Freud's case histories, but more particularly from other psychoanalysts. Freud trained many analysts himself, and they in turn trained others. It will be recalled that every analyst must himself undergo periodic practice analyses under one of his colleagues. The training and practice analyses appear to be the chief means of acquiring the art of interpretation of the symbol-clues unearthed by free association. Freud, at any rate, felt that he had mastered the art.

The function, then, of the method of free association was to furnish the symbolic materials on which to practice the art of interpretation.

Dreams, for Freud, performed a similar function. Like associations involving unintentional thoughts, the imagery of dreams furnished symbolic allusions which formed the subject-matter of interpretation. Freud called the dream imagery "the manifest dream" and that which was symbolized by the imagery, "the dream thought." The symbolic images of the manifest dream required interpretation to arrive at the dream thought. The latter was supposed to reveal repressed and unconscious wishes. Just as free association was designed to allow the involuntary thought to enter consciousness in an unguarded moment, so dreams were supposed by

1. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p. 75.

Freud to catch consciousness in the relatively unguarded time of sleep, and thus allow passage of symbolic clues to unconscious repressed material. We will have occasion a little later to examine Freud's theory of dreams and their interpretation. Here we need only note that he employed the imagery of dreams to obtain symbolic material which he could then submit to the art of interpretation.

The third method of psychoanalysis developed by Freud was what he called "transference." The intimate relationship between the analyst and the patient, the result of complete self-revelation on the part of the latter, leads to an intense emotional relationship between the patient and the analyst ranging from sensual love to embittered defiance and hatred. Freud's interpretation of this phenomenon is that the patient is re-enacting the emotions of a former situation the memory of which is now repressed. The *transferred* emotions are supposed to furnish clues to the unconscious repressed material. Here again the clues require the art of interpretation.

All three methods of psychoanalysis are, according to Freud, primarily means whereby to obtain materials for interpretation. He chose to interpret them as hieroglyphic messages from otherwise inaccessible repressions.

Underlying the methods of psychoanalysis and the art of interpretation was Freud's theory of neurosis. Neurotic symptoms, the chronic phobias, obsessions, paralysis and others, were held by Freud to be among the devious ways in which repressed thoughts, impulses or wishes, retaining their irrepressible "charges of psychic energy," forced their way to discharge either psychically or somatically or both at once. With regard to therapy, Freud says: "The problem consists in making the unconscious accessible to consciousness...."[1] When this is done, by means of the three methods and the

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. I, p. 269.

interpretation of their materials, the symptoms are supposed to disappear because when repressions are finally made conscious the theory is that the "charges of psychic energy" are thereby detached.

By means of the three methods and the art of reading symbols Freud came to the conclusion that repressions form a chain leading back ultimately to some experience which was repressed in childhood, and that these repressed experiences invariably involved what he called "infantile sexuality." His first attempt to elaborate this theory ended in a self-admitted complete fiasco.

In two papers, one published in 1896 and the other in 1898,[1] Freud developed his conviction that childhood sexual seduction lay at the base of every neurotic repression His evidence for this theory was embodied in some eighteen cases of hysteria in which his patients without exception had recounted such experiences.

Shortly after reporting the cases, however, Freud was "obliged to recognise that these scenes of seduction had never taken place, and that they were only fantasies which my patients had made up or which I myself had perhaps forced upon them....[2] It was a sharp blow to his self-confidence, but a way out was soon found. "When I had pulled myself together," he wrote later, "I was able to draw the right conclusion from my discovery: namely, that the neurotic symptoms were not related directly to actual events but to fantasies embodying wishes, and that as far as the neurosis was concerned psychical reality was of more importance than material reality."[3] The stories told by the patients referred not to actual events but to unconscious and repressed wishes to be seduced.

Shortly after this first crisis in his attempt to elaborate psychoanalysis, Freud wrote up his famous case

1. *Ibid.*, Papers X and XI.
2. Freud, *An Auto-Biographical Study*, pp. 60-61.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

history of "Dora," although it was not published until 1905. The young woman, Dora, came to Freud suffering from chronic coughs and loss of voice. In the analysis, the symptoms were traced back to unconscious repressed love of her father's mistress's husband, of the mistress herself, of her own father, and finally to onanism in childhood. Freud leads the woman through this labyrinth largely by means of certain symbols, divulged through the use of free association and dream analysis. Among the symbols, almost all sexual, are "keys" and "monuments" on one side and "houses," "jewel cases" and "rail-road stations" on the other. Freud reveals the character of his thinking above all in the case histories. The art of interpretation is indeed symbol-reading.

The culmination of his work during the lonely period was the writing of his major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* first published in 1900. Freud always maintained that dreams constituted the best evidence for his theory of repression and for his contention that the latter was the key to both normal and neurotic mental phenomena. Since dreams are common to all people whether in illness or health they became the focal point of his system. For psychoanalysis was never meant by its founder to be limited to psychopathology, but was intended as an all-embracing psychological philosophy which would account for the normal as well as the neurotic, for social as well as individual behavior, for civilization, science and art. Through the interpretation of dreams he wanted to demonstrate that repression was the key to the understanding of mental life in general.

In the book Freud makes an exhaustive survey of dream theories down the ages and concludes that they all have something to offer, with one exception. Only the physiological theory of dreams, that they are the product of the partial functioning of the cerebral cortex during the restorative process of sleep and are therefore not subject to interpretation with regard to meaning, is categorically rejected. He had to reject

the physiological theory because it alone renders meaningless his entire project of dream interpretation. Freud combined all the various theories into an eclectic rationale for his theory of repression, including even the popular theories of dream books. The writing of the book coincided with his own attempt to psychoanalyse himself, and the volume is full of his own dreams and their interpretation.

"The interpretation of dreams," says Freud, "is the via regia to a knowledge of the unconscious element in our psychic life."[1] He maintained that psychoanalysis could penetrate through the dream as dreamed, the "manifest" dream, to the real content, the "dream-thought," which is always the expression of a repressed desire. The meaning of the dream was held to reside in the dream-thought which was concealed and disguised by the manifest dream. The manifest dream could be made to divulge its secrets primarily through the interpretation of its symbols. He speaks of "how impossible it is to arrive at the interpretation of a dream if one excludes dream symbolism."[2]

With his theory of the primarily sexual character of repressions, most of the symbolism in dreams is viewed as of a like nature. Freud includes in the book a long section on symbols, some of the least offensive of which are the following : "All elongated objects, sticks, tree-trunks, umbrellas, all sharp and elongated weapons, knives, daggers and pikes, represent the male member. . . . Small boxes, chests, cupboards, and ovens correspond to the female organ ; also cavities, ships and all kinds of vessels. A room in a dream generally represents a woman ; the description of its various entrances and exits is scarcely calculated to make us doubt this interpretation. . . . The dream of walking through a suite of rooms signifies a brothel or a harem. . . . Steep inclines, ladders and stairs, and going

1. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, London, 1951, p. 559.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 341.

up or down them, are symbolic representations of the sexual act. . . . The dream-work represents castration by baldness, hair-cutting, the loss of teeth and beheading. . . . The *luggage* of a traveller is the burden of sin by which one is oppressed."[1] The volume is replete with dreams and their interpretation by means of such symbols.

"A dream," Freud wrote, "is the disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish. . . . They are compromises between the demands of a repressed impulse and the resistance of a censoring force in the ego."[2] He viewed dreams as one of the major avenues of discharge of the "psychic energy" retained by instinctive impulses which had been debarred or banished from consciousness. They were able to perform this function because as Freud claimed, during sleep the censorship of repressed impulses was somewhat relaxed, not enough to allow the direct admission of repressed impulses to consciousness, but still sufficient to allow disguised, symbolic versions to pass. There is "a nocturnal relaxation of repression" which allows a repressed wish, disguised in the magery of a dream, to enter consciousness in the form of a fulfilled wish.

The Interpretation of Dreams, with its art of reading symbols, shows how far Freud had travelled away from the scientific method which he himself had embraced at the beginning of his career. He is now concerned with a form of psychic phrenology depending largely on stereotyped symbolism. He had travelled far from science and in the direction of myth-making.

In the famous Chapter Seven of his dream book, Freud takes another long stride in that direction. There he builds assumption on assumption in an attempt to present his theory of repression as a systematic and all-inclusive psychology. The metaphysical method of untestable assumptions, buttressed only

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-340.
2. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p. 81.

by previous or further assumptions, becomes wholly explicit. Freud now readily admits that his thinking amounts only to conjecture. Thus he opens the chapter by stating that "when we seek to penetrate more deeply into the psychic processes in dreaming, all paths lead into darkness.... We shall be compelled to advance a number of new assumptions which do little more than conjecture the structure of the psychic apparatus and the play of energies active in it."[1] He still remains enough of a scientist to admit the speculative nature of his thought, but when he goes on, as he does, to treat each assumption as an established fact, he has indeed passed beyond science into the nether world of pure psychology.

He posits two psychic systems and speaks of them as spatially located in the mind, if such a thing can be imagined. The first and by far the smallest system is consciousness, including immediate perception together with all those memories which can readily become conscious. The second is a vastly larger system called the Unconscious, composed of all so-called innate instincts and emotions and all those impulses, ideas, memories and wishes which have been banished from consciousness, but which retain their charges of psychical energy. Between the two systems, according to Freud's spatial conception, there stands a screen or censor whose function it is to guard consciousness. The censorial guardian has two tasks: one, to prevent objectionable, distasteful or painful impulses from gaining access to consciousness in the first place; and two, to keep previously repressed impulses out of consciousness.

For Freud, mental life is not concerned with dealing with the external world, adapting to it or gaining mastery over it; it is not conceived as a means of receiving signals from the world in the form of sense experience, or signals of sensory signals in the form of lan-

1. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 472.

guage, as Pavlov viewed the two systems of higher nervous activity. Rather Freud viewed mental life as an internecine struggle between consciousness on the one hand and the instincts and repressions of instincts on the other. It is not the activity of people in the world which forms their consciousness, according to Freud, but rather how successful or unsuccessful they have been in learning to live with the battle between consciousness and the Unconscious. The mind of man is a contradiction between consciousness and the Unconscious. The primary role of consciousness is to repress an irrepressible force, namely the animal instincts. When they are repressed, they find devious ways to gain entran e to consciousness, and thereby take their revenge—in the form of neuroses, dreams and their like.

The external world, however, is not completely neglected by Freud. He assigns it the role of supplying the censorial guardian with the religious and moral commandments and the social taboos and customs which are then utilized as means of keeping instinctual impulses out of consciousness. From infancy the human being is subjected to restrictions on his instinctual life which together comprise his conscience. This conscience is the censorial agency standing between consciousness and the Unconscious.

For Freud, then, the primary function of society is to create in each individual the conscience which then subdues the natural instincts. But the instincts will not so easily be overcome. They have such powerful "charges of psychic energy" that they are forever forcing their way into consciousness, or into action, but in disguised and distorted forms. Society is assigned the role of trouble-maker for man. If man had remained in the animal state, without society, the instincts could have avoided repression and been fulfilled directly. But society came into being and animal-man had to be curbed in its interest. The censorial conscience was viewed by Freud as the indwelling agency

for the subduing and thwarting of man's primitive instincts.

By 1902 this much of the Freudian system was completed. There was at the time no adequate physiology of the higher nervous activity which could effectively gainsay it and it went on developing without decisive challenge.

Around the same time, however, the science which would one day rise to challenge all speculation about the brain and its functions was just beginning to take shape. Pavlov and his fellow workers were initiating those experiments which fifty years later would be widely recognized as laying a firm basis for solving the mystery of mental phenomena and for putting an end once and for all to psychological speculations—just as astronomy once laid the ghost of astrology.

In 1903 Freud began to break out of the isolation of his lonely period by gathering around him several young doctors, and laymen, including Alfred Adler, who met at his office each Wednesday evening. This was the nucleus of what was in 1908 to become the "Vienna Psychoanalytical Society," the first of an earth-encircling chain of such organizations. Freud now had a circle of attentive followers.

In 1904 there appeared what is generally considered to be Freud's most popular work, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.[1] In it he applied his theory of repression to such things as forgetting of proper names, slips of tongue and of pen, and erroneous and faulty acts. All the above are treated by Freud as among the devious ways, along with dreams and neuroses, in which repressed impulses, thoughts and wishes force entrance into consciousness. He contends that, while there may be chance occurrances in the physical world, there are no accidents in mental life. All psychic events are completely determined internally by unconscious repressions. For example, if a

1. Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, London, 1949.

name slips your mind it may mean that you do not really like the person involved, or that you wish him out of the way. The emotion or the wish, having been previously banished from consciousness as objectionable, forces its way back in the disguise of forgetting.

For Freud, then, the mechanism of forgetting is the purely mental one of repression combined with a mechanical, one-to-one determinism excluding any possibility of accidents. Each and every instance of forgetting is considered as unconsciously purposeful, the purpose being to fulfill a previously repressed wish or impulse. It is an assumed mechanism with built-in evidence, since each objection to the theory is itself taken by Freud as fresh "proof" of resistance to recognizing what has been repressed.

Freud had by now presented five phenomena which he held to be ways in which unconscious repressed instincts, impulses, thoughts and wishes seek disguised entry into consciousness: through involuntary associations; through transferred emotions; through dreams; through neurotic symptoms; and through forgetting or slips of tongue, pen and their like. In 1905 he added still another. This time it was jokes and the title of the book was *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*.[1] Jokes, puns and witticisms of all kinds were treated, like the other five phenomena, as furtive ways for repressed material to gain admittance to consciousness. According to the theory, the censorial conscience, standing guard at the gates to consciousness, functions less rigorously with regard to wit than it ordinarily does, and thus the camouflaged repressions can infiltrate more readily. The subject-matter of wit, Freud maintained, is primarily seduction and aggression, and repressed impulses and wishes to attack and to seduce are enabled to break into consciousness under the guise of jokes. Civilization,

1. Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, included in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, New York, 1938.

religion and morality, as reflected in the conscience of the individual, bring about the repression of seductive and aggressive impulses, but the latter retain powerful charges of "psychic energy" and therefore are able to force entrance into awareness in the form of witticisms.

The six phenomena—involuntary associations, transferred emotions, dreams, neurotic symptoms, forgetting and jokes—are, in Freud's view, simply methods circumventing the censorial conscience guarding the approaches to consciousness.

According to Freud's way of thinking, there is no sharp line between functional mental illness and mental health. In sick and healthy people alike there is constantly taking place the battle between the Unconscious and consciousness and everybody is suffering, more or less, from the effects of this struggle. Those who suffer more are neurotic, those who suffer less are barely avoiding neuroses, or are learning to live with their neurotic symptoms. So far, up to 1905, Freud has maintained that such is the case, but he has not developed the over-all principles which would account for repression. The last thirty-four years of his life were devoted for the most part to supplying the philosophical framework underlying his theory of repression and the six ways in which it is circumvented. He called this philosophy "metapsychology." He developed his metapsychology in innumerable short papers and in the following books: *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905); *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920); *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921); *The Ego and the Id* (1923); and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929).

6

METAPSYCHOLOGY

IN the construction of his metapsychology Freud was more than ever acutely aware of the non-scientific character of his thinking. Thus in the middle of one of his flights of fancy he pauses to say, "The indefiniteness of all our discussions on what we describe as metapsychology is of course due to the fact that we know nothing of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of the psychical systems, and that we do not feel justified in framing any hypothesis on the subject. We are consequently operating all the time with a large unknown quantity, which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula."[1] This recognition of ignorance did not, however, deter him in his attempt to build an all-inclusive psychological system.

Freud distinguishes three aspects of mental processes: the topographic, the dynamic and the economic. "I propose," he writes, "that, when we succeed in describing a mental process in all its aspects, topographic, dynamic and economic, we shall call this a metapsychological presentation."[2] By "topographic" he means a map of the two psychic systems and a description of their features; by "dynamic" he means the motion of mental processes between the two systems; and by "economic" he means the distribution and exchange of charges of "psychic energy."

He had already in *The Interpretation of Dreams* introduced his notion of mental topography, that there are two regions of the mind, consciousness and the

1. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, New York, 1950, p. 37.
2. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 114.

Unconscious, and that between them stands the conscience as a censorial guardian. Now he attempts to support this graphic representation by an analogy with cerebral anatomy. He first admits frankly that "What follows is speculation, which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilection,"[1] and then begins the argument with an established fact, namely that the cerebral cortex is the seat of consciousness. On the cornerstone of this single fact borrowed from cerebral anatomy he erects a purely fanciful superstructure: Just as the cortex envelops the brain, so consciousness envelops the Unconscious. And again like the cortex, consciousness is shielded from the external world by the thick, bony skull, but there is no such shield between the cortex or consciousness and the lower parts of the brain and the Unconscious. Thus consciousness and the cortex are far more subject to internal stimuli than to external ones. In fact, internal stimuli from the unconscious are absolutely predominant and play a decisive role in determining consciousness. Consciousness and the cortex have only the sense organs as peep-holes looking out on the external world and receive only mild samples of it. "They may perhaps be compared," Freud says, "with feelers which are all the time making tentative advances towards the external world and then drawing back from it." The sense organs, instead of being ways of perceiving the world are viewed by Freud as a further shield of the cortex and consciousness, second only to the skull in that respect. While both the skull and the "feeler" sense organs shield the cortex and, by analogy, consciousness from the outside world, Freud maintains that "towards the inside there can be no such shield; the excitations in the deeper layers (of the Unconscious) extend into the system (of consciousness) directly and in undiminished amount."

1. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 27.

From all this Freud draws the conclusion that human consciousness is determined, not by sense experience in the course of social practice, but by the instincts and repressions of the Unconscious. This is the most essential Freudian doctrine, so we will let him tell it in his own words: "The fact that the cortical layer which receives stimuli is without any protective shield against excitations from within must have as its result that these latter transmissions of stimulus have a preponderance in importance .... The most abundant sources of this internal excitation are what are described as the organisms 'instincts'—the representatives of all the forces orginating in the interior of the body and transmitted to the mental apparatus."[1] As far as the perception of the external world is concerned, Freud annuls millions of years of animal and human evolution and reduces man to the level of a species of insects with feelers substituting for sense organs. The analogy with a wholly false conception of the cortex and the sense organs is his ultimate rationale for determination of consciousness by inborn instincts.

The topography of the mental processes, therefore, is a picture of consciousness shielded from the outside but unshielded from the inside or the Unconscious, with the instincts of the latter playing the dominant role. Freud describes the Unconscious as made up of instincts and repressed impulses, thoughts, emotions and wishes based on them. He classifies all instincts under two headings: the aggressive, Ego or death instincts on the one hand, and the sexual, Eros or life instincts on the other. The former include all the unconscious drives and tendencies that lead toward the return to the inorganic state of matter, while the latter include all unconscious drives and tendencies which lead to renewal of life. As examples of the death instinct, Freud cites sadism and masochism or aggressive

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-43.

violence directed at others and at one's own person. Erotic love is, of course, an example of the life instinct.

The Unconscious is made up of these two types of instincts together with their repressions. Other features of the Unconscious are said to be timelessness, exemption from mutual contradiction, substitution of psychic for external reality, and the so-called pleasure-principle. Instincts and their repressed impulses, thoughts and wishes are in no way related to time and temporal sequences. Thus Freud says, "The processes of the system Ucs (the Unconscious) are timeless; *i.e.*, they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time, in fact bear no relation to time at all."[1] The importance of this assumption for Freud is that he can then maintain that anything that has once entered the Unconscious remains absolutely the same forever after. Thus a childhood memory is retained in the Unconscious, after it has passed out of consciousness. Old impulses, thoughts, emotions and wishes exist alongside newer ones, even though they may be in complete opposition to one another, hence the exemption from mutual contradiction as a feature of the Unconscious. There is nothing rational about the Unconscious; it is completely irrational. The only principle is that of pleasure and pain, with no relation to external reality. "The processes of the Ucs," Freud writes, "are just as little related to reality. They are subject to the pleasure-principle; their fate depends only upon the degree of their strength and upon their conformity to regulation by pleasure and pain."[2] Freud maintains that this irrational, upside-down, Alice in Wonderland world is "psychic reality" and that it is the function of consciousness to bring it into awareness. Psychic reality not external reality is what forms and dominates consciousness, and constitutes its subject-matter.

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 119.
2. *Ibid.*

Freud went into great detail in describing his notion of the sexual, Eros or life instinct, but he never developed in much detail his speculations on the aggressive, Ego or death instinct. The sexual instinct, he maintained, comes into active being at birth and continues through a number of stages into maturity. The first two stages are concerned with alimentation and elimination, which according to him are primarily sexual in character. In these stages the erotic object is the self and the two together form the narcissistic phase. At the age of puberty an external love-object is sought, and in every case, Freud insists, the choice is the parent of the opposite sex. This is the famous Freudian Oedipus phase or complex. The development of an individual, Freud held, depends on the successful solution of the Oedipus complex and the selection of a mate of the opposite sex from outside the family circle.

The dynamic and economic factors in Freud's view of mental life are concerned with the process of repression. The theory of repression requires that there be a censorial guardian standing between the Unconscious and consciousness. He could find no counterpart for it in cerebral anatomy and so he assumes it without benefit of analogy. In his later works he calls the censorial guardian the "super-ego," and he renames the Unconscious the "id." The super-ego is the ideal built up by the conscious ego out of legal, ethical, moral and religious prohibitions and imperatives. It is the conscience of the earlier works. In the light of the demands of the super-ego, the ego represses instinctual impulses which might threaten the ideal.

The ego or consciousness represents reason and light while the id or the unconscious represents irrationality and darkness, unknown and essentialy unknowable. Ego-consciousness is under the impression that it reacts to the external world according to what is called "the reality principle," but according to Freud this is self-delusion. The conscious-ego, with all its reason and science, is really just doing the disguised

bidding of the Unconscious id. "We are 'lived' by unknown and uncontrollable forces," Freud wrote, and he went on to say of the conscious ego, "Thus in its relation to the id it is like a man on horse-back, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse."[1]

The primary role of human consciousness only *appears* to be the gaining of knowledge of the external world, whereas in essence, according to Freud, it carries on a never-ending and always-losing struggle with the instincts and the repressions based on them. The price of civilization, with its injunctions against fulfillment of the sex and death instincts leading inevitably to repressions retaining their "charges of psychic energy," is neurosis. As a result everybody is more or less neurotic.

The major function of society is to bring about, through the agency of the super-ego conscience, the repression of the animal-human instincts of death and sex. Only in this way can society go on existing. But in Freud's view the existence of society is always an evil for the individual living in it, and the more advanced the society is, the more of an evil does it constitute. The more civilized a society is, the more repression of the instincts does it demand, and the more repression demanded, the more bad dreams, bad jokes, bad slips of tongue and neuroses. There is an implication here that one might as well be reconciled to the evils of the capitalist social system since any more civilized society would simply demand more repression and therefore lead to even greater misery. The only real hope is for society to be utterly destroyed, leaving man without social injunctions and commandments, without a super-ego, and therefore without repressions. Remaining would be only the unencumbered fulfillment of sexual and aggressive instincts.

1. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, London, 1950, pp. 27-30.

The dynamic factor in Freud's view of mental processes, namely repression, leads to a cynically hopeless outlook for man. The more social he becomes, the more he suffers from repression and its various reaction formations. But Freud does hold out one compensation. Certain rare individuals do succeed in "sublimating" instinctual repressions in the form of the arts and sciences. The phenomenon of sublimation involves the economic factor in Freud's view of the mind. By sublimation he means the possibility of "charges of psychic energy," attached to instincts and their repressions, being transferred to other impulses, thoughts or wishes which become associated with them. Freud conceived of "psychic energy" as a purely quantitative force which could be attached to any element of the Unconscious and even to elements of consciousness in so far as the latter expressed unconscious, repressed impulses or wishes. Thus, for example, if a man had repressed his erotic love for his mother, and if the energy attached to this repression could become associated with, for instance, an unconscious repressed drive to investigate sexual matters in childhood, and the two energies could somehow, by the fortuitous events of life, be transferred to investigation of nature as a substitute gratification, then the man might become a scientist. A more complicated version of such a process of sublimation, or channelizing of unacceptable instinctive energies into socially acceptable activities, was described by Freud in his psychoanalysis of Leonardo da Vinci.

Freud never really analyzed what he meant by "psychic energy," the key to his system as a logical structure. It remained until the end a pure assumption probably taken over by analogy from physics and from the mystical "vital force" of pseudo-biology. Another source of the notion was the philosophy of Schopenhauer and that of Fechner. Without the assumption of "psychic energy" as a purely quantitative force attached to instincts and their repressions, the

dynamic character of psychoanalysis simply would not exist. "Without assuming the existence of a displaceable energy of this kind," Freud wrote, "we can make no headway."[1] It is only because of the supposition that anything forced out of consciousness retains its "charge of psychic energy" that dreams, neuroses, slips-of-tongue, transferences, jokes and involuntary associations are presumed by Freud to be harbingers from the Unconscious. The Unconscious itself would have no reason for existence if there were no "psychic energy," for it is mainly the repository for all those impulses, thoughts and wishes which, having been expelled from consciousness as being objectionable to the super-ego, retain their "charges of psychic energy" and therefore force reentrance into consciousness in the disguise of dreams, neuroses and their like.

Under the influence of his own myth-making, in his psychoanalysis and more particularly in his metapsychology, Freud himself became hopelessly cynical. He finally reached the point where he could say: "I can at any rate listen without taking umbrage to those critics who aver that when one surveys the aims of civilization and the means it employs, one is bound to conclude that the whole thing is not worth the effort and that in the end it can only produce a state of things which no individual will be able to bear. . . . My courage fails me, therefore, at the thought of rising up as a prophet before my fellow-men, and I bow to their reproach that I have no consolation to offer them."[2] The faith of the scientist in the power of knowledge was by now wholly transformed into the cynicism of the pseudo-scientific myth-maker.

That Freud became quite literally a maker-of-myths becomes fully apparent in such flights of fancy as his theory of man's acquisition of power over fire. It is indeed no more fantastic than many of his other theories, but it is perhaps more patently ludicrous. The

1. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
2. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 142-143.

Freudian version of the Prometheus myth is found in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* published in 1929 :

> Psychoanalytical material, as yet incomplete and not capable of unequivocal interpretation, nevertheless admits of a surmise—which sounds fantastic enough—about the origin of this human feat. It is as if primitive man had had the impulse, when he came in contact with fire, to gratify an infantile pleasure in respect of it and put it out with a stream of urine. The legends that we possess leave no doubt that flames shooting upwards like tongues were originally felt to have a phallic sense. Putting out fire by urinating therefore represented a sexual act with a man, an enjoyment of masculine potency in homosexual rivalry. Whoever was the first to deny himself this pleasure and spare the fire was able to take it with him and break it in to his own service. By curbing the fire of his own sexual passion he was able to tame fire as a force of nature. This great cultural victory was thus a reward for refraining from the gratification of an instinct. Further it is as if man had placed woman by the hearth as the guardian of the fire he had taken captive, because her anatomy makes it impossible for her to yield to such a temptation.[1]

That Freud took this myth seriously is indicated by the fact that he devoted an entire article to it in 1932.[2] He shows that to be a pseudo-scientist in one field spills over into others. Pseudo-psychology applied to pre-history inevitably produces pseudo-anthropology. It could perhaps better be called pseudo-mythology, if it were not that pseudo-science is in fact always latter-day myth-making. Freud demonstrates this ad nauseam in his various applications of psychoanalysis to other fields.

1. *Ibid.*, pp., 50-51
2. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. V, Paper XXVI.

7

APPLICATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS TO OTHER FIELDS

IN the meantime, the seminar led by Freud had become the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, and a second society had been formed in Zurich, Switzerland, under the leadership of C.G. Jung. As Freud put it, "The result of the official anathema against psychoanalysis was that the analysts began to come closer together."[1] Since scientific, medical and academic circles treated them with scorn and derision, they had to form their own associations.

In 1908, the Vienna and Zurich societies, together with followers from other countries, including A. A. Brill of New York, met in Salzburg for what in fact if not in name was the inaugural International Psychoanalytical Congress, the first of a long line of annual congresses extending down to the present. A result of this first congress was the founding of a psychoanalytical yearbook which, until 1941, served Freud as a ready-made means of publishing.

About this time Brill undertook to translate Freud's works into English and thus introduce psychoanalysis into the United States. Freud, himself, visited America in 1909 at the invitation of Stanley Hall, the President of Clark University, and gave a course of five lectures attended by leading academic psychologists, clinicians and neurologists. For the first time psycho-analysis became "respectable," as it had not so far in Europe. A leading professor at Harvard, J. J. Putnam, championed Freud's cause and his career

1. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, p. 91.

in America was off to an auspicious start. From the very outset psycho-analysis found a "home" in the United States. William James' instinct psychology had blazed the trail that Freudianism now trod.

Following the First World War the psycho-analytic movement became world-wide, with a vast outpouring of literature. Freud's teachings broke far beyond the boundaries of psychology and psycho-pathology, and in fact became an all-embracing philosophy of life. Psycho-analysis was applied to almost every field including literature and the arts as well as economics, labor relations, politics, anthropology, the national question, the woman question, the race question and religion. Freud, himself, devoted much of his time in the later years to what is now called "applied psycho-analysis."

In a series of books and papers Freud applied his theory of repression, as he put it, "by a bold extension, to the human race as a whole."[1] Chief among the books were: *Leonardo da Vinci, A Study in Psychosexuality*, (1910); *Totem and Taboo*, (1913); and *Moses and Monotheism*, (1939). In these books and in a number of shorter pieces, he outlined the implications of psycho-analysis for many fields of human understanding. He deals with such subjects as the origins of society, morality and religion, the theory of history, of the nation, of the woman question, of art, the cause and nature of war, and many others. Here we can only indicate briefly the general character of his efforts in some of these fields.

Freud devoted two books, *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, to expounding the psychoanalytic theory of the origins of society, morality and religion. He based his convictions on whatever ethical theories seemed to suit his purposes, even though they had more recently come into disrepute among ethnologists.

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. V, p. 302.

In defense of this practice, he wrote, "Above, all, however, I am not an ethnologist, but a psychoanalyst. It was my good right to select from ethnological data what would serve me for my analytic work."[1] Borrowing whatever he could use, he constructed his theory of social, moral and religious origins.

He offers "a glimpse of a hypothesis which may seem fantastic but which offers the advantage of establishing an unsuspected correlation between groups of phenomena that have hitherto been disconnected."[2] He begins with the notion that man originally lived in a "primal horde" organized as a patriarchy. "All that we find there is a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up. . . . One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. . . . Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him ....The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion."[3]

"In the beginning was the deed," Freud quotes from Goethe, but it was a dastardly deed of patricide. The murder of the patriarchal father led, according to Freud, to the establishment of society on the basis of the social contract : the sons, all half-brothers, realized that the fate of the father would inevitably descend on the sons unless they formed a mutual pact prohibiting murder and marriage within the clan. Thus social organization, Freud held, was founded on two moral restrictions following the deed of patricide. Morality

1. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*; New York, 1949, pp. 207-208.
2. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, New York, 1952, p. 141.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

and society were viewed as being the result of father-murder.

Behind this "theory" lay Freud's view of individual development of the male sex. As they grew up, boys supposedly fall in love with their mothers and hate, but at the same time revere, their fathers. The father is a rival of the son for the mother's love. This is the famons Freudian "Oedipus complex." The result is that the son wishes his father dead, but represses the wish which then enters the Unconscious retaining its full "charge of psychic energy." The future of the boy depends in large part on how successfully he can divert the energy of the unconscious death-wish toward socially accepted ends. In any case the wish forces its way into consciousness as more or less camouflaged guilt, in dreams if not in neuroses.

Freud accounts for religion as the mass sense of guilt arising out of the prehistoric deed of patricide. The murdered primal father is later reinstated as God and "original sin" is the memory of the murder of the God-father. The totemic feast and the Christian communion are the ritualistic re-enactment of the murder and the devouring of the primal father. Freud calls this "the scientific myth of the father of the primal horde."

"Society," Freud wrote, was now based on complicity in the common crime ; religion was based on the sense of guilt and the remorse attaching to it; while morality was based partly on the exigencies of this society and partly on the penance demanded by the sense of guilt."[1]

The Oedipus complex, man's relation to his father, is, for Freud, the source of society, morality and religion. Their origin and development have nothing to do with the labor process nor with the relations people enter into based on the way they obtain food, clothing and

1. *Ibid* p. 146.

shelter. "The beginnings of religion, morals and society converge," Freud insists, "in the Oedipus complex."[1]

In his application of psychoanalysis to "the human race," Freud assumed the existence of "a collective mind in which mental processes occur just as they do in the mind of an individual."[2] Thus the sense of guilt arising from the murder of the primal father has been operative as a powerfully charged "race-memory" for many thousands of years. This sense of guilt exists in each individual of each generation as an hereditary, repressed memory located in the Unconscious. In the individual, from time immemorial and down to the present, the roots of the Oedipus complex are inborn, the innate but repressed memory of the original deed of patricide and cannibalism.

According to Freud, then, the character of both the human race and the individual human being is largely formed as the result of the Oedipus complex. Not only society, morality and religion arise in this complex, but history too is moved by it. The Oedipus complex is the motive force of history, for Freud.

History moves essentially as the result of the influence of great men, Freud maintained, and the reason these great men could exert such tremendous influence was because the masses need to submit to the authority of a father-substitute. "Why the great man should rise to significance at all we have no doubt whatever. We know that the great majority of people have a strong need for authority which they can admire, to which they can submit, and which dominates and sometimes even illtreats them. We have learned from the psychology of the individual whence comes this need of the masses. It is the longing for the father that lives in each of us from his childhood days, for the same father whom the hero of legend boasts of having overcome. And now it begins to dawn on us that all the features with which we

1. *Ibid*, p. 156.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

furnish the great man are traits of the father, that in this similarity lies the essence, which so far has eluded us, of the great man. . . . He must be admired, he may be trusted, but one cannot help also being afraid of him."[1]

Freud repudiates all progress in the science of history and reinstates the great-man theory as an inevitable result of the Oedipus complex in mankind and in the individual. There is, according to him, no escape from this theory of history since it is built into the supposed structure of man's inborn mental apparatus.

In an open letter to Albert Einstein written in 1932 at the request of the latter for the purpose of furthering peace, Freud says of war: "It seems quite a natural thing, no doubt it has a good biological basis and in practice it is scarcely avoidable."[2] He goes on to give war an additional basis, a psychological one, in the form of an inborn aggressive, destructive instinct, the death instinct. It is this instinct which has produced wars and inquisitions in the past and which makes war in the future "scarcely avoidable." He speaks in the letter of "an instinct for hatred and destruction—which goes halfway to meet the efforts of the war mongers."[3]

Freud outlined has theory of instincts to Einstein: "According to our hypothesis human instincts are of only two kinds: those which seek to preserve and unite. . . . and those which seek to destroy and kill and which we class together as the aggressive or destructive instinct. . . . As a result of a little speculation we have come to suppose that this (latter) instinct is at work in every living being and is striving to bring it to ruin and to reduce life to its original condition of inanimate matter. Thus it quite seriously deserves to be called a death instinct. . . ."[4] After relating this fantastic theory, or as he himself calls it, "our mythological

1. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 172-173.
2. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. V, p. 285.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-282.

theory of instincts,"[1] he evidently felt a little abashed considering to whom he was addressing his remarks, so he hurries on to say to Einstein: "It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology and, in the present case, not even an agreeable one. But does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology like this? Cannot the same be said today of your own Physics?"[2] Since all sciences are held to be mythologies, Freud is pardoned in his own eyes for constructing a mythological psychology in apology for war. It is not the structure of society at certain stages and under certain conditions that leads to war; it is rather the instincts of man, and particularly of the "uncultured masses."

Freud, himself, was opposed to war and considered himself a pacifist. The trouble is that there are not enough pacifists, he says, and there is a good reason why they are so few in number. A pacifist, Freud maintains in the Einstein letter, is one who has renounced instinctual gratifications and impulses and has substituted cultural aims. But the masses still are uncultured and still operate on the basis of their instincts and thus are propelled to meet the war-mongers halfway. "The ideal condition of things," Freud writes, "would of course be a community of men who had subordinated their instinctual life to the dictatorship of reason. . . . but in all probability that is a Utopian expectation . . . . An unpleasant picture comes to one's mind of mills that grind so slowly that people may starve before they get their flour."[3]

Second only to his apology for war is Freud's rationale for the doctrine of female inferiority and male superiority. Instead of tracing the position of women to the conditions existing in certain stages of society, and to their special oppression and exploitation by owning

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 283.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285.

and ruling minority classes, he attributes it to recognition on the part of both sexes of an alleged anatomical "deficiency" in women. Young girls, he holds, assign the lack of the male anatomy to castration in punishment for sin and, if they are to progress normally into "femininity," they must accept an inferior and passive condition. Freud speaks of "the psychological consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes" and points to "character—traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women—that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great necessities of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility."[1] Here again Freud feels a little on the defensive and so he hastens to add, "We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from such conclusion by the denials of the feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth."[2]

Freud made what he called a "pathological elaboration" of Leonardo da Vinci in which he accounted psychoanalytically for the fact that Leonardo was both an artist and a scientist. He was an artist because of the particular form of the Oedipus complex in his case. He was an orphan who was in love with his mother. The latter prematurely awakened his sexual activity, the energy of which was then successfully sublimated into activity as an artist. He was a scientist because as a child his sexual activity was concentrated on "investigation" of sexual matters which, being repressed, returned in later life as an obsessive passion for investigating nature.

Art, science and culture in general, were accounted for by Freud in terms of repression of instinctive life and subsequent successful transformation of sexual energy into intellectually creative works. Objective

1. *Ibid*, Vol. V, pp. 196-197.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

evaluation and criticism of art gave place, for Freud, to such pathographic analyses as he made of Leonardo.

Freud's myth-making came to an end only with his death. In 1939, at the age of eighty-three, he published his final book, *Moses and Monotheism.* In this work he held that Moses was an Egyptian, not a Jew, and that he was the father image murdered by the tribes of Israel. In remorse for this deed he was later deified and became the one God of Judaism. This was the origin of monotheism according to Freud.

Freud, forty years old when he "discovered" psychoanalysis, spent forty-three more years first in elaborating it and then in applying it to "the human race." In the course of those years he had attracted many followers, and at the same time had lost not a few by defection. Chief among the latter were Alfred Adler and Carl G. Jung who broke away to set up their own separate versions of the theory. But in the closing years of his life the Psychoanalytic movement was virtually worldwide and Freud ruled it with dogmatic zeal.

He had lived in the Vienna Ghetto of Leopoldstadt ever since the age of four, first in poverty but then in middle-class comfort. In later years he no longer took patients but devoted his time to writing and to the training of analysts. For the last fifteen years he had been suffering from cancer of the mouth, kept from his throat only by repeated operations.

In 1938, when death was closing in, the Nazis invaded Austria and soon had confiscated all Freud's possessions, his publishing house, his library and his fortune. Most serious of all, his passport was taken away. Now he was a prisoner of Hitler in the Ghetto. The International Psychoanalytic movement brought pressure to bear for his freedom. A ransom was demanded and one of his patients and followers, Princess Marie Bonaparte, paid one-quarter of a million

shillings for his release. The Freud family travelled to England where the final year of his life was spent. Four of his sisters, remaining in Vienna, were murdered in the gas ovens of the Nazis. On September 23, 1939, Freud died.

8

CONCLUSION

FREUD made two evaluations of his life and his work. In the first of these he placed himself in an eminent line of descent, from Copernicus to Darwin to Freud. In the second he said flatly that he was not a scientist but an adventurer.

In claiming his illustrious line of descent, he developed the thesis that the self-love of humanity had suffered three severe wounds by the researches of science. The first was the cosmological one in which Copernicus proved that the earth and therefore man was not the center of the universe. The second was the biological blow in which Darwin demonstrated that man is not a special creation of divine will but is in fact a higher animal. The third wound was the psychological one in which Freud "proved" that consciousness is not master in its own house but is ruled by the Unconscious with its instincts and repressions, especially the sexual and aggressive drives.[1]

To "prove" his contention that consciousness is determined by the Unconscious, Freud cited certain phenomena which a psychology based exclusively on consciousness could not account for. Chief among these phenomena were hypnosis, dreams and neurosis. Now it is a fact that such aspects of mental life defy understanding in purely psychic terms. Only the physiology of higher nervous activity can discover the essential nature of hypnosis, dreams and neurosis. Pavlov laid the experimental basis for understanding the nervous mechanisms underlying each in terms of

1. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, Paper XX, pp. 350-355.

the fundamental processes of excitation and inhibition. The first two, hypnosis and dreams, are, according to cerebral physiology, closely connected with sleep, the irradiation of inhibition throughout the cortex and into the lower parts of the brain. Pavlov demonstrated that hypnosis is partial inhibition or partial sleep in which certain areas of the cortex are under inhibition while others are not, depending on the type of hypnosis. He did a great deal of work on the phenomenon in completely repeatable experiments and developed a body of facts and laws of cerebral functioning under hypnosis.

Dreams are explained by the science of higher nervous activity to be dependent on several possible conditions in the cerebral cortex and other parts of the brain during sleep. Restricted zones of excitation may be left behind as inhibition irradiates throughout the cortex, or may appear later as the result of stimulations from the external environment or from organs of the body, such as the stomach, the bladder, the intestines, the heart, the lungs. Stimulation of the sense organs during sleep may lead to associated excitations. Often dreams are connected with memories of events that were previously witnessed, or told or read. They may even be connected with earlier stimulations which at the time never reached consciousness at all. This latter is accounted for by the fact that *traces*, as Pavlov called them, of all impulses coming from the sense organs are retained in the cells of the cortex for some time afterwards. Pavlov demonstrated this fact by constructing conditioned reflexes to such traces. The often chaotic and fantastic character of dreams, in which memories are associated which in waking life would never be connected, are accounted for in terms of the partial and scattered zones of excitation in the brain during sleep. The jumping from one subject to another so characteristic of dreams is explained similarly. The often vivid imagery of dreams is accounted for by the fact that the highest

system, the abstract language system of higher nervous activity, is the first to be engulfed in the irradiating inhibition of sleep and the last to be released, leaving, at the time of falling asleep and awakening when most dreams occur, the sensory system with its sense images as the main constructor of dreams. Much work remains to be done on the mechanism of dreams, but a solid foundation has been laid, sufficient certainly to make forever untenable any speculative system built on the interpretation of dream imagery as symbols of some supposed Unconscious.

It is apparent what Freud did. He went to the dream as dreamed, took it seriously as indicating mental activity that proceeded independently of consciousness, and went on to interpret the nature of that mental activity by the so-called *art of interpretation*. The opposing views of dreams may be dramatized by the following example. According to cerebral physiology, if during sleep the nose is suddenly freed of mucus, the respiration becomes easier, and one may get in the dream a sensation of flying freely through the air. For Freud, on the other hand, all dreams of flying are symbols representing just one "thing the longing for the ability of sexual accomplishment."[1]

The Pavlovian science explains the mechanisms of neuroses likewise in terms of the processes of excitation and inhibition. Neuroses are defined as chronic overstrain of the higher nervous activity, overstrain of the force, equilibrium and mobility of this activity, and the dislocation of the inter-relationships of the verbal and sensory systems. A number of detailed conditions were discovered, such as the frozen phases of partial sleep as the cortex goes under irradiating inhibition ; isolated pathological points in the cortex ; and others. Sufficient work has been done to establish the fact that there is a patho-physiological basis in all forms of neuroses and psychoses. The therapeutic measures, including various

1. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 106.

types of sleep therapy, are also primarily physiological. Here again there is much scientific work to be done, but more than enough verified evidence exists to establish the position that the physiological approach to neuroses has been discovered at last. The diagnosis and treatment of neuroses are thereby fully returned to the jurisdiction of medical science.

Here again, it is clear what Freud did. He took seriously the appearances of the mental illness, the fantasies, delusions, obsessions and their like, and proceeded to construct purely psychical theories to account for them. Pavlov, on the other hand, was concerned with the chronic disturbance of cortical processes that were indicated by these appearances, or symptoms of illness.

Freud's own repeated statements, that psychoanalysis was only a stopgap substitute pending the discovery of the physiological basis of functional mental illness, themselves require the final scrapping of his mythical theories now that the discovery has been made. In this connection his second self-evaluation is relevant. Freud wrote to a friend: "You often estimate me too highly. For I am not really a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a *conquistador*—an adventurer if you want to translate the word—with the curiosity, the boldness, and the tenacity that belong to that type of being. Such people are apt to be treasured if they succeed, if they have really discovered anything; otherwise they are thrown aside. And that is not altogether unjust."[1] Freud started as a scientist and became an adventurer. He pegged his entire adventure into psychology and psychopathology on the lack of physiological knowledge of the three phenomena, hynposis, dreams and neurosis. But during the very same decades that he was

1. Freud, Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, February 1, 1900. Quoted by Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I, New York, 1953, p. 384.

carrying on his speculations, Pavlov and his co-workers were discovering in the laboratory and the clinic the facts and laws of higher nervous activity, including those of the three aspects of mental life. The lack of a science of cerebral functioning has been overcome, and there is no basis whatever for further speculation, or for treating seriously the mythical theories developed by Freud to account for psychical appearances. In his own terms Freud was a "conquistador" who did not "really discover anything" fundamental and therefore his work must be "thrown aside." On the basis of his own statements he would have to concur in this verdict.

The story of Freud's life is the tale of the making of a pseudo-scientist. From the promising young neuro-anatomist, blocked by anti-Semitism, and from the rising young neurologist working in the neurological clinic, he became an introspective interpreter of dreams and a maker-of-myths. The story confirms the supposition expressed at the outset. Freud, like William James, succeeded only in devising another instinct theory of unchanging human nature to replace or supplement the soul theory. In doing so, he along with James, included among the innate instincts certain character traits of bourgeois man. And again like James, he applied his theories to many fields with the objective effect of undercutting the knowledge that could make men free.

He did all this by venturing into regions where no real progress was possible until the basis of cerebral physiology had been laid. In the beginning his speculations were confined to fields where lack of knowledge was an objective fact, but in the later years he employed his mythical psychology to annul and displace established sciences in many spheres of human knowledge.

William James told Freud, on the occasion of the latter's visit to America in 1909, "The future of psychology belongs to your work."[1] James had prepared the

1. Quoted by Ernest Jones, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 57.

way for Freud's instinct psychology, and he may have recognized the greater popular appeal, particularly to the American public, of Freud's sexually oriented approach. It was not just sex but its various deviations all mixed up with violence, closely related to the daily fare offered by the tabloids, which lay at the heart of the Freudian psycho-mythology. Freud, himself, once wrote in a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, "I can hardly tell you how many things I (a new Midas) turn into filth" and he added that "This is in complete harmony with the theory of internal stinking."[1] His theory of the Unconscious with its sexual and aggressive instincts and repressions amounts in fact to a "theory of internal stinking": instincts toward seduction, murder, patricide, incest, homosexuality, masochism, lust and sadism are what Freud reads into the human mind by means of the art of interpretation of symbols, the art of mind-reading through dream-reading.

Pavlov had something to say about psychologists like James and Freud: "Undoubtedly, this is a special breed of people, a special sphere in which there is no place for genuine thought, where it is always buried in the devil knows what. . . . These gentlemen never bother about the real meaning of their words, they are unable to give words a concrete sense. . . . They have a tendency to play with words while ignoring reality."[2] To use words without regard to reality is myth-making, and myth-making is the essence of philosophical idealism.

In the construction of his system Freud drew eclectically on many philosophical sources: Fechner, Schopenhauer, the Hedonists, vitalism, teleology and others. His general position, however, appears in essence to be neo-Kantian. Immanuel Kant was always his favourite philosopher, and throughout Freud's works there are numerous references to the great German agnostic. But

1. *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, New York, 1954, p. 240.
2. Pavlov, *Selected Works*, Moscow, 1955, pp. 615-616.

even if there had been no such references, his thinking was along the lines of vulgar kantianism.

While Kant was concerned with the forms of perception and thought which, according to him, mould the "world" of sense experience, Freud was concerned with so-called instinctive forms of unconscious mental life which, in his view, are far more important in moulding the "world ' of the individual. Man, in this view does not know the world as it is in objective reality, but only his own reactions to that world. And he reacts to it in terms of his instincts and their repressions and in terms of pleasure and pain. Thus, for Freud, the Unconscious is the true creator of the "world" for each person. He grants along with Kant the thing-in-itself, but holds that it can never be known. Thus Freud wrote, "The task of science is fully circumscribed if we confine it to showing how the world must appear to us in consequence of the particular character of our organization.... The problem of the nature of the world irrespective of our perceptive mental apparatus is an empty abstraction without practical interest."[1] Such a position is clearly subjective idealism. Man constructs his world out of appearances, and science is merely the description and organization of these appearances. Science and all knowledge are purely *phenomenological* for Freud. This is the significance underlying his remark to Einstein that physics as well as psychology is in the last analysis nothing but mythology—suppositions to explain appearances.

Freud refers to the connection between psychoanalysis and Kantian philosophy on a number of occasions. For example, he wrote : "The psycho-analytic assumption of unconscious mental activity appears to us, on the one hand, a further development of that primitive animism which caused our own consciousness to be reflected in all around us, and, on the other hand, it seems to be an extension of the corrections begun by Kant in regard to our views on external perception.

1. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, New York, 1953, pp. 98-99.

Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perception is subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with the phenomena perceived but never really discerned, so psychoanalysis bids us not to set conscious perception in the place of the unconcious mental process which is its object."[1]

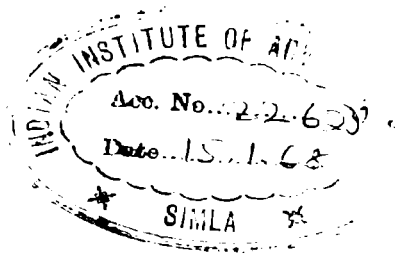
That mental life determines reality and that the Unconscious with its instincts and repressions determine mental life, is Freud's basic philosophical thesis throughout his works. It is in essence latter-day Berkeleyan idealism established by means of a neo-Kantian instinct theory. The parallel with the psychological philosophy of William James is striking. Whether the repository of the instincts is called the "back door" or the "Unconscious" is immaterial, the fact is that for both James and Freud instincts determine mental activity and the latter plays the central role in creating the "world" of the individual. Freud only adds the psychodynamics of repression to complicate the matter. As Lenin pointed out, such philosophies are at bottom nothing but subjective idealism culminating in solipsism, and such philosophers are salesmen of theology. Being a life-long atheist, Freud's philosophy ends up as mythology rather than theology. In any case both are forms of ignorance and superstition.

As we have seen, Freud did not set out to be a pseudo-scientist, but the logic of his life, once he had turned his back on what Pavlov liked to call "Mr. Fact," led inexorably to more and more wild speculations. Such myth-making could only serve that segment of capitalist society which has an enormous investment in the preservation and extension of social ignorance and superstition.

There is no contradiction whatever in the fact that the centre of psychoanalysis is today located in the United States, the centre also of the capitalist world. In this country, as A.A. Brill, the late leading U.S. exponent

1. Freud, *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, p. 104.

of Freud's teachings, put it : "Indeed, all mental disciplines have thus been almost entirely rewritten since psychoanalysis came on the scene."[1] There can be no question but that psychoanalysis has won the dominant position in American psychology and psychiatry and that it plays a highly influential role throughout the ideological superstructure of U.S. imperialism. Its position, however, does not go unchallenged. There is a strong tradition of experimental psychology and scientific psychiatry which is today actively combating Freudianism. But psychoanalysis in the United States, and the struggle against it, is another big and important subject requiring separate treatment.



1. A. A. Brill, "Introduction" to Freud's *Leonardo da Vinci*, New York, 1947, p. 4.