CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Modern psychopathology may be said to have originated with the appearance of the hypothesis of unconscious mentation. This hypothesis was necessary to account for the phenomena observed by workers in two schools, the hypnotic and psychoanalytic. The work of the former group has never received the attention it deserved either from scientific speculators or intelligent laymen. This is possibly to be accounted for by the limited therapeutic results of such hypnotic measures as demonstrated unconscious phenomena. Psychoanalysis, however, has become highly popular as a result of its therapeutic achievements on the one hand and also, probably, because its insistence on one dominating and specific unconscious tendency, namely the sexual, has made a wide and often morbid appeal. It is a peculiarity of psychoanalytic technique that it cannot be used for therapeutic ends without a constant demonstration of the “unconscious.” The popularity of psychoanalysis, therefore, has led inevitably to a wide consideration or acceptance of the doctrine of an unconscious mind. During the war the experience was repeated in different countries of finding that those trained in psycho-
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analytic method were highly competent to deal with war neuroses, while the repeated demonstration of “psychoanalytic” mechanisms in these conditions independent of sex factors led many, previously skeptical and indifferent, to examine Freud’s system of psychology with interest.

The question as to what this system really is has become each year more pressing, while a number of factors have contributed to obscure the problem. Four of them are important. The first is that psychoanalysis has never been formally taught but has been learned in the main by independent observations of men originally inspired by the scattered and unconnected writings of Freud and his immediate followers. Each of these workers has tended to give his own meaning to the terms in common use and often to invent new ones. The second factor is of still greater importance from a scientific standpoint. In any single analysis observation is not made of mental reactions occurring with complete spontaneity in the patient examined but is most often of reactions definitely stimulated by the observer himself. The subjective factor—the personal equation—has, therefore, to be considered as an element in the results obtained to a degree that is not met in other kinds of scientific enquiry. The third difficulty belongs more properly to the material than to the method. Theoretically, psychoanalysis aims at an investigation of the patient’s entire life, a task which is practically impossible of completion. Consequently the analyst must make a selection, and this is apt to be made on a basis of personal bias,
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the analyst selecting those mental trends for special investigation which are likely to strengthen his particular hypothesis. Finally, there is no ready method of controlling his results. An analysis terminates so soon as the patient feels he can travel alone. According to psychoanalytic theory cure comes about by freeing inhibition and thereby liberating unconscious energy, previously bound up in symptoms, so that it can attain normal expression. When sufficient energy is thus loosened the patient’s satisfaction with life is complete enough to make further repression unnecessary and he is permanently well. It is clear that, in consequence of this, mental health may be attained by any type of analysis provided only that a sufficient number of complexes are ventilated. Therapeutic results, therefore, simply demonstrate that this has been achieved, not that complexes broken up were necessarily the most important ones.

With so many factors militating against uniformity in the views of individual psychoanalysts it is truly surprising that there is, so far as fundamentals are concerned, essential agreement among them, a phenomenon which speaks strongly in favor of the validity of their hypotheses. Since these are novel and deal with allegedly basic principles of psychology it is important that they should be incorporated with scientific thought in general. In order that this may be done two tasks must be accomplished. The hypotheses themselves must be formulated logically and with internal consistency and, on the other hand, they must be correlated with general biolog-
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ical theory. Two books\(^1\) appeared recently in which solution of these problems is attempted and since their purpose is to illuminate the same fundamental question from these two angles, it may be well to use them as starting points for discussion.

The followers of Freud who are interested in psychoanalysis have been eagerly waiting for a summary from him of his views. His previous publications have been mainly topical and, as time went on and his theories broadened and were modified, earlier generalizations were contradicted in later writings. His readers felt curious as to how much these alterations modified his general theory and, being unable themselves to synthesize his scattered formulations into one unified structure, have looked to him for a statement of this new system of psychology. During the winters of 1915-16 and 1916-17 he delivered 28 lectures to lay audiences in Vienna, which were designed to cover, superficially, the field of psychoanalysis. Owing to war conditions these lectures have only recently become available in translation to English readers. Unfortunately the translation (anonymous) seems to have been made by some one ignorant of psychiatry and more familiar with German than English. In places the text is completely incomprehensible and necessitates reference to the original. Typographical errors are frequent and gross.

To add to these difficulties of the English reader


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the arrangement of the lectures seems unfortunate. They begin with a discussion of errors (The Psychopathology of Everyday Life), proceed with dream analysis, while it is only in the last half of the book that Freud’s theories of the neuroses appear. It would seem that either from the standpoint of logical development or from the standpoint of tact it would have been wiser to reverse the order of presentation. Moreover no topic seems to be exhaustively discussed in any one place, important additions to the exposition appearing in later chapters. Considerable labor is therefore necessary if one is to discover just what his views are. In the following pages an attempt will be made to digest and criticize the material thus gathered. During the years when Freud was delivering these lectures he published five papers 1 which also contain important generalizations. When these amplify or amend the formulations arrived at in his book, special reference will be made to them.

1 These papers with the titles “Triebe und Triebchicksale,” “Die Verdrängung,” “Das Unbewusste,” “Metapsychologische Ergänzung zur Traumlehre” and “Trauer und Melancholie” have all been reprinted in Sammlung Kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre, Vierte Folge, 1918. Hugo Heller, Leipzig and Vienna.