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0521327911 - Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious

- D. H. Lawrence

Excerpt

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**PSYCHOANALYSIS
AND THE
UNCONSCIOUS**

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

In the absence of manuscripts or typescripts, the base-text for *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* is the first American edition (A1), published by Thomas Seltzer on 10 May 1921 (Roberts A18), in a copy at UT, which contains seven autograph corrections (A1R). In Chapter 6 of this copy, DHL has changed an initial capital to lower case (see (iii) below). The other six corrections are noted in the Textual apparatus which also records variants in the first English edition (E1) published by Martin Secker in July 1923 and notes all editorial emendations.

The following practices are adopted:

- i. Chapter numbers and chapter headings in both A1 and E1 were printed without punctuation and in large and small capitals respectively. They are printed in bold small capitals in this edition.
- ii. Such variants as the following between A1 and E1 are not noted unless they form part of a longer variant: 'marvelous' for 'marvellous'; 'center' for 'centre'; 'realize' for 'realise'; 'Mr.' for 'Mr'; 'offense'; for 'offence'; 'authorized' for 'authorised'; 'polarized' for 'polarised'; 'civilization' for 'civilisation'; 'forever' for 'for ever'.
- iii. The first words of each chapter are in capitals in A1 and this is not noted.

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PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Chapter I

PSYCHOANALYSIS VS. MORALITY

Psychoanalysis has sprung many surprises on us, performed more than 5
one *volte face* before our indignant eyes. No sooner had we got used
to the psychiatric quack who vehemently demonstrated the serpent of
sex* coiled round the root of all our actions, no sooner had we be-
gun to feel honestly uneasy about our lurking complexes, than lo and
behold the psychoanalytic gentleman reappeared on the stage with a 10
theory of pure psychology.* The medical faculty, which was on hot
bricks over the therapeutic innovations, heaved a sigh of relief as it
watched the ground warming under the feet of the professional psy-
chologists.*

This, however, was not the end. The ears of the ethnologist began to 15
tingle, the philosopher felt his gorge rise, and at last the moralist knew he
must rush in. By this time psychoanalysis had become a public danger.
The mob was on the alert. The Oedipus complex was a household word,
the incest motive* a commonplace of tea-table chat. Amateur analyses
became the vogue. "Wait till you've been analyzed," said one man to 20
another, with varying intonation. A sinister look came into the eyes of
the initiates—the famous, or infamous, Freud look. You could recognize
it everywhere, wherever you went.

Psychoanalysts know what the end will be. They have crept in among 25
us as healers and physicians; growing bolder, they have asserted their
authority as scientists; two more minutes and they will appear as apos-
tles. Have we not seen and heard the *ex cathedra* Jung?* And does it need
a prophet to discern that Freud is on the brink of a Weltanschauung—or
at least a Menschanschauung,* which is a much more risky affair? What
detains him? Two things. First and foremost, the moral issue. And next, 30
but more vital, he can't get down to the rock on which he must build
his church.*

Let us look to ourselves. This new doctrine—it will be called no less—
has been subtly and insidiously suggested to us, gradually inoculated
into us. It is true that doctors are the priests, nay worse, the medicine- 35
men of our decadent society.* Psychoanalysis has made the most of the
opportunity.

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First and foremost the issue is a moral issue. It is not here a matter of reform, new moral values. It is the life or death of all morality. The leaders among the psychoanalysts know what they have in hand. Probably most of their followers are ignorant, and therefore pseudo-innocent.
 5 But it all amounts to the same thing. Psychoanalysis is out, under a therapeutic disguise, to do away entirely with the moral faculty in man. Let us fling the challenge, and then we can take sides in all fairness.

The psychoanalytic leaders know what they are about, and shrewdly keep quiet, going gently. Yet, however gently they go, they set the moral stones rolling. At every step the most innocent and unsuspecting analyst starts a little landslide. The old world is yielding under us. Without any direct attack, it comes loose under the march of the psychoanalyst, and we hear the dull rumble of the incipient avalanche. We are in for a débâcle.
 10

But at least let us know what we are in for. If we are to rear a serpent against ourselves,* let us at least refuse to nurse it in our temples or to call it the cock of Esculapius.* It is time the white garb of the therapeutic cant was stripped off the psychoanalyst. And now that we feel the strange crackling and convulsion in our moral foundations, let us at least look
 15 at the house which we are bringing down over our heads so blithely.

Long ago we watched in frightened anticipation when Freud set out on his adventure into the hinterland of human consciousness. He was seeking for the unknown sources of the mysterious stream of consciousness. Immortal phrase of the immortal James!* Oh stream of hell
 20 which undermined my adolescence! The stream of consciousness! I felt it streaming through my brain, in at one ear and out at the other. And again I was sure it went round in my cranium, like Homer's Ocean,* encircling my established mind. And sometimes I felt it must bubble up in the cerebellum and wind its way through all the convolutions of
 25 the true brain. Horrid stream! Whence did it come, and whither was it bound? The stream of consciousness!

And so, who could remain unmoved when Freud seemed suddenly to plunge towards the origins? Suddenly he stepped out of the conscious into the unconscious,* out of the everywhere into the nowhere, like some
 30 supreme explorer. He walks straight through the wall of sleep, and we hear him rumbling in the cavern of dreams.* The impenetrable is not impenetrable, unconsciousness is not nothingness. It is sleep, that wall of darkness which limits our day. Walk bang into the wall, and behold the wall isn't there. It is the vast darkness of a cavern's mouth, the cavern
 35 of anterior darkness whence issues the stream of consciousness.
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[More information](#)*Psychoanalysis vs. Morality*

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With dilated hearts we watched Freud disappearing into the cavern of darkness, which is sleep and unconsciousness to us, darkness which issues in the foam of all our day's consciousness. He was making for the origins. We watched his ideal candle flutter and go small. Then we waited, as men do wait, always expecting the wonder of wonders. He came back with dreams to sell. 5

But sweet heaven, what merchandise! What dreams, dear heart! What was there in the cave? Alas that we ever looked! Nothing but a huge slimy serpent of sex, and heaps of excrement,* and a myriad repulsive little horrors spawned between sex and excrement. 10

Is it true? Does the great unknown of sleep contain nothing else? No lovely spirits in the anterior regions of our being? None! Imagine the unspeakable horror of the *repressions* Freud brought home to us.* Gagged, bound, maniacal repressions, sexual complexes, faecal inhibitions, dream-monsters. We tried to repudiate them. But no, they were there, demonstrable. These were the horrid things that ate our souls and caused our helpless neuroses. 15

We had felt that perhaps we were wrong inside, but we had never imagined it so bad. However, in the name of healing and medicine we were prepared to accept it all. If it was all just a result of illness, we were prepared to go through with it. The analyst promised us that the tangle of complexes would be unravelled, the obsessions would evaporate, the monstrosities would dissolve, sublimate,* when brought into the light of day. Once all the dream-horrors were translated into full consciousness, they would sublimate into—well, we don't quite know what. But anyhow, they would sublimate. Such is the charm of a new phrase that we accepted this sublimation process without further question. If our complexes were going to sublimate once they were surgically exposed to full mental consciousness, why, best perform the operation. 20 25 30

Thus analysis set off gaily on its therapeutic course. But like Hippolytus, we ran too near the sea's edge.* After all, if complexes exist only as abnormalities which can be removed, psychoanalysis has not far to go. Our own horses ran away with us. We began to realize that complexes were not just abnormalities. They were part of the stock-in-trade of the normal unconscious. The only abnormality, so far, lies in bringing them into consciousness. 35

This creates a new issue. Psychoanalysis, the moment it begins to demonstrate the nature of the unconscious, is assuming the rôle of psychology. Thus the new science of psychology proceeds to inform us 40

that our complexes are not just mere interlockings in the mechanism of the psyche, as was taught by one of the first and most brilliant of the analysts, a man now forgotten.* He fully realized that even the psyche itself depends on a certain organic, mechanistic activity, even as life
5 depends on the mechanistic organism of the body. The mechanism of the psyche could have its hitches, certain parts could stop working, even as the parts of the body can stop their functioning. This arrest in some part of the functioning psyche gave rise to a complex, even as the stopping of one little cog-wheel in a machine will arrest a whole
10 section of that machine. This was the origin of the complex-theory, purely mechanistic. Now the analyst found that a complex did not necessarily vanish when brought into consciousness. Why should it? Hence he decided that it did not arise from the stoppage of any little wheel. For it refused to disappear, no matter how many psychic wheels
15 were started. Finally, then, a complex could not be regarded as the result of an inhibition.

Here is the new problem. If a complex is not caused by the inhibition of some so-called normal sex-impulse, what on earth is it caused by? It obviously refuses to sublimate—or to come undone when exposed and
20 prodded. It refuses to answer to the promptings of normal sex-impulse. You can remove all possible inhibitions of the normal sex desire, and still you cannot remove the complex. All you have done is to make conscious a desire which previously was unconscious.

This is the moral dilemma of psychoanalysis. The analyst set out
25 to cure neurotic humanity by removing the cause of the neurosis. He finds that the cause of neurosis lies in some unadmitted sex desire. After all he has said about inhibition of normal sex, he is brought at last to realize that at the root of almost every neurosis lies some incest-craving, and that this incest-craving is *not the result of inhibition of normal sex-craving*.* Now see the dilemma—it is a fearful one. If the incest-craving
30 is not the outcome of any inhibition of normal desire, if it actually exists and refuses to give way before any criticism, what then? What remains but to accept it as part of the normal sex-manifestation?

Here is an issue which analysis is perfectly willing to face. Among
35 themselves the analysts are bound to accept the incest-craving as part of the normal sexuality of man, normal, but suppressed, because of moral and perhaps biological fear. Once, however, you accept the incest-craving as part of the normal sexuality of man, you must remove all repression of incest itself. In fact, you must admit incest as you now admit
40 sexual marriage, as a duty even. Since at last it works out that neurosis

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II

is not the result of inhibition of so-called *normal* sex, but of inhibition of incest-craving. Any inhibition must be wrong, since inevitably in the end it causes neurosis and insanity. Therefore the inhibition of incest-craving is wrong, and this wrong is the cause of practically all modern neurosis and insanity.

5

Psychoanalysis will never openly state this conclusion. But it is to this conclusion that every analyst must, willy-nilly, consciously or unconsciously, bring his patient.

Trigant Burrow* says that Freud's *unconscious* does but represent our conception of conscious sexual life as this latter exists in a state of repression. Thus Freud's unconscious amounts practically to no more than our repressed incest impulses. Again, Burrow says* that it is knowledge of sex that constitutes sin, and not sex itself. It is when the mind turns to consider and *know* the great affective-passional functions and emotions that sin enters. Adam and Eve fell, not because they had sex, or even because they committed the sexual act, but because they became aware of their sex and of the possibility of the act.* When sex became to them a mental object—that is, when they discovered that they could deliberately enter upon and enjoy and even provoke sexual activity in themselves, then they were cursed and cast out of Eden. Then man became self-responsible; he entered on his own career.

10

15

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Both these assertions by Burrow seem to us brilliantly true. But must we inevitably draw the conclusion psychoanalysis draws? Because we discover in the unconscious the repressed body of our incest-craving, and because the recognition of *desire*, the making a mental objective of a certain desire causes the introduction of the sin motive, the desire in itself being beyond criticism or moral judgment, must we therefore accept the incest-craving as part of our natural desire and proceed to put it into practice, as being at any rate a lesser evil than neurosis and insanity?

25

30

It is a question. One thing, however, psychoanalysis all along the line fails to determine, and that is the nature of the pristine unconscious in man. The incest-craving is or is not inherent in the pristine psyche. When Adam and Eve became aware of sex in themselves, they became aware of that which was pristine in them, and which preceded all knowing. But when the analyst discovers the incest motive in the unconscious, surely he is only discovering a term of humanity's repressed *idea* of sex. It is not even *suppressed* sex-consciousness, but *repressed*. That is, it is nothing pristine and anterior to mentality. It is in itself the mind's ulterior motive. That is, the incest-craving is propagated in the pristine

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Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious

unconscious by the mind itself, even though unconsciously. The mind acts as incubus and procreator of its own horrors, *deliberately unconsciously*. And the incest motive is in its origin not a pristine impulse, but a logical extension of the existent idea of sex and love. The mind, that
5 is, transfers the idea of incest into the affective-passional psyche, and keeps it there as a repressed motive.

This is as yet a mere assertion. It cannot be made good until we determine the nature of the true, pristine unconscious, in which all our genuine impulse arises—a very different affair from that sack of horrors
10 which psychoanalysts would have us believe is source of motivity. The Freudian unconscious is the cellar in which the mind keeps its own bastard spawn. The true unconscious is the well-head, the fountain of real motivity. The sex of which Adam and Eve became conscious derived from the very God who bade them be not conscious of it—it
15 was not spawn produced by secondary propagation from the mental consciousness itself.

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Chapter II

THE INCEST MOTIVE AND IDEALISM

It is obvious we cannot recover our moral footing until we can in some way determine the true nature of the unconscious. The word unconscious itself is a mere definition by negation and has no positive meaning. Freud no doubt prefers it for this reason. He rejects *subconscious* and *preconscious*, because both these would imply a sort of nascent consciousness, the shadowy half-consciousness which precedes mental realization. And by his unconscious he intends no such thing. He wishes rather to convey, we imagine, that which *recoils from* consciousness, that which reacts in the psyche away from mental consciousness. His unconscious is, we take it, that part of the human consciousness which, though mental, ideal in its nature, yet is unwilling to expose itself to full recognition, and so recoils back into the affective regions and acts there as a secret agent, unconfessed, unadmitted, potent, and usually destructive. The whole body of our repressions makes up our unconscious.

The question lies here: whether a repression is a primal impulse which has been deterred from fulfilment, or whether it is an *idea* which is refused enactment. Is a repression a repressed passional impulse, or is it an idea which we suppress and refuse to put into practice—nay, which we even refuse to own at all, a disowned, outlawed idea, which exists rebelliously outside the pale?

Man can inhibit the true passional impulses and so produce a derangement in the psyche. This is a truism nowadays, and we are grateful to psychoanalysis for helping to make it so. But man can do more than this. Finding himself in a sort of emotional *cul de sac*, he can proceed to deduce from his given emotional and passional premises conclusions which are not emotional or passional at all, but just logical, abstract, ideal. That is, a man finds it impossible to realize himself in marriage. He recognizes the fact that his emotional, even passional, regard for his mother is deeper than it ever could be for a wife. This makes him unhappy, for he knows that passional communion is not complete unless it be also sexual. He has a body of sexual passion which he cannot transfer to a wife. He has a profound love for his mother. Shut in between walls of tortured and increasing passion, he must find some escape or fall