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FREUD AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS

BY

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The centenary of the birth of a famous man inevitably raises three questions: What manner of man was he personally? What did he achieve? and What has been the effect of his work? The first of these is easy for me to answer, since I knew him intimately for more than thirty years; the second is more troublesome because of its extent; the third is very hard to answer, and perhaps it is premature to try to do so.

His Personality

Freud was a man of great vitality with strong and deep feelings. Potentially he could be very passionate, but there was only one occasion in his life when he allowed himself to be so—during his great love displayed in the courtship of his future wife, his one and only love episode. Apart from this solitary occasion he exercised a superb control over his emotions. This was not always easy, and at times the effort induced a certain amount of tension, for which an outlet was found—as with Darwin—in a variety of psychosomatic symptoms. He was a man of very tender feelings which he was extremely loath to show. They were concealed by an inner reserve and a self-protective outer layer of apparent hardness. He was sustained by a flawlessly happy married and family life. There were six children, and I have never known a family where the common frictions were so completely absent. He had, moreover, a great capacity for enjoyment, both of the small things of life and of the great. He was responsive to certain forms of art, particularly poetry and sculpture, though he never developed a technical aesthetic awareness or knowledge. A pronounced feature of his personality was an exceptionally keen sense of humour and a habit of illustrating a point or argument by quoting from his rich fund of Jewish anecdotes and jokes. That he was a very easy man to get on with came partly from this, partly from his wide tolerance, and partly from the entire absence of anything resembling pomposity or arrogance. He was singularly modest, without the slightest pretensions to being a great man, and he loved simplicity both in his general outlook and in the details of his daily life.

He was specially fond of children and very lenient towards their difficulties and misdemeanours. He had indeed a great fund of kindness, and only later researches have revealed the number of people he helped and encouraged in various ways, and the number he surreptitiously supported, wholly or in part, financially.

To hurt anyone was for him a cardinal sin, and I know of no act of his that could be called cruel, mean, or even unkind.

He was a man of very wide interests and culture. His knowledge of the classics was remarkable, and he was well versed in German literature, also in much of that of other countries. Shakespeare was perhaps the author he quoted most often. He was familiar with the main works of art in Austria and Italy, where he travelled extensively, and many of those in France and Germany. His main hobby was the collecting of antiquities, of Greece, Egypt, and Syria, and he was widely read in archaeological literature; the excavations carried out in his time he followed with excitement. If I could picture Freud in any career other than the one that fell to his lot it would be as an archaeologist.

In Freud's character there were two features that dominated the rest: his courage and his integrity. He had both physical and moral courage, and above all the much rarer kind—intellectual courage. It was this quality that enabled him to face and learn to endure truths however painful and unpleasant, and, furthermore, to defend them against the fierce onslaughts he had to suffer.

His integrity also was of the highest order. He was quite unyielding in any matter of compromise or concession. He was, for instance, many times pressed to use some less outspoken term than "sexual," but he rightly maintained that any other expression would soon acquire the same connotation, and, moreover, that the processes he was describing as sexual continued to be so whatever name was applied to them. This quality of Freud's was so highly developed as to make him intolerant of any hypocrisy or humbug. He also disliked any ceremonies or festivities, which are seldom entirely free of such traits. The two attributes of mankind he most detested were hypocrisy and brutality.

There was a slight, but distinct, vein of superstitiousness in Freud's mentality, though I cannot trace any effect of it in his views—unless possibly in his belief in telepathy. More surprising was a vein of credulity, one which I have suggested played an indirect part in enabling him to make his great discoveries. It was an interesting contrast to his native scepticism.

Contrary to a popular legend, I should describe Freud as a very tolerant man. Since I had occasion to differ from him myself on a number of important conclusions, biological, philosophical, and

even psycho-analytical, I had ample opportunity of testifying personally to this. He would say: "So long as your opposition does not proceed from malice it can make no difference to our friendship." When previous adherents would change fundamentally their attitude to psycho-analysis Freud would naturally recognize there was no longer any community of interest to bind them together in co-operative work, but it would never have occurred to him to deny them their complete right to their own opinions. On such occasions he would display much patience before any final break.

Freud had a hard life, and the suffering it entailed left a mark on him in more ways than one. The first part of his life was spent in dire poverty, even at times to the point of hunger. When his practice improved he had to support several people besides his wife and children. Later the inflation that followed the first world war swallowed up all his savings and insurances, so that he had to start again in old age.

Attitude Towards Opposition

His work met as bitter an opposition as has fallen to the lot of any pioneer in science. He was reviled as either an evil-minded villain or someone with a diseased brain pretending that his own delusions were clinical observations. A chapter of the calumnies directed against Freud personally and his work would be long indeed, nor is it even yet at an end. He bore all this hostility with considerable fortitude and never deigned to reply to it in public; in private he even derived a certain amount of amusement from the more extreme examples. I remember his remarking once: "My opponents may abuse my doctrines by day, but I am sure they dream of them by night."

Freud therefore had no reason to think of life as something easy. It was something to be endured, and any enjoyment or happiness was a bonus, not something one had any inherent right to expect. He was certainly not a spoilt child. Nor did his experiences give him a high opinion of mankind's moral nature. Much of what passes as such was the product of fear and hypocrisy, and only the exceptional few were good throughout. This attitude was strengthened by an innate optimism which made him unduly disappointed when closer contact revealed imperfections in his friends or acquaintances. It was also related to a very surprising feature in Freud—that he was notoriously a poor judge of men. His estimate of them tended to be black or white despite his intellectual knowledge of their complex greyness.

Freud had many good personal friends, both those associated with his work and others. But not all of the former were able to face the conclusions that follow from deep psycho-analytic investigation. Three or four of those near to him, on whom he had counted a good deal, turned away and repudiated the conclusions they had previously accepted and expounded. They were then able to enjoy successful careers on the basis of rejecting Freud's sexual theories, and the general public welcomed them with a sense of relief at being rescued from Freud's displeasing ideas. Such events were inevitably a source of deep disappointment to Freud, but it would be untrue to say that they caused him any serious distress.

Freud was the recipient of fewer honours than usually fall to the lot of those distinguished in science. The only university to bestow an honorary degree on him was a small American one, Clark University in Massachusetts. The only two honours he ever prized were receiving the Goethe prize for literature and, at the age of 80, a Corresponding Membership of our Royal Society. There were two others he had somewhat coveted, but they were far out of his reach: a Nobel prize, the money of which he would have found very useful for his publishing activities,

and the Austrian Award of Honour for Art and Science, one which had been bestowed on the great teacher of his youth, the physiologist Brücke.

When Freud was 67 he was attacked by an epithelioma of the sulcus between the cheek and upper jaw. In an operation carried out in two stages half of the superior maxilla was extirpated together with the submaxillary glands. There followed more than sixteen years of intense discomfort and often great misery. He had to submit to thirty-three operations in all, with in between them repeated radium and x-ray applications of a very painful nature. There was also the daily discomfort of difficulties in eating and speaking, with the constant irritation of imperfectly fitting prostheses. Nevertheless he bore all this martyrdom with an exemplary nobility.

Work as Neurologist

In spite of a day of twelve hours' hard work with patients, followed by a heavy correspondence and editorial duties, Freud's swiftness in thought and in the physical act of writing enabled him to display a remarkable literary productivity. The twenty-four volumes of the English edition do not include any of his early neurological work, which would occupy several more. Indeed, it is often forgotten that Freud was in his early days a distinguished neurologist, and I will begin by making a short reference to this stage of his career.

While he was still a medical student Freud carried out an investigation of the Reissner bipolar cells in the spinal cord of the Petromyzon fish and established two important points. One was a gradual continuity between those cells and the unipolar ones of higher animals, so that the sharp distinction previously accepted was invalid—a noteworthy contribution to evolutionary unity. The other was the demonstration that the Reissner cells correspond to the posterior ganglion cells of higher vertebrates, although they have not yet emigrated from within the spinal cord.

Soon after this he studied with a special technique the spinal nerve cells of the crayfish, and was the first to show that the axis cylinders emanating from them were truly fibrillary. In his conclusion that the cells and fibres constitute separate units he definitely adumbrated the neurone theory—the basis of modern neurology—some ten years before Waldeyer coined the word "neurone."

Mention should be made at this point of a rather curious episode in Freud's career. He made a very detailed historical and clinical study of cocaine in an extensive monograph which was the first to arouse medical interest in the drug. He was chiefly concerned with the effect of internal administration, about which he became unduly enthusiastic, but he told an ophthalmological friend of its anaesthetic properties, which might be of use to him in his surgical work. The friend, Koller, seized at the idea, and thus became famous as the inventor of local anaesthesia. Freud's part in the discovery was forgotten, essential though it was.

The next histological researches were on the medulla, the structure of which was then rather obscure. For his purpose Freud devised two notable improvements in technique. One, the gold chloride method of staining, was published in *Brain*. The other was the study of foetal brains, where the different rates of myelinization allowed an easier differentiation of the various tracts. In these papers Freud traced in detail the roots of origin of the acoustic nerve, and established their connexion via the interolivary tract with the opposite posterior columns. He also traced the course of the inferior peduncle of the cerebellum, connecting this also, via the sensory decussation, with the posterior spinal tracts. There was, furthermore, an interesting demonstration that the nuclei of the fifth, eighth, ninth, and tenth cranial nerves, with their triple roots, were homologous with those of the posterior root ganglia of the cord. He pointed out the route taken by these nuclei in their movement towards the exterior (with the fifth nerve, successfully),

one already achieved by the spinal ganglia. The genetic and evolutionary bearing of Freud's interests is here again apparent.

In these years there were also a few papers in clinical neurology, including the first case of peripheral neuritis to be diagnosed in Vienna. But his main work in this field was in the sphere of aphasia and children's paralyzes. The book on aphasia, undoubtedly the most important and original of Freud's neurological writings, was a challenge to the accepted Wernicke-Lichtheim scheme and the replacement of it by a more functional explanation of the results of localized lesions. I agree with Dr. Stengel's conclusion, in the preface to his recent translation of the book, that Freud's thinking was here profoundly influenced by Hughlings Jackson's teaching. The book is in many ways a precursor of the future Freud.

The work, however, by which Freud's name is chiefly remembered in neurology was that on the cerebral paralyzes of children. The two volumes on them still rank as a medical classic. Incidentally, it was in them that the syndrome of choreatiform paresis was first identified.

Early Studies in Psychopathology

We then pass to the early studies in psychopathology, Freud's interest in which had been aroused during his sojourn in Charcot's Clinic. But his neurological period is far from being irrelevant to his later work. On the contrary, it is possible to trace to it many of the formulations and concepts which, being alien to psychologists, aided in the reserve, to put it mildly, with which they reviewed his work.

After experimenting for a few years with hypnotism Freud recalled a discovery Breuer had years before told him of—the method of "catharsis" which a famous patient of Breuer's, Anna O., had herself invented. With some difficulty he persuaded Breuer to collaborate with him over a book, *Studies in Hysteria*, 1895, which was to prove a landmark in psychopathology. From it is usually dated—not altogether accurately—the inception of psycho-analysis.

The next two or three years were by far the most fertile in Freud's life, the rest of which was occupied in expounding, extending, modifying, and applying the doctrines he conceived in that critical era. They culminated in the composition of Freud's magnum opus on dream life, which was the foundation of all his later work. This is not the place to trace the evolution of Freud's doctrines chronologically. It will be more fitting to present a summary of the main ones.

The first of Freud's contributions were in the field of psychopathology, and concerned the essential sexual factor in the aetiology of the neuroses. Far more important, however, were the contributions he made a couple of years later to normal psychology, and it is to the additions he made to our understanding of human nature in general that he owes his fame. From it comes the very unexpected conclusion that psychopathology is the most fertile basis for normal psychology. The reason for this is that psychopathological symptoms, complex as they are, are nearer to the primary mental elements than the even more distorted products in the so-called normal—his interests, wishes, and activities.

Exploration of the Unconscious

Freud's life-work may be broadly summarized as the exploration of the unconscious after he had devised a method, now known as psycho-analysis, for doing so. The original step in this was the intuition that "free association" is not really free, being determined by connexions of which the subject is not aware. Psycho-analytic technique, however, naturally comprises far more than this element, central as it is.

It had long been recognized that conflicts could arise between different parts of the mind, especially between our moral and our sinful tendencies. St. Paul himself complained about how the law in his members warred against the law

of his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. He had apparently no doubt that sinful impulses could be equated with bodily impulses, doubtless sexual ones. This division of the mind into good and bad is, however, a very primitive classification, of little use to psychological science. Freud's was both more profound and more precise, and it transcended the moral categories.

This division is most familiar in terms of consciousness versus the unconscious, there being a barrier separating them which Freud fancifully likened to a political censorship. The barrier is, however, an active agency which Freud called repression (literally in German "a shoving aside"). It is one of the cardinal concepts of Freud's doctrine, and is identical with the "resistance" displayed when any attempt is made to introduce an unconscious process into consciousness. Later he widened it by using the term "defence," recognizing that there are several methods for keeping unconscious processes at bay in addition to simple repression. This is bound up with the vast problem of anxiety, the spectre that haunts all human hearts and which influences, directly or indirectly, the greater part of human conduct. Freud's numerous studies of this problem belong to the most important of his contributions.

In spite of these defences unconscious processes constantly influence conscious ones, and the energy belonging to them may reach consciousness in several ways. There are the common compromise formations compounded of both repressing and repressed material. The most striking example is found in hysterical symptoms, but in everyday life, such as in the "parapraxes" of slips of the tongue, etc., they are common enough. The most important, however, is the transformation of quality termed "sublimation," which enables the energy to be diverted to the permissible uses that constitute our conscious interests and activities. For Freud these are all derived from unconscious mental activity; he held that every mental process originates in the unconscious layer.

In later life the distinction afforded by the criterion of consciousness became less and less significant for Freud, and he reverted to a more fundamental one which he had made at the very beginning of his work. This was between what he termed the "primary process" and the "secondary process," distinguished above all by their quite different modes of functioning. Processes belonging to the former system have what Freud called "unbound" energy and so are subject to the various mechanisms, which he described in great detail, of displacement, condensation, symbolism, and so on. This mode of functioning, most readily studied in dream life and in the psychoses, is quite alien to our more or less logical thinking, and the conclusions reached by studying them therefore necessarily seem "far-fetched" and unconvincing.

Towards the end of his life Freud modified the categories into which he had divided mental processes, and now introduced the generally accepted tripartite division of id (roughly corresponding to the earlier "unconscious" and "primary system"), the ego (an important part of which is itself unconscious), and the super-ego (the unconscious basis of what becomes the moral and aesthetic conscience).

The study of the *content* of this primary layer of the mind was even more important. Freud throughout took a naturalist, biological view of man. Deeply imbued with the doctrine of evolution, of the mind as of the body, he saw no reason for assuming any sudden investing of man with a spirit or soul independent of other natural phenomena. To him the impulses emanating from the unconscious were essentially of a biological nature, presumably generated by physico-chemical processes in the body.

Among these fundamental impulses sexual ones play a highly important, perhaps predominant, part, and Freud's researches led him to postulate their functioning from the beginnings of life. Here they are, in the nature of things, incestuous in their application, this accounting in large

measure for the intense repression they undergo and also for the extraordinary amnesia for childhood years. That an exaggerated horror of incest is the hall-mark of homosexuals is still not recognized. Freud traced in detail the development of the early fragmentary manifestations of sexuality in childhood into the more recognizable adult form. It was this conclusion about infantile sexuality, and the deriving of all neuroses from conflicts about it, that evoked so much hostility to his work.

Another set of impulses in a state of repression may be grouped under the term "aggressive," and their exact status caused Freud much puzzlement. At first he was inclined to regard them as responses to certain frustrating situations—for example, jealousy: the murderous wishes of a child against his father are a classical example. The problem of whether a primary aggressive or destructive instinct is to be recognized he long kept open. Towards the end of his life Freud postulated the much debated "death instinct," and connected aggressivity with the turning of this from within towards the outer world.

On the basis of the three cardinal concepts of the unconscious, of repression, and of infantile sexuality, Freud elaborated in immense detail numerous studies of the most diverse human activities, constantly throwing out suggestions which have only in part so far been followed up. They range from the unravelling of psychoneurotic symptoms and psychotic delusions to the education of children, from the origins of conscience and morality to the importance of early family relationships, from the sources of artistic creativeness to the origins of religious beliefs, from the evolution of savagery into what civilization we possess to the nature of the deficiencies so patent in this. One may fairly say that there is no aspect of human activity on which his insight has not thrown light.

Freud's Influence

Widely different opinions have been expressed concerning the extent of Freud's influence, and the more familiar one is with his work the more reticent is one in according the exaggerated claims that have often been made for it. People talk of the revolution in thought he inaugurated, the impossibility of conceiving our present world without his teaching, and so on. Very much of this is lip service, and psychoanalysts are much more impressed by the extent to which his work is even yet not accepted, still less applied. Nevertheless many ramifications of his influence can be traced socially. There is a vague recognition that dreams have some meaning, that one may betray private thoughts by a slip of the tongue which is no longer regarded as purely accidental, that our childhood life has fateful consequence for later years, that we do not always know what impels our conduct, and that *perhaps* our sexual wishes may produce indirect, disguised manifestations. Possibly a greater freedom in the discussion of sexual topics, including even perversions, and a greater tolerance in the judgment of delinquents may also be reckoned here, but I will confine myself to the more medical aspects of his influence.

The most striking of these would seem to be the vast extension of the scope of psychiatry, or medical psychology, that has been such a prominent feature of the past quarter of a century. There is a much wider recognition of the extent and significance of neurotic suffering than formerly. From the days when such a diagnosis was seldom and unwillingly made as a last resort, when even astigmatism or constipation could be excluded, we can now read reports from doctors who say that the sufferings of two-thirds of their patients are neurotic. Years ago it would never have occurred to the victim of an unhappy marriage to consult a psychiatrist, an everyday occurrence now. In such ways the medical profession is less exclusively materialistic than it used to be. But one does not note much advantage being taken of Freud's work in elucidating the pathological nature of neurotic symptoms. They are still often ascribed simply to overwork, and the sexual aetiology is still on the whole taboo.

Side by side with this is a freer admission that agencies roughly grouped as "emotional" probably play a considerable part in the causation of various physical conditions. Studies on the lines of what is called psychosomatic medicine have been made, particularly in America, with such different disorders as hypertension, duodenal ulcer, coronary thrombosis, and even some forms of eczema. There is undoubtedly much to learn in this field, which is peculiarly obscure, but I must subscribe to the criticism that the conclusions often put forward are so far greatly lacking in specificity.

There are many other extensions of psychiatry that could be mentioned: the analytic successes with some forms of psychosis in their early stages, the wide instituting of psychiatric child guidance clinics, the treatment and prophylaxis of delinquency, and so on. But I would conclude with the assertion that we are still far from assimilating and using all that Freud's work has to teach us.

FREUD'S IMPACT ON PSYCHIATRY

BY

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There is no better proof of the great impact Freud has made on psychiatry than the change in its scope, for which his work has been largely responsible. Conventionally, psychiatry is defined as "the medical treatment of diseases of the mind." This definition no doubt satisfied our predecessors, whose orientation was well illustrated by Griesinger's dictum that mental diseases were brain diseases, and by Hughlings Jackson's warning that if there were such a thing as a disease of the mind we could do nothing for it. Nowadays both these dogmatic statements sound very much out of date. A great deal of the work that the present-day psychiatrist is doing is not medical in the conventional sense; an up-to-date definition of psychiatry focused on its therapeutic aspects would have to include psychological treatment: and the disorders treated by psychiatrists to-day embrace not only the mental illnesses which in days gone by were the province of the alienist, but also the vast range of the neuroses, which used to be the concern of the neurologist only, as well as a variety of personality disorders and social maladjustments which in the past did not come into the orbit of any branch of medicine. Psychiatry has more recently been defined as "the field of study which concerns disorders, defects and inadequacies of behaviour."¹ Vague as this definition is, it does reflect the range of activity of the present-day psychiatrist.

New Dimensions of Psychiatry

Freud has not only expanded the range of psychiatry, he has also given it new dimensions in depth by the discovery and exploration of the dynamic unconscious—that is, of mental forces which influence behaviour and which can be brought into consciousness. Freud's chief domain was the study and treatment of the neuroses. By establishing their largely psychological origin and elaborating a treatment which is the basis of most psychotherapy he has greatly enriched psychiatry, but he also added immeasurably to the psychiatrist's labours. The psychopathological discoveries which resulted from the intensive study of the neuroses have

¹ Gregg, Alan, "What is Psychiatry?" *British Medical Journal*, 1944, 1, 550.