

## LETTER TO DR. FRIEDRICH S. KRAUS ON ANTHROPOPHYTEIA

My Dear Dr. Krauss,

You have asked me what scientific value can in my opinion be claimed by collections of erotic jokes, witticisms, funny stories, etc. I know you have not felt any doubt of being able to justify the making of such collections. You merely wanted me to bear witness from the standpoint of a psychologist to the fact that material of this kind is not only useful but indispensable.

There are two points upon which I should principally like to insist. When all is said and done, the erotic quips and comic anecdotes that you have collected and published in *Anthropophyteia* have only been produced and repeated because they gave pleasure both to their narrators and their hearers. It is not difficult to guess which components of the sexual instinct (compounded as it is from so many elements) find satisfaction in this manner. These tales give us direct information as to which of the component instincts of sexuality are retained in a given group of people as particularly efficient in producing pleasure; and in this way they give the neatest confirmation of the findings reached by the psycho-analytic examination of neurotics. Allow me to indicate the most important example of this kind. Psycho-analysis has led us to assert that the anal region - normally and not only in perverse individuals - is the site of an erotogenic sensitivity, and that in certain ways it behaves exactly like a genital organ. Doctors and psychologists, when told of there being an anal erotism and an anal character derived from it, have been highly indignant. At this point *Anthropophyteia* comes to the help of psycho-analysis by showing how universally people dwell with pleasure upon this part of the body, its performances and indeed the product of its function. If this were not so, all these anecdotes would be bound to give rise to disgust in their hearers or else the whole mass of the population would have to be 'perverse' in the sense in which the word is used in works dealing with 'psychopathia sexualis' in a moralizing tone. It would not be hard to give other instances of how the material collected by the authors of *Anthropophyteia* has been of value for the researches of sexual psychology. Its value may even be increased, perhaps, by the circumstance (not in itself an advantage) that the collectors know nothing of the theoretical findings of psycho-analysis and have brought together the material without any guiding principles.

Another advantage of a wider character is presented in particular by erotic jokes, in the strict sense, just as it is by jokes in general. I have shown in my study of jokes that the revelation of what is normally the repressed unconscious element in the mind can, under certain provisions, become a source of pleasure and thus a technique for the construction of jokes. In psycho-analysis to-day we describe a congeries of ideas and its associated affect as a 'complex'; and we are prepared to assert that many of the most admired jokes are 'complexive jokes' and that they owe their exhilarating and cheerful effect to the ingenious uncovering of what are as a rule repressed complexes. It would carry me too far afield if I were to bring forward instances here in proof of this thesis, but I can assert that the outcome of such an examination of the evidence is that the jokes, both erotic and of other

sorts, which are in popular circulation provide an excellent auxiliary means of investigating the unconscious human mind - in the same way as do dreams, myths and legends, with the exploitation of which psycho-analysis is already actively engaged.

It is therefore safe to hope that the psychological importance of folklore will be more and more clearly recognized, and that the relations between that branch of study and psycho-analysis will soon become more intimate.

I remain, dear Dr. Krauss, yours very sincerely,

FREUD

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