

PREFACE TO REIK'S RITUAL: PSYCHO-ANALYTIC STUDIES - (1919)

Psycho-analysis was born out of medical necessity. It sprang from the need for bringing help to neurotic patients, who had found no relief through rest-cures, through the arts of hydropathy or through electricity. A most remarkable observation made by Josef Breuer had excited a hope that the more one understood of the hitherto unexplored origin of their symptoms the more extensive would be the help one could afford them. Thus it came about that psycho-analysis, being originally a purely medical technique, was from the first directed towards research, towards the discovery of causal chains at once far-reaching and recondite.

Its further course led it away from the study of the somatic determinants of nervous disease to an extent that was bewildering to physicians. Instead, it was brought into contact with the mental substance of human lives - the lives not only of the sick, but of the healthy, the normal and the supernormal. It had to deal with emotions and passions, and most of all with those which the poets never tire of depicting and celebrating - the emotions of love. It learnt to recognize the power of memories, the unsuspected importance of the years of childhood in shaping the adult, and the strength of wishes, which falsify human judgements and lay down fixed lines for human endeavour.

For a time psycho-analysis seemed fated to merge into psychology without being able to show why the psychology of the sick differed from that of the normal. In the course of its advance, however, it came up against the problem of dreams, which are abnormal products of the mind created by normal men under regularly recurrent physiological conditions. When psycho-analysis had solved the problem of dreams, it had discovered in unconscious psychical processes the common ground in which the highest and the lowest of mental impulses have their roots and from which spring the most normal as well as the most morbid and erratic of mental productions. The new picture of the workings of the mind began to grow ever clearer and more complete. It was a picture of obscure instinctual forces organic in origin, striving towards inborn aims, and, above them, of an agency comprising more highly organized mental structures - acquisitions of human evolution made under the impact of human history -, an agency which has taken over portions of the instinctual impulses, has developed them further or has even directed them towards higher aims, but which in any case binds them firmly and manipulates their energy to suit its own purposes. This higher organization, however, which is known to us as the ego, has rejected another portion of these same elementary instinctual impulses as being unserviceable because they cannot be fitted into the organic unity of the individual or because they rebel against the individual's cultural aims. The ego is not in a position to exterminate these unsubdued mental powers, but it turns its back on them, lets them remain at the lowest psychological level, defends itself from their demands by the energetic erection of protective and antithetical barriers or seeks to come to terms with them by means of substitutive satisfactions. These instincts which have fallen victim to repression - untamed and indestructible, yet inhibited from any kind of activity - together with their primitive mental

representatives, constitute the mental underworld, the nucleus of the true unconscious, and are at every moment ready to assert their demands and, by hook or by crook, to force their way forward to satisfaction. To this is due the instability of the proud superstructure of the mind, the emergence at night of the proscribed and repressed material in the form of dreams, and the tendency to fall ill with neuroses and psychoses as soon as the balance of power between the ego and the repressed shifts to the disadvantage of the ego.

A little reflection was bound to show that it would be impossible to restrict to the provinces of dreams and nervous disorders a view such as this of the life of the human mind. If that view has hit upon a truth, it must apply equally to normal mental events, and even the highest achievements of the human spirit must bear a demonstrable relation to the factors found in pathology - to repression, to the efforts at mastering the unconscious and to the possibilities of satisfying the primitive instincts. There was thus an irresistible temptation and, indeed, a scientific duty, to apply the research methods of psycho-analysis, in regions far remote from its native soil, to the various mental sciences. And indeed psycho-analytic work upon patients itself pointed persistently in the direction of this new task, for it was obvious that the forms assumed by the different neuroses echoed the most highly admired productions of our culture. Thus hysterics are undoubtedly imaginative artists, even if they express their phantasies mimetically in the main and without considering their intelligibility to other people; the ceremonials and prohibitions of obsessional neurotics drive us to suppose that they have created a private religion of their own; and the delusions of paranoics have an unpalatable external similarity and internal kinship to the systems of our philosophers. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that these patients are, in an asocial fashion, making the very attempts at solving their conflicts and appeasing their pressing needs which, when those attempts are carried out in a fashion that is acceptable to the majority, are known as poetry, religion and philosophy.

In 1913 Otto Rank and Hanns Sachs, in an extremely interesting work, brought together the results which had been achieved up to that time in the application of psycho-analysis to the mental sciences. The most easily accessible branches of those sciences seem to be mythology and the history of literature and religion. No final formula has yet been found enabling us to give an appropriate place to myths in this connection. Otto Rank, in a large volume on the incest complex (1912), has produced evidence of the surprising fact that the choice of subject matter, especially for dramatic works, is principally determined by the ambit of what psycho-analysis has termed the 'Oedipus complex'. By working it over with the greatest variety of modifications, distortions and disguises, the dramatist seeks to deal with his own most personal relations to this emotional theme. It is in attempting to master the Oedipus complex - that is to say, a person's emotional attitude towards his family, or in a narrower sense towards his father and mother - that individual neurotics come to grief, and for this reason that complex habitually forms the nucleus of their neuroses. It does not owe its importance to any unintelligible conjunction; the emphasis laid upon the relation of children to their parents is an expression of the biological facts that the young of the human race

pass through a long period of dependence and are slow in reaching maturity, as well as that their capacity for love undergoes a complicated course of development. Consequently, the overcoming of the Oedipus complex coincides with the most efficient way of mastering the archaic, animal heritage of humanity. It is true that that heritage comprises all the forces that are required for the subsequent cultural development of the individual, but they must first be sorted out and worked over. This archaic heirloom is not fit to be used for the purposes of civilized social life in the form in which it is inherited by the individual.

To find the starting-point for the psycho-analytic view of religious life we must go a step further. What is to-day the heritage of the individual was once a new acquisition and has been handed on from one to another of a long series of generations. Thus the Oedipus complex too may have had stages of development, and the study of prehistory may enable us to trace them out. Investigation suggests that life in the human family took a quite different form in those remote days from that with which we are now familiar. And this idea is supported by findings based on observations of contemporary primitive races. If the prehistoric and ethnological material on this subject is worked over psycho-analytically, we arrive at an unexpectedly precise result: namely that God the Father once walked upon earth in bodily form and exercised his sovereignty as chieftain of the primal human horde until his sons united to slay him. It emerges further that this crime of liberation and the reactions to it had as their result the appearance of the first social ties, the basic moral restrictions and the oldest form of religion, totemism. But the later religions too have the same content, and on the one hand they are concerned with obliterating the traces of that crime or with expiating it by bringing forward other solutions of the struggle between the father and sons, while on the other hand they cannot avoid repeating once more the elimination of the father. Incidentally, an echo of this monstrous event, which overshadowed the whole course of human development, is also to be found in myths.

This hypothesis, which is founded on the observations of Robertson Smith and was developed by me in *Totem and Taboo*, has been taken by Theodor Reik as the basis of his studies on the problems of the psychology of religion, of which this is the first volume. In accordance with psycho-analytic technique these studies start out from hitherto unexplained details of religious life, and by means of their elucidation gain access to the fundamental postulates and ultimate aims of religions; moreover they keep steadily in view the relation between prehistoric man and contemporary primitive societies as well as the connection between the products of civilization and the substitutive structures of neurotics. In conclusion, I would draw attention to the author's own introduction and express my belief that his work will recommend itself to the notice of specialists in the branch of knowledge with which it deals.