

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF NUMBER

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Dr. Feigenbaum has asked me to write a few words for the Review of which he is in charge, and I take the opportunity of wishing the best success to his undertaking.

I often hear that psycho-analysis is very popular in the United States and that it does not come up against the same stubborn resistance there as it does in Europe. My satisfaction over this is, however, clouded by several circumstances. It seems to me that the popularity of the name of psycho-analysis in America signifies neither a friendly attitude to the thing itself nor any specially wide or deep knowledge of it. As evidence of the former fact I may point out that, although financial support is to be had easily and in plenty for every kind of scientific and pseudo-scientific enterprise, we have never succeeded in obtaining a backing for our psycho-analytic institutions. Nor is it hard to find evidence for my second assertion. Although America possesses several excellent analysts and, in Dr. A. A. Brill, at least one authority, the contributions to our science from that vast country are exiguous and provide little that is new. Psychiatrists and neurologists make frequent use of psycho-analysis as a therapeutic method, but as a rule they show little interest in its scientific problems and its cultural significance. Quite particularly often we find in American physicians and writers a very insufficient familiarity with psycho-analysis, so that they know only its terms and a few catch-words - though this does not shake them in the certainty of their judgement. And these same men lump psycho-analysis with other systems of thought, which may have developed out of it but are incompatible with it to-day. Or they make a hotch-potch out of psycho-analysis and other elements and quote this procedure as evidence of their broad-mindedness, whereas it only proves their lack of judgement.

Many of these evils which I have mentioned with regret no doubt arise from the fact that there is a general tendency in America to shorten study and preparation and to proceed as fast as possible to practical application. There is a preference, too, for studying a subject like psycho-analysis not from the original sources but from second-hand and often inferior accounts. Thoroughness is bound to suffer from this.

It is to be hoped that works of the kind that Dr. Feigenbaum intends to publish in his Review will be a powerful encouragement to the interest in psycho-analysis in America.