

LIBIDINAL TYPES

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Observation teaches us that individual human beings realize the general picture of humanity in an almost infinite variety of ways. If we yield to the legitimate need to distinguish particular types in this multiplicity, we shall at the start have the choice as to what characteristics and what points of view we shall take as the basis of our differentiation. For that purpose physical qualities will doubtless serve no less well than mental ones; the most valuable distinctions will be those which promise to present a regular combination of physical and mental characteristics.

It is doubtful whether we are as yet in a position to discover types to fulfil this requirement - as we shall no doubt be able to do later, on some basis of which we are still ignorant. If we confine our effort to setting up purely psychological types, the libidinal situation will have a first claim to serve as a basis for our classification. It may fairly be demanded that this classification should not merely be deduced from our knowledge or our hypotheses about the libido, but that it should be easily confirmed in actual experience and that it should contribute to the clarification of the mass of our observations and help us to grasp them. It may at once be admitted that these libidinal types need not be the only possible ones even in the psychical field, and that, if we proceeded from other qualities, we might perhaps establish a whole set of other psychological types. But it must be required of all such types that they shall not coincide with clinical pictures. On the contrary, they must comprehend all the variations which according to our practical judgement fall within the limits of the normal. In their extreme developments, however, they may well approximate to clinical pictures and in that way help to bridge the gulf that is supposed to lie between the normal and the pathological.

According, then, as the libido is predominantly allocated to the provinces of the mental apparatus, we can distinguish three main libidinal types. To give names to these types is not particularly easy; following the lines of our depth-psychology, I should like to call them the erotic, the narcissistic and the obsessional types.⁶

The erotic type is easily characterized. Erotics are those whose main interest - the relatively largest part of whose libido - is turned towards love. Loving, but above all being loved, is the most important thing for them. They are dominated by the fear of loss of love and are therefore especially dependent on others who may withhold their love from them. Even in its pure form this type is a very common one. Variants of it occur according as it is blended with another type and in proportion to the amount of aggressiveness present in it. From the social and cultural standpoint this type represents the elementary instinctual demands of the id, to which the other psychical agencies have become compliant.

The second type is what I have termed the obsessional type - a name which may at first seem strange. It is distinguished by the predominance of the super-ego, which is separated from the ego under great tension. People of this type are dominated by fear of their conscience instead of fear of losing love. They exhibit,

as it were, an internal instead of an external dependence. They develop a high degree of self-reliance; and, from the social standpoint, they are the true, pre-eminently conservative vehicles of civilization.

The third type, justly called the narcissistic type, is mainly to be described in negative terms. There is no tension between ego and super-ego (indeed, on the strength of this type one would scarcely have arrived at the hypothesis of a super-ego), and there is no preponderance of erotic needs. The subject's main interest is directed to self-preservation; he is independent and not open to intimidation. His ego has a large amount of aggressiveness at its disposal, which also manifests itself in readiness for activity. In his erotic life loving is preferred above being loved. People belonging to this type impress others as being 'personalities'; they are especially suited to act as a support for others, to take on the role of leaders and to give a fresh stimulus to cultural development or to damage the established state of affairs.

These pure types will hardly escape the suspicion of having been deduced from the theory of the libido. But we feel ourselves on the firm ground of experience when we turn to the mixed types, which are to be observed so much more frequently than the unmixed ones. These new types - the erotic-obsessional, the erotic-narcissistic and the narcissistic-obsessional - seem in fact to afford a good classification of the individual psychical structures which we have come to know through analysis. If we study these mixed types we find in them pictures of characters with which we have long been familiar. In the erotic-obsessional type it appears that the preponderance of instinctual life is restricted by the influence of the super-ego. In this type, dependence at once on contemporary human objects and on the residues of parents, educators and exemplars, is carried to its highest pitch. The erotic-narcissistic type is perhaps the one we must regard as the commonest of all. It unites opposites, which are able to moderate one another in it. One may learn from this type, as compared with the two other erotic ones, that aggressiveness and activity go along with a predominance of narcissism. Finally, the narcissistic-obsessional type produces the variation which is most valuable from a cultural standpoint; for it adds to independence of the external world and a regard for the demands of conscience a capacity for vigorous action, and it strengthens the ego against the super-ego.

One might think one was making a jest if one asked why no mention has been made here of another mixed type which is theoretically possible - namely, the erotic-obsessional-narcissistic type. But the answer to this jest is serious. Such a type would no longer be a type at all: it would be the absolute norm, the ideal harmony. We thus realize that the phenomenon of types arises precisely from the fact that, of the three main ways of employing the libido in the economy of the mind, one or two have been favoured at the expense of the others.

The question may also be raised of what the relation is of these libidinal types to pathology - whether some of them have a special disposition to pass over into neurosis, and if so, which types lead to which forms of neurosis. The answer is that the setting-up of these libidinal types throws no new light on the genesis of the

neuroses. Experience shows that all these types can exist without any neurosis. The pure types, marked by the undisputed preponderance of a single mental agency, seem to have a better chance of manifesting themselves as pure characterological pictures, while we might expect that mixed types would provide a more favourable soil for conditions leading to a neurosis. But I think we should not make up our minds on these matters till they have been submitted to a careful and specially directed examination.

It seems easy to infer that when people of the erotic type fall ill they will develop hysteria, just as those of the obsessional the will develop obsessional neurosis; but these inferences, too, share the uncertainty which I have just stressed. People of the narcissistic type who are exposed to a frustration from the external world, though otherwise independent, are peculiarly disposed to psychosis; and they also present essential preconditions for criminality.

It is a familiar fact that the aetiological preconditions of neurosis are not yet known with certainty. The precipitating causes of it are frustrations and internal conflicts: conflicts between the three major psychical agencies, conflicts arising within the libidinal economy in consequence of our bisexual disposition and conflicts between the erotic and the aggressive instinctual components. It is the endeavour of the psychology of the neuroses to discover what makes these processes, which belong to the normal course of mental life, become pathogenic.