

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>. (1908f).

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A close study of Freud's work together with psycho-analyses conducted by ourselves, teaches us that faulty education is not only the source of faulty character development, but is also the source of serious illnesses; moreover, we find that present-day education is literally a forcing house for various neuroses.

While analysing our patients and therefore—willy-nilly—subjecting ourselves and our own development to revision, we become convinced that even an education inspired by the noblest intentions and carried out under the most favourable conditions has, through being based on faulty but generally accepted principles now prevalent, a harmful influence in many respects upon the development of the child. If we have succeeded in remaining healthy despite these adverse factors, then it is due to our robust, resistant mental make-up. Further, we learn that even he who by good luck has not become ill has, nevertheless, endured much unnecessary mental pain and suffering because of inappropriate pedagogical methods and theories, and we discover that most people are almost wholly unable to find unselfconscious pleasure in the natural joys of life.

What then are the practical advantages education can derive from these experiences? This is not a purely scientific question; it is to psychology (the subject of main interest to us) as horticulture is to botany. Freud, starting from a practical discipline—the pathology of the neuroses—has subsequently been able to gain surprising psychological insight. We must not, therefore, fight shy of penetrating into the nursery. I would hasten to add that this question cannot be solved by one single worker. The co-operation of all of us here will be necessary for the solution, and it is for this reason that I bring up the subject as a problem and invite my colleagues, and above all Professor Freud, to take part in the discussion.

First of all, I should like to mention some general points of view that have come to my mind.

The tendency to maintain existence without pain or tension, the unpleasure principle, must be considered, as Freud considers it, to be the original and natural regulator of the mental apparatus as it appears in the new-born infant. Despite the later superimposing of more complicated mechanisms, a somewhat sublimated unpleasure principle remains paramount in the mind of the civilized adult which takes the form of a natural tendency to experience the greatest possible gratification at the price of the least possible strain. Every

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1.- Paper read at the First Psycho-Analytical Congress in Salzburg, 1908.

[A Hungarian version of this paper was printed first in *Gyógyászat* (a Hungarian medical weekly journal) in 1908, and subsequently included in *Lélekelemzés* (a collection of Ferenczi's early psycho-analytical papers, printed in book form) in 1909.

This version differs considerably from the German version found in manuscript among Ferenczi's papers after his death: (a) The social consequences of repression are described more in detail, (b) The second half of the paper is a completely new version.

The most likely explanation is that the manuscript version is the original paper as read at the Congress; when translating it into Hungarian Ferenczi included in it some 'second thoughts'. These two differing parts are printed here as Appendices. In the text of the original it is indicated where they should be inserted.— M. Balint.]

(Translated by Michael Balint.)

education ought to reckon with this tendency. Present-day education does not. Instead, it burdens the mind with still more compulsions than even the already sufficiently pressing external circumstances demand, and does so by strengthening the repression which was originally an adequate and purposeful defensive measure, but if in excess, leads to illness. (Appendix I.).

The primary aim of the educational reform to which we should aspire should be an attempt to spare the child's mind the burden of unnecessary repression. After that—an even more important task—should be a reform of our social institutions so that freedom of action is given to those wish-impulses which cannot be sublimated. We can afford to ignore the reproach that such views are inimical to civilization. For us civilization is not an end in itself, rather is it an appropriate means whereby a compromise between one's own interests and those of one's fellow men may be attained.

If this can be achieved by less complicated means, we need not be afraid of the epithet 'reactionary'. Respect for the reasonable and natural demands of others must always be the limiting factor in deciding the extent to which liberty may run. Ignorance of the true psychology of man and disregard for it in the course of education to-day create in social life numerous pathological phenomena, and expressions of the illogical working of repression become apparent. Were we acting only in consideration of the few people specially predisposed to neuroses, there would be no need to alter the existing state of affairs. But I think—and here I am supported in my belief by Freud's as yet unpublished communications—that the excessive anxiety of most civilized people, their fear of death, their hypochondriasis—all these must be derived from the libido being repressed during the process of education. Similarly, clinging to meaningless religious superstitions, to traditional cult of authorities, to obsolete social institutions, are pathological phenomena of the folk-mind, —so to speak, obsessive acts and ideas of the collective mind—, their motivating forces being the repressed wish-impulses which have been made rampant by erroneous education. (Appendix II.).

In his excellent lectures on the pedagogical duties of the physician, Professor Czerny, the pediatrician, reproaches parents for being unable to educate their children either because they (the parents) are unable to remember their own childhood at all or else, if they do remember it, they do so unreliably and indeed self-deceptively. We cannot but agree with him, and in fact we could tell him—using the knowledge gained from Freud—what a remarkable mental mechanism it is that causes this infantile amnesia. This in itself is sufficient explanation why education has not made any noticeable progress since time immemorial. It is a vicious circle. The unconscious compels the parents to bring up their children in the wrong way, while wrong education, in its turn, piles up unconscious complexes in the children. Somehow, this vicious circle must be broken. To start with radical reforms in education would be a hopeless beginning. Correction of the infantile amnesia, the enlightenment of grownups, holds greater promise. The first and most important step towards a better future lies—in my opinion—in the propagation of the knowledge of the true psychology of the child as discovered by Freud. This wholesale enlightenment would mean a cure for mankind suffering from unnecessary repressions, a sort of inner revolution which each one of us must have experienced whilst incorporating Freud's teachings. Liberation from unnecessary inner compulsion would be the first revolution to bring real relief to mankind, for political revolutions have achieved only that the external powers, i.e. the means of coercion, have changed hands, or that the number of the oppressed has risen or fallen. Only people liberated in this real sense will be able to bring about a radical change in education and prevent permanently the return of similar undesirable circumstances.

In addition to this work of preparation for the future, we must look to the next generation and discover, with this increased insight, what could be changed without delay in the bringing up of children.

First, however, we must discuss the arguments of the nativists who maintain that education has no effect whatsoever, and that the entire mental development is predetermined organically. Freud has shown that the same sexual constitution will produce various outcomes according to the further elaborations of the affective influences, and that infantile experiences have an important part in determining the subsequent course of development. All this pleads for the effectiveness of pedagogical measures. Conversely, not only untoward events, but also purposeful and benign influences—i.e. true education—can make use of the child's tenacity and capacity for fixation.

For the reform of education, I think it is highly desirable to obtain the co-operation of the pediatricians, who have such a great influence upon the public. Moreover, through direct observation of infantile mental life, they could obtain further proofs of the conclusions arrived at—following Freud—from the dreams of the healthy and from the symptoms of the neurotic in relation to the method of working and to the development of the child's mind. It may be assumed that such observations will yield fruitful results in the field of the psychology of the neuroses.

For the time being, however, these new ideas seem to have failed to arouse the understanding and interest of pediatricians. This is all the more remarkable since there are numerous points of contact between Freud's psychology and the pediatric observations uninfluenced by Freud.

If we take Czerny's book, which I have already quoted, as an example, we observe with pleasure that he ascribes to correct handling of the baby during the first year of life a far-reaching effect. Using Freud's terminology, we shall put the problem thus: is the baby to be educated at all and, if so, how is this to be done during the period of almost exclusive paramountcy of the unconscious mental system?

According to what we know of the later rôle of the unconscious instinctual impulses, there must be the least possible inhibition of the motor discharges of the infant. That is why I consider the present-day custom of swaddling—i.e. tying up of the child—to be objectionable. The child should have ample freedom of movement. The only thing that at this age might be deemed 'education' is to limit the amount of external stimuli reaching the infant. Czerny is absolutely right when he condemns the all-too-early pinning down of the infant's attention by strong visual or auditory stimuli.

As a means of reassurance, Czerny mentions feeding at healthily proper intervals. Further he maintains that rocking, rolling and thumb-sucking, condemned by so many physicians, are absolutely harmless. Nevertheless, had he known of the possible consequences of excessive stimulation of the erotic senses, of the accompanying sexual effects of rhythmic swaying, he would have advocated some precaution. It is certain that children need these and similar sensations for their full sexual development, but only in limited quantities, and a sensible education must, therefore, regulate the amount of these stimuli which might be harmful if permitted in excessive quantities.

It is interesting to note that Czerny favours breast-feeding as a means whereby those emotional contacts between mother and child develop the relations 'which are so highly valued if they exist between parents and children'. This is a true observation but at the same time a very cautious periphrasis of the decidedly sexual nature of those relations.

The sexual theme is treated cursorily in this book—just as in all similar ones; a few notes about infantile masturbation is all that is offered to the readers. If the pediatricians did but know even a little of Freud's discoveries, then they would not condemn kissing the child on the mouth merely because of the possibility of its being a means of infection, or Escherich would not consider the problem of sucking as finally dealt with by his invention of the boric acid dummy.

The only source of knowledge in this field—for the time being—is Freud's Three Contributions to the Theory of Sexuality. The experiences described there should be appraised from the point of view of education, and an attempt should be made to work out whether, and how, the predominance of certain erotogenic zones, component instincts or tendencies to perversions could be prevented, and excessive reaction formation be checked. Education, however, must always bear in mind that it should not aim at strangling these components which are indispensable to the building up of a normal sexuality, but should aim at preventing them from reaching beyond the bounds of expediency into a luxurious indulgence. A wise education will know how to achieve the condition wherein transformation of sexual emotions, repressions, etc., need have no more pathogenic effect. The present-day custom of leaving children alone during the most violent crises of their sexual development, without support or instruction, explanation or assurance, is cruel. Instead, the child should be given successive explanations that will correspond with the current stage of his intelligence.

Only when the hypocritical mysteriousness in sexual matters has ceased to exist, when everyone will

know of the processes of his own body and mind—i.e. only with conscious cathexis—will sexual emotions be truly mastered and sublimated. As long as the emotions repressed into the unconscious are free from our control they will, like a ‘foreign body’, disturb the peace of our mental life. The double meaning of the word ‘selbstbewusst’<sup>2</sup> shows that language had some idea of the connections between knowledge of oneself and character.

How the possible breakdown of the sexual latency period, the fixation of auto-erotic mechanisms and of incestuous phantasies, the unfortunately frequent seduction by adults, are to be prevented, I am afraid I cannot—for the time being—even imagine.

The methods of correction, praise, command and reprimand, corporal punishment—all these need a thorough revision. Because there is much wrong committed in this field, it often happens that the seeds of subsequent neuroses are sown. On the other hand, the spoiling and pampering of children, i.e. overburdening them with expressions of love by adults—can also have harmful delayed effects, as is well known by any one who has conducted analyses. But once parents are clear in their own minds as to the importance of these implications, their love of the child will prevent any such excesses.

Now, as before, great attention must be paid to the development of the symbols of speech and of the higher mental systems. These have been the almost exclusive aim of present-day pedagogy. The knowledge that thinking in words means a new cathexis of the instinctual life can show teachers why the child’s self-control grows parallel with his increasing knowledge. The lack of control in deaf-mute children may possibly be traced back to the lack of this over-cathexis by words. In any case, it should be seen that teaching is made more interesting and that the teacher does not handle the children as a severe tyrant but as a father—whose representative, in fact, he really is.

Whether we shall ever succeed in moulding and forming the character of man by purposeful influences during early childhood is the task of future experimental pedagogy. After what we have quite recently learnt from Freud—I mean the paper ‘Character and Anal Erotism’—such a possibility is not wholly unthinkable. But we must work to learn much before we can seriously contemplate trying out this idea in practice.

Yet even without this new science, the victory of Freud’s ideas will bring much that is good to education. A rational education based upon those ideas may discard a great part of the pressing burdens. And even if the people—because they need no longer surmount such colossal obstacles—may not have such intensive gratifications, their share will be a quiet, cheerful existence, no longer tormented by day by unnecessary anxieties, nor by night by nightmares.

## APPENDIX I

What is repression? Perhaps it could be best described as a denial of facts. But, while the liar tries to cheat others in concealing the truth from them, or by inventing things that do not exist, present-day education has set out to achieve that man should cheat himself in disowning thoughts and feelings stirring within him.

Psycho-analysis teaches that thoughts and impulses thus repressed from consciousness are by no means annihilated, but remain stored in the unconscious, and organize themselves into a dangerous complex of instincts, anti-social and dangerous to the self—a kind of parasitic ‘second personality’, the tendencies of which are diametrically opposite to those capable of becoming conscious.

It could be contended that this state of affairs is expedient as it makes socially purposeful thinking so to speak automatic, and prevents any harmful effects arising from the antisocial or asocial tendencies by relegating them to the unconscious. Psycho-analysis has proved, however, that this kind of neutralizing of the asocial tendencies is uneconomic and ineffective. The tendencies hidden in the unconscious can be kept suppressed and hidden only by the automatic action of powerful safety measures, a process which

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2.- Only in German and in Hungarian. This word also means ‘self-esteem’, ‘self-respect’. In English ‘self-conscious’ has the opposite meaning.



consumes much too much mental energy. The prohibiting and deterring commands of moralizing education based on repression are comparable with the post-hypnotic suggestion of a negative hallucination; for just as with a sufficiently strong command one can render a hypnotized man, when awake, unable to perceive or recognize certain visual auditory or tactile stimuli, so nowadays is mankind educated to introspective blindness. The man thus educated, like the one who is hypnotized—draws much mental energy from the conscious part of his ego and so impairs considerably his own ability for action, first because he breeds in his unconscious another—a parasitic—person, whose natural egotism and tendency for unscrupulous wish-fulfilment represents the dark phantom, the negative of all the good and beautiful on which the higher consciousness prides itself; and secondly, because the conscious is forced to expend its greatest power in creating a defence against being forced to recognize and appreciate the asocial impulses hidden behind the charity and kindness, by surrounding them with ramparts of moralistic, religious and social dogmas. Such ramparts are, for example, sense of duty, honesty, respect for authority and legal institutions, etc. In a word, all those moral qualities which compel us to respect the rights of others and to suppress our own egotism.

## APPENDIX II

The anaesthesia of hysterical women and the impotence of neurotic men correspond to the strange and unnatural tendency of society towards ascetism. In the same way as behind the exaggerated reaction-formation of the unconsciously perverse, as behind the pathological over-cleanliness and over-honesty of the neurotic, smutty thoughts and repressed libidinous impulses are lying in wait, so do we find that behind the respect-exacting mask of the over-strict moralist there exist unconsciously all the thoughts and wish-impulses which he so strongly condemns in others. The over-strictness saves the moralist from seeing himself and at the same time enables him to live out one of his repressed unconscious urges, namely his aggressiveness.

None of that is meant as an accusation: the best members of our society are men of this kind. I want only to show by what means moralizing education based on repression calls forth a modicum of neurosis, even in the healthy. Only in this way are such social circumstances possible in which behind the catchword 'patriotism' obviously egotistic tendencies can hide themselves, where under the name of 'social reform' tyrannical suppression of the individual freedom is propagated, where religion receives homage partly as a drug against fear of death (i.e. a drug serving egotistical purposes) and partly as a permissible means of mutual intolerance, where in the sexual sphere nobody wants to notice what everyone does continuously. Neurosis and hypocritical egotism are the ultimate effects of education that is based on dogmas and fails to pay attention to the true psychology of man; in the latter effect it is not the egotism that must be condemned—without it no living being on this earth can be imagined—but the hypocrisy, the most characteristic symptom of the present-day civilized man's neurosis.

There are some who admit the truth of this, but they are frightened by the prospect of what may possibly happen to human culture when appeal can no longer be made to dogmatic principles nor their discussion tolerated, and when these will no longer guide education and the everyday life of man. Will the egotistic instincts, now freed from their fetters, not destroy all the creations of the millennial human civilization? will it be possible to substitute anything for the categorical imperative of morals?.

Psychology has taught us that a substitute is possible. When, after a psycho-analytic cure a hitherto seriously neurotic patient becomes aware of the unconscious wish-impulses of his mind, impulses condemned by the ruling morals or by his own conscious moral notions, his symptoms disappear. And this happens also when the wish which manifested itself in symbolic form in the neurotic symptom must remain ungratified because of insurmountable obstacles in its way. Psycho-analysis does not lead to an unrestrained rule of egoistic instincts that are or may be inexpedient for the individual, but instead to a liberation from prejudices hindering self-knowledge, to discernment of the hitherto unconscious motives and to control over the now conscious impulses.

Repression is replaced by conscious condemnation, says Freud. The external circumstances, the way of life, need hardly change.

A man with true self-knowledge becomes modest—apart from the exalting feeling created by this knowledge. He is lenient towards the faults of others, willing to forgive; moreover, from the principle ‘tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner’ he aspires only to understand—he does not feel justified to pardon. He analyses the motives of his own emotions and thereby prevents their increase into passions. He watches with cheerful humour the human groups scrambling under various banners; in his actions he is not led by loudly proclaimed morals, but by sober efficiency, and this urges him to keep a watch over and to control those of his wishes whose gratification might offend the rights of other men (which might thus in their later repercussions become dangerous to him also), but without, nevertheless, denying their existence.

When I stated above that to-day the whole of society is neurotic, it was not meant as a farfetched analogy or a metaphor. Nor is it a poetic turn of phrase. It is my earnest conviction that this illness of society has no other remedy than the undisguised recognition of the true and full nature of man, especially recognition of the no longer inaccessible method of the workings of the unconscious mental life; its prophylaxis is: a new education not based on dogmas but on insight, suited to the means to be achieved (Zweckmässigkeit)—an education to be worked out in the future.

**(Sándor Ferenczi. Obras Completas, Psicoanálisis Tomo I, cap. I V . “Psicoanálisis y Pedagogía”.  
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