

# BASIC THEORY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

圖書館藏

ROBERT WAELDER

# **BASIC THEORY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS**

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## PREFACE

These essays do not offer a comprehensive survey of psychoanalytic theory; some aspects of analytic theory, particularly the more abstract ones, are not treated at all or treated only in a cursory fashion. The following chapters will deal only with what I consider to be *basic* theory—its rationale, its implications, and the questions which it stimulates us to ask. They deal with questions such as these: Can psychoanalytic interpretations and theories be verified in a scientifically satisfactory way? How must such verification proceed? What is instinct in psychoanalysis? Why do psychoanalysts seem to insist on using this concept which biologists seem inclined to discard? What is the role of sexuality in psychoanalytic theory? Why do analysts speak of a destructive instinct? What does “ego” mean in psychoanalysis? Why was ego psychology a relatively late addition in psychoanalytic theory? What is the nature of psychoanalytic therapy? Why is consciousness supposed to have a therapeutic value? What are the indications and limits of psychoanalytic therapy? These and similar questions will be considered, though not necessarily solved, in the following pages.

I hope that these essays will serve three goals: to combat widespread misunderstandings of psychoanalysis and thereby to help conserve what we have inherited; to see psychoanalysis in its context in the history of our civilization; and

to help to discover the most promising avenues of advancement.

In science, as in most other affairs, we should first try to keep what we already have—cultivate the land that has been cleared and guard it against a return of the jungle and against corrosion—and then try to improve on it or to enlarge it.

As far as conservation is concerned, many people take it for granted that scientific achievements can never be lost and that change always means progress. Historical experience does not support this optimistic assumption. The foundations of many sciences that had been laid by the Greeks were lost to the West for a thousand years until the ancient writings were rediscovered in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The idea, developed in the middle of the nineteenth century, by Claude Bernard, on the basis of ancient, Hippocratic, heritage, that health depended on the ability of the organism to adjust to its external environment while keeping its internal environment fairly constant, was all but lost when the doctrine of a single etiology of diseases carried everything before it and dominated the scene until the recent past. And we must remember that we know of achievements lost only if they had not been entirely lost, and particularly if they have been rediscovered and reappreciated in the meantime; how many fruitful ideas have been lost and have not been found again, or are no longer correctly understood, we have no way of knowing.

Psychoanalysis is persistently misunderstood, not only *extra muros*. Psychoanalysis—its intellectual substance and the categorical imperative of ceaseless self-exploration which provides its moral mainspring—is always in jeopardy because it arouses strong resistances from which nobody seems to be exempt. The causes for these resistances are

manifold; some are characteristic only of a particular time and place, others seem to be of more lasting significance. Much of them is probably due to the fact that psychoanalysis, properly understood, presents a constant challenge to complacency and mental laziness<sup>1</sup> and perpetually interferes with wishful thinking.

For decades, the hostility which psychoanalysis has aroused in the world and which has caused much discomfort to psychoanalysts has also, as outside pressure often does, helped to preserve psychoanalysis because it has welded us together and has given us protection against the danger of succumbing to an alliance of our resistances and our more superficial ambitions.

More recently, psychoanalysis has been facing a new situation, at least in this country; outside pressure—not resistances as such but their expression in pressure brought to bear on psychoanalysts—has diminished and opportunities for positions have correspondingly increased. Desirable though this is from one point of view, it has also laid psychoanalysis more open to inner perils.

It appears more and more likely that psychoanalysis has a good chance of recognition and integration into existing institutions if analysts are only willing to modify some of their traditional attitudes. The appeal of this combination of temptation and subtle pressure is further increased by the widespread inclination to regard things that have existed for some time as worth discarding on account of their age alone.

In this situation, it may not be useless to try to take stock of the essential ideas of psychoanalysis and to discuss their pros and cons in the light of available experience.

<sup>1</sup> Improperly understood psychoanalysis can become itself a source of complacency and an excuse for mental laziness.

The place of psychoanalysis in the history of Western thought is not made subject of a special discussion, but frequent references to other areas of human knowledge and practice should make it clear that psychoanalytic thought is not the isolated, esoteric doctrine for which it is often held. Despite the ill will which psychoanalysis has encountered and which still permeates most of what is being said about Freud or psychoanalysis, it stands in the mainstream of European tradition. Nothing could characterize the personality of Freud better than the following words that were said about his ancestor in spirit, Thucydides:<sup>2</sup> "His was a passionate nature and one of his passions was for self-control, another was for truth" (Gomme, 1954, p. 161). These characters have made their imprint on psychoanalysis, and that at once explains much of the hostility against psychoanalysis—as neither of these two passions<sup>3</sup> is widely shared at any one time—and determines the place which I believe it will occupy in historical perspective as a carrier of the best traditions of our civilization.

The study of theory and of its implications could also, and in particular, be of service for scientific progress because it is the function of theory to suggest what kind of observations, out of an infinite number of possible observa-

<sup>2</sup> I dare call him so because Thucydides, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, analyzed the great tragedy of Hellas in his time as an outgrowth of human nature, with the hope that the very understanding of the patterns will weaken their automatic grip on men and will provide men with a degree of emancipation from them.

<sup>3</sup> Because of this sense of dedication of Freud's and of many of his close associates, psychoanalysis has often been called a religion, or pseudo religion, classifications meant to discredit psychoanalysis in the eyes of believer and nonbeliever alike. The dedication of this circle to the ideals of self-control and truth was real, but these ideals are for themselves alone not sufficient to make a complete value system, still less a religion. One hopes that many people—e.g., rulers, educators, healers—have an equal dedication to ideals which they have an opportunity to serve and one will hardly on this ground accuse them of "unscientific" attitudes.



tions, is likely to lead to insights of general significance, to a better understanding of the nature of things.

Ideas without facts are empty, facts without ideas are blind, as Kant put it. As in most other sciences, the most promising avenue of advance in psychoanalysis seems to lie not with pure empiricism nor with daring speculation but in the middle area where observation and theory formation constantly pass the ball to each other.

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## CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	ix
Acknowledgments . . . . .	xiv

## INTRODUCTION

The Validation of Psychoanalytic Interpretations and Theories . . . . .	3
The Need for Validation . . . . .	3
A Science of the Mind and of Human Destiny and the Exact Sciences . . . . .	6
The Validity of Historical and Psychological Propositions . . . . .	13
Psychological and Historical Judgments Implicit in the Exact Sciences . . . . .	16
A Compensatory Advantage of Psychology . . . . .	19
A Pentathlon Theory . . . . .	25
The Question of Universal Demonstrability . . . . .	27

## Part I

### THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOANALYTIC THOUGHT

1. The Fundamental Concepts . . . . .	35
The Home Base of Psychoanalysis: the Neuroses . . . . .	35
The Basic Structure of Neurosis . . . . .	36
Inner Conflict and Outside Pressure . . . . .	37
Sexual and Childhood Aspects of Neurosis . . . . .	39
Constitution and Environment . . . . .	41
Semantic Interlude . . . . .	44

Essentials of Psychoanalytic Therapy . . . . .	46
Psychoanalytic Theory a Prison of the Mind? . . .	47
The Psychoanalytic Approach . . . . .	49
The Range of Psychoanalysis . . . . .	52
The Parallelogram of Forces . . . . .	57
<b>2. The Middle Years . . . . .</b>	<b>66</b>
Narcissism . . . . .	66
Metapsychology . . . . .	69
The Dissident Schools . . . . .	71
<b>3. The Later Additions . . . . .</b>	<b>82</b>
The Model of the Personality . . . . .	83
<b>4. Current Trends . . . . .</b>	<b>87</b>

## Part II

### SURVEY AND DISCUSSION OF BASIC CONCEPTS

<b>5. Introductory Remarks Concerning Instinctual</b>	
<b>Drives . . . . .</b>	<b>97</b>
Instinctual Drives and Instincts; the Tyranny of	
Words . . . . .	97
"Trieb" and "Instinkt" . . . . .	101
Definition of Instinctual Drives . . . . .	102
<b>6. The Sexual Drive . . . . .</b>	<b>104</b>
The Idea of Sexuality . . . . .	104
General Characteristics . . . . .	105
Sexual Development . . . . .	108
Phallus Worship . . . . .	114
Sublimation . . . . .	122
<b>7. Destructiveness and Hatred . . . . .</b>	<b>131</b>
Prejudices pro and con . . . . .	131

Destructiveness Subordinate to the Struggle for Survival and the Pursuit of Happiness . . . . .	139
Essential Destructiveness . . . . .	142
Destructiveness and the Animal Kingdom . . . . .	147
Destructiveness an Instinctual Drive? . . . . .	149
An Asymmetrical Classification . . . . .	150
The Detoxification of Destructiveness . . . . .	151
<b>8. Anxiety . . . . .</b>	<b>154</b>
The Two Theories of Anxiety . . . . .	154
Forms of Anxiety . . . . .	158
Anxiety and Traumatic Neurosis . . . . .	163
<b>9. Analytic Ego Psychology . . . . .</b>	<b>167</b>
Precursors of the Concept . . . . .	167
The Concept of the Ego . . . . .	168
The Use of Teleological Concepts . . . . .	169
The Appearance of Adler's Individual Psychology	174
The Delayed Appearance of Ego Psychology in Psychoanalysis . . . . .	175
The Defense Mechanisms and Man's Restricted Repertory of Defenses . . . . .	179
The Therapeutic Application . . . . .	182
An Alphabet of Defense Mechanisms . . . . .	183
Post-Freudian Trends . . . . .	185
The Superego . . . . .	187
<b>10. Some Problems in Psychopathology . . . . .</b>	<b>196</b>
Psychoneuroses . . . . .	196
Ego Distortion, Character Neuroses, Fate Neuroses	200
Delinquency . . . . .	201
The Schizophrenic Psychoses . . . . .	204
Disturbances of Identification . . . . .	209
<b>11. Principles of Psychoanalytic Therapy . . . . .</b>	<b>212</b>
The Rationale of Psychoanalytic Therapy . . . . .	212

Psychoanalysis, Educational Psychotherapy, Psychoanalytically Oriented Psychotherapy . . .	215
The Indications of Psychoanalytic Therapy . . .	216
The Scope of Educational Psychotherapy . . .	231
The Treatment of Psychoses . . . . .	232
The Borderline Cases . . . . .	233
Psychoanalytic Technique . . . . .	236
The Completion of Analysis . . . . .	242
The Moral Problem of Psychoanalytic Treatment	243
<b>Postscript</b>	
The Value of Psychoanalysis . . . . .	248
<b>Annex</b>	
A List of the Most Common Misunderstandings of Psychoanalytic Concepts . . . . .	252
<b>Bibliography . . . . .</b>	255
<b>Index . . . . .</b>	265

*Many are the wonders, but none is more  
wondrous than man*

—SOPHOCLES





## INTRODUCTION

### The Validation of Psychoanalytic Interpretations and Theories

#### THE NEED FOR VALIDATION

The question of validation of psychoanalytic results has often been raised—more often by critics of psychoanalysis than by psychoanalysts themselves. As usual, there is a great variety of opinions. Some are satisfied with the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations as made by well-trained and experienced analysts and hence with the validity of the theory which is based on them, and do not see any need for further proof. Others wish interpretations to be subject to more controls within the analytic procedure while rejecting extra-analytic means of verification. Others, for the most part not analysts, request nonanalytic forms of verification as prerequisite to their consideration of analytic claims.

There is also a wide spectrum of opinion regarding the degree of exactitude that is requested. Some merely present their results as products of analytic study, often without clearly distinguishing between the raw material of observation and its interpretation, and without stating the criteria according to which the latter follow from the former. In