



# **THE MACHINERY OF THE MIND**

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**BY**  
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of insanity. The neurotic knows that there is something wrong with him, but that the world is all right; the lunatic believes that he is all right, but that there is something wrong with the world.

It is the constant aim of the mind to maintain harmonious relations between the individual and the environment; to secure an adjustment to and to make the best of, the constantly varying conditions to which the organism is subjected. If it fails to do this, the law of the survival of the fittest comes into action and automatically eliminates the unfit.

Those who have failed, have failed to adapt themselves to the conditions in which they live. Failure to adapt may be due to one of two causes: the individual may be abnormal, or the environment may be abnormal.

Modern social conditions in a civilised community tend to prevent the automatic elimination of the unfit and to permit them to live on. The physical failure to adapt, due to malformation or lack of stamina, we will not deal here, but will confine ourselves to the problem of adjustment on the mental level.

If there is difficulty in making a mental adjustment to environment and finding contentment and peace of mind, then the individual is faced by a peculiar problem. He is allowed to continue his physical life, but cannot find mental peace. In order to obtain relief from this intolerable condition, certain devices are unconsciously resorted to. These devices are of the nature of buffers or shock absorbers, and provided the individual does not deviate too much from the normal type, which is adapted to the environment, and that the environment likewise does not differ too much from the type for which the individual was designed, then these devices effectually protect his feelings from the rude shocks of circumstances and enable him to keep his poise and peace of mind.

If, however, the strain thrown upon the psychic shock absorber is too great for it to adequately absorb, then the rebound of the buffer-springs throws the machinery of the mind out of gear and makes itself felt in nervous and mental disorders. Like physical disease, mental disease is Nature's effort at repair which overreaches itself.

This, then, is what constitutes mental disease (the organic insanities being excluded from this definition). The reaction of the mind to what it cannot assimilate. It must not be thought, however, that mental disorder necessarily means insanity. Any faulty functioning of the mind comes under the heading of psycho-pathology, and just as the diseases of the body range from a passing indisposition to some fatal organic disease, so the diseases of the mind range from irritability and forgetfulness to the complete collapse of lunacy.

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## CHAPTER 15. CONFLICT

As we have already seen, our life is motivated by three great instincts. A moment's thought however, will cause us to realise that as these instincts are diverse in their aims, they may sometimes find themselves in opposition to one another. This condition is known to psychologists as CONFLICT, wherein one instinct can only be gratified at the expense of another. For instance, a man may be starving and be tempted to steal in order to satisfy his hunger. Here we see a conflict between the self-preservation and herd instinct, for if he steals he may lose his place in the herd, and if he does not steal, he may lose his life. It is astonishing how many will choose the latter alternative, proving the power and fundamental nature of the herd instinct. The man will be torn two ways, and can only gratify one instinct at the expense of the other.

Or, again, he may fall in love with a woman who is denied to him by the marriage laws of his country. Here we see a conflict between the sex instinct and the herd instinct Or he may fall in love with one whom it would be disadvantageous socially or professionally for him to marry, and here we see a conflict between the sex and self-preservation instincts.

Now, in each of these cases a large amount of force is locked up and rendered unavailable for the general purposes of the life, for a head-on collision between instincts is involved and each entreats the whole of its energy to neutralise the force of the other. The whole life comes to a standstill while the battle is fought out. It is notorious that an individual in such a dilemma can come to no decision, take no decisive action, in any department of his life. Some solution has to be arrived at, and any solution is better than a continuation of the conflict, the pain of which is intolerable.

First, the man may think the whole matter out, and, acting according to his nature, give the victory to one or other of the combatants, leaving the vanquished instinct to seek adjustment as best it may. It requires great strength, however, to take such a stand, and many are not able to do it. Some seek a solution of the problem by keeping the instincts in separate



compartments of the mind, and never comparing their special pleadings, as did a science teacher known to the writer. On weekdays the teacher taught the doctrines of evolution, and on Sundays the doctrine of special creation, and when questioned on the matter, burst into a towering passion and refused to discuss it.

A third solution, however, is very often found by the perplexed mind, and that is known as dissociation.

Now, REPRESSION and DISSOCIATION are two terms current in modern psychological parlance, and the writer has often heard them used as if they were interchangeable terms, but this is not the case. Repression means that certain ideas are put into the subconscious mind and not permitted to return to consciousness. Dissociation means that some of these ideas, instead of lying quiet in the subconscious, split off from the integration of the personality and function independently. These two factors of mentation will be studied in detail in the following chapters.

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## CHAPTER 16. REPRESSION

REPRESSION is a refusal to permit an idea to enter consciousness. The instant it looms up upon the fringe of consciousness the attention is resolutely turned away from it. This device is resorted to when an idea enters the mind which is repugnant to our character and when we find ourselves thinking thoughts which are out of harmony with the general tone of our nature. Unwilling to admit to ourselves that we have such a side to our dispositions, we turn away from the repulsive images. As it is impossible to erase from the mind any idea which has once entered it, we endeavour to store these ideas, since they must be stored somewhere, in that part which is furthest away from consciousness, and so to use the technicalities of the psychologist, we repress them into our subconscious.

When it is remembered that every child is born into the world a little savage, and that it is only by education he achieves civilisation, it will readily be seen that our primitive nature is not a thing which our cultivated self can regard with any complacency. That the untrained child is selfish and dirty, we are all aware and that we ourselves, before our training had time to take effect on us, were also selfish and dirty, we cannot with logic deny. But a merciful veil of forgetfulness has been drawn across this period, for we have developed into something so different from that we were that our primitive self is utterly repugnant to us, and repression is resorted to, to prevent this unpleasant ghost of our original nature from intruding upon our self-esteem.

All ideas of an uncivilised type which enter the mind are apt to call forth a certain amount of response from us, hence the success of the smutty story. For the primitive side of our nature is not dead, and stirs in its sleep if a note of the same pitch is sounded in its hearing; therefore ideas which wake our lower nature are quickly repressed into the subconscious lest they should be translated into action. Repression is essentially the mechanism of selfdisgust.

It is still an open question whether repression is normal or abnormal; whether it is part of the functioning of the healthy mind, or whether it is to be regarded as a psychic corn or callus, an endeavour on the part of nature to reinforce a point of pressure, which, though intended as a defence, is apt to become a disease.

The part played by consciousness in repression is equally an open question. In my opinion, an idea must be present to consciousness before its nature can be apprehended and the judgment formed which leads to its banishment.

There is no question but that, if we were strong enough, we could deal with these problems in the conscious mind by means of thought control, and that repression is only resorted to when the first line of defence has gone down before the onslaught of the lower side of our natures.

Repression may therefore be looked upon as a reaction due to weakness; the mind that was perfectly adapted to its environment would assimilate all experiences and grow stronger in the process.

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## CHAPTER 17. DISSOCIATION

WHILE the device of repression may adequately deal with many of the unwelcome thoughts that intrude themselves upon us, it is not capable of doing so in every case. Then the process is carried a stage further and DISSOCIATION takes place.

Dissociation is pathological forgetting. Emotion is the life of an idea. In ordinary forgetting a memory sinks into the subconscious because insufficient interest is attached to it to enable it to remain in consciousness. If, however, an idea associated with some strong emotion is repressed into the subconscious, that emotion will, as it were, vivify it, and cause it to have an independent life of its own. It splits off from the personality and is said to be dissociated. It will be noted that in our study of memory we saw that ideas never remain solitary, but tend to form associations among themselves, or, as they are technically termed, complexes. The dissociated idea is no exception to this rule; not only does it form alliances with its fellow prisoners, but its chains of associations manage to evade the censor and ramify through the other levels of the mind with far-reaching consequences, giving rise to much of the illogicality and unreasonableness which disturb our attempts at rational thinking.

We have already noted that a complex is a group of ideas held together by some emotionally tuned interest and as all emotion has its root in an instinct, it follows that all complexes must be affiliated to one or other of the instincts. As they sink into the subconscious they therefore go down the channel of the instinct to which they belong, and as they are swimming against the current they tend to block the flow of that particular instinct and to cause it to express itself through the subsidiary channel which they are endeavouring to open up.

It can readily be seen that serious consequences must arise from an obstacle lodged in the fairway of so great a force drawing to itself, under the law of association of ideas, all thoughts that may enter the mind on the same subject, or that have a real or symbolic resemblance to it. As has been truly

said, the subconscious grows at the expense of the conscious and the balance of the mind is upset. The thrust of life, the source of all energy, instead of flowing freely from level to level, is blocked by the complex and held up in the subconscious, causing the pressure on that level to rise to danger-point. The conscious mind is sapped of its vitality, producing an individual of imperative and chaotic needs which he is unable to formulate, even to himself, and with no power to give them expression or obtain their satisfaction.

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## CHAPTER 18. SYMBOLISATION

WE may picture the dissociated complex with the pressure of an instinct behind it, constantly seeking to evade the censor and return to consciousness where its wishes can be translated into action, and see how the censor, reinforced by the whole weight of the character, resolutely refuses to permit its escape.

We have seen that the dissociated complex, following the ordinary laws of association, forms alliances with ideas that have a symbolical or fanciful connection with itself. These ideas, not being in themselves objectionable to the character, are permitted by the censor to enter consciousness. Then the dissociated complex, taking advantage of its alliance with them, pours its bottled-up emotion along the association-channels thus formed, and so obtains an outlet into consciousness. This gives rise, however, to very different results from those which were its original intention, and produces those irrational likes, dislikes, and eccentricities which are characteristic of the person whose mind is not working smoothly.

An example of this is shown in the case of a woman who noticed that the brass plates on doctors' doors had a peculiar fascination for her. When enquiry was made into the history, it was found that in her youth, she had fallen in love with the family physician who was a married man. Feeling this affection to be wrong, she had firmly put it out of her life (i.e., put it into her subconscious). The association between the doctor and the brass plate was obvious enough, but as brass plates were unobjectionable, the censor offered no resistance to them, and the emotion which centred round the doctor, whose image was buried in her subconscious, was permitted to reach consciousness transferred to the innocent brass plate.

The subconscious makes use of symbolism in precisely the same way that the poet does, but it employs a device which the poet does not. It remembers that a pair of opposites have a connecting link in their very polarity, and uses a negative to express a positive, if the positive is repugnant to the character. Thus an unmarried woman, whose healthy sex

instinct has been denied fulfilment through husband and children, may become morbid. She may read literature concerning the repression of the white slave traffic, ad nauseam, and becoming worse, may develop what is called old maids' insanity, and imagine that perfectly innocent men are pestering her with immoral attentions (which in her heart she secretly desires) and go to the police for protection.

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## CHAPTER 19. PHANTASIES, DREAMS, AND DELUSIONS

WE have already seen that emotion is intimately allied with instinct, and that it is the thrust of the urging instincts that drives us to action, making us seek to appease the needs of our nature and incidentally fulfil certain racial and evolutionary ends.

Our first attempt, urged on by these promptings, is to bring about the realisation of our desires in the external world by means of bodily effort. Should this effort fail to achieve its purpose, or should circumstances deny us the opportunity to make this effort with any hope of success, then the mind often falls back upon a secondary achievement, and images its success in the realms of phantasy and make-believe, where there are no laws of cause and effect to check its operations. Cinderella in her kitchen constructs a phantasy of the Prince's ball. She sees her wish acted out to its fulfilment in the theatre of the mind.

This factor in our nature influences a large proportion of our mental processes and is considered to be the chief factor in determining the nature, not only of our dreams, but also of the symptoms of nervous and mental diseases, as will be seen later.

During sleep, the avenues of the physical senses whereby impressions reach the mind, are more or less closed, and the ego, which never ceases its activities, is thrown back upon the resources of its memories. Unguided by the reason and judgment, it reviews these, following along the chains of associated ideas according to the laws of memory, which we considered in an earlier chapter.

These wanderings however, though carried out with the illogicality which distinguishes the lower levels of our mind, are not entirely purposeless, being determined by various factors. It may be that physical or sensory impressions, dimly discerned during sleep through the partially closed doors of the senses, will give rise to a train of thought, or the matters upon which the mind has been busied during the day may continue to occupy it in an



undirected fashion during sleep. But the dream determining element to which most attention has been directed in modern psychology, is the upsurging of the instinctive wishes which have been denied fulfilment in waking life. In our dreams we see realised, as in phantasy, the wishes which have failed to gain realisation in reality, or may even have failed to gain access to our consciousness owing to the operation of the censor which strives to exclude from consciousness all distressing or repulsive matters. For in sleep, all our painfully acquired civilisation falls away from us, the higher centres of our being are in abeyance, and our primitive, natural self, controlled but never abolished, expresses its fundamental, untutored desires in their elemental form.

These wishes, however, are seldom expressed directly. So foreign are they to our civilised selves that even in sleep our habits of thinking assert themselves and exercise some check upon what shall be expressed. They are generally distorted almost beyond recognition by the substitutions of more acceptable ideas for crude images of instinctive needs, and as the subconscious mind links ideas together according to their superficial or accidental associations, it will be seen that strange and tangled dramas will be acted out upon the stage of the mind in an effort to represent the fulfilment of some primitive instinctive wish.

Modern methods of psychological research make much use of dreams in the effort to investigate the levels of the mind to which we have no direct access, and psychotherapy uses the same method in order to trace the disorders of the mind to their cause. For if the train of thought which the mind has followed in its progression from a crude instinctive, often physical, wish to the completed dream-drama be traced back again from the images of the dream to the underlying ideas which gave rise to them, we can lay bare the hidden springs of motive and character; hence that great use that has been made of the method of dream analysis in modern psychotherapy.

It is interesting to note that the delusions of lunatics are constructed upon exactly the same principles as the phantasies of our castles in the air. They also represent the fulfilment of wishes that have been denied their realisation, and have achieved their ultimate form through the same primitive methods of thinking that are responsible for our dreams. In fact,

they may be looked upon as a phantasy which has progressed a step nearer realisation than the day-dream.

The symptoms of the hysteric have a similar origin, but represent the wishes of dissociated complexes instead of the wishes of the whole personality as happens in insanity.

Thus we may see that should our desires be denied expression in our lives, they will construct dream castles for themselves during sleep in which we may temporarily dwell as monarch of all we survey. And, should these desires be very imperative, should a large part of our nature be involved in them, then the dream may overflow into waking consciousness, and we shall live among our own subjective mental pictures, instead of among objective realities, and act out the part we have assigned ourselves in the dream-drama, to the consternation of onlookers who pronounce us insane.

The lunatic, however, is not irrational. He is absolutely rational if, once his premises be granted, he carries the logical deductions from these premises to their ultimate conclusion. And once it be realised that some fundamental and essentially natural wish lies at the root of these phantasies which we see him acting out, then we shall see that the clue to the treatment of insanity lies in these wishes and the region of the mind that gives rise to them.

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## CHAPTER 20. PSYCHOTHERAPY

WHILE many forms of mental disease have a physical origin in the brain, nervous system, and state of the blood, many others are purely mental from beginning to end, although the body may be chosen as the scene of some of their manifestations. Modern medicine is learning to deal with mental diseases by mental methods, and of these, the principal types may be of interest. It must be remembered, however, that psychotherapy is the youngest of the sciences, and is still in its experimental stage though magnificent work has been done by the pioneers. They cannot claim to have said the last word upon the structure of the human mind even if they knew all that was to be known, leaving nothing to lie discovered by future investigation. They would be the last to claim on their own behalf, though their disciples are not always blessed with the same modesty of genius. Evolution is moving on, with the human mind at its apex, so that statements which were true of human nature before the Great War may have to be modified and supplemented when the Great Peace becomes an established fact.

Our knowledge of the mind, its diseases and therapy, is far from complete. The investigation of each human mind is in the nature of a voyage of discovery. Though the coastline of the mental landscape may be known to us, the hinterland is unmapped. We do not know what lies behind the human personality; we are equally ignorant of the exact nature of its relations with its environment and while our knowledge is in this state we cannot speak upon any point with finality.

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## CHAPTER 21. PSYCHOANALYSIS

The foundations of this method and theory were laid by Sigmund Freud of Vienna, and set forth by him in his epoch-making book, the *Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900. Two schools of psychoanalysis exist at the present time. The Vienna school, which adheres strictly to the doctrines of Freud, and the Zurich school, which subscribes to a modification of these doctrines as taught by Dr. Jung.

While both schools agree upon general principles as to the anatomy of the mind, they differ in their teaching as to the *modus operandi* of mental disease. Freud holds that functional nervous disorders are due to the retention by the subconscious mind of an infantile attitude towards life, especially towards sex, and that this attitude, which should have been outgrown and left behind, sets up stresses and strains in the mind which lead to the manifestations of mental disease. He gives us the concept of the accumulation of emotion in this wound in the mind, just as pus accumulates in an abscess, giving rise to tenderness and pain. The function of the psychoanalyst is to lance the abscess by bringing the subject of distress into consciousness, whereby the repressed emotion is realised and fully experienced, and thereby got rid of. This process is technically known as ABREACTION.

The psychologist who conducts the analysis is very likely to be the recipient of this repressed emotion because, at the moment of its arrival in consciousness, he is apt to be standing in the line of fire. This acceptance of the repressed emotion by the operator is conceived to be a most important phase of the cure, and is known as the TRANSFERENCE.

That this factor of the transference opens a door to most serious difficulties and dangers cannot be denied. The *via media* between undue influence and callous indifference is hard to find. It is maintained that more analysis will work off the emotion which much analysis has succeeded in laying bare, but in actual practice the process is not so simple and often leads to complications.

This transference of emotion to the analyst, together with the deleterious effects of continual and prolonged dwelling upon the unsavoury aspects of life which takes place in psychoanalysis, constitute serious objections to this method of therapy.

Jung holds that mental disease is due to a failure of adaptation in the present, leading to regression to an infantile mode of thinking. It will thus be seen that the two theories, while based upon the same data, are fundamentally different and must lead to differences in practical application.

Both schools explore the subconscious mind by means of dream analysis, and to this method the Zurich school also adds the method known as Word reaction. The process of dream analysis is extremely complicated. Briefly, the patient is instructed to recount a dream, and this dream is then taken point by point, and the "free associations" traced out in the following manner. He is instructed to take an image in his dream as a starting-point, turn his mind loose, and watch where it goes, the theory being that it will retrace the association train of ideas by which the dream image was derived from the underlying wish. An elaborate technique exists for interpreting these dream images, so elaborate as to be beyond the scope of the present volume. How much of this technique is sound and how much is arbitrary is still a matter of opinion among psychologists. We have little data as yet as to the part played by unintentional suggestion on the part of the psychoanalyst, no doubt a considerable factor in some cases and an exceedingly falsifying and misleading hue.

The word association method of Jung is less open to objection on the ground of arbitrariness and its operation is simpler. A list of anything from a dozen to a hundred or more words is made out. The first half-dozen words have usually no particular significance, but then follow a series of words believed to be specially associated with the different types of complex which may become split off from consciousness. Lists of these have been worked out by different students of this school, but although one of these lists is usually used as a basis, the analyst generally inserts words which he believes will especially bear upon the patient's particular problems. These words are called out to the patient, one at a time, and he is instructed to utter the first word that comes into his head in connection with each. The

time he takes to do this is taken by a stop-watch usually working to one-fifth of a second.

The first half-dozen of unimportant words will show the patient's average reaction time, but if any words among the subsequent ones have special significance for him, there will be a perceptible lengthening of the time he takes to reply. Moreover the replies may be curious, and either show special bearing upon his problems, or, by their irrelevancy, show that the original idea was discarded as unspeakable and a substitute hastily extemporised. If the list be read over again it will be found that, whereas those words which have no special significance are usually responded to by the same reaction word, those which bear upon the patient's emotions produce a change in the reaction word. Free association is then resorted to, as in the case of dream symbols, to discover the underlying train of ideas and the factors in the subconscious from which they derive their emotion.

Many Freudians make use of this method also, and indeed the two methods of dream analysis and word association are generally regarded as supplementary. The chief value of the latter lies in the fact that it can be used in cases where the patient is either unable or reluctant to co-operate.

The difference in the view-point of the two schools of psychoanalysis leads to a difference in the method of handling the patient. The Freudian, who believes that all nerve trouble is due to the retention of infantile habits of thinking, confines himself to analysis and nothing but analysis, offering the patient little or nothing in the way of explanation or instruction, but simply aiding him to lay bare the depths of his subconscious mind, believing that by so doing pent-up emotions will be worked off and split-off complexes reassociated to the personality. The disciple of Jung, on the other hand, believing that the trouble is due to a present failure of adaptation, though using the psychoanalytic method to reveal and bring into consciousness the dissociated complexes, uses a considerable amount of teaching and explanation in an endeavour to enable the patient to assimilate the fruits of experience and adapt himself to his environment. The Freudian complains that the follower of Jung beclouds the issue by unintentional suggestion and by failing to discover the underlying train of ideas and the factors in the subconscious from which they derive their emotion. The disciple of Jung

accuses the former of unnecessarily prolonging the process by leaving the patient to find his own way unaided by a wider experience.

The teaching and explanatory method, generally known as re-education, is chiefly associated with the name of Du Bois, who was its original exponent, but as, in his day, the psychoanalytic method of investigating the causes of mental disease was unknown, he was often groping in the dark, and dealing with secondary symptoms and effects, so that his method fell into disrepute in the eyes of the new school. That this method, wisely handled, can be of great benefit in expediting a cure and lessening the painfulness of the process, is beyond gainsay.

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mind alone will not give us the key to a healthy life, we must study social psychology as well as individual psychology, because man is a social animal, and his mental processes are determined by this fact. Any adaptation he makes, and adaptation is the basis of psychotherapy, must be in relation to his social group as well as to his own subconscious wishes. It is not enough to bring these wishes into the light of consciousness, they must be synthesised with the rest of the personality, to the social organisation of which that personality is a unit, and to the great evolutionary drift of which even the race itself is but a partial expression. Psychotherapy may begin with the primitive, but it must end with the divine, for both are integral factors in the human mind.

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