

PSYCHOANALYTIC NOTES ON
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT
OF A CASE OF PARANOIA
(DEMENTIA PARANOIDES)
(1911 [1910])

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

PSYCHOANALYTISCHE BEMERKUNGEN ÜBER EINEN AUTOBIOGRAPHISCH BESCHRIEBENEN FALL VON PARANOIA (DEMENTIA PARANOIDES)

(A) GERMAN EDITIONS:

- 1911 *Jb. psychoanalyt. psychopath. Forsch.*, 3 (1), 9-68.
1913 S.K.S.N., 3, 198-266. (1921, 2nd ed.)
1924 *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8, 355-431. (Revised ed.)
1932 *Vier Krankengeschichten*, 377-460.
1943 *Gesammelte Werke*, 8, 240-316.
1912 'Nachtrag zu dem autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall
von Paranoia (Dementia paranoides)', *Jb. psychoanalyt.
psychopath. Forsch.*, 3 (2), 588-90.
1913 S.K.S.N., 3, 267-70. (1921, 2nd ed.)
1924 *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8, 432-5.
1932 *Vier Krankengeschichten*, 460-3.
1943 *Gesammelte Werke*, 8, 317-20.

(B) ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

- 'Psycho-Analytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account
of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)'
1925 *Collected Papers*, 3, 387-466. - "'Postscript" to the Case
of Paranoia', *ibid.*, 467-70. (Tr. Alix and James
Strachey.)
1958 *Standard Edition*, 12, 1-82. (A re-issue, with a number of
corrections and additional notes, of the version
published in 1925.)

The present edition is a corrected reprint of the *Standard Edition* translation, with some editorial changes.

Schreber's *Memoirs* were published in 1903; but, though they had been widely discussed in psychiatric circles, they seem not to have attracted Freud's attention till the summer of 1910. He is known to have talked of them, and of the whole question of paranoia, during his Sicilian tour with Ferenczi in September of that year. On his return to Vienna he began writing his paper, and letters dated 16 December to both Abraham and Ferenczi announced its completion. It seems not to have been published till the summer of 1911. The 'Postscript' was read before the Third International Psycho-Analytical Congress (held at Weimar) on 22 September 1911, and was published at the beginning of the next year.

Freud had attacked the problem of paranoia at a very early stage of his researches into psychopathology. In his communications to Fliess (Freud, 1950a), which include detailed considerations of the subject dating from 1895 and 1896, and in his second paper on the neuropsychoses of defence (1896b) he aimed at establishing two main theoretical points: that paranoia is a neurosis of *defence* and that its chief mechanism is *projection*. An interesting letter to Fliess of 9 December 1899 (1950a, Letter 125), adds a suggestion that paranoia involves a return to an early auto-erotism.

Between the date of this letter and the publication of the Schreber case history more than ten years elapsed with scarcely a mention of paranoia in Freud's published writings. However, in 1908 he put forward what was to become his main generalization on the subject – namely, the connection between paranoia and repressed passive homosexuality – in letters to Jung (27 January 1908, included in Freud, 1974a) and Ferenczi (11 February 1908), both of whom confirmed that hypothesis.

More than three more years elapsed before the Schreber memoirs offered him the opportunity of publishing his theory for the first time and of supporting it by a detailed account of his analysis of the unconscious processes at work in paranoia.

There are a number of references to that disease in Freud's later writings. The more important of these were his paper on 'A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychoanalytic Theory of the Disease' (1915f) and Section B of 'Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality' (1922b). In addition, 'A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis' (1923d) includes some discussion of the Schreber case, though the neurosis which is the subject of the paper is nowhere described by Freud as paranoia. In none of these later writings is there any essential modification of the views on paranoia expressed in the present work.

The importance of the Schreber analysis, however, is by no means restricted to the light it throws on the problems of paranoia. Section III, in particular (p. 196ff. below), was, together with the simultaneously published short paper on the two principles of mental functioning (1911b), in many ways a forerunner of the metapsychological papers on which Freud embarked three or four years later. A number of subjects are touched upon which were to be discussed afterwards at greater length. Thus, the remarks on narcissism (p. 197f.) were preliminary to the paper devoted to that subject (1914c), the account of the mechanism of repression (p. 205ff.) was to be taken up again in the course of a few years (1915d), and the discussion of the instincts (p. 213f.) was feeling its way towards the more elaborate one in 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915c). The paragraph on projection (p. 204f.) on the other hand was not, in spite of its promise, to find any sequel. Each of the two topics discussed in the later part of the paper, however – the various causes of the onset of neurosis (including the concept of 'frustration') and the part played by successive 'points of fixation' – was to be dealt with before long in a separate paper (1912c and 1913i).

Finally, in the postscript we find Freud's first brief excursion into the field of mythology and his first mention of totems, which were beginning to occupy his thoughts and which were to give the title to one of his principal works (1912-13).

As Freud tells us (p. 181, *n.* 1), his case history makes use of only a single fact (Schreber's age at the time he fell ill) that was not contained in the *Memoirs*. We now possess, thanks to a paper written by Dr Franz Baumeyer (1956), a considerable amount of additional information. Dr Baumeyer was for some years (1946-9) in charge of a hospital near Dresden where he found a quantity of the original case records of Schreber's successive illnesses. He has summarized these records and quoted many of them in full. In addition to this he has collected a large number of facts concerning Schreber's family history and antecedents.¹ Where any of this material seems to be directly relevant to Freud's paper, it will be found mentioned in the footnotes. Here it is only necessary to report the sequel to the history narrated in the *Memoirs*. After his discharge at the end of 1902, Schreber seems to have carried on an outwardly normal existence for some years. Then, in November 1907, his wife had a stroke (though she lived until 1912). This seems to have precipitated a fresh onset of his illness, and he was re-admitted - this time to an asylum in the Dösen district of Leipzig - a fortnight later.² He remained there in an extremely disordered and largely inaccessible state until his death, after gradual physical deterioration, in the spring of 1911 - only a short time before the publication of Freud's paper. The follow-

1. W. G. Niederland (1959a, 1959b, 1960 and 1963) has published further information about Schreber's father of an interesting kind.

2. It appears from a letter to Princess Marie Bonaparte, written by Freud on 13 September 1926, and published in part in the third volume of Ernest Jones's biography (1957, 477), that he had been informed of this relapse and its occasion (among other things) through a Dr Stegmann, though he made no mention of it in his paper. See footnotes on pp. 181 and 186 below.

ing chronological table, based on data derived partly from the *Memoirs* and partly from Baumeyer's material, may make the details in Freud's discussion easier to disentangle.

- 1842 25 July. Daniel Paul Schreber born at Leipzig.
- 1861 November. Father died, aged 53.
- 1877 Elder brother (3 years his senior) died, aged 38.
- 1878 Married.

First Illness

- 1884 Autumn. Stood as candidate for the Reichstag.¹
- 1884 October. For some weeks in Sonnenstein Asylum.
8 December. Leipzig Psychiatric Clinic.
- 1885 1 June. Discharged.
- 1886 1 January. Took up appointment in Leipzig Landgericht.

Second Illness

- 1893 June. Informed of approaching appointment to Appeal Court.
1 October. Took up appointment as Presiding Judge.
21 November. Re-admitted to Leipzig Clinic.
- 1894 14 June. Transferred to Lindenhof Asylum.
29 June. Transferred to Sonnenstein Asylum.
- 1900-1902. Wrote *Memoirs* and took legal action for his discharge.
- 1902 14 July. Court judgement of discharge.
20 December. Discharged.
- 1903 *Memoirs* published.

Third Illness

- 1907 May. Mother died, aged 92.

1. At this time Schreber was already filling an important judicial office, as judge presiding over the Landgericht (a court of inferior jurisdiction) at Chemnitz. After recovering from his first illness he occupied a similar position in the Landgericht in Leipzig. Just before his second illness he was appointed Presiding Judge over a Division of the Saxon Appeal Court in Dresden.

14 November. Wife had stroke. Fell ill immediately afterwards.

27 November. Admitted to Asylum at Leipzig-Dösen.

1911 14 April. Died.

1912 May. Wife died, aged 54.

A note on the three mental hospitals referred to in various ways in the text may also be of help.

(1) Psychiatric Clinic (In-patient department) of the University of Leipzig. Director: Professor Flechsig.

(2) Schloss Sonnenstein. Saxon State Asylum at Pirna on the Elbe, 10 miles above Dresden. Director: Dr G. Weber.

(3) Lindenhof Private Asylum. Near Coswig, 11 miles N. W. of Dresden. Director: Dr Pierson.

An English translation of the *Denkwürdigkeiten* by Dr Ida Macalpine and Dr Richard A. Hunter was published in 1955 (London: William Dawson).¹ For various reasons, some of which will be obvious to anyone comparing their version with ours, it has not been possible to make use of it for the many quotations from Schreber's book which occur in the case history. There are clearly special difficulties in translating the productions of schizophrenics, in which words, as Freud himself pointed out in his paper on 'The Unconscious' (1915e), play such a dominating part. Here the translator is faced by the same problems that meet him so often in dreams, slips of the tongue and jokes. In all these cases the method adopted in the present edition is the pedestrian one of where necessary giving the original German words in footnotes and endeavouring by means of explanatory comments to allow an English reader some opportunity of forming an opinion of his own on the material. At the same time, it would be misleading to disregard outward forms entirely and to present through a purely literal

1. Cf. also a critical discussion of Freud's interpretation by the same authors (1953).

translation an uncouth picture of Schreber's style. One of the remarkable features of the original is the contrast it perpetually offers between the involved, elaborate and dignified sentences of official academic nineteenth-century German and the *outré* extravagances of the psychotic events which they describe.

Throughout this paper figures in brackets with no preceding 'p.' are page references to the original German edition of Schreber's memoirs – *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken*, Leipzig, Oswald Mutze, 1903. Figures in brackets with a preceding 'p.' are as always in the *Pelican Freud Library*, references to pages in the present volume.

Quotations from Schreber, as well as page references to the *Denkwürdigkeiten* and its Appendices, have been compared with the original and, where necessary, corrected. These corrections have, however, only been indicated where they involved a change in meaning.