

MINUTES OF THE
VIENNA
PSYCHOANALYTIC
SOCIETY

Volume I: 1906—1908

EDITED BY

HERMAN NUNBERG

ERNST FEDERN

Translated by M. Nunberg

New York

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES PRESS, INC.

homosexual vocation. Neurotics also often yearn for an institution out of homosexual desires.

HITSCHMANN first calls attention to a book: *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Arbeiters*¹³ in which the author presents a picture of the typical vagabond (without dementia praecox). The book contains nothing erotic, yet reading it one gains the impression that this man is masturbating.

Traveling always means to us a journey of conquest. But one becomes a hero only after he has mastered his love for mother. The home is often also an erotic inhibition. In the vagabond one must also take into consideration the complexity of forces which may not permit him to leave his milieu once he has become enmeshed in it. The choice of vagrancy, moreover, betrays a deep lack of culture which must be based on serious defects.

For the distinction of paranoia and dementia praecox, Hitschmann missed references to the age of the patients in the individual cases.

The discontent with the environment is, in his opinion, mostly a dissatisfaction with the self: a sort of hypochondriacal state.

(FREUD observes here: if it is true that anxiety neurosis is the somatic equivalent of hysteria, there must also exist a somatic condition that has an analogous relationship to paranoia—and that is hypochondria. In this state, a return of the libido to the subject's ego also takes place and is always accompanied by corresponding changes to unpleasurable sensations.¹⁴)

[A.] DEUTSCH mentions the (homosexual) friendship between the poets Rimbaud and Verlaine. One day both disappeared from home. They wandered about together for years. Suddenly they fled from each other, only to reunite later on.

STEKEL speaks of a case of dementia praecox following rheumatism with chorea.

The most important factor in vagrancy is the friend who drives the vagrant into flight. Finally, he calls attention to the similarity of the anxiety neurosis to morbus Basedow.

¹³ Karl Fischer: *Denkwürdigkeiten und Erinnerungen eines Arbeiters* [Memoirs and Recollections of a Worker], 3 Vols. Leipzig, 1904-1905.

¹⁴ This thought is more clearly crystallized in later works of Freud.

SCIENTIFIC MEETING on February 13, 1907

Present: Freud, Adler, Federn, Heller, Hitschmann, Kahane, Reitler, Rank, Sadger.

Hitschmann returns Minutes 11 and Reitler's supplement to 9.

PRESENTATION

Spring's Awakening, by Wedekind¹

SPEAKER: DR. REITLER

Reitler begins with a characterization of the three main figures: Moritz Stiefel, who remains arrested at the stage of infantile sexuality

¹ Frank Wedekind (1864-1918) called his play *Frühlingserwachen*, *Eine Kindertragödie* [A Children's Tragedy], and he was indeed less concerned with individuals than with the minor and major tragedies of young people awakening to sex without knowledge and without guidance, misunderstood and derided by parents and teachers. The plot is simple: the student Melchior and fourteen-year-old Wendla find answers to their questions in a hayloft. Wendla becomes pregnant; before she dies during an abortion, she asks her helpless mother, "Why did you not tell me these things?"

Melchior's friend Moritz commits suicide because of bad marks in school. His distraught father, searching through Moritz's room, finds an obscene treatise on coitus in a strange handwriting which is discovered to be that of Melchior. Melchior is expelled from school and, fleeing from his parents who want to send him to a reform school, he comes to the cemetery. While reading the inscription on Wendla's tombstone, he suddenly sees Moritz, who has stepped out of his grave, come toward him with his head in his arms. Moritz attempts to lure his living friend into his realm but then the "Vermummte Herr" ["The Masked Gentleman"] appears to chase the phantom back into his grave and to take Melchior with him. It is life itself which is personified by the "Masked Gentleman." It is "To the Masked Gentleman" that the play is dedicated by the author.

(autoerotism); his friend Melchior Gabor, who develops beyond infantile sexuality to normal sexuality (intercourse with Wendla); and Wendla who has marked masochistic tendencies. In the very first scene, Wendla betrays her fear of awakening sexuality (thoughts of death, and the like).

Reitler then goes through the drama, scene by scene, giving his interpretations as he goes along. He shows, for instance, how Wedekind connects the incipient atheism and the simultaneous loss of parental authority with the knowledge of parental sexual activity. He mentions the writing of a diary as a sort of psychic discharge.

Reitler understands the story of the headless queen (Maria) and the king with two heads, who gives one to the queen, as a symbolic representation of bisexuality.

In the last scene, Reitler interprets the ghost of Moritz as a representation of the wish to return to infantile sexuality, whereas the Masked Gentleman represents the sexuality of the adult. Both figures are merely projections of the struggle which is going on in Melchior's soul.

From the standpoint of the theory of sexuality, no fault can be found with Wedekind. One might possibly consider it an omission that he does not sufficiently emphasize the importance of the erotogenic zones in presexual life [for later development].

In commenting on the process involved in Wedekind's creativity, Reitler refers to Professor Freud's observation that Jensen in his *Gradiva* gives a correct clinical description of the development of a delusional idea. Replying to an inquiry, Jensen stated that he came upon this intuitively, without any knowledge of the clinical picture, let alone of the mechanisms of delusional ideas. Wedekind cannot be considered equally uninformed.

DISCUSSION

FREUD characterizes Wedekind's book as meritorious but not a great work of art. It has lasting value as a document relating to the history of civilization. We must assume that Wedekind has a deep understanding of sexuality. This is shown by the mere presence of constant sexual undertones in the manifest dialogues. However, to assume a conscious intention in the creation of all of this is no more

justified than in the case of Jensen. One can produce the most beautiful symptomatic act without having any knowledge of the concept or nature of symptoms. Freud mentions a slip of the tongue in *Wallensteins Lager*² which Schiller certainly could not have explained. After the discourse between Questenberg and Octavio (and Max), Octavio says "Let us go." When Questenberg asks "Whither?" Octavio answers, "To her," but immediately corrects himself to, "To him." During Questenberg's speech it occurred to him that Max's trip with the princess had been arranged only for the purpose of making him fall in love with her, thus tying him to Wallenstein's party. That is why he says "To her" when he is about to go to the general. (He is thinking of the intrigue with the princess.) This motivation of the slip of the tongue is then expressed in the scene between father and son.

The sexual theories of children constitute a theme well worth an independent study: namely, how children discover normal sexuality. In all of their misconceptions, there lies a core of truth.

In considering the dream in which the boy sees legs, clad in tights, stepping over the pulpit, one must not forget that, to the boy, school is partly a means of keeping him away from sexuality. Behind the school tyrant he sees the woman.

Diaries can with equal justification be called a means of repression [just as well as expression]. Freud has at present a patient who used to write zealously in his diary. Now that the diaries can be examined in the light of psychoanalysis, we discover that the essential, the unconscious of early periods, is consistently omitted from the entries.

Concerning atheism, faith in God regularly coincides with faith in the father. Freud mentions a woman patient who lost her faith in God when she lost her trust in her father.

The ill treatment of children in the sack reminds him of the punishment customary for masturbation.

²The passage mentioned here appears in the drama *Piccolomini* (Act I, Scene 5) and not in *Wallensteins Lager*. Max Piccolomini, colonel and son of the leader of Wallenstein's enemies at the Austrian imperial court, has just accompanied Wallenstein's daughter on a trip. In a conversation with his father he extolls enthusiastically the blessings of peace. This seems suspicious to the Count Piccolomini since his son was an ardent soldier. Schiller, here, makes use of the fact that the imperial court accused Wallenstein of peace negotiations with the enemy and therefore planned his murder. Freud quotes this example in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). *S.E.*, 6:96-97.

He considers it a fine bit of observation that Wedekind depicts the longing for object love without object choice in Melchior and Wendla who are not at all in love with each other. The fact that Wendla, the masochist, is not beaten by her parents also demonstrates that Wedekind has not followed the usual cliché: otherwise he would have had her beaten in childhood. On the contrary, Wendla complains that she has not been beaten enough. Children who have been severely beaten do not become masochists.

Freud believes that Reitler's interpretation of the fantasy of the headless queen is incorrect. He wants to mention only a few elements: the poetic source [of the fantasy] points to Moritz's later fate; Moritz himself later appears as a "headless" person.³ With his suicide he follows an old fantasy (what Adler once claimed to be true of all suicides). The organic source of the fantasy is the anonymity of the fantasied woman; he is still too timid, one might say, to love a specific woman. Women frequently indulge in fantasies about headless men (masks). The fantasy of the two-headed king is reminiscent of Plato's sexual fantasies.⁴ Lastly, a "headless" individual cannot learn and Moritz is tortured precisely by his incapacity to learn.

The last scene acquires its grimly humorous character with full poetic necessity. The humor of the last scene means only: all of this is basically childish nonsense. The two characters should certainly be understood as two currents in the boy's soul: as the temptation to suicide and as the temptation to live. But it is also true that suicide is the climax of negative autoerotism. In this respect, Reitler's interpretation is correct. The negative of self-gratification is suicide.

The inquisition to which the Masked Gentleman is subjected is not simple humor. Deeper thoughts are behind it. The demon of life is, at the same time, the devil (the unconscious). Life is being subjected to examination as it were. This questioning is a regular characteristic

³ The German text has: ". . . die poetische Quelle ist der Hinweis auf sein spätere Schicksal; Moritz selbst trete ja dann als 'kopflose' Person auf." The literal translation is: "The poetic source is the allusion to his later fate; indeed, Moritz himself appears later on as a 'headless' person."

The meaning seems to be: the fantasy of the headless queen has two sources, a poetic source in the poet's anticipation of Moritz's later fate, and an organic source in the anonymity of the fantasied woman.

⁴ Plato's belief in the bisexuality of man is expressed in the form of a legend in his *Symposium*.

of the anxiety state. For example, in an anxiety attack, an individual begins to examine himself, allegedly to find out whether he is still in his right senses. Oedipus's examination is also linked with anxiety. Behind the Sphinx lurks anxiety (Sphinx means the strangler.)⁵ The question at the base of all these examinations is probably the question raised by the sexual curiosity of the child: where is it that children come from? The Sphinx puts the question in reverse: what is it that comes?⁶ Answer: the human being. Quite a few neuroses begin with this question.

Freud reads to the members a letter, written by an eleven-year-old girl to her aunt. The little girl asks her aunt to enlighten her about the origin of children. When she was twenty-three years old, this girl became ill with a severe obsessional neurosis.

RANK maintains that Wedekind is a striking example of Adler's inferiority-overcompensation theory. Wedekind surely had an inferior genital system. It suffices to refer to his undoubted enuresis, which can be proven "symptomatically": the arsonist in one of the earliest short novels by Wedekind (*The Fire in Egliswyl*) is already highly suspicious, but the *pisser-au-lit* scene in one of his last dramas (*Pandora's Box*) is definite proof. He feels certain that other such passages could be found. From Reitler we have already heard about masturbation (solitary and mutual) as well as about emissions and wet dreams (*Spring's Awakening*). He also mentioned the homosexual relationship between the two boys, beginning in the vineyard. There is a wet dream also in *Rabbi Esra*. Later (genuine) homosexuality is quite clear in many of his poems. Proof of the genital inferiority by means of circumstantial evidence: enuresis, emissions, masturbation (solitary and mutual), homosexuality has thus been produced. A second inferior organ is the mouth: Wedekind is known as a hard drinker (enuresis), is cleanly shaven,⁷ and expression of a marked oral per-

⁵ According to Robert Graves (*The Greek Myths*, 2 Vols. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), the question of the Sphinx is: What creature with a single voice has sometimes two feet, sometimes three, sometimes four, and is weakest when it has the most feet? Oedipus answers: Man, for he crawls on all four as a baby, stands erect on two feet as a youth, and supports himself on his cane as an old man.

⁶ In the unconscious, causality can be represented only by a sequence. The development of man is expressed by a series of people beginning with the infant and ending with the old man: each engenders the next.

⁷ In those days men on the Continent used to wear beards.

version is found in his works (in *Fire in Egliswyl* and in many of his poems).

The supervalence of the mouth is manifested by the fact that Wedekind became an orator (actor) and singer.

Rank considers Wedekind's sexual symbolism to be for the most part unconscious.

KAHANE emphasizes that one has to defend society against the analytic criticism directed against it. And Wedekind's book is, in essence, a critique of society. All civilization is indeed based on sexual repression as Freud has shown. Education necessarily has to follow this path even though some may perish in the process. This is, we might say, the touchstone held out to the individual by society. Furthermore, one must not seek only the poet himself in his work as Rank is doing. It seems to him that Wedekind did not work consciously. His work turned out too well.

In connection with the headless queen, he wishes to remark that the head symbolizes the penis and that the boy's penis is, so to speak, still a headless penis. Perhaps this implies also that one could not look in the face of the person with whom one has had sexual intercourse. Moreover, the head (reason) is the impeder of sexuality (inhibition).

Examination: onanists who think that their memory is becoming weak examine themselves frequently. And Oedipus too may personify the individual who has not been depleted by autoerotism to the extent that he can no longer answer the question.

SADGER regards Wendla's white garment (last scene) also as a shroud (dying: unfulfilled sexual longing). He calls attention to the change brought about in children by sexual enlightenment: if the enlightenment comes from the parents, admiration for them increases, especially for the mother who "must have suffered and been tormented." However, if enlightenment is given by someone else (servant girl and others), the child thinks: what a good time she must have had.

It should also be emphasized that Wendla has no father. She has known only the homosexual love for the mother and envies her friend who is beaten by her father. Her yearning for a beating is therefore

a yearning for heterosexuality.⁸ The switch is a symbol for the penis (pointed and flexible). Thus, she is longing for a caress from a father. Etiology of masochism: first caressing.

The headlessness refers to the penis (head means also the behind). The headless queen is the "repressed" mother ("Queen of Hearts"). Lastly, Sadger points out the characteristic trait shown by Moritz's father who after Moritz's suicide claims that Moritz was not his son. In this way, he fends off the disagreeable. (FREUD: That is his solace.)

HELLER, too, is of the opinion that Wedekind did not set out to create with conscious intentions, as Reitler claims. Then he disagrees with Kahane's assertion that sexual struggle is a means of social selection. Indeed, there are quite a few gradations between perishing through something and the mastery of it. There is scarcely a person who emerges from this period without some scar, and it is not always the worst ones who perish.

FEDERN stresses that, of all the great psychologists among modern writers (Dostoyevsky, Musset, Jacobsen, and others), only Wedekind has recognized the importance of infantile sexuality. Perhaps it is a sign of the time; [it] may have become ready for it. Wedekind's work plays some part in curing mankind from the torments of sexuality. On the other hand, our kind of education (through its forceful moral precepts) fulfills a good purpose in so far as it shields the child from sexuality and its torments for a long time. In addition, the powerful tendencies toward cruelty which are inherent in mankind are bridled by our Judaeo-Christian upbringing. In spite of this, it is true that our moral education has to be changed.

ADLER says that he has never regarded Wedekind as a poet but rather as an extremely ingenious person. At the time he wrote *Spring's Awakening*, he was living in Zürich, in licentious company, and was considered a depraved individual. When he was asked what he was doing, he would reply, "I am perishing." It was in this frame of mind that he reached a solution of these problems. In him it is not repressed material that finds poetic expression: he *knows* everything.

⁸ Beating as proof of love. See Freud's "A Child Is Being Beaten" (1919). *S.E.*, 17, 175-204.

For example, he portrays the masochist Wendla also as a sadist who gratifies her cruel impulses in doing charitable work.

Wendla's speech about short or long dresses betrays her desire to be denuded.

In the headless queen, there lies the germ of a paranoid idea. Contrary to Rank's idea, Wedekind is not a typical example of Adler's theory.

HITSCHMANN points out that Wedekind himself experienced most of what he portrayed. He did not, by a long shot, put in as much morality and "purpose" as one likes to read into it.

Headless: the woman acquires a "head" only through the man. The analogy with the sack is very striking: here too the child's head and body are separated. The pretense of being ignorant in *sexualibus* [sexual matters] is a sign of hysteria: the pleasure in hearing of such things is hidden behind it. It seems doubtful that the child would feel the sadistic tendencies of his parents. (ADLER: Wedekind just *knows* this).

It is a fine characterization that Melchior makes fun of Wendla's charitable activities. In the seduction [of a woman] it is important that the man fight the moral attitudes of the woman. Recalling his own school days Hitschmann points out that a boy with normal sexuality would be expelled (as in Wedekind). During intercourse, Melchior says that he does not love Wendla; nor does she love him: sex and erotism are separated here. Finally, Hitschmann raises the question of where the onanist's *Weltschmerz* comes from.

REITLER adheres to his original interpretation of the final scene (autoerotism—normal sexuality), whereupon

FREUD remarks, concerning the concept of autoerotism, that Havelock Ellis uses this term when only *one* person is involved (thus, for instance, also in relation to hysterical symptoms), whereas Freud uses it when there is no object; for example, those who masturbate with images [*Bilderonanisten*] would not be considered autoerotic.

14

SCIENTIFIC MEETING on February 20, 1907

Present: Freud, Adler, Bach, [A.] Deutsch, Federn, Heller, Häutler, Hitschmann, Hollerung, Kahane, Meisl, Rank, Reitler, Sadger, Stekel.

PRESENTATION

PROFESSOR FREUD speaks about

The Hopelessness of All Psychology, by Moebius¹

The pessimism of the title seems to be psychologically related to the circumstance that the book was written shortly before Moebius's death. It is an important book, of special interest to us because Moebius, taking a different path, comes to conclusions which have been familiar to us for a long time. However, the reviewer cannot agree with all of the author's conclusions. It is an insoluble psychological riddle to him how Moebius could, throughout his life, ignore the Freudian doctrines, especially since they were known to him (as is shown in a passage in the foreword to the translation of Sancti's dream book);² and then, in his last work, he advocates views which are in

¹ *Die Hoffnungslosigkeit aller Psychologie*. Halle: Marhold, 1906. Paul Moebius (1853-1907), German neurologist and psychiatrist.

² Sante de Sancti (1862-1935), Italian physician and dream explorer.