THE ORIGINS OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902

by

SIGMUND FREUD

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EDITORS' NOTE

This book consists of a selection of letters from Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, a Berlin physician and biologist, written between the years 1887 and 1902. The letters, with other documents left by Fliess, came into the hands of a second-hand dealer during the Nazi period in Germany and thus into the editors' possession.[1] Fliess's letters to Freud have not been found.

The preliminary work of preparing the German edition for the press was done by Marie Bonaparte. The work of detailed selection was undertaken by Anna Freud and Ernst Kris. Ernst Kris is responsible for the Introduction and notes.[2]

The correspondence consists in all of 284 items—postcards, picture postcards, letters, notes, drafts. The selection was made on the principle of making public everything relating to the writer's scientific work and scientific interests and everything bearing on the social and political conditions in which psycho-analysis originated; and of omitting or abbreviating everything publication of which would be inconsistent with professional or personal confidence.

Similarly all letters and passages in letters have been omitted which are mere repetitions, or refer to the two correspondents' frequent appointments to meet or to their intended or actual meetings; as well as a good many passages relating to purely family matters or events in their circle of friends. The table on the next page shows the proportion of published to unpublished material.

This volume contains nothing sensational, and is principally intended for the reader and serious student of Freud's published works. In the Introduction and notes an attempt is made to facilitate

[1] Draft I in the present volume is the property of Dr. Robert Fliess, into whose possession it came after his father's death. He took it with him as a souvenir when he emigrated from Berlin to New York several years before the Fliess household was broken up.

[2] Translators' notes are enclosed in square brackets [. . .]

understanding of the letters and drafts and to establish their connection with Freud's contemporary and subsequent works. In the English edition references to recent publications have been added, and the editors express their gratitude to James Strachey and A. Winterstein for a number of suggestions and corrections which have been adopted.

The published letters are numbered in order of date, and the notes and drafts are designated by letters of the alphabet. The letters are nearly all dated by the author, or alternatively the date is established by the postmark. In the few cases where drafts or notes are undated they have been inserted by the editors in what appears to be the correct chronological order by reason of their contents. Omissions have been indicated by dots.

The author of the material in this volume would not have consented to the publication of any of it. It was Freud's habit to destroy all notes and preliminary drafts as soon as they had served their purpose, to publish nothing incomplete or unfinished, and to publish material of a personal nature only when it was essential for the purpose of demonstrating unconscious connections. These letters were brought to light by chance, and the editors feel justified in publishing them in spite of the hesitation which respect for the author's attitude in the matter inevitably imposes. They amplify the prehistory and early history of psycho-analysis in a way that no other available material does, provide insight into certain phases of Freud's intellectual processes from his first clinical impressions until the formulation of his theory, throw light on the blind alleys and wrong roads into which he was diverted in the process of hypothesis-building, and furnish a vivid picture of him during the difficult years during which his interest shifted from physiology and neurology to psychology and psychopathology.

Since the publication of the German original of this volume (London, Imago Publishing Co. 1950), certain readers seem to have gained the impression that the "secrets" of Freud's personal life have now become accessible. In view of this we should like to make it clear that the material here published supplements to some extent data on Freud's life and experiences familiar from *The Interpretation of Dreams* and other works of his; but neither the letters to Fliess

nor what Freud felt compelled to record about himself in his published works reveal more than certain aspects of his interests and preoccupations at the time.

MARIE BONAPARTE, Paris. ANNA FREUD, London. ERNST KRIS, New York.

TRANSLATORS' NOTE

Though the translators are jointly responsible for this volume as a whole, the translation of the bulk of the letters is the work of Eric Mosbacher, while James Strachey is mainly responsible for the "Project" at the end of the book, the "Drafts" and the more technical passages in the correspondence. They have had the advantage of being able, through the kindness of Miss Anna Freud, to consult the original MSS. where difficulties or obscurities have arisen.

J.S.
E.M.

NUMERICAL TABLE

Year	*Total number of letters, etc.*	*Letters, etc., here published.*
1887	2	2
1888	3	3
1889	—	—
1890	2	2
1891	4	2
1892	7	4
1893	15	6
1894	18	9
1895	37	21
1896	29	15
1897	39	29
1898	35	21
1899	44	26
1900	27	14
1901	17	11
1902	5	3
	284	168

INTRODUCTION

BY

ERNST KRIS

I

WILHELM FLIESS'S SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS

Freud's letters to Fliess give us a picture of him during the years in which he applied himself—tentatively at first—to a new field of study, psychopathology, and acquired the insight on which psycho-analysis, both as a theory and a therapy, is based. They enable us to see him grappling with "a problem that had never previously been stated",[1] and struggling with an environment whose rejection of his work endangered his livelihood and that of his family; and to follow him along part of the road during his effort to deepen his newly-acquired insight against the resistance of his own unconscious impulses.

The letters cover the period from 1887 to 1902, from Freud's thirty-first to forty-sixth year, from when he had just set up in practice as a specialist in nervous and mental diseases until he was engaged in his preliminary studies for *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. To the years of this correspondence there belong, besides his first essays on the neuroses, the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901b), and *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905e).

Reading these letters is rather like listening to someone speaking on the telephone: you can hear only what one party to the conversation is saying; the rest you have to guess. As in this case the listener is interested only in what is being said by the party whom he can

[1] The phrase is from *Studies on Hysteria*.

hear, he may at first be inclined to dismiss from his mind the speaker at the other end of the line. But very soon he finds he cannot follow satisfactorily unless every now and then he reconstructs the dialogue as a whole.

Freud's friendship with Wilhelm Fliess (1858-1928) was, so far as we know, the closest of his life-time, and it was so closely bound up, both as a helping and a hindering element, with the development of his theories in the nineties that it seems desirable to start with a brief outline of Fliess's scientific interests. If Fliess's letters to Freud were available, we should be in a position, not only properly to follow the exchange of ideas between the two men, but to obtain a reliable impression of Fliess's personality. As it is we have had to fall back on the little that we have been able to gather from Fliess's writings and from questioning those who knew him. All who knew him emphasize his wealth of biological knowledge, his imaginative grasp of medicine, his fondness for far-reaching speculation and his impressive personal appearance; they also emphasize his tendency to cling dogmatically to a once-formed opinion. These characteristics are partially perceptible in his published works.

Fliess was trained as a nose and throat specialist, but his medical knowledge and scientific interests extended over an area far wider than this comparatively restricted field. He was a consultant with a big practice in Berlin, which he continued to the end of his life, but otolaryngological therapy was merely the hub of his wide medical and scientific interests, which took him outside the field of medicine into that of general biology. The first of his more important published works, which he decided to write at Freud's suggestion (see Letter 10), was concerned with a clinical syndrome.

Fliess's interest was early roused by the fact that he found he was able to clear up a number of symptoms by the administration of cocaine to the nasal mucous membrane. On the basis of this discovery he convinced himself that he was confronted with a clinical entity, a reflex neurosis proceeding from the nose.[1] This, in Fliess's words, was to be regarded as "a complex of varying

[1] See Fliess (1892) and (1893).

symptoms, as we find to be the case in Menière's complex."[1] Fliess distinguished symptoms of three different types: head pains; neuralgic pains (in the arm, at the points of the shoulder-blades or between them, in the area of the ribs or the heart, the xiphoid process, the stomach, the spleen, the small of the back in the area of the kidneys; but "gastric neuralgias" in particular); and finally disturbed functioning, particularly of the digestive organs, the heart and the respiratory system. "The number of symptoms adduced is great," Fliess says, "and yet they owe their existence to one and the same locality—the nose. For their homogeneity is demonstrated, not only by their simultaneous appearance, but by their simultaneous disappearance. The characteristic of this whole complex of complaints is that one can bring them temporarily to an end by anaesthetizing with cocaine the responsible area in the nose."[2]

Fliess maintained that the aetiology of the nasal reflex neurosis was a double one. It could arise from organic alterations, for example "the after-effects upon the nose of infectious diseases", or it could be the result of functional, purely vasomotor disturbbances. It was the latter that explained why "neurasthenic complaints, in other words the neuroses with a sexual aetiology, so frequently assume the form of the nasal reflex neurosis."[3] Fliess

[1] This comparison was suggested by Freud. See Draft C.

[2] It is significant, though it is not mentioned in the correspondence, that Fliess indirectly owed his diagnostic criterium, the administration of cocaine to the nasal mucous membrane, to Freud, who had early drawn attention to the importance of the coca plant; Freud's investigations were continued by the oculist Koller. (See page 30, footnote 2, and *An Autobiographical Study*, 1925d.) See also the paper by Bernfeld (1953) on the subject.

[3] The value of Fliess's clinical writings is still disputed. German clinical literature contains a number of discussions of his work on nasal troubles. These are more or less summarized by G. Hoffer, who says in connection with the nasal asthmas that Fliess paid insufficient attention in his monographs on the nasal reflex neurosis to the work of others in the same field. The result was that at first "a number of enthusiastic followers . . . were opposed by a small circle of sceptics, which quickly grew, however". In Hoffer's opinion there existed "no justification whatsoever for attributing any special priority to nasal complaints as compared with nervous irritations in any other area of the body". "Die Krankheiten der Luftwege und der Mundhöhle" in Denker and Kahler, Part III, page 263 *sqq.*) Other contributors to Denker and Kahler adopt a similar attitude, though several confirm the appearance of the syndrome described by Fliess and express a favourable opinion of the effectiveness of his therapeutic proposals.

In American medical literature Fliess's work was, so far as we are aware,

explained this frequency by assuming a special connection between the nose and the genital apparatus. He recalled the phenomenon of vicarious nose bleeding in place of menstruation, recalled that "the swelling of the turbinate bone during menstruation is to be observed with the naked eye," and reported cases in which the administration of cocaine to the nose led to miscarriage. He maintained that a special connection between the nasal and genital areas existed in men also. In his later works he developed this alleged connection further, basing it at first on purely clinical evidence.

From the clinical observation that "certain parts of the nose played an important part in the origin of two complaints (gastric neuralgia and dysmenorrhoea)" he concluded that "hyperplastic exogenous alterations in the nose" led to "lasting cure of the secondary phenomena when the nasal disturbance was removed," and that "vasomotor endogenous alterations in the nose" arose "essentially from the sexual organs".[1] Fliess was concerned with the problems of human sexual life in general, and Freud, at a time when he was only imperfectly informed about the work that Fliess was doing and projecting, was able to assume that he had solved "the problem of conception", *i.e.*, the problem of at what period likelihood of conception was smallest. Fliess's interests, however, were directed elsewhere.

In the spring of 1896 he sent to Freud his manuscript on "the relations between the nose and the female sex organs from the biological aspect", which was published at the beginning of the following year.[2] In it Fliess elaborates in several respects the theory that he had put forward in his previous work, namely that of a connection between the nose and the female genitals. He states that alterations in the nose are regularly to be observed during menstruation, and he discusses the diagnostic and therapeutic value of administering cocaine to the nose. He claims that this is considerable, because menstruation is "the prototype of numerous phenomena in sexual

not mentioned. *Cf.* the discussion of the nasal neuroses by R. A. Fenton in Jackson (1945); and in Sluder (1927). For more recent references to his work and its contributions to the field which today is covered by the term "psychosomatic medicine" see Holmes *et al.* (1951).

[1] Fliess (1895).

[2] Fliess (1897).

life . . . childbed and the act of birth more particularly being both in time and in their essential nature nothing but a transmutation of the menstrual process". "The real pains of delivery" and "nasal dysmenorrhoea, regarded morphologically", are "homologues".

These "facts", which Fliess sought to establish by numerous observations, led him to far-reaching hypotheses about the role of periods in human life. In his introduction he expresses his ideas more pointedly than in the often clumsy language of the monograph:

"Woman's menstrual bleeding", he says, is the expression "of a process which affects both sexes and the beginning of which goes back beyond puberty. . . .

"The facts before us compel us to emphasize another factor. They teach us that, apart from the menstrual process of the twenty-eight day type, yet another group of periodic phenomena exists with a twenty-three day cycle, to which people of all ages and both sexes are subject.

"Consideration of these two groups of periodic phenomena points to the conclusion that they have a solid inner connection with both male and female sexual characteristics. And if both—only with different emphasis—are present both in man and woman, that is only consistent with our bisexual constitution.

"Recognition of these things led to the further insight that the development of our organism takes place by fits and starts in these sexual periods, and that the day of our death is determined by them as much as is the day of our birth. The disturbances of illness are subject to the same periodic laws as are these periodic phenomena themselves.

"A mother transmits her periods to her child and determines its sex by the period which is first transmitted. The periods then continue in the child, and are repeated with the same rhythm from generation to generation. They can no more be created anew than can energy, and their rhythm survives as long as organised beings reproduce themselves sexually. These rhythms are not restricted to mankind, but extend into the animal world and probably throughout the organic world. The wonderful accuracy with which the period of twenty-three, or, as the case may be, twenty-eight whole days is observed permits one to suspect a deeper connection

between astronomical relations and the creation of organisms."

These are the broad principles of Fliess's period theory, which he continued to develop for many years, notably in his principal work *Der Ablauf des Lebens* ("The Course of Life"), of which the first edition appeared in 1906 and the second in 1923.[1] He supplemented the first statement of his theory in 1897 with a number of other monographs devoted to the subject of bisexuality, but he laid the chief emphasis on working out the mathematical "proofs" of his theory with an obstinacy and lack of objectivity which ignored all inconsistencies and inconvenient facts.

Some of Fliess's clinical findings have been adopted into modern gynaecology and otolaryngology, but his period theory, which roused critical interest at the time of publication, has been almost unanimously rejected by modern biologists; in particular, his period calculations, which were based on false inferences, have long since been recognised as fallacious.[2]

At the time of his meeting with Freud none of Fliess's works had appeared, but a capacity for bold thinking must already have characterized him. In the autumn of 1887 he paid a visit to Vienna for purposes of professional study, and Breuer advised him to attend Freud's lectures on neurology. He took the opportunity of discussing with Freud the new views which the latter was forming on the anatomy and functioning of the central nervous system. The projects which they discussed were only partially completed and published. The correspondence that followed began as that of two specialists who passed patients on to each other; and from 1893 onwards it became a regular exchange of ideas between two friends drawn together by common scientific interests, who continually

[1] See also his later, shorter and to an extent more popular works. (Fliess, 1924a, b and c.)

[2] A detailed criticism of the mathematical assumptions in Fliess's period theory was made by J. Aelby, a physician (Aelby, 1928). Fliess's researches were continued on a sounder basis by the gynaecologist Georg Riebold, whose writings on the subject from 1908 onwards were collected into a single volume (Riebold, 1942). In Riebold's view "some truth lurks" in Fliess's fundamental idea "that life follows a periodic rhythm . . . and the periods of twenty-three and twenty-eight days that he discovered are of frequent occurrence, but the claim made by Fliess, who in his vanity puts himself on a par with Kepler" is rejected as belonging to the realm of the psychopathological. The efforts of Riebold, Fliess and others to establish a relation between menstruation and other periodic

looked forward to but never attained their aim of jointly publishing their scientific work. The progress of their friendship was facilitated by the circumstance that in 1892 Fliess married a Viennese girl who belonged to the circle of Breuer's patients; the result of this was that in the early years the two men met frequently. Soon, however, they started arranging meetings outside the circle of their family and friends in Vienna, at which they exchanged their scientific ideas and findings. Freud called these meetings "congresses". Many of his letters fill in the gaps between the "congresses" and are full of references to what had passed between the two men in conversation.[1]

In the first years of their friendship they had a great deal in common. Both were the sons of Jewish middle-class business men, specialists devoted to scientific research, concerned with setting up a family and establishing a practice. In 1886, the year before he met Fliess, Freud, who was the older by two years, had married and opened a consulting room at 8 Maria Theresienstrasse. During the years covered by the correspondence we see Freud's family increase from one to six; we hear of the removal to the flat at 19 Berggasse, which Freud was to leave forty-seven years later, after the Nazi occupation of Austria, to emigrate to England. We hear of Fliess's marriage to a Fräulein Ida Bondy, of Vienna, of the birth of their three children, and of the life of the two families in so far as this is reflected in the correspondence of two friends.

The resemblance of their outer circumstances was supplemented by the resemblance in the two men's intellectual background. Their

phenomena have been critically examined by Knaus (Knaus, 1938, p. 47): "With the advance of our knowledge of the functional connection between the glands related to the uterus and the organ of menstruation there disappears . . . belief in any deep cosmic connection between menstruation and its periodicity, and therewith the scientific repute of Riebold's period laws". Outside Germany no attention has been paid to Fliess's biological theories.

Apart from Aelby and Riebold, several otolaryngologists have observed a mystical tendency in Fliess's clinical writings. "To obtain a picture of the mental attitude underlying the whole, one should not confine oneself only to Fliess's rhinological writings, but also take into account his other works, which contain a number mystique which could quite well have been a product of the end of the Middle Ages." (F. Blumenfeld's article on "Die Krankheiten der Luftwege" in Denker and Kahler, Part II, page 51.)

[1] The result is that numerous passages and remarks, of which only a few are here reproduced, remain unintelligible in spite of all efforts.

scientific interests rested on a firm foundation of the humanities. They shared an admiration for the masterpieces of world literature, and exchanged quotations which fitted in with their trend of thought. Freud referred continually to Shakespeare as well as to Kipling and other contemporary English writers,[1] and owed to Fliess a closer acquaintance with the works of the Swiss writer Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, who remained a permanent favourite of his.

The things they mentioned betrayed the two men's predominant interests. Among Freud's books is a two-volume edition of Helmholtz's lectures, which Fliess sent him as a Christmas present in 1898. Freud, who followed medical literature closely in the nineties, kept sending hurried postcards[2] to his friend in Berlin drawing his attention to articles on otolaryngolical matters which Fliess might have missed in the German, French and English medical press. He also mentions his study of the works of contemporary psychologists, his growing interest in prehistoric and archaeological studies of the first modest beginnings of Greek and Roman civilization, which was a substitute for his long-desired and long-postponed journey to Italy in a Goethean mood. Among the few contemporary events to which Freud drew particular attention was Sir Arthur Evans's discoveries in Crete; he mentions the first newspaper report of this event, which led to the reconstruction of an unknown civilization from the rubble of the past.

There was a sharper contrast in the physical environment in which the two men lived. The contrast between the tired, cramped Vienna of Franz Josef and the lively, go-ahead Berlin of Wilhelm II is often vividly reflected in Freud's letters. The contrast extended into the economic sphere. In Vienna medical practice, "right to the very top of the tree", was severely affected by every economic recession, every one of which, in addition to the effects of the ups-and-downs in Freud's reputation with his colleagues and the public, was reflected in his household's welfare. Fliess's letters betray no such anxieties. His practice seems to have grown rapidly and uninterruptedly. In any case, after his marriage he was exempt from financial worries.

[1] In postcards or letters not reproduced here.
[2] Not reproduced here.

The contrast between Vienna and Berlin extended into the political field. Freud reports the defeat of the Liberals in Vienna, the victory of the anti-Semites, who took over the city administration, and the anti-Semitic tendencies in the Vienna Medical Society, the medical faculty and the academic administration which for a long time withheld from him the title of professor. Freud had every right to expect that the title of professor would act as a stimulus to his practice, as the Viennese public at that time awarded its confidence to specialists according to their academic status.[1] The two friends followed the news of the Dreyfus trial and Zola's "battle for justice" with understandable interest; in this connection Fliess seems to have extolled the progressive spirit prevalent in Berlin and Germany.

However, the true motive of the correspondence was not provided by the similarity in the two men's origin, intellectual background and family situation or, indeed, by anything personal. Even in the years of their closest friendship the relations between the two families were never close, and plans for them to meet in the summer holidays never came to anything. All Freud's letters that have come down to us go to show that the true motive behind the correspondence was the two men's common scientific interests.

We may connect the increasing frequency with which they exchanged ideas,[2] and the increasing confidence and friendship reflected in the change from the use of the formal *Sie* to the familiar *Du*, with a significant change in Freud's personal and scientific relationships—his estrangement from Josef Breuer (1842-1925).[3] Freud had been in close contact with this important personality ever since his student days. Breuer, who was Freud's senior by thirteen years, had described the cathartic treatment of a patient to

[1] Appointments of this kind were connected with neither duties nor privileges. The designation *Privatdozent mit dem Titel eines ausserordentlichen Professors* corresponds approximately to that of associate clinical professor in American medical schools.
[2] See page xi.
[3] Freud frequently described his relations with Breuer and thus "certainly did not under-estimate the debt of psycho-analysis" to him. See *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* (1914d), the obituary of Josef Breuer (1925g), and *An Autobiographical Study* (1925d).

him[1] as early as the beginning of the eighties, and ten years later the two men agreed to write a book on hysteria together.

Differences of opinion which led to their eventual estrangement soon arose, however. Freud's thought advanced by leaps and bounds, and the older and more timid Breuer could not reconcile himself to the position of a follower. In a letter to Fliess (No. 11) Freud reports conflicts with Breuer in connection with their first jointly written paper;[2] and during their work on their joint book, *Studies on Hysteria*, which appeared in 1895, the difficulty of co-operation constantly increased. When the book finally appeared the two authors specifically drew attention in the introduction to the divergence of their views.

Breuer willingly followed Freud in his early assumptions; he took over from him the conceptions of defence and conversion, though he clung to the French psychiatric assumption that a special condition, designated as hypnoid, was responsible for the origin of hysterical phenomena. Freud's fundamental assumption about the functioning of the psychical apparatus, which he formulated as the principle of constancy of psychical energy (pp. 21 and 135), was also accepted by Breuer and elaborated by him. Differences seem to have arisen when Freud's clinical experiences and first theoretical reflections pointed towards the importance of sexuality in the aetiology of the neuroses.[3] At the time of the appearance of *Studies on Hysteria* it was still just possible in public to bridge over the gulf between the two men. If the restraint with which the problem of sexuality is dealt with in *Studies on Hysteria* is compared with what Freud says in a paper on the anxiety neurosis published before the book appeared,[4] and if one takes into consideration the wealth of insight which Freud, as these letters testify, had already obtained, one will have some idea of the difficulties he must have had to contend with. His older friend and mentor, who years before had

[1] The case of Anna O. in *Studies on Hysteria*.

[2] "Vorläufige Mitteilung über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene." It was later reprinted as the introductory chapter of *Studies on Hysteria*.

[3] *Cf.* Freud's account in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* (1914d).

[4] "On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description 'Anxiety Neurosis'" (Freud 1895b).

introduced him to the problem of hysteria, now refused him his encouragement and support.

No support was to be expected from the official representatives of psychiatry and neurology at the university. Meynert, Freud's former teacher, had already rejected his first essays on hysteria, and Krafft-Ebing regarded him with indifference and reserve. His immediate circle of medical friends was entirely under Breuer's influence. But what Freud found burdensome seems to have been, not so much Breuer's rejection of his discoveries, as his oscillation between criticism and admiration. (See, for example, Letters 24, 35, 135.)[1]

Freud's friendship with Fliess filled the gap left by his estrangement from Breuer and provided a substitute for a friendship and intellectual relationship that had ceased to be viable.[2] He had lost confidence that he would be understood in his own immediate circle, and his Berlin colleague became, in Freud's own words, his only audience.

In the early years of their correspondence Freud kept Fliess informed of his work in progress and sent him copies of everything he wrote. Fliess soon became the confidant to whom he communicated clinical material, his latest findings, and the first formulations of new theories. Thus we find among Freud's letters, not only half-thought-out outlines of new ideas and plans for future research, but some finished essays that were scarcely to be surpassed in his later works. The result was that Freud subsequently asked for a number of drafts sent to Fliess to be returned to him to be used for purposes of publication. Also some of the phases in the development of Freud's theories, and some of the detours he made before arriving at them, are ascertainable only through the material published here.

We do not know what was the effect of all this on the mind of the recipient. We can conclude from Freud's letters that he occasionally

[1] A passage in an accidentally preserved letter from Breuer to Fliess, dating from the summer of 1895, several months after the appearance of *Studies on Hysteria*, says: "Freud's intellect is soaring; I struggle along behind him like a hen behind a hawk."

[2] F. Wittels concluded correctly, in our opinion, from the dreams reported by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that Fliess's role was to replace his lost friend. Wittels also found an ambivalent attitude to Fliess in Freud's dreams—a conclusion which Freud drew himself (Letter 119). (Wittels, 1924, pp. 88 *sqq.*)

expressed doubts or remonstrances, but frequently approved and agreed. The material became richer in content only when differences of opinion became pronounced and Fliess insisted more and more emphatically that his own period theory must be regarded as the basis of Freud's theory of the neuroses.

The letters give us plenty of information about Freud's attitude to Fliess's work. At least for the first ten years he followed it with extreme interest and was full of admiration for it. It is significant that his enthusiasm for Fliess's work was always greater immediately after he had met him, or after Fliess had written to him about it; in his comments on the scientific papers that Fliess sent him he is noticeably restrained.

This circumstance lends support to the suspicion that his over-rating of Fliess's personality and scientific importance corresponded to an inner need of his own. He made of his friend and confidant an ally in his struggle with official medical science, the science of the high-and-mighty professors and university clinics, though Fliess's contemporary writings show that such a role was remote from his thoughts. Freud, to bind his friend closer to him, tried to elevate him to his own level, and sometimes idealized his picture of his assumed ally into that of a leader in the world of science.

No doubt the over-estimation of Fliess reflected in these letters had an objective as well as a personal basis. Freud not only needed Fliess as an audience and an ally, but looked to his association with him to provide answers to questions with which he had been occupied for years—questions about the border-line between the physiological and psychological approaches to the phenomena which he was studying.

II

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHYSIOLOGY

"I was not always a psychotherapist, but was trained in local and electrical diagnosis like other neuropathologists, and I still find it a very strange thing that the case histories I describe read like short

stories and lack, so to speak, the serious imprint of science. I must console myself with the thought that it is obviously the nature of the material itself that is responsible for this rather than my own choice. In the study of hysteria local diagnosis and electrical reactions do not come into the picture, while an exhaustive account of mental processes, of the kind we are accustomed to having from imaginative writers, enables me, by the application of a few psychological formulas, to obtain a kind of insight into the origin of a hysteria."

These are the words with which Freud introduces his discussion of the case history of Elisabeth von R., apparently the last that he contributed to *Studies on Hysteria.* They point to an intellectual conflict which had a decisive influence on his ideas in the nineties. A new and unprecedented vista was opening out before him—that of stating in scientific terms the conflicts of the human psyche. It would have been tempting to base his excursion into this territory on intuitive understanding, to trace all case histories to their biographical roots, and to base all the insight gained on intuition "of the kind we are accustomed to having from imaginative writers". The sureness of the literary touch with which he handled biographical material, which he fully demonstrated for the first time in *Studies on Hysteria*, must have been a great temptation. We know from the letters that he had already acquired the ability to subject works of literature to psychological analysis; his analysis of two stories by C. F. Meyer are the first attempts of this nature.[1] We know from later years what his attitude was to the artist's intuition, to the creations of those to whom "it is vouchsafed with hardly an effort to salve from the whirlpool of their own emotions the deepest truths, to which we others have to force our way ceaselessly groping amid torturing uncertainties".[2] The conflict of which he speaks in this passage—he was already concerned with it at the time of *Studies on Hysteria*—is that between intuitive understanding and scientific explanation. There was never any doubt on which side Freud stood. He had been through the school of science, and it became his life work to base the new psychology on scientific methods.

[1] Letters 90 and 91.
[2] *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930a).

Let us now briefly recall what is known about Freud's professional training. The sources are his *Autobiographical Study* and other works.[1] In 1882, while still a student in the physiological institute of Vienna university, he abandoned biology for medicine after six years' study; he did this unwillingly and on the explicit advice of his teacher, the physiologist Ernst Brücke [1819-1892], yielding only to practical considerations.[2] In choosing his speciality he continued the direction of his biological work, which had set out from a study of the roots of the nerves and spinal ganglia of the petromyzon.[3] At the suggestion of Theodor Meynert [1832-1892] he devoted himself to neurology and, prompted by a developing "tendency to exclusive concentration", he wrote six monographs in the field of histology, pharmacology and medicine[4] which gained him a lecturership in neuropathology in the spring of 1885, when he was twenty-nine.

A travelling fellowship, for which he was recommended by Brücke, enabled him to go to Paris and study at Charcot's Salpêtrière. He stayed in Paris from the autumn of 1885 to the end of February, 1886.[5] From Paris he went to Berlin "in order to gain a little knowledge of the general disorders of childhood" from Adolph Baginsky, for he could not look forward to a position in the psychiatric-neurological clinic in Vienna, entry to which was barred to him then, as later. Instead the children's specialist Max Kassowitz offered him a post as head of the new neurological department of "the first public hospital for children", a private and unofficial institution from the point of view of the official academic world. Freud worked there for several years.[6]

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[1] See Bernfeld, 1949 and 1951.

[2] In a letter to a friend (Wilhelm Knöpfmacher) dated August 6th, 1878, Freud said: "During this vacation I went over to another laboratory, where I am preparing for my true calling . . . flaying animals or torturing human beings . . . and I more and more favour the former alternative".

[3] Freud 1877a and 1878a.

[4] Freud. 1884,a, d, e; 1885 a, c, d.

[5] According to a remark of Freud's in a footnote to his German translation (1886f) of Volume III of Charcot's *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux* (1887).

[6] This institution, founded in the reign of the Emperor Josef II in 1787, was not modernized till the eighties of last century. Freud's work there occupied him for several hours three times a week. See Kassowitz (1890), Vol. I, introduction.

The letters permit us fleeting glimpses into the period that followed his return to Vienna, his marriage, and his setting up in practice. His interests lay in several fields. In his published papers his predominant interest was at first neurology, and his earliest papers represent a direct continuation of his old interests in the clinical, histological, pharmacological and anatomical fields.[1]

But he soon took up the challenge of the new clinical material he found at his disposal. A study of hemianopia in earliest childhood[2] was the first of a series of works in the field of child neurology. It was followed by a monograph, written jointly with Rie, on unilateral cerebral paralysis in children,[3] and two years later his monograph on the cerebral diplegias[4] appeared; his study of this subject led several years later to the reluctant fulfilment of a long-standing promise to deal exhaustively with cerebral paralysis in children for Nothnagel's handbook of special pathology and therapy.[5] The letters show that this work made Freud feel "like Pegasus yoked to the plough". This is understandable enough when we consider that he had to sacrifice to it his work on the problem of dreams.

However, this labour, which to Freud represented merely the fulfilment of a burdensome and oppressive obligation, still occupies, according to the testimony of R. Brun,[6] a secure place in modern neurology. Freud's monograph, Brun writes, is "the most complete and thorough study of the cerebral paralysis of children that has yet appeared. . . . When one considers that the index alone fills fourteen-and-a-half pages, it will give one an idea of the consummate mastery of the enormous mass of clinical material that is here collected and critically surveyed".

Between 1886 and the winter of 1892-93 there also appeared, almost incidentally, the translations of four large volumes—two volumes of Charcot's lectures and two books of Bernheim.[7] He

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[1] Freud 1886a, b, c, and 1887d.

[2] Freud 1888a.

[3] Freud and Rie, 1891a.

[4] Freud 1893b.

[5] Freud 1897a.

[6] Brun, 1936.

[7] Charcot 1887 and 1892-3a. Bernheim 1886 and 1890.

These were not Freud's only translations. In his student days he translated a volume of J. S. Mill (see page 343, footnote 2). In later life, in 1922, he

provided two of these volumes with notable introductions, and in addition he provided his translation of Charcot's *Leçons du Mardi à la Salpêtrière* with innumerable references to recent clinical literature, as well as with critical notes, some of which are the earliest statements of Freud's theories in the field of the neuroses.

The reputation which Freud's work in the field of children's neurology earned him made little or no impression on him. (See Letter 18.) His real interest lay elsewhere, in two fields—or rather in two manifestations of a single problem—which alternately occupied the first place in his mind. These were anatomy of the brain and research into hysteria.

The idea of writing on the anatomy of the brain was suggested in the course of his work for Villaret's medical dictionary.[1] As articles in this were unsigned, Freud did not allow his contributions to be included in his bibliography; he also thought that his article on the anatomy of the brain had been ruined by cuts. Freud's monograph on the interpretation of the aphasias,[2] which was dedicated to Breuer, originated from his studies of the same subject. In this[3] he for the first time expressed "doubt about the localization of speech centres". In its place he put forward a theory which placed in the foreground the manner of functioning of the parts of the brain involved. In Freud's opinion the localization theory underrated the play of forces, the dynamics of the thing, and he emphasized the contradiction between dynamic centres and definite localization

translated the chapter on Samuel Butler in the German edition, edited by Anna Freud, of Israel Levine's *The Unconscious* (Levine 1926); and finally, in his old age, when he was waiting for a permit to leave Vienna after the Nazi occupation of Austria, he translated Marie Bonaparte's little book *Topsy*, jointly with Anna Freud.

[1] Villaret 1888 and 1891.

[2] "Zur Auffassung der Aphasien" (1891b).

[3] Brun (1936) says of this work: "Freud makes a sharp distinction between the peripheral (and spinal) projection and the central cortical representation of the parts of the body in the central organ and says that the peripheral areas of the body are not locally but exclusively functionally represented in the higher quarters of the brain. Moreover he firmly declines to localize ideas in locally circumscribed areas of the brain ("centres") and instead explains the function of speech genetically (on the basis of its gradual acquisition in childhood) as the result of the restimulation of a widespread visual, acoustic, tactile, kinaesthetic, etc., network of association. It was the breaking of this network of association and not the destruction of any special motor, sensory or 'understanding' centres which led to 'crippling' of the functions of speech and so produced the various forms of aphasia. Finally, he was again the first to lay special emphasis on the work of Hughlings Jackson and the theory of the functional 'disinvolution' of that highly organized apparatus under pathological conditions which had been introduced into pathology by that brilliant English physician but had unfortunately been ignored. In this fruitful work Freud finally put forward the conception of agnosia (to describe disturbance of the capacity to recognize objects, which had previously been lumped together with the 'asymbolia' of Finkelnburg); this idea is well known to have subsequently been a very fruitful one in the pathology of the brain and has been generally accepted. When we consider the clarity with which Freud step by step developed all these modern points of view in his outstanding pathological study of the brain as early as 1891, we need not hesitate to describe him as Monakow's most important predecessor. It seems to me to be an act of historical justice and scientific duty to state this specifically today".

points. There can be no doubt that Bernfeld is right when he speaks of the work on aphasia as the first Freudian book.[1]

Freud's interest in hysteria developed slowly. In the early eighties, presumably soon after he left the physiological institute, Breuer told him about a patient whom he treated from 1880 to 1882. This patient is known to us from *Studies on Hysteria* as Anna O., and it was her case that led Breuer to the discovery of the principle of cathartic treatment. When Freud took it upon himself "to inform Charcot of these discoveries ... the great man showed no interest in my first outline of the subject". The result was that Freud's interest, as he himself testifies, was temporarily diverted from the problems which Breuer had opened up.

After his return from Paris, while he was engaged on the translation of Charcot's lectures, Freud took advantage of an external circumstance to discuss the subject of hysteria again. He was under an obligation to report to the Vienna Medical Society on what he had learned in Paris, and on October 15th, 1886, he delivered his report in the form of a lecture on Charcot's recent work in the field of male hysteria. What he said found no credence with his audience, however, and Meynert called on him "to describe to the society cases in which the somatic symptoms of hysteria, the stigmata of hysteria" by which Charcot characterized this neurosis "were to be observed in clear outline". Freud responded on November 26th

[1] In 1939 Freud declined to have "Zur Auffassung der Aphasien" included in the first volume of the complete German edition of his works on the ground that it belonged to his neurological and not to his psycho-analytic works. On the other hand in his letters he mentions it with greater warmth than his other neurological papers.

by lecturing, jointly with the oculist L. Königstein, on a case of "pronounced hemianaesthesia in a hysterical man".[1] The lecture was applauded, but the rejection of the views of Charcot for which Freud stood remained. Meynert's opposition remained unbroken, and he countered Charcot's theory with an anatomical theory[2] which Freud found totally inadequate.[3] The result of this conflict with Meynert was that Freud's former place of work, the university neurological institute, was closed to him, and his contacts with the medical faculty diminished.

After this first purely clinical report in the autumn of 1886, Freud published nothing on hysteria for more than five years. But his interest in the subject was not dead. From the autumn of 1887 onwards he used hypnotic therapy (Letter 2), and from the spring of 1889 onwards he used hypnosis for the examination of his patients;[4] in the summer of the same year he went to Nancy to see Bernheim and supplement his clinical impressions, and Breuer's interest in the subject received a fresh stimulus from Freud's.

Three years later, in 1892, Freud and Breuer collaborated in a preliminary study "of the psychical mechanism of hysterical phenomena". This was published at the beginning of 1893 and was reprinted more than two years later as the introductory chapter of *Studies on Hysteria.*

Freud's interest in the new field was at first exclusively clinical. Observation of his cases soon forced upon him a recognition of certain important factors which Breuer was unwilling, or only reluctantly willing, to share. The insight that Freud gained was

[1] Freud, 1886e. For a detailed account see S. and S. C. Bernfeld (1952), who show that Freud's admiration for Charcot was considered a betrayal of the Viennese medical tradition.

[2] *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift*, 1889.

[3] See Freud's footnote to page 100 of his translation of Charcot (1892-3a). In his *Interpretation of Dreams* he mentions that when he went to see Meynert on his death-bed, Meynert described himself as a typical case of male hysteria.

[4] According to a passage in the *Studies*, the case of Frau Emmy von N. was the first in which he used these new methods. He reports other applications of hypnosis for therapeutic purposes in "A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism" (1892-93b). But he describes his attitude to hypnotic therapy during those years as follows: "Neither patient nor physician can tolerate for long the contradiction between the emphatic denial of the illness in suggestion and the necessary recognition of it outside suggestion". (Charcot (1892-3a), footnote to page 286).

into the defensive character of symptoms, their over-determination, and the function of resistance. Simultaneously with the acquisition of this clinical insight, or rather in advance of it, he completely altered his technique. He abandoned Breuer's technique for the "concentration technique" described in the *Studies*, and a little later, between 1895 and 1898, he abandoned the remaining elements of suggestion in it and developed the psycho-analytic technique proper.[1]

The clinical and technical parts of the *Studies*—four of the five case-histories and the technical part—were written by Freud, while the theoretical part was signed by Breuer. But much of what Breuer wrote, and in particular the fundamental assumptions he took as his point of departure, was unquestionably Freud's intellectual property, or joint property.[2] We possess a draft of the preliminary study written by Freud in 1892 which anticipates several of Breuer's important formulations.[3] In this Freud put forward the proposition that "the nervous system endeavours to keep constant something in its functional condition that may be described as the sum of 'excitation'. It seeks to establish this necessary precondition of health by dealing with every sensible increase of excitation along associative lines or by discharging it by an appropriate motor reaction".

This theoretical assumption, borrowed from the world of physics, found its way into Breuer's account as the theory of "intra-cerebral excitation", and enabled him to compare events in the central nervous system with those in an electric circuit. In Freud's mind, however, it led to various speculations of which we are informed in

[1] Freud's account in the *Studies* suggests that the change in technique preceeded the formulation of his findings. A similar sequence played a decisive role in the later development of psycho-analysis. Freud's technical work in the second decade of the twentieth century laid the foundations for his conceptions of the structure of the psyche and contained many elements of what later became the psycho-analytic ego-psychology.

[2] See Bernfeld, 1944.

[3] *Cf.* "On the Theory of Hysterical Attacks" (1940d). Similar formulations are to be found in a letter of Freud's to Breuer of June 29th, 1892 and in a footnote, possibly written earlier, to Charcot (1892-3a) which states :"I have attempted to tackle the problem of hysterical attacks other than descriptively, and from the examination of hysterics in a hypnotic state I have arrived at new results, some of which I shall describe here: the nucleus of a hysterical attack, whatever form it may take, is a memory, the hallucinatory reliving of the scene which was significant for the illness. It is this process which expresses itself manifestly in the phase of *attitudes passionnelles*, but it is also present where the attack appears to include only motor phenomena. The content of the memory is as a

the letters, and eventually to theories about the regulating mechanism of the psyche which belong to the fundamental assumptions of psycho-analysis.

Bernfeld has demonstrated the origin of these ideas in a brilliant essay, which we shall follow here. They stem directly from the physiological ideas of Brücke. Both Freud and Breuer were Brücke's pupils—they first met at the physiological institute. These ideas were widely accepted in the circle of Viennese physiologists, among the leading figures of which were Brücke and his assistants Ernst von Fleischl-Marxow [1846-1891] and Sigmund Exner [1846-1925] (both of whom are mentioned in the letters, though in different contexts). Only now are we able fully to understand what Freud had in mind when in his old age he described Brücke as the teacher who had made the biggest impression on him. Brücke's physiology, firmly based on ideas taken from the world of physics and having the measurability of all phenomena as its ideal, was the point of departure from which psycho-analytic theory was built up.

Brücke was no solitary figure among the physiologists of his time. He was one of a group of men who shared a similar outlook, were pupils of Johannes Müller and had founded the Berlin Physical Society in 1845. In 1847 Helmholtz lectured to this society on the principle of the conservation of energy. Helmholtz (1821-94) and Du Bois-Reymond (1818-92) were close contemporaries and close friends, and regarded Brücke as their "ambassador in Vienna".

The closeness of relations between the Viennese and Berlin physiologists, convincingly described by Bernfeld, provided part of the background of the relationship between Freud and Fliess. When Fliess came to Vienna the scientists on whom he called were

rule either the psychical trauma, which because of its intensity was sufficient to provoke the patient's outbreak of hysteria, or the event which, because it occurred at a particular moment, turned into a trauma.

"In cases of so-called 'traumatic' hysteria this mechanism is evident even to the most casual observation, but it can also be demonstrated in hysteria in which there is no single major trauma. In such cases one finds successive minor traumas, or frequently, if there is a strong predisposition, memories, indifferent in themselves, elevated into traumas. A trauma might be defined as an increase in excitation in the nervous system with which the latter is unable to deal adequately by motor reaction.

"The hysterical attack is perhaps to be regarded as an attempt to complete the reaction to the trauma."

men with whom he inevitably felt closely linked. His works leave no doubt that he came of the same school as they, and it was no accident that, as we have already mentioned, he made a present to Freud of Helmholtz's collected works. The ideal of establishing biology on a firm physical-mathematical foundation showed itself more and more plainly in his works. His inclination to mathematics is clearly deducible from the correspondence; it played an unhappy role in his later works, and expressed itself in the sub-title of his principal work, *Der Ablauf des Lebens* ("The Course of Life") (1906) with which he looked forward to "laying the foundations for an exact science of biology".

Fliess's interest in Freud's researches must be seen against this background. He supported Freud in his need to preserve a connection between psychological conceptions on the one hand and physiological and physical conceptions on the other; and finally he offered his own hypotheses as a foundation for Freud's findings; an action which was provoked by his sense of rivalry to Freud and led inevitably to their eventual estrangement.

But in the early years of their friendship the factors which led to their estrangement acted as a mutual stimulus. Fliess's theory of the nasal reflex neurosis touched on one of Freud's liveliest interests, the problem of the differential diagnosis of hysterical and somatic disturbances, with which he had already been concerned in Paris. But he did not deal with the subject till 1893, seven years after his return from Paris, when he published an article in French on one aspect of the problem and demonstrated with unsurpassed clarity that hysterical paralysis conducted itself "as if no anatomy of the brain existed", but had to do with "the general reactivity of a definite group of ideas".[1]

The problem of differential diagnosis also played a notable role in Freud's clinical works at that time. It was natural for him to think that it would be necessary to differentiate "more sharply than had hitherto been possible between neurasthenia proper and various kinds of pseudo-neurasthenia, such as the clinical picture of the

[1] "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralysis" (1893c). The article was based on a suggestion of Charcot's. See Freud's footnote to page 268 of Charcot (1892-3a).

organically determined nasal reflex neurosis, the nervous disorders of the cachexias and arteriosclerosis, the early stages of general paralysis of the insane and of some psychoses".[1] He regarded it as all the more necessary to make this differentiation because the growing insight he was obtaining from his clinical work seemed to be throwing new and unexpected light on the nature of neurasthenia as an actual-neurosis (anxiety neurosis). We can watch the development of this insight in the letters, in which it is occasionally too sharply formulated, until it was finally published in the paper "On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description 'Anxiety Neurosis'". The important discovery that the mechanism of anxiety neurosis lay "in the diversion of somatic sexual excitation from the psyche and the resultant abnormal utilization of that energy" was expressed by Freud in the formula: "Neurotic anxiety is transmuted sexual libido".[2]

This idea was mentioned only briefly in the *Studies on Hysteria*, which were published later, but had important consequences for the history of psycho-analysis. Until the theory of anxiety was revised by the publication in 1926 of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, the "toxicological" theory, which regarded anxiety as the result of dammed-up libido, held the field. This revision simultaneously revived another important idea which Freud had had in the early nineties;[3] the idea of putting the function of defence in the centre of the theory of the neurosis. After an interval of more than thirty years part of the psycho-analytic ego-psychology was based on this concept of defence.

The views that caused Freud to desire to establish the anxiety neurosis as a clinical entity were not wasted either; they found a secure but modest place in psycho-analytic theory and practice. There can be no doubt of the clinical importance of what we nowadays call the actual-neurotic factor in neurotic conflict and interpret

[1] "On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description 'Anxiety Neurosis'" (1895b).

[2] Freud 1897b.

[3] In "On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description 'Anxiety Neurosis'" (1895b) Freud unquestionably pointed the way to this revision. "The psyche develops the affect of anxiety when it feels itself incapable of dealing (by an adequate reaction) with a task (danger) approaching it externally", he wrote.

as an enhancement of the danger situation of the ego; but sexual frustration is only one among several conditions which give rise to such actual-neurotic situations. The difference between this and Freud's original conception clearly illustrates the development of Freud's hypotheses. While we, on the basis of our knowledge of the role of genetic conditions in the aetiology of the neuroses, are accustomed to deriving the reaction to frustration and instinctual tension from the history of the individual, but do not believe that frustration in the attainment of sexual objectives produces neurotic anxiety in adults, it was the latter idea which Freud originally considered to be of decisive importance. The idea that "the anxiety that underlies the phenomena of neurosis cannot admit of a psychological derivation" promised to lead from the uncertainty of psychological insight on to the firm ground of physiological processes, and at least to establish a link between the explanation of a group of psychopathological phenomena and the realm of physiological theory. It was in this field, that of sexual aetiology, that Breuer had followed Freud, if at all, with so much hesitation, and it was here that Freud felt the need for advice and encouragement. There were innumerable puzzles to be solved; the letters give one the impression of the observer's continual struggle with his clinical impressions. Freud tried at first to push the significance of his new start too far and to explain the physiology and psychology of the sexual function on a single pattern which interpreted all disturbances as quantitative displacements (Draft G.) Fliess obviously supplied the stimulus for this undertaking, which Freud repudiated only a few years later.

In those years the dominant idea in Freud's mind was to make physiological changes and the physically measurable the basis of all psychological discussion; in other words his aim was the strict application of ideas derived from Helmholtz and Brücke. He had been busying himself with the attempt to paint a picture of this kind at least since the beginning of 1895. It is worth recalling in this connection that Breuer was simultaneously engaged in writing the theoretical part of the *Studies on Hysteria*, in which he expressed the view that in the contemporary state of knowledge no link could be established between psychological conceptions and conceptions concerning the physiology of the brain. But it was precisely this

that Freud set out to do. He first thought of writing a "psychology for neurologists", but obviously kept altering and modifying his first drafts. One draft dating from the autumn of 1895 has come down to us. The greater part of it was written in a few days immediately after a meeting with Fliess, and the rest in the weeks that followed. No sooner had it been sent off to Fliess than a stream of explanations and corrections went off in its wake. The ideas it contained were kept alive in the correspondence for months, and then gave way to new ideas, and above all to new insights.

The "Project for a Scientific Psychology" printed as an appendix (p. 347) enlightens us on only one phase of Freud's attempt to gain an inclusive view of psychology and the anatomy of the brain, but its historical value is nevertheless considerable. No attempt at a systematic appreciation of it will be made here, but the ideas it contains will be described. It is a coherent attempt to describe the functioning of the psychical apparatus as that of a system of neurones and to conceive of all the processes concerned as in the last resort quantitative changes. These processes are not confined merely to perception and memory but include thought, emotional life, psychopathology and normal psychology, as well as a first restricted but in some respects well-rounded theory of dreams. The idea of fusing the theory of the neuroses and normal psychology with the physiology of the brain was bold in itself. Even more impressive to the present-day reader is the consistency with which Freud holds his objective in mind in spite of all difficulties and contradictions. Each section, whether on the physiology of the brain or psychopathology, defence or thought, contains a wealth of new observations and hypotheses, of which some were only fleetingly utilized in Freud's later works. Some of them point to the future development of psycho-analysis. For example the ego is represented as an organism distinguished by the possession of a constant cathexis of energy—a hypothesis which a quarter of a century later became the cornerstone of the psycho-analytic theory of psychical structure. With Freud's rejection of the system of ideas on which he based this hypothesis in 1895—when he regarded the ego as a group of neurones with special characteristics—the idea seemed temporarily to lose its significance. Other fundamental ideas contained in the "Project"

did not have to wait so long before finding a place in psycho-analysis. The idea that biological exigencies, which necessitated adaptation, ran counter to the individual's striving after pleasure was later revived in the form of the pleasure principle and the reality principle. However, the examples with which Freud illustrates these problems in the "Project" come partially from a field the importance of which his clinical work had still only imperfectly revealed to him. They are taken from earliest childhood. One of the most important deals with the relation between the suckling and the breast.

This wealth of ideas, which extends from the physiology of the brain to metapsychology in the later meaning of the term, necessarily makes the "Project" difficult to follow, even for the reader who approaches it with some preparation. Also it contains a number of obvious inconsistencies which Freud himself points out in subsequent letters. We can only partially guess Fliess's reactions to the "Project" from Freud's letters. They appear to have been a mixture of reserve and admiration.

Freud's object in sending it to Fliess, for whom it was written, was to obtain from him detailed suggestions for improving the parts dealing with the physiology of the brain. But Fliess was obviously busy with other matters, and Freud's interest in his all-too-bold undertaking was not sustained. He put away his notes and revolted against the "tyrant" who had been dominating his thoughts. New clinical impressions demanded his attention.

III

INFANTILE SEXUALITY AND SELF-ANALYSIS

The problem which occupied Freud in 1896 and the first half of 1897 had long been heralded. In *Studies on Hysteria* the role of childhood in the aetiology of hysteria was only briefly touched on. In the "Project", written at the same time, he expressed the view that sexual experiences before puberty possessed aetiological significance in the formation of neurosis (see p. 413 *sqq.*). Later he was of

the opinion that it was sexual experiences before the period of second dentition that led to neurosis; and he sought to differentiate the individual "forms of neurosis, and paranoia, according to their time of fixation". At first he thought the period was that of later childhood, but the date subsequently grew earlier and earlier, and at the same time he gained the firm impression that the decisive damage was attributable to seduction by adults. "What poets and students of human nature had always asserted", he wrote in his *Autobiographical Study*, "turned out to be true; the impressions of that remote period of life, though they were for the most part buried in amnesia, left ineradicable traces upon the individual's growth and in particular laid the foundations for any nervous disorder that was to follow. But since these experiences of childhood were always concerned with sexual excitations and the reaction against them, I found myself faced by the fact of infantile sexuality; once again a novelty and a contradiction of one of the strongest of human prejudices. . . .

"Before going further into the question of infantile sexuality I must mention an error into which I fell for a while and which might well have had fatal consequences for the whole of my work. Under the pressure of the technical procedure which I used at that time, the majority of my patients reproduced from their childhood scenes in which they were sexually seduced by some grown-up person. With female patients the part of seducer was almost always assigned to their father. I believed these stories, and consequently supposed that I had discovered the roots of the subsequent neurosis in these experiences of sexual seduction in childhood. My confidence was strengthened by a few cases in which relations of this kind with a father, uncle or elder brother had continued up to an age at which memory was to be trusted".[1]

Freud put forward this conception of the genesis of the neuroses in his paper on "The Aetiology of Hysteria", published in May, 1896, and his letters show that he abided by it for some time; it

[1] One of these cases was that of "Katharina" in *Studies on Hysteria*. When this case history was reprinted in Volume I of his Collected Works (*Gesammelte Schriften*, 1924), Freud added a footnote saying that he considered it legitimate after so many years to state that Katherina had fallen ill under the influence of sexual approaches by her father.

later appeared that he did so in spite of a good many misgivings, which he initially suppressed. During the last few months of 1896 and the first half of 1897 Freud studied the luxuriant growth of his patients' phantasy life; not only their day-dreams, but more particularly the infantile phantasies which invariably manifest themselves in the thoughts, dreams and behaviour of adult neurotics under the conditions of psycho-analytic treatment. From these he slowly gained the first hesitant insights into the nature of infantile sexual organization, at first into what was later to be called the anal phase. Later observation was to pile on observation in what was perhaps Freud's boldest undertaking. His observations of adult neurotics enabled him to reconstruct some of the normal stages in the child's growth towards maturity; in the half-century since Freud first discovered them the stages of development of the libido have been the subject of detailed research and systematic observation which have invariably confirmed them afresh.

In the spring of 1897, in spite of accumulating insight into the nature of infantile wish-phantasies, Freud could not make up his mind to take the decisive step demanded by his observations and abandon the idea of the traumatic role of seduction in favour of insight into the normal and necessary conditions of childish development and childish phantasy life. He reports his new impressions in his letters, but does not mention the conflict between them and the seduction hypothesis until one day, in his letter of September 21st, 1897 (Letter 69), he describes how he realized his error. The description of how this came about, and the consequences of the abandonment of the seduction hypothesis, tallies with that given in his published works.[1]

"When this aetiology broke down under its own improbability and under contradiction in definitely ascertainable circumstances, the result at first was helpless bewilderment", he states in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement*. "Analysis had led by the right paths back to these sexual traumas, and yet they were not true. Reality was lost from under one's feet. At that time I would gladly have given up the whole thing. Perhaps I persevered only because

[1] See also Kris, 1950a.

I had no choice and could not then begin again at anything else."

Nearly thirty years later, in his *Autobiographical Study*, Freud pointed to what seems another psychologically important explanation of his mistake. "I had in fact stumbled for the first time upon the Oedipus complex", he wrote. We see from the letters that insight into the structure of the Oedipus complex, and thus into the central problem of psycho-analysis, was made possible by Freud's self-analysis, which he started in the summer of 1897 during his stay at Aussee.[1]

The reader of Freud's works is already familiar with some of the stages of his self-analysis. In his pre-analytic period he had several times conducted experiments on himself, and had quoted the results of self-observation.[2] With his self-analysis, taken in conjunction with his psychological writings, this practice now assumes a new significance. We can regard as the first evidence of this his paper on "Screen Memories",[3] which has been identified by Bernfeld as being essentially autobiographical.[4] After the appearance of *The Interpretation of Dreams* examples multiplied, and they played a notable role in later editions of that work and in the various editions of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. In Freud's later works, published after 1902, autobiographical examples are rarer, but an instance occurs in one of the last things he wrote, the letter to Romain Rolland on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. In this, under the title of "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis (1936a)", he describes the feeling of de-realization that came over him during a visit to Athens in 1904 which he explained as having "something to do with a child's criticism of his father, with the under-valuation which took the place of the over-valuation of earlier childhood". In his introduction to this piece of writing Freud pointed out to Romain Rolland that when he had set out "to throw light upon unusual, abnormal or pathological manifestations of the

[1] Freud says in Letter 75 that he started his self-analysis after this summer, but Letters 65 *sqq.* contradict this.

[2] *E.g.* "Über Coca" (1884e, page 84); "Zur Auffassung der Aphasien" 1891b, page 63 (a passage to which Otto Isakower drew attention in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. XX, 1939, page 340); Über die Bernhardt'sche Sensibilitätsstörung am oberschenkel 1895e, page 491. See also Bernfeld (1946).

[3] Freud (1899a).

[4] Bernfeld (1946).

mind. . . . I began by attempting this upon myself". His letters to Fliess permit us to date his first efforts at this more exactly, and actually enable us to see him at grips with the Oedipus complex. That this was the central theme of his self-analysis is not merely the impression one receives from the letters; it is confirmed by Freud himself when he says in his introduction to the second edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* that "the book was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death—that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life".

The gist of what Freud reports of his self-analysis in his letters to Fliess is concerned with the reconstruction of important events in his childhood, chiefly with the period before he was three. External circumstances caused this period to be sharply marked off from his later life, because when he was three his parents were forced by economic difficulties to leave the small Moravian town of Freiberg. The prosperity of the Freiberg period was followed by the privations of Freud's childhood and youth.

Siegfried and Suzanne C. Bernfeld have attempted to reconstruct from Freud's writings his childhood experiences in the Freiberg period.[1] The material in the letters confirms the Bernfelds' conclusions in many respects and adds a number of details, but on the whole the information on the subject that emerges is far scantier than that which can be gathered and deduced from Freud's published works. Remarks scattered about in them enable us to infer a good deal about his father's household. Jacob Freud was born in 1815, married twice, and his children and grandchildren lived under the same roof. Freud's childhood companions were a nephew a year older than himself—John, the son of his brother Emmanuel, who is frequently mentioned in the correspondence—and a niece, Pauline, who was the same age as he. The two boys, no matter how much they fought on other matters, every now and then united against Pauline (Letter 70). Freud's father remains a shadowy figure in the letters, but rather more light is thrown on him in Freud's other writings. In Freud's early childhood his father was

[1] Bernfeld, 1944.

"the wisest, most powerful and wealthiest" man whom the boy knew. Memories of walks in the woods, during which he "used to be able to run away too fast for his father to catch him almost before he could walk", survived for a long time, and may have paved the way for the love of nature to which the letters testify. The figure of Freud's nurse—a clever but ugly old woman—is also known to us through his writings, and important memories were associated with her disappearance: her arrest as a thief; the birth of a sister; impressions of his mother's pregnancy, and of jealousy displaced on to his younger step-brother Philipp (who was, however, twenty years older than he). In his published works Freud used this material in support of several psycho-analytical hypotheses, but the letters give us some information about the analytic work by which it was obtained. Freud's reconstruction of his repressed childhood memories was not effortless, but only succeeded after many vain attempts. To obtain confirmation of a point he asked his mother for information (Letter 71), and her confirmation not only helped him towards understanding his own problems, but also gave him increased confidence in the reliability of his methods. Thus personal and scientific gain reinforced each other.

If references to his self-analysis in his works permit the impression that Freud, studying dreams in the interests of science and concomitantly carrying out part of his self-analysis, obtained insight about himself effortlessly, the letters serve to correct that impression. We can observe him struggling with some of the dynamic effects of his self-analysis; we can see the alternation of progress and resistance; we hear of abrupt changes of mood and of phases in which he felt suddenly plunged back into early childhood. It was, in fact, something far more than a purely intellectual process and bore all the marks of a real analysis. Freud actually appears to have gained full understanding of many of the manifestations of analytic resistance from his own behaviour in this, his "hardest analysis".

We see from the letters how he went on to use the insights gained in his self-analysis in the analysis of his patients; and how in turn he applied what he learned from his patients to further his understanding of his own prehistory. This was not a single process, and was not limited to a brief period of time; it progressed in a series of

phases or intermittent advances, each of which yielded important insights. According to the evidence of Freud's works, his self-analysis was not limited to the years of the correspondence; it extended into the early years of the century and at least in isolated instances much further.[1] Many years later, when what had started as Freud's personal experience had long since developed into an institution, and a training analysis had become an essential part of an analyst's professional equipment, Freud returned to the theme of the mutual relationship of analyst and analysand. "We hope and believe", he wrote, "that the stimuli received in the learner's own analysis will not cease to act upon him when that analysis ends, that the processes of ego-transformation will go on of their own accord and that he will bring his new insight to bear upon all his subsequent experience."[2] This process was, however, threatened by the "dangers" to the analysis introduced by the active party, the analyst; to avoid these dangers, in Freud's view, "every analyst ought periodically himself to enter analysis once more". It is legitimate to suppose that this idea was at any rate partially the result of his own experience, and that Freud's self-analysis, perhaps in the modified form of systematic self-observation, was protracted "indefinitely" and acted as a constant check on the observer in his work.[3]

The first and perhaps most significant result of Freud's self-analysis was the step from the seduction theory to full insight into the significance of infantile sexuality. Freud's bewilderment when he recognized his mistake soon gave way to new insights. "If hysterics trace back their symptoms to fictitious traumas, this new fact signifies that they create such scenes in phantasy, and psychical reality requires to be taken into account alongside actual reality. This was soon followed by the recognition that these phantasies were intended to cover up the auto-erotic activity of early childhood,

[1] The analysis of "the disturbance of memory on the Acropolis" mentioned above was concerned with an incident in 1904. The analysis of the screen-memory of the disappearance of his nurse was carried further in a later edition of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life;* and we know from the third edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* that he investigated the end of his friendship with Fliess by the method of self-analysis. (See page 43).

[2] "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937c).

[3] For an instance of self-analysis late in Freud's life see "The Subtleties of a Faulty Action" (1935b).

to gloss it over and raise it to a higher level; and then, from behind the phantasies, the whole range of the child's sexual life came to light".[1] The development of the idea which Freud here describes in broad outline can be followed in detail in his letters. In the summer and autumn of 1897 his self-analysis revealed the essential features of the Oedipus complex and enabled him to understand the nature of Hamlet's inhibition. Insight into the role of the erotogenic zones in the development of the libido followed. In the spring of 1898 he was at work on a first draft of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in the summer he solved the problem of parapraxes, and in the autumn he started systematic preparation for *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the form in which we know it; it was written in the summer of 1899. Meanwhile, at the beginning of 1899, after another advance in his self-analysis, he took another decisive step in the development of psycho-analytic insight. Freud had been preoccupied with dreams on the one hand and with clinical questions of neurosis on the other. These had hitherto seemed to be two separate and independent fields of inquiry; he had alternately reported progress in the one and lack of progress in the other. He now recognized that they were part of the same problem and saw that what explained dreams also explained neurotic symptoms (Letters 82 and 105).[2] Two distinct problems merged into a single field of scientific inquiry, and psycho-analysis, as a theory and a therapy, was born. Freud's theoretical and therapeutic interests found expression in the important study "Dreams and Hysteria", written at the beginning of 1901 but not published till four years later as "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria".[3]

[1] *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* (1914d).

[2] For a more detailed account of the formation of this hypotheses and an attempt to view this process as an example of creative thinking see Kris (1950b).

[3] Attempts to gain insight into the material with which Freud's self-analysis dealt have been current for years. Wittels (1924) used the reinterpretation of dreams reported in the *Interpretation of Dreams* for his later biographical sketch: and Maylan (1930) applied a similar procedure for his anti-Semitic vilifications. More recently Fromm (1952) has undertaken to reinterpret one of Freud's dreams in order to demonstrate the shortcomings of Freudian dream interpretation. For a survey of Freud's self-analysis based on the *Interpretation of Dreams* in conjunction with the letters to Fliess and the material referred to in the notes to the German edition, see Buxbaum (1951), who suggests that "Fliess played an important part in Freud's self-analysis, namely that of a transference figure"; for a supporting view, see Van der Heide (1952), some of whose statements were later corrected by Jones (1952), and for a critical comment see S. C. Bernfeld (1952). In view of these attempts it might be appropriate to re-emphasize that in his *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud did not intend to offer a "complete" analysis of his dreams, but used each example only for definite purposes; similarly we have no reason to assume that in the letters to Fliess all restraint was dropped. On the contrary, it seems evident from the material that the letters to Fliess are concerned only with selected aspects of Freud's interests and preoccupations. That Fliess was not familiar with all phases of Freud's self-analysis is evident. The most detailed report of this kind, contained in Freud's paper "On Screen Memories" (1899a) was published under disguise, a fact which was not communicated to Fliess (see Letter 107). It might in this connection also be restated that Freud remained aware of the limitations of self-analysis. Later in his life he stated his views clearly in a letter to a man whose contributions to the field of psycho-analysis were considerable but who had not undergone analysis. Freud emphasized the crucial importance of a personal analysis for future analytic work and pointed to the fact that he had had to rely on self-analysis himself because he was originally the only analyst and subsequently all analysts were his pupils, a fact which would have made the analytic process impossible.

IV

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AS AN INDEPENDENT SCIENCE

(End of the Relationship with Fliess)

Freud's self-analysis, which opened the way to understanding of the conflicts of early childhood, brought about a shift in his interests. Insight into the conditions in which individual conflict arose in the course of the interaction between the child and its environment—in other words the intervention of the social aspect—meant that the need to explain psychological processes by immediate physiological factors had lost its urgency. This was a circumstance that could not fail to influence his relationship with Fliess.

Freud had continually turned to Fliess when he wanted information about the "physiological sub-structure", the "foundations", the "*realia*"; henceforth this need declined. Also Fliess had long since developed his own theories to a point at which in his opinion they appeared to supplement Freud's, though in fact they could only hamper them. The first clash between Freud's theory of the neuroses and Fliess's period theory occurred in the spring of 1895, when Ludwig Löwenfeld, a Munich nerve specialist with whom

Freud in later years kept up a correspondence based on mutual respect, criticized Freud's conception of the anxiety neurosis.[1] Löwenfeld expressed the view that Freud's theory was inadequate to explain either the diversity of the anxiety states that were to be observed clinically or the unpredictability of their appearance. Freud's reply[2] cleared up a number of Löwenfeld's misunderstandings, drew attention to the quantitative factor, the summation of noxae, and laid down the framework within which discussion of the problem should be conducted. This was provided by the "aetiological formula", in which a "precondition" and several kinds of "causes"—specific, contributory and precipitating—were to be distinguished. Freud discussed the role of heredity as a possible precondition. The precipitating cause could be an event of the day, but sexual experiences and factors such as physical exhaustion had to be taken into account as specific and contributory causes. In Freud's opinion the important field for further investigation was the specific cause. "The form that the neurosis takes, the way in which it breaks out, is determined solely by the specific aetiological factor deriving from sexual life".[3]

Freud's discovery of the significance of infantile sexuality and of conflict in early childhood were destined gradually to yield insight into this specific aetiological factor. But long before he reached that

[1] Löwenfeld, 1895.
[2] "A Reply to Criticisms of my Paper on Anxiety Neurosis" (1895f).
[3] Freud himself summarized the contents of his paper on the subject as follows: "It deals with the problem of aetiology in neuropathology; its object is to divide the aetiological factors present into three categories: (*a*) preconditions; (*b*) specific causes; (*c*) subsidiary or contributory causes. The preconditions are those without which the effect could not have been produced but which could not have produced it by themselves unless the specific causes had arisen. The specific causes are differentiated from the preconditions by the fact that they appear only in a few aetiological formulas; while the preconditions play the same role in numerous disorders. Contributory causes are factors which are neither necessarily present in every case nor are sufficient by themselves to produce the effect in question. In the case of the neuroses the precondition is perhaps provided by heredity; the specific cause lies in sexual factors; and all other factors which can be brought forward to explain the aetiology of the neuroses (overwork, emotion, physical illness) are contributory causes and can never completely take the place of the specific factor, though they can replace it quantitatively. The form the neurosis takes depends on the nature of the specific sexual factor; whether neurotic illness take place at all depends on quantitatively effective factors; the effect of heredity is like that of a multiplier introduced into a circuit". (See Freud 1897b).

goal Fliess came forward with his own theory to fill the breach. In his monograph on the connection between the nose and the female sexual apparatus,[1] he specifically recognized the value of Freud's discoveries. He stated on page 142 that his clinical experience had repeatedly confirmed Freud's findings concerning the aetiological significance of undischarged sexual excitation, and went out of his way to demonstrate in detail the mutual consistency of Freud's theories and his own. He emphasized, for instance, that his view of "nasal dysmenorrhoea" did not exclude the influence of conversion as a "magnifying factor" (page 11) and that in the case of real hysterical gastric pains "the nose played no part, as in such cases it was purely a matter of the transmutation of a repressed idea into a physical symptom" (page 110). The seed of future conflict between his period theory and Freud's theory of the neuroses showed itself only in one important point. In the course of his discussion of anxiety "in children, men and women, and the aged" he expressed the view "that the appearance of anxiety attacks was bound up with certain periodic dates". He compared anxiety attacks with certain cases of intoxication, recalled "the anxiety accompanying acute nicotine or colchicum poisoning, or the anxiety stage in diabetic coma" and concluded "that at the time of the periodic days a substance was secreted in the body" which affected the nervous system, and that "with the establishment of the fact that anxiety is released only on definite days"[2] Löwenfeld's objections to Freud's theories collapsed. He observed that "Löwenfeld did not of course know with what exactness his demand for a resemblance between anxiety and epileptic attacks would be fulfilled. Both follow their own determination in time in accordance with the same law".

Thus Fliess answered Löwenfeld's criticism of Freud's conception of the anxiety neurosis with his own theory. Freud had at first been greatly impressed by Fliess's findings. He had been attracted by Fliess's soaring ideas long before the publication of this monograph, and had sent him[3] data on periods from his own case histories, and

[1] Fliess (1897).
[2] Fliess's text does not reveal how he arrived at this conclusion.
[3] In letters not printed here. But see Letter 52.

collected dates from the life of his own family. He had also sought to attribute variations in his own health and state of mind to definite dates in accordance with Fliess's ideas. So long as his own ideas were in a state of active development it was easy for him to overlook the latent antagonism between Fliess's theories and his own. Not till his self-analysis taught him to realize the full significance of the past history of the individual did he become aware that Fliess's attempt to explain neurotic conflict by "periodicity" meant shackling the dynamic thinking of psycho-analysis, enriched as it had been by the introduction of the genetic aspect.

Moreover, the conflict was not confined to this one question. Freud's advance from the study of dreams and parapraxes to the further development of his sexual theory was facilitated by an idea that he took over from Fliess. This was the significance of bisexuality. In the introduction to his 1897 monograph Fliess, after proclaiming the existence of both male and female periods, went on to develop the theme of constitutional bisexuality.[1] This problem played an important role in the exchange of ideas between the two men. Freud was fascinated by it, and quickly adopted Fliess's idea that the theory of bisexuality was capable of making an important contribution to the understanding of the neuroses. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* he describes as an example of motivated forgetfulness how the fact that he owed the idea to Fliess faded completely from his memory and only gradually re-emerged.[2] When it came to developing the idea, however, differences arose which

[1] The term "bisexuality" was perfectly current in contemporary literature.

[2] "In the summer of 1901 [1900] I one day said to a friend with whom I used to exchange scientific ideas: 'These problems of the neuroses are only to be explained if we base ourselves firmly on the assumption of the initial bisexuality of the individual'. My friend replied: 'That's what I told you two-and-a-half years ago at Br., when we went for that evening walk. But you wouldn't hear of it then!' It is painful to have to surrender one's originality in this way. I could not remember the conversation in question, or that my friend had made any statement of the sort. One of us must have been mistaken, and on the *cui prodest*? principle the one who was mistaken must have been myself. Indeed, in the course of the following week the whole conversation of which my friend had tried to remind me returned to my mind, and I remembered the answer that I had given him at the time. 'I can't accept that', I had exclaimed. 'I don't believe it!' But since that incident I have felt more tolerant when in reading medical literature I have come across any of the few ideas with which my name can be associated quoted without acknowledgment".

brought to the surface the whole latent conflict between the two men. It involved a problem with which Freud was concerned for decades. Twenty years later he stated and discussed it with unsurpassed clarity.[1] He described Fliess's theory[2] as "attractive", and praised its "magnificent simplicity". According to Fliess, he said, "the dominant sex of the person, that which is the more strongly developed, has repressed the mental representation of the subordinated sex into the unconscious. Therefore the nucleus of the unconscious (that is to say, the repressed) is in each human being that side of him which belongs to the opposite sex". Freud's attitude to this idea, which he himself considered for a moment even before Fliess (Letters 52, 63) was at first hesitant (Letter 75 *sqq.*) but he ended by allowing the counter-arguments to prevail. "Such a theory as this can only have an intelligible meaning if we assume that a person's sex is to be determined by his genitals."[3] He rejected it with the words: "I do not think we are justified in sexualizing repression in this way—that is to say, in explaining it on a biological instead of a purely psychological basis".[4] Freud rejected, not the validity of bisexuality as the explanation of many traits of human behaviour, but the claim that biological conditions excluded psychological explanations.

This question of bisexuality had a decisive effect on his relationship with Fliess. In 1901, when the friendship was fading, Freud tried to revive it by once more suggesting that the problem of bisexuality was one which lent itself to harmonious co-operation between them. The effort was vain, however; the gulf could no longer be bridged. Their last meeting at Achensee in 1900 showed that understanding between them was impossible. Something of what took place can be reconstructed from Fliess's subsequent account[5] and from what Freud says in his letters. Fliess seems to

[1] " 'A Child is being Beaten' " (1919e).

[2] Fliess's name is not mentioned in the passage referred to, but when he discussed Fliess's theories in one of his later works (see below) he referred back to this passage.

[3] " 'A Child is being Beaten' " (1919e).

[4] This quotation from one of Freud's last works ("Analysis Terminable and Interminable", 1937c) summarizes the argument contained in several letters (Letters 85 and 146).

[5] See footnote, p. 324.

have asked Freud to accept the validity of his attempt to explain the specific nature of neurotic illnesses by periodic variations resulting from the twenty-eight and twenty-three day cycles. Freud obviously replied that such an assumption excluded the whole psychical dynamism which he was struggling to explain, and that in all the evidence at his disposal he could find nothing to justify it. Fliess thereupon attacked the methods by which Freud's insight into the dynamics of the mind had been obtained and accused Freud of projecting his own ideas into the minds of his patients.

Freud tried to keep the correspondence alive in spite of this onslaught. But Fliess was irreconcilable, and finally admitted the reason. We do not know the terms in which he did so, but we can see from Freud's reply (Letter 146) that Fliess was obviously hurt at the insufficient interest that Freud took in his theories.

Indeed, the interest in Fliess's period theory shown in Freud's letters had been declining since 1897, and more particularly since 1898. The reason is not far to seek. Fliess's theorizing had grown more and more remote from fact and observation; his claim to have discovered a cosmic principle that affected all living things must have developed further in those years. The introduction to his monograph on the connection between the nose and the female sexual apparatus which we mentioned earlier pointed in this direction, and in his later works the drive to rigid, abstract system-building was fully developed.[1]

Meanwhile Fliess had been "refining" his mathematical proofs. The less the observed facts fitted in with his theoretical requirements, the more strained became his calculations. So long as the time-intervals in which he dealt could be explained as parts or multiples of twenty-three and twenty-eight, Freud followed him. But Fliess soon found himself obliged to explain the intervals with which he was confronted by combinations of four figures and to use not only twenty-three and twenty-eight, but five (twenty-eight minus

[1] Aelby (1928) concludes his examination of Fliess's work with the observation that anyone with any psychiatric training could not fail to be convinced that Fliess was suffering from over-valuation of an idea. Riebold (1942) calls him "a player with numbers, unfamiliar with the simplest general mathematical principles". O. Frese expresses the opinion that Fliess's nasal reflex neurosis "verges on the mystical". (Denker and Kahler, Part II, page 51).

twenty-three) and fifty-one (twenty-eight plus twenty-three). Freud refused to accompany him in this step, excusing himself on the ground of his lack of mathematical knowledge. But it is legitimate to suspect from the tone of the letters that his interest had been transformed into an understandable reserve.

The tendency of Fliess's that expressed itself in this over-straining of hypotheses led to an epilogue which only very superficially affected his relations with Freud. In 1902 a sensational book called *Sex and Character* appeared, written by a Viennese writer named Otto Weininger, who committed suicide in the autumn of 1903. Weininger made use of Fliess's theory of constitutional bisexuality, as well as of other theories mentioned in his 1897 pamphlet. Weininger had heard of Fliess's work from the Viennese philosopher Hermann Swoboda, who had consulted Freud because of a neurosis and had had his attention drawn to the significance of bisexuality in the course of treatment. He passed on the idea to Weininger, who made use of it in his book without mentioning Fliess's name. In 1904 a monograph by Swoboda appeared entitled "The periods of the human organism and their psychological and biological significance" in which, among other things, he applied the period theory to the interpretation of dreams. Unlike Weininger, he based himself explicitly on the work of Fliess, to whom he devoted a chapter. Weininger's widely-read book and Swoboda's monograph made Fliess feel threatened. He not only wrote a pamphlet in which he defended his own priority, but caused the librarian Richard Pfenning to write a historical study on the question of priority. This appeared in 1906, long after the correspondence with Freud had come to an end.[1]

Fliess's struggle to have his biological system recognized did not come to an end in his life-time. He did not mention Freud's name

[1] Pfenning's book was entitled *Wilhelm Fliess und seine Nachentdecker O. Weininger and H. Swoboda.* Its publication led to a literary feud with wide ramifications. See in particular Swoboda's reply *Die gemeinnützige Forschung und der eigennützige Forscher* (1906). Two letters of Freud's dated July 23rd and 27th, 1904, to Fliess, who passed them on to Pfenning for publication, give us information about Freud's relations with Swoboda and Weininger, as do two letters of Freud's to D. Abrahamsen, dated March 14th, 1938, and June 11th, 1938 (facsimile in D. Abrahamsen, 1946). Abrahamsen had no knowledge of Fliess's works. See Letter 147.

in any of his later works.[1] But he preserved a certain interest in psycho-analysis, and in the last decades of his life he revived it to a certain extent in the course of a friendship with Karl Abraham, the well-known Berlin psycho-analyst. His son Robert, to whom Freud sends greetings in his letters, became a professional psycho-analyst.

Freud always scrupulously mentioned in his works the debt he owed to Fliess's theory of bisexuality. In 1910 he started testing the Swoboda version of the period theory on his own dreams, but after a year he had found nothing to confirm it.[2] He preserved a certain amount of interest in Fliess's fundamental ideas. In discussing developmental inhibitions which might be rooted in the disposition he referred to Fliess's works. "Since the work of W. Fliess has revealed the biological importance of periodicity, it has become conceivable that developmental disturbances may be ascribed to modification in the duration of the various stages", he wrote.[3]

When Freud produced his own biological speculations in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he mentioned Fliess again. "According to the grandiose conception of Wilhelm Fliess", he wrote, "all the vital phenomena exhibited by organisms—including, no doubt, their death—are linked with the conception of fixed periods, which express the dependence of two kinds of living substance (one male and the other female) upon the solar year. When we see, however,

[1] The last mention is in 1902. See Letter 147.

[2] See *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*trans.* 1953, p. 94). Freud remarks that the Fliess theory would seem to under-estimate the significance of dreams. "The subject-matter of a dream, on his view, is to be explained as an assemblage of all the memories which, on the night on which it is dreamt, complete one of the biological periods whether for the first or for the *n*th time".

[3] "The Predisposition to Obsessional Neurosis" (1913i). In 1911, when Karl Abraham proposed getting in touch with Fliess, Freud encouraged him in the following terms: "You will meet a highly gifted, fascinating human being, and incidentally have the opportunity of finding out the scientific grain of truth that is certainly contained in the period theory, which for personal reasons I am prevented from doing". (Letter to Karl Abraham of February 13th, 1911.) After he had met Fliess Abraham reported to Freud as follows: "Since the breach with you he (Fliess) has cut himself off from all the later developments in psycho-analysis, but he showed great interest in everything I told him. He did not make the fascinating impression on me that you foresaw (he may have altered in recent years), but I had the impression of a keen and original mind. I felt he lacked any real stature. That is reflected in his scientific work. He sets out from some valuable ideas; but all the rest of his work is concerned with proving their correctness or defining them more accurately". (Letter to Freud of February 26th, 1911.)

how easily and how extensively the influence of external forces is able to modify the date of the appearance of vital phenomena (especially in the plant world)—to precipitate them or hold them back—doubts must be cast upon the rigidity of Fliess's formulas, or at least upon whether the laws laid down by him are the sole determining factors". In other words the period theory occupied a place at the periphery of Freud's interests; it did not contribute to the creation of psycho-analysis.

Freud mentions repeatedly that his relationship with Fliess played a part in his self-analysis (see Letter 66, for instance). Several passages permit one to assume that Freud realized that his relationship with Fliess was connected with the chief problem of the first phase of his self-analysis, his relations with his father (Letter 134), and the progress of the self-analysis seems to have facilitated his estrangement from Fliess.[1] Freud's depression at the initial failure of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which was increased by financial worries, was the last in his life about which we have information.[2] His visit to Rome, his decision to procure himself the title of professor and thereby assure his livelihood quickly followed. Soon afterwards his first pupils appeared and the psycho-analytic movement was born.

The starting-point of any attempt to estimate in retrospect the significance on Freud's intellectual development of his exchanges with Fliess must be Freud's own conception of the matter. During a period of isolation and estrangement from all colleagues and friends Fliess offered himself as a willing and often enthusiastic listener. His scientific influence was practically exclusively confined to

[1] A trace of this analytic work survives in a footnote in the third edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. "While I was engaged in working out a certain scientific problem, I was troubled for several nights in close succession by a somewhat confusing dream which had as its subject a reconciliation with a friend whom I had dropped many years before. On the fourth or fifth occasion I at last succeeded in understanding the meaning of the dream. It was an incitement to abandon my last remnants of consideration for the person in question and to free myself from him completely, and it had been hypocritically disguised as its opposite" (*trans.* 1953, p. 145).

We may suspect that the problem with which Freud was occupied was that of bisexuality.

[2] At this time he still had debts which he had incurred in setting up his household. Bringing up six children was no light task in those years for a specialist with no other resources.

Freud's efforts to establish a bridge between his psychological discoveries and physiology. Freud was concerned with this question before his relations with Fliess became at all close. In *Zur Auffassung der Aphasien* (1891b) he followed Hughlings Jackson: "Physiological processes do not cease when psychical processes begin", he wrote. "On the contrary, the physiological chain continues; but from a certain moment there is a psychical phenomenon corresponding to every link (or several links). Thus the psychical is a parallel process to the physiological".[1]

Freud subsequently posed the question of at what distance from each other these parallel processes were to be studied. French psychiatry showed him the way. German physicians, he says in his introduction to his translation of Charcot (1892-3a) tend "to the physiological interpretation of the state of illness and the complex of symptoms. French clinical observation undoubtedly gains in independence in that it banishes the physiological point of view to second place. . . .That is not negligence, but is done for a specific purpose". Freud attempted in subsequent works to follow these precepts, but in 1894-95, while drafting certain parts of the *Studies on Hysteria,* he was seized with the idea of working psychology and the anatomy of the brain into a single synthesis; an ambitious effort, encouraged perhaps by the fact that Breuer had just completed the theoretical part of *Studies on Hysteria.* Fliess acted as godfather to this enterprise and encouraged it, but Freud soon abandoned it. It is significant that the "Project" of 1895 was found among Fliess's papers, that Freud never asked him to return it, and never again showed any interest in it.

Not till after his self-analysis, when he was able completely to fuse the dynamic and genetic points of view, did Freud succeed in establishing the distance between the physiological and psychological approaches. His first attempt to do so in *The Interpretation of Dreams* was surprisingly successful; the psychical structure sketched in Chapter Seven of that work was the foundation on which all his subsequent work on the question was built. In the next few years

[1] "Zur Auffassung der Aphasien", page 56. The phrase corresponding to "parallel process" used by Hughlings Jackson (1879 and 1890) is "dependent concomitant". See also Dorer (1932).

Freud specifically rejected any attempt to use any conceptions taken from the physiology of the brain. He abandoned the idea "of proclaiming cells and fibres or the systems of neurones which nowadays take their place . . . as psychical paths, though it must be possible to represent such paths in terms of organic elements of the nervous system in some not yet assignable way".[1]

Some years later Freud threw light on the problem of the relations between physical and mental processes in his work on psychogenic disturbances of sight (1910i), in which he developed the fundamental principles of what has come to be known in the last two decades as psychosomatic medicine.[2] He subsequently repeatedly spoke of the connection between psychological and biochemical processes as a field still awaiting exploration, and always emphasized that the terminology of psycho-analysis was provisional, valid only until it could be replaced by physiological terminology.[3] What Freud said of the terminology of psycho-analysis obviously applied also to its conceptions. The psychic entities of psycho-analysis are described as organisms and characterized by their functions, just as physiological organs are. This is a direct link with the "Project" of 1895.[4]

The result was that in studying the structure of the psychical apparatus, with the investigation of which Freud had been concerned since the time of his study of cerebral anatomy, it was possible to preserve the connection between the physiological and psychological approaches without hampering psycho-analysis by the closeness of the connection.[5]

After the beginning of Freud's self-analysis in 1897 Fliess's influence could only hinder this development. His attempts to attribute mental events to periodic intoxications or to biologise the

[1] *Cf. Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905c), where he stated the future task of the physiology of the brain in the terms used by Charcot: "*Je fais la morphologie pathologique, je fais même un peu l'anatomie pathologique, mias je ne fais pas la physiologie pathologique, j'attends que quelqu'un d'autre la fasse*". Regret at the failure of all attempted psychological explanations in the terms of brain physiology are frequently expressed in Freud's works. See the passage quoted on page 349.
[2] See Fenichel (1945).
[3] See Kris (1947).
[4] See Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein (1947). This was written before the authors were acquainted with the "Project".
[5] For an elaboration see Kris, 1951.

theory of repression could only have the effect of alien bodies. Fliess's allegations that psycho-analysis was incapable of yielding scientific results, that Freud's interpretations were only "projections" of himself, were all the more painful to Freud because of the crucial advances in technique he had made during the years of their closest intellectual contact. In 1898 he wrote a paper in which he reported the alterations he had introduced into his concentration technique.[1] This advance is barely mentioned in the letters, though it was of vital importance and must be counted as one of Freud's great discoveries of the period around the turn of the century. The abandonment of the remnants of the procedure associated with the technique of hypnosis had opened up new possibilities to psycho-analytic therapy; they rapidly revealed to Freud the significance of resistance and transference—conceptions which turned the therapeutic situation into a reliable instrument in the investigator's hands. This goal was reached a few years after Freud's estrangement from Fliess, and psycho-analysis acquired its threefold significance as a therapy, a psychological theory and a new and unique method of observing human behaviour. We owe to the new technique the overwhelming majority of the clinical hypotheses of psycho-analysis, the verification of which by other methods of observation is now in progress. Some of the socially conditioned resistances to the findings of psycho-analysis have simultaneously weakened. Psycho-analysis has given a new sense and a new meaning to psychiatry, has gained an influence over the whole field of medicine through the development of psychosomatic research, has had a big influence on the upbringing and education of children, and has suggested new points of view to the social sciences. The task of the psycho-analytic movement, which had hitherto been to promote the work of psycho-analytic investigation and provide training for psycho-analysts, is now shared with universities and medical research institutions.

In the course of this development some observers have gained the impression that the fundamental principles of psycho-analysis must be out-of-date because a good deal of its terminology derives from

[1] "Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses" (1898a).

the scientific terminology of the eighties and nineties of last century. The fact is not in dispute. The physiology of the brain which Freud took as his point of departure is as out-of-date as Herbart's mechanistic psychology, which Freud frequently took as his point of departure, as M. Dorer[1] has convincingly shown. But the terms thus taken over into psycho-analysis have acquired new meanings which often have little to do with their original meanings. It was the stimulus provided by Herbart that caused Freud to be the first to replace Herbart's mechanistic psychology of association with a new one. The question of the origin of the terminology and fundamental assumptions of psycho-analysis is therefore of only historical interest;[2] it has nothing whatever to do with the question of the value of those assumptions and that terminology for psycho-analysis as a science. There are, however, other questions that remain to be answered. In the first place we must ask ourselves whether the hypotheses which can be based on Freud's assumptions are verifiable and permit the formulation of new hypotheses; and then we must inquire whether there are other assumptions on the basis of which more fruitful hypotheses could be built. These are problems which promise to keep psycho-analytic investigation busy for a long time to come.

From this point of view the material collected in this book acquires importance. It shows Freud gradually shaking himself free from the ideas and conceptions with which he started, or at any rate taking the first steps in that direction. This was at first not desired by him, and it remained unintentional for a long time. It was forced on him by "the nature of the material", by his attempt to take the description and understanding of human conflict out of the realm of art and intuition and to put it into the realm of science.

[1] Dorer (1932).
[2] See Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein (1946) and Kris (1947).