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## A Psychiatrist on Religion

SOME years ago a distinguished anthropologist observed, with regard to the conflict between religion and science, that the battle had scarcely begun; the anthropologists were just getting their guns into position. He might have added that their allies—the psychologists—were also just preparing to take off with a heavy load of bombs to support the artillery.

Dr. David Forsyth's recent presidential address delivered before the Psychiatry Section of the Royal Society of Medicine must certainly be regarded as an able and disturbing contribution to this offensive. The explosives utilised were of the recognised Freudian type. For example, inasmuch as remarkable likenesses exist between certain religious ritual practices and the behaviour of sufferers from obsessional neurosis, we may conclude that "the private obsessional neurosis is a private religious system, and religion a universal obsessional neurosis". Conscience, too, consists of latent memory of parental injunctions and prohibitions. The adult idea of God "has originated in the earlier idea of the father, of which it is an abstracted and elaborated repetition". With regard to guilt, "The original guilty feelings seem to arise from conflict between the child's inclinations and its parents' wishes . . . and from the child's contending emotions towards its parents—its love of the one and jealousy and hate of the other". In prayer and contemplation "the worshipper withdraws into himself, shuts out his sensory perceptions and gives himself over to rumination in an auto-suggestive state". The belief in a soul "has no other origin than the experience of dream".

With regard to religious conversion, which is essentially a phenomenon of adolescence, "psychologically the phenomenon is none other than the new strong tide of sexual feeling that accompanies puberty being checked in its usual course and deflected into religion. The check comes from an undue sense of guilt about sexual matters". Sexual deprivation and religious adoration too are closely connected; "it is inevitable that the unsatisfied erotic feelings should find expression in some 'non-carnal' direction". Even the theological doctrine of the Holy Trinity may be traced to the fact that "a child throughout its earliest and most impressionable years is influenced almost exclusively by two individuals only—its parents. . . . Its earliest conception of human-kind must surely

be as consisting of its father, its mother and itself. Here is the first experience of a trinity”.

Such contentions, and many others of the same sort, cannot but be extremely damaging to religion, if they are valid. Far more damaging, however, is the Freudian contention that religion is seriously inimical to mental health and well-being. That a distinguished British psychiatrist should have been led by his practical experience to support this contention ought to lead the exponents of religion to reflect seriously over their policy in certain respects. To quote Dr. Forsyth :

“In the last 25 years we have learned more about the working of the human mind than in the previous 2000, and our psychological methods of treatment have no more in common with the spiritual methods of religion, than modern medical science with the cure of bodily disease by exorcism and prayer.

“If there is one consideration more than any other which confirms this it is in the attitude of the Churches to sex. I believe I am voicing the opinion of the large majority of medical psychologists in saying that of all the causes of mental illness easily the commonest lies in the sexual life. Go about in this country and you will find homes innumerable containing middle-aged nervous invalids, men as well as women, who owe their plight to having been brought up according to the prudish ideas current in their childhood. These ideas survive in the Churches to-day.”

Although economic and social as well as religious causes contribute to sex starvation or perversion (it is middle-class families which suffer most—Mr. Barrett of Wimpole Street is still functioning), yet there is no denying that the Church has a bad record in this respect. The trouble is that the Church starts from the principle that there is something ‘unclean’ about sex, besides being dogmatically committed to certain applications of that principle in the sphere of ethics. Indubitably, owing to the fact that Nature has wished to run no risks about the reproduction of the race, sex is a powerful force, only to be controlled with difficulty. But that is a pressing reason for trying to understand it and deal with it rationally, and not for dogmatising about it and meeting all proposals with a flat *non possumus*.

There can be no doubt that the new psychology is distressing to many people. But the fact has to be faced that we can now no more go behind Freud than we can go behind Newton or Darwin. Theories of gravitation or of evolution doubtless have to be modified, but the principles stand ; and so with the theory of the subconscious. What

Freudians do sometimes overlook is that their dialectic is an ambiguous weapon and can be used against other activities besides religion. For example, Dr. Forsyth notes how Freud discovers a close parallel (as was indicated above) between religious practices and the behaviour of patients with some obsessional neurosis. But could not many of the practices of the laboratory be attributed in like manner to some morbid curiosity-complex of the ‘peeping-Tom’ type, especially if the laboratory were a physiological one ? Again, there is plenty of evidence adduced by the Freudians for the existence of sadistic and masochistic practices in religion. But could not the practice of vivisection be attributed to a repressed sadistic instinct ? Also, might not the neurologists, bacteriologists and physiologists who have not hesitated to experiment upon themselves in the course of their researches, be branded as morbid masochists ? To the man of science this interpretation of his behaviour would seem unreasonable, but the closely parallel interpretations of the Freudians seem equally absurd to the sincere religionist.

The truth seems to be that inasmuch as all human activities, scientific and artistic as well as religious, are in the short or long run expressions of the *libido*, all of them are subject to Freudian interpretations. This does not mean that the Freudian dialectic is invalid, but only that it fails to give a complete account of the activities which it sets out to explain, and may thus evacuate them of much of their real value. Religion, connected as it is so closely with sexuality (primitive religions being fertility cults), is liable to suffer more from Freudian analysis than either art or science—though art comes off worse than science owing to its connexion with religion and magic.

In another respect, too, religion is less fortunate than either science or art. In discussing it, metaphysical issues can scarcely be avoided. The man of science is more fortunate. He can assume that the entities with which he deals, whether forces, or objects, or organic and mental processes, are real without having to define in what sense they are real, for the simple reason that they seem real to the uncritical perceptions of the general public. What is more, he can brand as unreal whatever eludes his measuring instrument for the time being, and be sure of public support in so doing. Along these lines it is not difficult to represent religion as concerned with fantasy,

and science with reality. The scientific point of view (regarding the world we know by sensory perception as reality) can be represented as the awakening of the mature mind from that confused state of infant mentality when the subjective and the objective are in a state of total confusion. For example, Dr. Forsyth quotes from an article contributed by him to the *British Journal of Psychology* for 1921:

"Where the pleasure principle dominates and psychic truth is accepted as the standard, interest passes to elemental psychological processes, and thence to the supernatural and spiritual; this is exemplified in the evolution of religion and of personal religious faith. Alternatively, with objective reality as the aim, chief importance is given to the facts of the physical and material world, and thence to natural laws; along this line come science and an interest in science."

The only evidence, however, given to show that the 'pleasure principle' and not the 'reality principle' is dominant in religion is that in the case of very young children and neurotics this is the case. But not all religion is immature infantilism or neurotic fantasy. It has been taken for granted, but not proved, that 'objective reality' cannot be the aim of religion, but can only be the aim of science. As a matter of fact, the critical study of scientific method (apart from all questions of metaphysics and the criticism of the 'objective reality' of sensory experience), suggests that the 'truth' of science is largely abstract in its nature, and that the concrete richness of reality escapes the scientific net. This does not discredit science, of course, but suggests that there are areas of objective reality which elude it.

The public, however, general as well as scientific, is placed under a considerable obligation by the writer of such a paper as we have tried to examine. Too rarely does the medical profession lift that veil of reticence where certain important matters are concerned. But with regard to the psychotherapist's general attitude, is it inevitable that he should regard all religion, good as well as bad, as pathological? This appears to be an extreme point of view. Experience teaches that a good religion has a sanitary and stimulating effect, banishing worries and achieving that inner harmony which is the foundation of mental and moral health. What most of the neurotics need is not less religion, but more, provided always that it is of the right kind. J. C. HARDWICK.

### Crystal Chemistry

*Kristallchemie der anorganischen Verbindungen.*

Dargestellt von M. C. Neuburger. (Sammlung chemischer und chemisch-technischer Vorträge, begründet von F. B. Ahrens, herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. H. Grossmann, Neue Folge, Heft 17.) Pp. 115. (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1933.) 9.70 gold marks.

THIS monograph has been written in order to bring to the notice of a wider circle of readers the work of G. N. Goldschmidt, as set out mainly in publications by the Norwegian Academy. His work on ionic radii, which occupies about sixty pages of the present monograph, is already familiar to English readers, since it formed the subject of a lecture to the Faraday Society in 1929. The ingenious application whereby the crystal properties of zinc silicate,  $Zn_2SiO_4$ , as willemite were imitated in the soluble salt  $Li_2BeF_4$  are also familiar to English readers.

One example of the principles involved may, however, be cited as an illustration. According to Goldschmidt, the type of lattice developed by an ionic aggregate  $AB$  depends on the ratio of the ionic radii  $r_A : r_B$  of the ions  $A$  and  $B$ . Thus, if this ratio is 0.15 or less, the ion  $A$  can be stowed away on the interstices of an equilateral triangle formed by the larger ions  $B$ ; if the ratio is 0.22, it can be accommodated in a tetrahedron; if 0.41, in a square or in an octahedron, as in rock salt; if 0.73, in a cube as in caesium chloride. The formation of layer lattices in crystals of the type  $AB_2$  is also determined by the ratio of the ionic radii. Thus, when this ratio is less than 0.73, the metallic ions  $A$  can be sandwiched between twin layers of the ion  $B$ , giving rise to crystals which have very little cohesion between successive sandwiches. If, however, the ratio is greater than 0.73, an ordinary ionic lattice of the fluorspar type may be developed. Thus  $NiCl_2$  forms layer lattices, just like  $CdCl_2$ , since the ratio of the ionic radii is only 0.43; but  $[Ni.6NH_3]Cl_2$ , where the ratio has been increased to 1.41, gives a structure of the fluorspar type. If, however, iodides are considered instead of chlorides, the negative ion has such a large diameter (2.19 Å.) that it is impossible to find a simple cation of sufficient diameter to produce this effect. All metallic iodides of the type  $RI_2$  therefore form layer lattices; but by making use of the complex cation,  $[Ni.6NH_3]^{++}$ , which has a much larger ionic radius (2.56 Å.) than any simple cation, the ratio can be raised to 1.17 and the fluorspar lattice is again developed.

The influence of atomic radii on crystal structure is only precise when the ions can be treated as undeformable spheres, and is subject to profound