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## Freud's Concept of Sexuality

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*Transcript of a Lecture given at The New School for Social Research (66 West 12th Street, New York City) on Tuesday evening, May 28, 1957, at 8:30 p.m. – From the early 1940s on, Erich Fromm was a lecturer at The New School for Social Research. This lecture, given in 1957, was the last in a series about the main concepts of Freud's psychoanalysis. Most of the lectures and seminars were not recorded. This one was recorded and transcribed. The text follows the transcription. Editorial additions are in [brackets]. The lecture is published here for the first time.*

So far I have spoken about a concept of the unconscious, of resistance, of transference, and of the Oedipus complex. Now, tonight, in this last lecture of the series, I want to speak about Freud's concept of sexuality and of the libido and about some other concepts as far as I have the time.

### [Freud's physiological concept of sexuality]

Needless to say, Freud's discovery of many aspects of sexuality was in itself at the time a great and important discovery. This was all at the end of the Victorian Age in which among other lies one also denied the existence of sexuality, especially among women, as something indecent, and Freud with his theory restored, so to speak, part of its honor to human nature.

That in itself was important, very important. It was important furthermore that he could show how in certain cases, even though not in as many as he perhaps believed originally, the very frustration, repression or suppression of sexuality and the sexual desire led to sickness. Individually he made discoveries which will remain part of our basic knowledge about humans, namely, that sexuality is not something which arises or comes into existence with purity, but that it is already there when the child is born. It is already there in the little infant. That discovery transformed the whole view of sexuality from something which a child certainly ought to be ashamed of into a part of human nature which nobody should be ashamed of, and which does not need to be repressed.

I shall speak first about his concept of sexuality, and later on about his concept of the libido, because the latter is more far-reaching, and say that his concept of sexuality had very definite limitations because of the very personal and philosophical factors which I discussed in the first



part of this lecture.

To put it in the simplest and most general way, I will say this: For Freud, the sexual drive was essentially a physiological thing. He formed the picture of this drive analogous to the concept of hunger in line with the physiological knowledge which one had at the time. His picture was that certain chemical processes in the body create tension, tension which is felt consciously as sexual desire. That is to say, as a wish, sexual desire being a wish to get rid of the tension. Sexual satisfaction or sexual pleasure was for Freud the success or the satisfaction of this wish. It was never in itself a pleasure, but the pleasure was the removal of the un-pleasure. This is what the pleasure principle means. The sexual desire was clearly an inner chemically produced tension, you might say, like an itch, except rather important and rather a persistent one. Humans had the tendency to get rid of this itch, of this tension, by the sexual act, which reduces the tension to the level in which it was before it was built up, it then gets built up again, again the sexual excitement is felt, and is reduced to a lower level of excitement again by the act of sexual satisfaction.

Now, this is a completely physiological explanation of the sexual drive, and, actually, from that standpoint the most normal satisfaction of the sexual drive would be found in masturbation, because there is no reason why men should go to the lengths to which men and women have gone for thousands of years of love-making, of seeking each other, and so on and so on, if all they wanted was get rid of a disagreeable painful tension.

Undoubtedly, the sexual drive, like all others, are rooted in chemical processes in the body, and, undoubtedly, there is such a phenomenon as a tension which men or women want to get rid of, although it must be said that this reaches its peak around the age of 25, and from then on the purely physiological aspect of the sexual drive diminishes.

However, Freud did not see in his physiological preoccupation a much more important aspect of sex, namely, that sexual desire is not primarily the wish to get rid of the tension, but is primarily related to the masculine-feminine polarity, the masculine-feminine polarity which runs through all of nature, which runs through the plants, the animal kingdom, and man, which is one of the most basic polarities of all living substance. Electricity and magnetism are one of the most basic polarities of matter.

#### **[The biological concept of sexuality]**

You might call this a biological concept of sex as contrasted to a physiological concept. The biological concept of sex looks at sex as that drive, as that passion which tries to bridge the masculine-feminine polarity, and in that very act finds satisfaction.

Freud strangely enough did not pay any attention to the fact that the sexes are attracted to each other. It is, of course, an old fact, he couldn't deny it. He used it for the explanation of the Oedipus complex. Theoretically, he was not concerned with it, theoretically did hardly anything with it, because, theoretically, it was based on the physiological concept of man as a machine, this inner chemistry created tension, this tension had to be removed, and when it was removed, a man felt better, and sometimes even women, although he didn't pay too much attention to that either.



It is quite clear, and I think it follows from what I said in these lectures before, why Freud was so strangely silent or ignorant, if you please, about the sexual drive as an expression of masculine-feminine polarity, or to use a good old word as Eros – I am using the Greek word here, namely, that process of being drawn together which exists between the masculine and feminine pole.

I say the reasons for this are, in the first place, his whole physiological materialism in which he could only think of a feeling as being produced by an inner chemical process rather than dynamically by the tension between two poles, between two forces, but, secondly, his patriarchal device: for Freud the woman was a castrated man. For Freud the woman was a being who was just lacking something, and he couldn't imagine that there was any such thing as feminine libido, as feminine sexuality. He said it very clearly himself. He said that the libido is masculine.

That is the idea many men still have, and, certainly, most men probably had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where it was still supposed to be the normal thing if a woman was frigid, or, at least, did not admit that she enjoyed sexual pleasure. So for Freud the libido was masculine, and if the libido is masculine how can there be any polarity?

There can be no polarity between something and the lack of something. There can be a polarity between plus and minus, between two opposites, between two poles, and therefore Freud, with this patriarchal bias in which the libido, the sexual drive was by its very nature masculine, and the woman by her very nature did not have any of this except a lack, saw no polarity and could not conceive of Eros as the basis of or as the more important basis of the sexual drive.

Much later Freud advanced to the concept of Eros, when he formed the concept of the death instinct and the life instinct, which he called Eros, and where he defined Eros or the life instinct as a tendency of the organism towards ever increasing unification of parts, towards what unifies, towards what creates unity (biologically speaking) between diverse parties.

That is, indeed, an old but very fundamental definition of Eros, but Freud came many years later, and never applied it to sex: Freud spoke of masculine and feminine libido, masculine and feminine sexuality as the particular polarity which creates sexual desire, or, to put it differently, Freud saw the sexual desire as a primary thing, and people, men and women, seeking each other out in order to satisfy this desire, rather than seeing that the primary thing is the male-female attraction, the male-female polarity, and that the sexual desire is the outcome of that very polarity, its culmination, its climax.

In Freud's concept, actually, you have a typical individualistic market concept. I mean this in the sense of the very same concept which applied to man in general. Man has a certain need, namely, to get relief from his painful tension. In order to have this need fulfilled, he seeks out a partner, and the wonderful thing is that the two exchange their needs and satisfactions without anyone being exploited.

The man and the woman fortunately are organized in such a way that they both think the same in the exchange of the sexual satisfaction. Nobody is defrauded and nobody is cheated. At least, that is the idea.

But this is exactly the picture of man as an individual isolated and relating himself to other



men, as man relates himself to others on the market. I come to the market, the commodity market with certain needs. Others come with their needs, and if we meet each other and can fulfill each other's needs, then we are satisfied and we have met each other for a purpose, namely, for the mutual satisfaction of needs rather than what is implied in erotic attraction – there is no purpose whatever, there is the fact of a male and a female, of a man and a woman, and it is one of the phenomena or, if you please, laws of nature that the male and the female part attract each other.

Why? That, I think, has never been answered, but, certainly, if there were an answer, it would be a much more complicated answer than this model of the human machine with its inner tension.

To put it differently, one has often objected to Freud by saying he has emphasized sex too much. Well, in a sense that may be true, but I don't think that that objection really hits the center problem. The center problem is not that Freud has emphasized sex too much, but that Freud has seen sex too superficially, that he has dealt with sex primarily as a physiological need rather than see that erotic attraction is one of the great universal forces which creates need in men as it create needs in every living thing. And if one sees sex more deeply, namely, as a biological and not as a purely physiological phenomenon, then, indeed, one comes to an appreciation that sexual attraction is a need, something of the greatest importance in the relationship between people.

Then one comes to another problem which has the greatest importance for character, for pathology, namely, the discrepancy between a person's (let us say) anatomical role and his acceptance or non-acceptance of the psychic, mental role with regard to sex. That is to say, you find many people, men or women, who are physiologically men or women but who for one reason or another are in a profound conflict with their anatomical role. And that conflict is in itself a source of many disturbances of personality.

This is greatly underrated, and here, strangely and paradoxically enough, you find an instance where sex has been greatly underrated in Freudian analysis, with the pathological consequences it has.

### **[The role of masculinity and femininity]**

If a person, let us say a woman, for one reason or another, cannot accept her female, her feminine role, and, therefore, cannot function as a total human being – let me say that while it is true that we are human beings before we are anything else, it is also true that we are human beings only through being men or women. You cannot be abstract, you cannot function as a human being per se. You function in your totality, and you are either a man or you are a woman, and if for one reason or another you cannot accept the role, the sex in which you are born, then indeed you are disturbed and you are paralyzed in your whole functioning.

The study of the distortions of the particular sexual role within the person is indeed one of the very important aspects of the study of all mental pathology. There are other aspects which need to be studied in this respect. One is the problem of masculine and feminine factors within society and culture. That is to say, to what extent certain cultural products, certain social phe-



nomena are primarily masculine or feminine, what the balance of masculine-feminine is within the whole culture, and, furthermore, what the roles of masculinity and femininity play within the person, because we are not only masculine and the other person is not only feminine, but we ourselves are both masculine and feminine, and the respective weights of these two factors are of greatest importance for the understanding of the total personality.

There are many problems of research, of study in the field of sexuality. As soon as we leave the physiological concept and turn to the biologic concept of Eros, of sexuality, you have the expression of the male-female polarity.

### **[The Freudian concept of the libido]**

Now I come to the discussion of the Freudian concept of the libido. By libido Freud meant, technically, the energy of the sexual drive. So whether you speak of sexuality or of the libido, it is pretty much the same, except that libido is an energy concept:

With his concept of the libido, Freud had created or given the basis for what you might call a unifying systematic theory of man. This libido, aside from the drive for self-preservation, was an energy which made man act in every respect. It formed his character, it formed his human relations. Man was formed, molded and driven by his libido, and a great theoretical advantage of it was that you had here one power, one force which could be assumed to be the driving power for all human activities inasmuch as they were not motivated by the wish to love, by the wish for self-preservation.

As a scientific theory, that was marvelous in its economy and its clarity and in its systematic and all-embracing proportions. One could explain symptoms, for instance, that way as a compromise between the demand of the libido and the demand of the drive for self-preservation. One could explain character, especially since Freud succeeded in a very ingenious way in freeing the libido from its identity with what he called genital sexuality – that is what we usually mean by sexuality, by assuming that the libido in an evolutionary sense has its various stages so that there is an oral libido – that is to say, the wish, the libido or sexual desire connected with a mouth, with sucking. There is an animal libido which is connected with identification. There is a libido at a certain age which is connected with the boy's wish to show his genitals or to feel his genitals, and eventually there comes the so-called genital libido which is sexuality after puberty.

By devising this scheme, Freud could explain in a very ingenious way how all character traits, what we call exploitation, what we call resistance, what we might call productivity, how all these character traits are nothing but the reaction against the sublimation of these various stages of the libido: in other words, a physiological explanation of character in a unified, systematic way which really satisfied all the expectations one could have with regard to a theory of man, except the one that it wasn't quite so, but that is nothing surprising. You find that theory through other centuries. You have one great vision, you have one theory which gives a systematic explanation by which a great number of facts are unearthed. Where there are enough facts unearthed you find the theory, but while it was beautiful and while it was impressive and while it fulfilled all formal conditions of the scientific theory, it wasn't quite true.



On the basis of new facts which you couldn't have found without this earlier theory formulation, you come to the new theory formulation. You gather new facts, and then you more or less find that that isn't quite true either. However, that is the way science proceeds and human thought proceeds. Only those who feel that any such thing is a holy position, is something one has to worship, only those are very upset when they find that the theoretical systems change. Those who don't have that attitude, on the other hand, are very happy to see how the human mind moves and how, when one has believed this is the answer, further mental effort and further unearthing of facts lead to the insight that this wasn't it either, but that we know a little better now.

### **[My own theory of human nature]**

I should like now to speak briefly about my own view; that is to say, what I believe to be a more adequate theory of human nature. Freud's basic idea here was that man is primarily isolated. He is like a little machine with all the fuel he needs for the 70, 80, 90 years in him. They replace each other, and the techniques which are created by this fuel make it necessary for him from time to time to seek the company of another person to satisfy certain needs, especially his sexual needs, but, of course, also those he needs to satisfy his hunger, and so on. Here you see a concept of man which corresponds very much to the concept which was quite current in the 19th century, the isolated self-sufficient machine driven by a chemistry or by forces which are all built in that machine, but human relations not as a prime need but as a secondary need in order to fulfill certain primary needs. It was Freud's timely idea for his time that humans need each other, need to be related to each other not because they need another person to fulfill their sexual needs, but because a need for relatedness is in itself the most basic human need.

The theory of man, the theory of man's behavior and, also, of man's pathology must start out with a picture of the peculiarity of man. The peculiarity of human existence is a contradiction, the fact that man is an animal, that man is part of nature, man is directed or determined by certain needs which are rooted in his body and which are imperative, and yet while man is part of nature he transcends nature. While he is in nature, he is at the same time outside of nature. Man is, if you please, a freak. Man is the only freak which exists in nature in this way, namely, to be in it and at the same time not to be in it. This not-to-be-in-it lies in man's awareness, in man's reason, in his capacity to be aware of himself, to imagine his future, to ask who he is, to be aware of the path of his future and of the present, to be aware of himself as an individual.

That is something which doesn't exist in any other species. If you want to use another term, you might say in man for the first time life becomes aware of itself.

Life existed before man, outside of man, but when life becomes aware of itself, that awareness transcends itself. That is the new quality in man. This contradiction within man is the natural product as part of nature and man as an animal with reason transcending nature. That conflict is the basic factor about human existence.

That basic factor in itself creates certain passions, certain needs in man. I have written about



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all of that in *The Sane Society*<sup>1</sup>, but since it would be unfair to ask all of you to read *The Sane Society*, I feel I should at least briefly speak about it right here, even if I have to be rather short.

I speak there about five basic needs of man, but there is no reason to assume that there are just these five, that this particular formulation is particularly correct or exhaustive, and that is not my intention. I tried to speak of those needs which either stand as the result of the basic human situation, of the basic consequences of human existence, and I am sure that that is by no means a final list, but it is, nevertheless, a list which at least serves as an illustration of the main point.<sup>2</sup>

### **[The need for relatedness]**

The first need of man is that of being related. The man who is not related at all is insane. Insanity is by its very definition complete unrelatedness from one person to another. One can be related in several ways. One can be related by submission to another person or by domination over another person, or as I have called it, in a symbiotic way in which both partners are intimately related. In this symbiotic relatedness each one loses his integrity. The person who submits to another person loses integrity, and the person who dominates another person loses integrity. They both stand by themselves only inasmuch as they are swallowed or have swallowed somebody else.

The only solution of relatedness in which at the same time one is related and yet one does not lose one's self is love. Love is the form of relatedness in which two are one, and at the same time two, in which fusion occurs under the condition of independence, under the condition of respect, and, therefore, love is the only solution which does not at the same time injure and harm man or his need for intimate relatedness.

### **[The need for rootedness]**

The second need, again rooted in the same basic human conflict, the same basic conditions of human existence is that of being rooted. The plant is rooted in the soil. The animal is rooted in nature. The animal does not make decisions essentially; its actions are determined by its instincts. Man is very little rooted. Indeed, as long as man is in the mother's womb, he is in the same situation as any animal. Then he is released from that womb. He is soon released from mother's breast and his actions are not determined any more by those instinctive prearrangements which determine the animal. Man has to be born. He has to be born at first by leaving mother's womb. That is what we call birth usually. He has to be born every day. He cannot stay where he came from. He has to find himself. He has to develop his reason. He has to develop his individuality, and therefore, man is constantly torn between two forces, one in which he is afraid of the new, in which he is afraid to be born, in which he is afraid of letting go, in which he wants certainty, protection – and one in which he wants to grow, to venture outside, to be himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955, pp. 27-66.

<sup>2</sup> [In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973a, pp. 230 ff.) Fromm in addition speaks of a need for "effectiveness" (pp. 235-237) and of a need for "excitation and stimulation" (pp. 237-242).]



Man can remain, can give in to the first tendency to remain rooted. Then he remains attached to mother, to soil, to blood, to custom, to habits, to his group life. He does not develop any individuality. He does not become himself. He does not grow. He is still-born. The difference is only at what point he is still-born, whether in mother's womb or mother's breast or mother's lap or mother's hand, but from then on he does not develop, and in a certain sense that means he doesn't live. Life is always characterized by growth. If there is no growth, there is no life. Physiologically, of course, there can be life, psychologically, however, there is no life but death.

Man can be rooted incestuously without having the sexual implication in these natural forces, but if he wants to grow out he has to be rooted in something else. He has to be rooted somewhere, and the only way in which he can be rooted in to be rooted in humanity, to be rooted in the solidarity of all men, to be rooted in the reality of the human spirit, to be rooted not only in the past but in the future. That requires courage, that requires faith, but it is a rootedness which cannot be disturbed or interrupted by anything. Now, again, he has to be rooted in some way; if he is not rooted at all, he would become insane, just as he would if he were not related at all.

### **[The need for a sense of identity]**

The third need of man is to have a sense of identity. The animal does not have a sense of identity, because in the animal there is no awareness of himself as a separate identity, but as soon as man exists with this self-awareness, he must be able to have a sense of identity, of saying "I."

Not only in a primitive tribe but in any early tribal organization, identity does not lie in the individual but in the tribe. If the person could firmly say – he might say "I is We". The I exists only inasmuch as I am a member of the tribe. That is why in a primitive tribe the most terrible thing for a man was to be ostracized, to lose his connection with the tribe. Think of the story of Cain and Abel. The punishment for Cain is not death – that would be small. The punishment for Cain is to be ostracized, to be expelled, to be lonely and alone, because that means loss of identity, and loss of identity is close to insanity.

Today we don't live in a tribal world in which these ties exist. What people do is to look for rootedness in other ways, to belong to a nation, to a religion, to a class, to a club, to a lodge, to a profession, to God knows what in order to find a sense of identity, in order to be able to say "I". It is mainly that they have a name, they have a profession, have a social status. Actually, a passport is what represents a sense of identity of many people today

However, there you have another possibility of saying "I", namely, if one can explain oneself as a true subject of one's own being, if the sense of "I" is established by the experience I feel, I think, I act. If I can truthfully experience myself as the subject of my own actions, then I have a sense of identity which cannot be threatened by anyone as long as I am alive. However, this sense of identity exists only inasmuch as I am productive, inasmuch as I do think, I do feel, I do act, inasmuch as I have integrity. That is just another way of putting it, namely, that my acts are mine and not put into me with the idea, with the illusion that they are mine.

True individuality is not an abstract concept. True individuality is nothing but the experience





that I feel, think and act, that I am not only dramatically but really in experience the subject of my action.

This may sound to some of you as rather self-evident, and yet if that sounds that way, it would mean that you have not seen enough of what in reality happens to most of us, namely, that the experience, the full experience of I as the originator and creator of my acts and the true subject is very important.

### **[The need for transcendence]**

Another need in man is that man is a creature and a part of nature, but by having self-awareness wants to transcend nature, to be above nature. By the need for transcendence I do not mean to be related to something which exists from outside of nature, which is sometimes called God, or something else. I do not speak about that, but about the fact that man cannot be satisfied with a passive role of the creature. He can assume some role as a creator only in two ways. The first way is by creation – and in creation the I transcends nature. I become myself a creator, therefore I transcend my status as a creature. However, to create is difficult. It has as a premise love, productive ability, and so on, and many people do not have that love or that faith which is necessary to create. If I cannot create, I can – and this is the second way – destroy. In destroying I also transcend nature, because destroying life is just as much a miracle as creating life. Therefore, the need of man to transcend nature very often finds its expression in a passion for destruction because he cannot satisfy his need for transcendence in the passion for creation. Destructiveness, the passion to destroy, will always occur when man is prevented from creating.

### **[The need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion]**

The next passion is also deeply rooted in a need that is based on the existence of man and the particular conditions of that existence: the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. Man must make some sense of the world, otherwise life would be utterly chaotic, saddled with the blessings or curse, if you please, of the awareness of consciousness. He can have more realistic interpretations or more unrealistic and fantastic ones, but he needs something. And he needs an object of devotion. He needs something which is a unified goal for all his efforts. If there were no unifying goals, men would have to make them every moment between this and that, and he could not possibly organize his energy for the pursuit of any aim.

As I have already indicated, these needs, these necessities are rooted in the basic conditions of human existence. If they are not satisfied at all, the result is a psychosis, the result is insanity, just as lack of satisfaction of our physiological needs ends in death. The way in which these basic needs can be satisfied are followed much – just as, let us say, our need to eat can be satisfied in many ways, by many ways. However, they are different. There are better and worse ways, just as in food. There are more or less adequate ways from a human standpoint to satisfy these needs, and the difference between the better and the worse ways is the difference between what you might call health or neurosis, happiness and unhappiness. That is the essential problem of psychopathology.



### [Impacts for the understanding of patients]

There follows one more thing, and that holds true, especially, for psychopathology and for the understanding of neurosis. If one looks at man mechanically like a machine, then you get about the same picture as when you bring your car into a garage. There are mechanics that say it needs a carburetor job or it needs a tuning up job.

But man is not a thing, and man cannot be fixed. Man cannot be looked at mechanically like that. Man is a unique event. All living represents in him all the past and future of the human race. All conventionalities which man has, ever had – every individual is confronted with the same situation. He is this piece of life thrown into the world at a certain point without his knowledge and will and forced to find an answer to the universal problem of his existence under certain conditions. There are not many answers. There are not many plots. There are perhaps five or six plots. You will find them in all great dramas, in all great religions, in all great works of art. There are, however, millions and millions, innumerable valuations of these plots, and no one plot in an individual person is the same as a plot in another person.

The basic features of these plots are the same; the way they are worked out are different. If that were not so, you would be bored to death by Shakespeare, by the great Greek dramatists, by Dostoyevsky because they would always describe the same story: Their great art lies in the fact that they see at the same time the basic nature of the fundamental plot and the tremendous variety of difference from individual to individual in which this plot is varied.

If you want to understand the so-called normal person and the so-called neurotic person, you can understand him only if you see in him all of humanity. If you see in his life a drama, a drama in which one person tries to answer the basic question which life has for all of us, and he answers it in his way. If he is sick you have to recognize why the answer is a poor one. If you want to help him, you might visualize how this particular era could find a better answer to the problem of his existence.

However, you never understand any person truly unless you can see him as a hero of Shakespeare, as a hero of the Greek dramas. Nobody's life is banal. What he thinks may be banal, what he believes about his own life may be banal, but his existence is never banal, because his existence is again and again that human drama in which life tries to find itself and to find an answer to his existence.

The first insight, the first condition of any true psychoanalytic understanding is to see your patient as the hero of this drama. Then his life not only becomes exceedingly interesting to you, but it becomes so that he begins to be interested in himself. Most people, and, certainly, the people who come to psychoanalysis come because they are so discouraged and bored with themselves. Most people find their lives are utterly uninteresting. Of course, they try consciously to make it interesting by making all sorts of noises, by gushing over this and being very precious about that, but deep down they know it is terribly uninteresting, or at least they think they know.

If you can show any person that his life is just as exciting and interesting as that of a Shakespearean hero, then he takes a first step for cure, namely, to find himself interesting in a true



and genuine sense, and that is very important.

### **[About free association]**

There is no time to speak about the super-ego, about dreams. I should like to say a word about free association. There Freud had a great concept, a great discovery. Originally he saw that in hypnosis persons know things which they don't know when they are awake. Then he forgot about the hypnosis and did something most ingenious. He touched the person's forehead and gave him an instruction. "At the moment when I touch your forehead, you tell me what is on your mind." Then he thought he could dispense, with that, too, and instructed the patient just to say what comes to his mind. That was a great error, because from that time on free association deteriorated into free talk. So actually if you listen to what is said on the analytic couch or the analytic chair in thousands and thousands of hours all over the United States, and if you didn't know that that was analysis, something very sophisticated, you wouldn't notice the slightest difference to the thousands of hours of chatter between two women, two men. The only thing which is free about it is that it lacks complete discipline and concentration.

That was certainly not Freud's idea, but that is the way it deteriorated into a culture which loses concentration and discipline almost completely in all essential matters. The task here is to restore free association as a meaningful tool for the understanding of the unconscious. That can be done, and I think it can be done essentially by going back to Freud's original idea, namely, that you touch another person, you by-pass the frame of reference of his conventional thoughts by the direct appeal.

Just to give you one very simple example, if you say to somebody, "I wonder what comes to your mind about this", that is one thing. It is another thing if you say "Tell me what is on your mind right now." The logical content is exactly the same. The difference lies in the directness, the immediacy of the appeal.

It is very easy for any one of us to withdraw and evade if we are asked a polite question. It is very difficult for any one of us to withdraw, to evade, if we are addressed directly and without any marginal talk of a conventional kind.

I could talk for hours about how one could restore the principle of free association in analytic treatment, but I don't have the time. I also don't have the time to talk about something else, which is closely related to it, and yet I want to say a few words about it, and that is the relationship between the analyst and the patient.

### **[About the relationship between the analyst and the patient]**

Here Freud again suffered from his premises, being a physiologist, a laboratory man, and believing that the knowledge of men should occur or should proceed in the same way as the knowledge of nature, and the knowledge of things just as you investigate a rat, just as you investigate a body or begin on the laboratory table. You dissect it, you analyze it, you apply your reason to the phenomenon. What he observed at that time, that holds true today. Psychologists believe they cannot understand man, but what they do not understand is that the study of the living substance requires different methods from the study of that which is not alive. If



you deal with that which is alive in the same way in which you deal with that which is not alive, you distort its very quality, and, therefore, you distort your whole observation.

What Freud did not see was that you can know the maximum or the optimum of what you can know about another person never at a distance but only in the act or relatedness to that other person. You have to be related to him in a very deep human sense, and at the same time, and then you become one with him. That is to say, there is nothing in the other person, nothing the other person says, which you don't experience in yourself, because there is nothing which anybody has which we all of us do not have ourselves, but, at the same time, you must also be yourself. If you would dissolve yourself into the other person, then, indeed, you cannot recognize him. You must be he and not he, but only in the act of empathy, only in the act of concentrated direct relatedness to the other person can you really recognize and understand him, and only then can you talk to him in such a way that he knows what you are talking about. Only if you share his experience can you talk about it meaningfully and in such a way that you can tell him what he doesn't know himself.

That is indeed the basic condition for psychoanalysis: that the analyst is a mind reader. By that I mean that he understands what he is not told. If one understands only what one is told, then one has no particular right to claim that this is an art. Anybody who has normal intelligence can do that, and, therefore, one of the signs of psychoanalytic knowledge, if not the crucial one, is the understanding of dreams. You cannot understand almost everything, but at least you can make some sense, you can use some words and make some sensible remarks about almost anything, but dreams are the real proof that you understand what the patient doesn't know.

Dreams speak in a language which does not permit rationalizing explanations and common sense explanations. Either you understand it or you don't. You find that, indeed, Freud was so utterly right when he said that dreams are what he called the royal road to the understanding of the unconscious.

You will find in many dreams, that one single dream contains the whole story of a person, his whole life problem, his whole existential problem, and the way it is solved often is all contained in one dream, but you see that only if you are so related to the patient, so concentrated that you can emphatically feel what he feels, then this dream looms up in its whole meaning.

#### **[About the present situation in psychoanalysis, and its future]**

Psychoanalysis was, in Freud's time, a radical idea and a radical therapy, and by radical I mean what the word radical means, literally, something which goes to the roots, to the roots of man, of what drives him, what motivates him, and what is deeper and more real than his conscious thoughts.

However, I am afraid psychoanalysis has been deteriorating rapidly. There are various brands of psychoanalysis. Mostly there is a difference between the Freudian brand and the non-Freudian brand. I cannot deal with this now, because the main point remains the same. Freudian analysis has essentially deteriorated into a ritual. You go five times, you lie on the couch, the analyst is a priest. He knows the truth, and if you don't get well, it's just too bad for you



that you have such a bad resistance. By that I don't mean that this holds true for all Freudian analysis. I don't mean that people don't get well, but I mean this is the danger into which Freudian analysis falls, namely that of ritualization, priesthood and pure ritual. Like in so many religions, there is a period of freshness, originality, then everything deteriorates into a routine which only claims to have the spirit of the old. By no means do I want to make a case against Freudian analysis or non-Freudian analysis. I think non-Freudian analysis has deteriorated or is in danger, just the same, only in a different way.

While the Freudians take the attitude of priests and rituals, the non-Freudians, not having this very good device, do something else. They present themselves as a friendly listener. They understand. They say, your father was bad, your mother was bad, it is not your fault; your grandmother was bad and your father's aunt with whom you lived was bad; you didn't get enough love. You are this and that. It is only because you didn't get enough love that this has happened. I understand you. I give you love. I give you sympathy. I give you understanding.

That is the non-Freudian form of deterioration, and someone talks and talks and talks about that. In the Freudian ritual, the analyst is mostly silent. Sometimes he falls asleep, which is understandable. I am speaking from experience. [Laughter] This is understandable because there is nothing more boring than to sit behind a person and to listen to endless chatter without even seeing the person. The non-Freudian analyst cannot fall asleep because he usually sees the person, which makes life easier in a way, but then they are glad when the 50 minutes are over with, too.

Again, I hope you do not misunderstand me. This picture I draw is not meant to imply that this is the way all Freudian analysts act or all non-Freudian analysts act. I don't act that way, and I know quite a few other people who don't. So please don't misunderstand me. Don't go away from here with the idea that this is my view about all psychoanalysts.

I feel, on the other hand – and the reason why I say this is that psychoanalysis becomes a menace if it deteriorates into this meaningless discussion in which people are told that their problems can be solved when there is no idea of solving them – that is worse than nothing. That is why I feel a certain responsibility as an analyst to draw the picture as I see it realistically of what psychoanalysis of all schools is in danger of deteriorating into, and has already done so.

Psychoanalysis very often becomes for people simply a substitute for religion, especially for the urban middle-class or upper-class population. You don't believe in God, you don't have any interest in politics, you are discouraged. So you choose yourself a little seat, and if Christian Science seems too narrow or sectarian, then you choose psychoanalysis. You have your analyst. You have your neurosis, you have your problem, and you are sure of time for five or ten years. There is no method which can function better to evade a real problem than psychoanalysis. There is no method which could elucidate and bring forth the reality of one's problem better than psychoanalysis. It has both possibilities.

However, undoubtedly, one of the ways in which psychoanalysis is developing and deteriorating is exactly that of hiding, of camouflaging, of pretending that one solves problems. There is a great deal of intellectualization. There is a great deal of historical research. One goes over it



again and again. There is a great deal of planning.

This is already Freud. Freud thought at first that if a person understands one is that way, that in itself will cure him. That is a typically rational bias. He later saw it wasn't that simple. Yet for all practical purposes you will find that still in analysis as a very all-pervading element, namely, you explain, you explain. So you were in love with your mother when you were three and you were spanked, and that is why you can't lose anybody new. The Freudians put it one way, the non-Freudians put it another way. It is an endless and rather repetitious and boring explanation of why this happened rather than to experience something. It means to have an experience of what is me which I don't know and which I perhaps cannot even express in thought.

There is another deception, another illusion, and that is that great results can be achieved by talking. In order to be happy, in order to grow, in order to achieve anything, you must work, and to some extent you must suffer. Nothing is done without some amount of suffering and very serious effort.

Psychoanalysis seems to be the only thing in the world which promises to many people happiness by talking. You talk and talk, and if you have talked long enough, then you become that free, mature, healthy person which the ad talks about. That is a mouth-to-mouth advertising. The old idea is you talk. Now, by talking, nobody gets any better, unless the talking is simply an attempt to formulate something which is experienced. There is a kind of agreement often between the analyst and the patient. It is really a beautiful and wonderful thing for many isolated people to have people to talk to, even if you have to pay for it. The person is at least objective, he is kind, he is nice. What more do you want? This is nice and, at the same time, you are afraid – that is resistance – of experiencing things which are outside of the conscious frame of reference. You don't want to be touched there. The analyst may not have too much belief in it either.

Today there is a kind of an alliance between psychoanalysis and religion. Some of the ministers don't believe too much in God and some of the analysts don't believe too much in the value of uncovering the consciousness, and they often think when they get together, each one thinks the other one is strong, and then this thing goes on and on.

It is dangerous, simply for one reason that the person might do something about himself with or without help of the analyst or the church, provided he can really see this is the question here and now to do something, to change, but if he gets the opiate of talking, talking, talking, then he may miss the point where he could do something.

Again, I believe that psychoanalysis has a wonderful possibility of helping a person to come back to life, but analysts and patients must be aware of the tremendous dangers of something which turns out to evade the real problem.

Psychoanalysis started as a specialty of medicine. Freud never liked to be a doctor. He didn't like therapy. He was a man who was interested in the riddles of human life, of culture, but not of therapy. What could he do? He writes himself that he was married, he had to make a living. There was no other way but to see patients. As far as we know from him, he never liked that. Nevertheless, in spite of that, psychoanalysis in his day was a typical medical specialty. Why?



People had symptoms. If you have a paralyzed arm, warm it every morning. If you have an obsession thought which doesn't permit you to work, or if you suffer from insomnia, or any other symptom – this is like anything else. It may be psychologically conditioned, but just the same if you have symptoms and all, you want to get rid of the symptoms so you can function again. Psychoanalysis originally was occupied with the cure of such symptoms. If you read Freud's early case histories, they all deal with such things. It is relatively easy to cure these symptoms. It is not that easy, but it is relatively easy. Why? Because this symptom in itself is produced indeed by certain specific repressions, and if you can undo these repressions, if the energy which is contained in the repression, however you formulate it, is given free outlet, then the symptom as such will disappear.

What does that mean? You are as unhappy as the rest of us. The person who has a symptom and wants to suffer from the symptom only wants to be as happy or as unhappy as the majority, and that indeed is relatively simple. While it was frequent 50 years ago that people came with symptoms to psychoanalysts, people have less symptoms of that kind. That is partly because there is another illness today which is quite different, which is the sense of emptiness. It is the sense that one is living and is not alive. That is the sense of inner deadness. That is what many people feel today.

As I have said before in these lectures, these terms are not in a category which fits into the pattern of our social thought. So this sense of unhappiness, of lack of life, of deadness is consciously perceived in more conventional patterns of being unhappily married, not having the right job, this, that, and the other. That is the complaint with which people come to a psychoanalyst.

To cure that is very difficult, because that requires a basic understanding of the person's whole existence, and it requires a transformation of his personality, transformation not in the sense that he becomes another person, but it is a new birth. It is that he grows from where he has started and begins to live. That you cannot do simply mechanically by lifting this other repression. That means that the deepest understanding of that person – it means something else, that once that person can understand his own situation, the point of existence in which he is, where he is headed for, the danger possibilities, this person can experience something which leads him to a new growth, to a new way of life, but you cannot coax anyone into that. You cannot encourage anyone into that. On the contrary, if anything, you can discourage someone into that. A person may ask you, "Is it likely that I shall get well by this method?" All you can really tell him is "I cannot even tell you that it is probable. The best I can say is, it is possible."

You might say in a special case, well, objectively speaking, it is more likely that you will not get well than that you will get well. You have muddled along in this way for 40 years. Objectively speaking, it is more probable that given all the circumstances, you will try to muddle along more and that this analytic attempt is just to satisfy your conscience that we have done something.

However, in the case of a serious physical illness, the chance of a cure is greeted with greater enthusiasm, and the person may do everything in the world to get well. If the interest for getting well is not great enough to spend all one's energy, if there is only a possibility, then one



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might as well not try as difficult and as taxing a method as psychoanalysis.

That means that psychoanalysis is not just to cure symptoms, but to deal with the basic problems of human existence. Hence psychoanalysis essentially deals with the very same question with which all great humanities, particularly philosophy and religion, have dealt. It means to help the person to come alive. It means to grow, to be born, to be awake, to be enlightened, to love and to think. It seems to me that the possibility, as a new-born technique, of furthering and helping in these aims which have been the essential aims of the human race in the last 4,000 years in the great humanistic tradition, in that way psychoanalysis has great possibilities. However, in order to fulfill it, we must be very aware also of the dangers, especially in our aim of joining in the attempt at manipulating man and silencing that voice in man which knows that he is not sufficiently alive and wants to live.

I will stop now. There is a good deal more to be said about it, but I hope you will do some thinking by yourself. Thank you.