

Part II.—Reviews.*

- *Psychotherapie: Ein Lehrbuch für Studierende und Ärzte.* Von Dr. MAX ISSERLIN, Professor an der Universität in München. Berlin: Julius Springer, 1926. Pp. ii + 205.

This short and compact text-book ought to prove a welcome addition to the library of the practitioner and of the student of psychotherapy. It reveals common sense everywhere, and in the discussion of controversial matters the author keeps a detached mind and is always fair.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with "General Psychotherapy," where, after a short "Introduction" and a succinct "Historical Review," the different psycho-therapeutic methods are reviewed and criticized. These are "Suggestion Therapy," "Re-education Therapy," and "Analytical Psychotherapy." In the second part on "Specific Psychotherapy" the subject is treated from a different angle, as the different methods are applied to symptoms and symptom-complexes (anxiety states, constitutions (hysteria and psychopathies), and in a last short expectation-neurosis states, compulsion states, tic, etc.), to abnormal chapter the author discusses the help that may be derived from psychotherapy in organic diseases.

In the chapter on suggestion therapy the author deals first with hypnotherapy, and discusses the phenomena of hypnosis, the post-hypnotic phenomena, superficial hypnotic states and abnormal hypnoses. There follows a well-informed discussion on the theory of hypnosis and the definitions of the term. Isserlin favours a modification of the Lipps-Moll definition of suggestion, namely: "Suggestion is a process where, under inadequate conditions, an effect is brought about owing to the production of an adjustment (*Einstellung*) towards the occurrence of this effect." The hypnotic state he defines as "a sleep-like condition with consciousness narrowed by suggestive rapport."

The author considers the "Unconscious" as a necessary helpful conception (notwendiger Hilfsbegriff). Of course nothing can be said against using a given term for an idea which has been carefully defined, if this definition is constantly kept in mind; and one is at liberty to apply the term "*the Unconscious*" to certain neural dispositions to produce certain psychic processes. That this is the author's meaning is evident from the following quotation:

"After what has been said just now the Unconscious is not a separately existing, independent sphere clearly apart from the Conscious. Every psychic element may pass from conscious through all degrees of consciousness to unconscious, and may become conscious again. Further, what has been said gives no ground for the belief that given psychical experiences have a separate lasting unconscious existence. It has rather been emphasized that there exist numberless connections between the unconscious dispositions among themselves as well as towards the

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actually conscious, that the revival of the unconscious happens on the one hand according to the laws of association and the strength of dispositions, on the other hand systematically according to the mental adjustments (Einstellungen)."

Isserlin is at great pains to make his position respecting "the Unconscious" quite clear, and reverts to the question repeatedly, adding, "Want of clearness and contradiction on this point have produced disastrous consequences, not only for the understanding of these phenomena, but also for the psychotherapeutic practice." Yet his very phraseology, "psychic elements passing through all degrees, etc.," opens the door wide to that mythology against which he warns us, and which was expressed so admirably by Breuer in the following words :

"All too easily one gets into the habit of thought of assuming behind a substantive a substance, of gradually understanding by consciousness an entity. If, then, one has got used to employing local relations metaphorically, as, e.g., 'sub-conscious,' as time goes on an idea will actually develop in which the metaphor has been forgotten, and which is as easily manipulated as a material thing. Then mythology is complete." (Breuer and Freud, *Studien über Hysterie*, 2te Aufl., 1909, p. 199).

Why, then, expose ourselves to this danger, to which we are all, some more, some less, prone, if the strictly scientific concept and term of "neural disposition" once understood and grasped can offer no difficulty? A psychic process is just a *process*, and a process can have no existence before it takes place, nor after it has taken place. That similar processes may occur again is due to the traces, the dispositions, left behind by past processes. The concept of the "Unconscious" has been banned from empirical and experimental psychology, and Wilhelm Wundt was right when he wrote :

"The want of clearness that still obtains respecting the relation of consciousness and attention, and respecting the question of the 'Unconscious,' is perhaps some excuse if the psycho-pathologist gets up a psychology of his own, to suit his own requirements, and is then tempted to transfer the product of the observation of special abnormal psychical states to general psychology. But, after all, here, too, holds good what for the physical side of human life no one questions to-day. However valuable pathological experience be for the understanding of physiological functions, pathology has, after all, to rely on physiology, and not *vice versa*. Though the help which experimental psychology offers to psychopathology be but a modest one, there is nevertheless no need to lose heart as regards dreams and hypnosis, as well as psychoses. And that which it offers has still the advantage of being gathered from real observation and is not a mere fiction, as the 'Unconscious' and the 'Pre-conscious,' together with the imaginary battle that is said to rage between them, before the portals of consciousness are opened to some thought arising from the darkness of the "Unconscious." (Wilhelm Wundt, *Grundzüge der Physiologischen Psychologie*, 6te Aufl., Leipzig, 1911, p. 653).

The "Technique of Hypnosis" and "Indications and Contra-indication" as well as "Waking Suggestions" terminate the chapter on "Suggestion Therapy."

In the following chapter on "Re-Education Therapy" the author deals sympathetically with "Instruction," "Persuasion," "Education of the Will," and "Therapy by Occupation." The various

views and methods (Dubois, Dégérine, Camus et Pagniez, Mohr, Oppenheim, Moll, Brissaud, Meige und Feindel, etc.) are discussed.

The next chapter is concerned with "Analytical Psychotherapy." The author devotes twelve pages to a condensed but fair and clear statement of Freud's teaching. Then follow twenty-six pages in which Freud's teachings are closely examined and criticized. After Freud had published his *Traumdeutung* he complained that psychologists took no notice of his book, and that it would have been "*totgeschwiegen*"—killed by silence—had not the general public taken to it kindly. Now psycho-analysts appear to mete out the same treatment to the various criticisms that have appeared since; no refutation is attempted of these. The only answer critics receive is, "Get psycho-analysed yourself and you will be convinced." The conduct of experimental psychologists towards Freud is comprehensible from the fact that by their training they are accustomed to scientific method, verifiable facts and logical reasoning, all of which are conspicuous by their absence in the whole of Freud's writings. But these strictures cannot be levelled against Freud's critics. One is therefore forced to conclude that the reason of their silence is not the same as in the case of the *Traumdeutung*, and the inference nearest at hand appears to be that these criticisms *cannot* be answered. The conclusion Isserlin comes to is this:

"The psycho-analytic method of Freud is, in both its parts, the simple successive association method and the actual procedure of interpretation, scientifically unwarranted, and its pretensions untenable. All assertions founded thereon of definite mechanisms (repression, determination) must be regarded as unproven and also in part as unprovable. Jung's assertion that it is possible with Freud's method to reconstruct out of each psychic particle the whole psychic constellation appears to be a ghastly error."

As to the results alleged to have been obtained by psycho-analysis and to be obtainable only by it, Isserlin rightly remarks that if these really existed they would still not prove anything as regards Freud's theoretical views. Other factors are potent also here, namely, suggestion and absorption in the psychic life of the patient, which makes it possible to engross his attention for a much longer period than can be done by any other method.

"I myself have, like others," continues the author, "seen in the course of years a goodly number of cases return from the treatment of well-known psycho-analysts of all schools. Some of these had been treated for years, and by no means those who, as Bleuler thinks, were angry because their complexes had been touched. I have seen no success in the treatment of these patients. On the other hand, after what the patients told me I have been forced to modify my previous views, and am now of opinion that Freud's psycho-analysis is never to be recommended, and that it is, in insufficiently careful or conscientious hands, a most dangerous weapon. I have been informed by patients of methods which far surpassed that which Freud, who warns against such excesses, narrates of the 'wild psycho-analysts.'"

Since in this method there is absolutely no restraint or censorship, it is evident that all depends upon the tact of the individual psycho-analyst. However, such tact does not appear to accompany a profession of faith in psycho-analysis, but it seems rather as if a

therapeutic optimism and pride to be able to master the "depth-psychology" on occasion entices to a reckless radicalism even in the treatment of patients.

"Is it then not possible to employ Freud's procedure in order to verify his results and to understand better his theoretical views? This is just the reproach which is levelled against the opponents by Freud's adherents that they content themselves with theoretical criticism. I believe indeed that it is difficult for him who is convinced of the unsoundness of the suggested procedure to verify it. What should we expect at these tests—which I, too, have made? That things take place as they are reported we do not doubt; but we contest the conclusions which are drawn, and deny that the interpretations put on them are permissible."

The following chapter of this section is devoted to the "Psycho-analytic technique." Here the author gives a fair description of the technique of Freud and Adler, with incidental criticism of the latter.

In the fourth chapter of this section the "Practical Use of Analytic Methods" is discussed. The author points out that associations, tracing of hidden complexes in hypnosis, examination of dreams (without their interpretation), are all theoretically justifiable and practically useful, for these procedures permit a thorough penetration into the psychic life of the patient. He admits that they, in themselves, have already a most beneficial influence, and prepare the ground for a thorough psychotherapeutic treatment. All this, as T. A. Ross has pointed out, ought to be included in case-taking. Oscar Vogt's and Breuer and Freud's cathartic methods are discussed, and Frank's questioning in deep hypnosis are mentioned. Association experiments, as evolved by the school of Wundt and Kraepelin, and later adopted by Jung for psycho-analytic theory and practice, are examined and recommended, although Isserlin dissociates himself from Jung's theoretical conclusions. That the reaction-time in association tests was increased by emotional processes was known from the work of Mayer and Orth before Jung.

The second part of the book treats of "Specific Psycho-therapy." In the first chapter on "Symptoms and Symptom-complexes" the author describes anxiety states, expectation neurosis states, compulsion states, tic, depression states, nervous, circulatory and gastric disturbances, pathological propensities, psychosexual anomalies and psychotherapeutic treatment of children, and discusses the various therapeutic measures and their relative importance.

The second chapter deals with "Abnormal Constitutions." Here the author repeats once more that the pre-requisite of a scientific foundation for all therapeutic endeavours, as well as of its practical possibility, is the intelligent penetration into the personality of the patient. After some further general remarks he discusses the psychotherapeutic methods in hysteria and various psychopathies.

A few remarks in a very short chapter on the value of "psycho-therapy in organic disease" terminate this compact and very readable little text-book.

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