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Psycho-analysis and the Artist (1928)*

Though the theme of this lecture is the relationship between psycho-analysis and the psychology of the artist, something must first be said about the subject of art itself. The connections between psycho-analysis and art are of special interest in more than one respect. It is, as you are doubtless aware, the fate of psycho-analysis to evoke apprehension and hostility in every field into which it intrudes itself, however tentatively. The slightest hint from

a psycho-analyst that he may be able to throw some light on obscure problems in a given field, to make a contribution to any given branch of knowledge, at once excites an attitude of alarmed defence in those already entrenched there. One has seen this occur so regularly in such fields as criminology, education, religion, jurisprudence, anthropology, and so on, that one may anticipate its automatic appearance on such occasions. Yet in no field is the

phenomenon more striking or more surprising to the psycho-analyst than in that of art. There is perhaps some difference to be observed in the characteristic note struck. Whereas the overtones of indignation and resentment are the ones most clearly to be discerned in some of these instances particularly with religion and criminology, there is no mistaking the blare of alarm that is heard whenever psycho-analysis approaches the sacred preserve of art. I can safely say that I have never once had a patient with any pretension to aesthetic feeling who did not express a lively apprehension that contact with psycho-analysis would destroy this faculty. They are astonished, and usually remain incredulous, when told that psycho-analysis is in no way likely to diminish their capacity for aesthetic enjoyment and is more than likely to heighten it. The plaint is so constant and the fear at times so intense that the psycho-analyst is finally compelled to ask himself what is it about art that should produce such an odd reac-

tion. This reason alone, therefore, would explain how the psycho-analyst comes to take a certain interest in the problems surrounding the word "art".

At this point we cannot avoid confronting the age-old question: What is Art? This perplexing question stands at the threshold of any inquiry into the nature of art, for there is no agreement about the definition of the category into whose nature we are to inquire. There is not even agreement about who are the competent authorities to give us information on the matter. The artist himself, the art critic, the art historian, and the professor of aesthetics, all claim the right to tell us definitely what is art and what not. The psychologist, therefore, prepared to undertake an inquiry into the psychological nature of the artistic process, is bewildered at the outset by a discordant clamour. From it, nevertheless, two especially strident voices can be heard above the rest, and these, therefore, claim our immediate attention.

The first of these represents what may perhaps be called the pure artist's view of the matter. It was explicitly developed by Riegl and Worringer towards the end of the last century, but it is best known in this country through the powerful advocacy of Roger Fry which has secured for it a wide acceptance. These authorities maintain that not only the essence or nucleus of art, but the whole of its aim, is comprised in what is termed the contemplation of formal relations. For our present purpose we shall not go far wrong if we paraphrase this in the sentence: Art is concerned solely with form, not with content. All other motives that may have played a part in the creation of a work of art and all other emotions that may be evoked by the contemplation of it are, according to this view, to be regarded as entirely accessory, fortuitous and irrelevant. In so far as they are factors in the situation they disturb the pure aim of art, for in themselves they have nothing whatever to do with art. If, for example, a work of art

evokes in the spectator any memory, any ideas, any feelings of love, of regret, of humility, of yearning, and so on, by so much the less is it a work of art, for the spectator's attention is thereby deflected from whatever qualities of art the work may contain. However laudable and important these other ideas or feelings - may be they have nothing to do with art. They are often found associated with art, but the work of art that result from this compromise is, from a purely artistic point of view, impure. In revolt against this impurity of motive and effect various artists and art critics have gone very far indeed. They do not rest content with the statement that these associated ideas are an irrelevant intrusion on their art aim, but they actively resent this intrusion. A serious attempt has been made, which may perhaps be dated from the work of Cézanne, to eliminate these adventitious elements completely, in other words, to construct works of art shall represent nothing whatsoever except the study of various formal re-

lations and contrasts and the like. The fact that the works of art thus produced are appreciated by only a limited circle does not in any way deter those who support this attitude. They merely express their regret that true aesthetic feeling is a gift confined to an extremely small percentage of the community, but they see no reason why this unfortunate fact should hinder them in their aims of achieving pure art. We may add that, although this attitude has perhaps been most clearly developed in the sphere of painting, it finds its counterpart in other arts, notably that of music. Indeed, the resistance displayed to the introduction of what may be called ideational, for instance programme-music shows that in this sphere the attitude in question must long have been firmly established.

The second of the two views we are considering, which may be called the humane view, is both more comprehensive in itself and more capable of a wide appeal. One may, in fact, doubt whether many people of general culture,

without any particular concentrated interest, would subscribe to the first view presented above. While displaying every respect for the puristic attitude of the specialist, which undoubtedly must have its deep significance, and while agreeing that large numbers of vulgar so-called works of art make their appeal solely through what have been called the associated emotions, they nevertheless cannot go so far as to regard the puristic view as all-embracing. They find it, in the first place, hard to believe that the high significance attaching to art in all civilizations can be accounted for either by a special appeal which is admittedly confined to an extremely small circle or by a purely external connection with what we have referred to above as "associated emotions". After all, these emotions can find innumerable other forms of expression and it is very difficult to think that their constant association with art can be entirely fortuitous. According to this second view, on the contrary, the association between

them and aesthetic feeling is an integral part of both the creative artistic impulse itself and the effect produced by the work of art. Put very crudely, this approximates to the common belief that an artist expresses his deepest “pours out his soul”, as it is said, in his work and in this way communicates them, more or less successfully, to his audience. The feelings in question are presumed to be of a kind common to all human nature, hence their effect, though doubtless they differ in their intensity, profundity, exaltation, and in many other respects from those generally experienced by the mass of mankind. The relation between them and the specific aesthetic sense claimed by the artist would thus in the last resort be a matter for the psychologist.

It is at this point that the psycho-analyst ventures on the scene in the hope of being able to establish better relations between the two parties by throwing light on the nature of their differences. Not that he makes any preten-

tious claims in the matter, for his studies have especially impressed him with the enormous complexity, subtlety and profundity of the human mind and we are certainly all agreed that we have here before us one of the most baffling and obscure problems in the whole realm of psychology. It is, indeed, by no means sure that the problem is entirely psychological. It is very well possible that to understand the full nature of the artistic endowment, that is, the specific aesthetic capacity and the physical ability to express this, we may have to evoke the aid of the physiologist with his special knowledge of the sense organs, of muscular coordination and such like matters. Be this as it may, however, it is evident that there are many purely psychological problems involved, so we do well at first to ask how far the psychologist can carry us in our investigation.

Now there are three reasons why the psycho-analyst in particular feels emboldened to embark on at least a pre-

liminary exploration of the ground. To begin with, psycho-analysis is, almost by definition, the study of the unconscious part of the mind, that is, the deeper layers of the mind of which we are totally unconscious, and it will be well known to you how constantly the great artists have described their creative impulse as arising in a compelling manner from unknown depth of the mind, from what we nowadays term the unconscious. In bygone ages this mysterious unknown source of inspiration was identified with the outer world, usually the supernatural world, and we still retain from this belief such expressions as divine afflatus, but we have the best of reasons for thinking that much of what in those ages was attributed to external agencies arise in fact from the unconscious, from the unknown depths of the personality itself. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that a branch of science devoted to the intensive study of the unconscious mental processes may throw some light on impulse that so chara-

cteristically emanate from this region.

In the second place, psychoanalysts are forced by their daily work to come into the closet contact with feelings and mental reactions of an aesthetic order. In many analysis these play a very prominent part and the precise relationship between them and the other component of the mind has to be elucidated with a delicacy of detail unimaginable to those not familiar with the psycho-analytic procedure. It may be known to you that this analytic work has to be performed against a formidable opposition, technically termed the resistance, which springs from source for the most part unknown to the subject and out of his control. Now it has happened to me in several cases that this resistance was mobilized in the peculiar form of a fear lest what was to the patient the most precious thing in life, his capacity for aesthetic feeling, be jeopardized by advance in the analytic aim. The aesthetic sense became in these cases the main strategic point of

the battle and it was plain that it not only had intrinsic significance but was being used to represent a number of still deeper and hidden feelings. One knows that tiffs cannot happen unless there is some inherent relationship between the representative and the thing or things represented, so that it became necessary to investigate not only the nature of the concealed feelings but also the precise relations between them and the aesthetic feelings. Furthermore, still more interesting proved to be the study of the opposition between this group of resistances, represented externally by alarm about the imagined threat to the aesthetic feelings, and the repressed and buried tendencies which it was the main aim of the analyst to uncover. In such an investigation, therefore, one sees clearly that the isolation of the aesthetic sense which the purists strive for is quite artificial, however useful it may be for their purpose, and that in reality the aesthetic feelings have important and intimate connections with at least

two other sets of mental processes, those it may represent and those it is opposed to, of a kind which psycho-analysis reveals as being the most fundamental in the whole personality. It is impossible for me to discuss here all that such studies have taught us about the nature of aesthetic feelings, for to do so would be to presuppose a thorough knowledge of the subject-matter of psycho-analysis, but I hope presently to be able to make a few general observations based on these studies, the existence of which in themselves justify the psycho-analyst's right to come at least to some tentative conclusions on these obscure problems.

In the third place, the psycho-analyst cannot escape making the interesting observation that the working of the artist's creative impulse bear noteworthy resemblances to other mental processes which it is the more usual task of the psycho-analyst to study. I have especially in mind here the various manifestations of the phantasy life. The

resemblance in question are certainly more than analogies, for it can be shown that there are direct connections between them and the activities concerned in artistic creation.

I may say at once that the result of such investigations has only been to heighten one's respect for the artist and to substantiate the most lofty claims he may put forward concerning the importance of art. Freud's own words on this point are of interest. He says of artists that they have a way of knowing a number of things in heaven and earth that are not dreamed of in our philosophy. He says further that in knowledge of the human soul they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw on sources that we have not yet opened up for the use of science. In another passage he proclaims the artist as having always been the forerunner of the man of science, and indeed their religious passion for truth is not the only bond between the two.

I may now state one of the main conclusions to which one is conducted by the line of approach just indicated, and I trust it is one which can effect a certain measure of reconciliation between the opposing views presented above. It supports the popular contention that the driving force in the artistic impulse is the need for expression, and further that what the artist has to express is primarily something of a non-aesthetic nature, something which may inaccurately, but intelligently, be described as a general human emotion. On the other hand one has to agree with the purist not only in respect to the essential importance of aesthetic feeling in the process in question, but further that the cardinal aim of the artist's striving is a purely aesthetic one. To resolve the apparent antinomy in these two statements I will combine them in the formula that what the artist is really trying to do, quite unconsciously, is to convert as completely as possible into aesthetic terms whatever emotions or wishes may be deeply stirring him.

This highly condensed formula will now need to be amplified and modified to a considerable extent before it can convey to you what I wish it to.

To begin with, we have to be perfectly clear in our minds about the distinction between the pure aesthetic feelings and the other, more general, class. To the latter the terms “associated”, “derivative”, “human”, “biological” are at times applied in this connection; we could simply call them, for the purpose of this argument, the non-aesthetic emotions. According to the art purists the undeniable part they play in most works of art must be regarded as a sort of concession to the ordinary man. Roger Fry, for example, refers rather contemptuously to “the romantic overtones of life which are the usual bait by which men are induced to accept a work of art”. This no doubt is often true, such as when interest in the subject of a picture leads someone to take a special interest in the picture as such, but it is a very superficial process. The very reverse of this

proposition touches a far deeper truth. On the basis of my psycho-analytic studies I would maintain that the essential function of art, and of aesthetic feeling altogether, is to induce such a state of mind as will enable the person concerned to experience certain profound emotions under its guise. To explain what I mean I have to introduce to you the concept of what is called fore-pleasure, for what I am suggesting is that aesthetic feeling is really one of the varieties of fore-pleasure. By this term we mean in psycho-analysis an experience which, intrinsically pleasurable in itself, has the peculiar function of stimulating the need for some further pleasure of a more culminating kind, the end-pleasure, as it is called, in which final satisfaction of the need or desire is achieved. The most familiar example is to be found in the sexual life, where the preliminary “fore” pleasures of wooing and love-making are stages leading towards the culminating act of union. We see also from this example how common it is for the

process to halt at the preliminary stage, either from necessity or even from preference, a consideration which has an important bearing on any full psychological theory of art. An example much more akin to the artistic process, however, may be taken from another field of aesthetics, namely, that of wit. Freud in his penetrating study of this subject was able to show that one can distinguish two quite separate sources of the pleasure derived from wit. In one class, which he called "harmless wit", the pleasure is wholly derived from a series of processes, such as play, on words, absurdity, unexpected discovery of the familiar, which he grouped together under the name of the "technique of wit"; it was not difficult to indicate the various infantile origins of them. In the more important form of wit, however, which he termed "tendentious wit", various unconscious tendencies, aggressive, cynical, etc., obtain gratification under the guise of the pleasure derived from the technique. He came to the curious conclusion, that in

this class one never knows, strictly speaking, what one is really laughing at; one is deceived by the amusement derived from the technique alone. This latter pleasure masks the former, or more accurately expressed, provides the essential condition for the experiencing of the former: it is, therefore, a fore-pleasure, the other being the end-pleasure. The striving, of course unconscious, that goes to produce the wit is directed towards the question of technique, the problem being how best to fashion a technique that will allow of unconscious expression of the deeper tendencies.

In so far as one accepts the parallel of wit and art one can understand and agree with the purist's assertion that all the artist's efforts are bent towards apprehending and expressing an aesthetic problem. This may be perfectly true in itself and yet a knowledge of the unconscious operations concerned allows us to take the view that nevertheless it is only a part of the whole process. To deal with the

aesthetic problem is the essential aim of the artist and, so far as his conscious mind is concerned, the whole of the matter, but what the artist thinks he is doing and what he is really being moved to do are two quite different things. That these two things can be different and yet related is the difficult thesis I am trying to propound to you. The psycho-analyst can only take up the same attitude as he does to the dicta of his patients concerning themselves. These he knows always contain the truth, but they need sifting before the exact truth can be ascertained.

Of the respects in which the parallel between wit and art breaks down one is of special interest to us here. With wit there is no particular antagonism between the two forms of tendencies we have mentioned above, or between the two forms of pleasure concerned. With art, on the contrary, there is good reason to think that an essential feature of the artistic process is a profound opposition between the corresponding two, i.e. the aesthetic and the

biological, and this is consciously voiced in the strength with which the “pure” artist repudiates any interest in the biological feelings, contemptuously dismissing them with such phrases as “associated”, “romantic”, or “disturbing and accidental accompaniments”. I am sure it would only madden an artist to hear his concern with aesthetic problems being described as merely a particular “technique” for dealing with a much broader and deeper set of problems, and his first response might well be that we are vastly overestimating the importance of technique. Let us be clear, therefore, that this word can be used in two very different senses. When we speak of art being a technique for dealing with and satisfying certain quite unconscious biological tendencies, we are, of course, not thinking at all of what the artist calls the technique of his craft, a matter with which we are not here concerned. This possible misunderstanding having been cleared away, the artist would be more shocked than ever when he apprehended our ac-

tual meaning. He would say that in so far as an artistic creation fulfils any tendency in life, for instance, a social, financial or political tendency, by so much is it removed from being a true work of art, and, incidentally, he would be quite right because he would be referring to conscious tendencies and our thesis is concerned essentially with unconscious ones. He would protest that, with all our respect for him, we had put forward a thesis the exact reverse of his own: whereas for him any biological emotions that may happen to accompany a work of art are nothing but baits to induce the spectator to contemplate its aesthetic theme, for us the aesthetic process is the bait that enables both him and the spectator to satisfy these biological tendencies. In short, we should reach the usual *impasse* that is invariably provoked when one person is talking of conscious mental processes and the other of unconscious ones.

We may profitably broaden and simplify our problem at

this point by considering some of the various spheres of art from this particular angle. Instead of the phrase “biological tendencies or emotions” let us use the word “idea” and ask what relation ideas bear to the various forms of art. It is easy to see that the three principal arts constitute a graduated series in this respect. Poetry, and still more evidently other forms of aesthetic literature, is unthinkable without ideas, and moreover these are certainly not merely accessory. Even granted that the more obvious aspects of the aesthetic appeal have to do with purely sensuous elements, rhythm, metre, sound of words and the like, elements of unquestionable importance, it cannot be doubted that perhaps more important and subtle sources of the aesthetic pleasure are to be found in the sense of order and inevitable relations of the ideas presented, in other words, in the painter’s “contemplation of formal relations” transferred to an ideational plane. The graphic arts come in the middle of the series. It is with them that

the battle chiefly rages over the part played by ideas. In spite of the fact that almost all the acknowledged masterpieces of painting are concerned with definite ideas, the modern artist, as we have seen, wishes to purge his work of these blemishes. And it is with the third of our series, music, that he can find the clearest confirmation of his views. For, excluding for the moment military music, love music and programmatic music, there is no doubt that to associate most of the great classics of music with any definite ideas or tendencies seems to us little short of profanation. I think we should all agree with this so far as any conscious ideas on the part of the composer are concerned, but when it comes to the deeper level of unconscious ideas and feelings it is a different matter. Never having analysed any composer I cannot speak dogmatically on the point, but I find it hard to believe that this class of creative artist differs in this respect from all others. Reviewing, therefore, the three chief forms of art, we

have to agree with the purist so far as his thesis applies to conscious ideas, but we cannot admit that it is necessarily valid also when it is a question of unconscious ideas.

Returning now to the psycho-analytical view that art as a whole serves the function of a peculiar vehicle whereby unconscious biological feelings are expressed or satisfied, I would remind you of the hint I dropped that the aesthetic feelings are also in a certain sense opposed to these other feelings and that the vigorous repudiation of the connection between the two on the part of art purists arises from this fact. We are thus faced with the curious paradox that one set of feelings moves in the same direction as another set, both fusing harmoniously in the same final expression, and yet that they are also antagonistic one to the other. How is this contradiction to be resolved? Perhaps it is time at last that I come to the subject of psycho-analysis itself, one which has been rather taken for granted hitherto in the discussion.

Let me state shortly some of its main tenets. One of the most important is that it has led to what may be called a dualistic conception of the mind. It attaches the greatest significance to the existence of unconscious conflicts. Often enough there are doubts, conflicts and dilemmas in the conscious mind, and even more often between the conscious mind and other deeper elements the very existence of which is only painfully admitted. But much more important than any of these is the constant state of conflict obtaining between opposing tendencies in the unconscious mind, and the greater part of what we usually consider to be our whole mind, i.e. our consciousness, is nothing but a resultant of these conflicts. On the particular resultants and compromises reached unconsciously depends not only our state of conscious serenity, balance and mental health, but also the very nature and intensity of our interests, preferences and beliefs. The unconscious conflicts to which I am referring take place between vari-

ous inborn primitive tendencies on the one side, tendencies often incompatible with civilized social life, and the forces opposed to them on the other side, which may for present purposes be grouped under the name of conscience. Psycho-analysis has discovered that in our hearts we are much less moral than we think, a truth which the philosophers and saints have long suspected, and also that in our hearts we are all much more moral than we imagined, a truth which no one had ever suspected. Even with people who have no conscience in the ordinary sense, who may actually pride themselves on their absence of moral judgments, psycho-analysis finds that quite remote from their conscious mind strong tendencies are at work which we can only call an unconscious conscience. It has been given various names by psychoanalysts, super-ego, ego-ideal and the like, and it subserves the function among others of criticising the ego itself and of determining in large part which deeper ele-

ments of the mind shall be accepted or repudiated by the ego. In the latter event we have the phenomenon known as repression, and it is the repressed or inhibited impulses that enter into conflict with the rest of the mind.

That is what we find when we investigate the deeper layers of any mind. But I have next to mention an equally astonishing discovery. We find that whatever conflicts are present in the unconscious of an adult are only echoes of those that had disturbed his development in early life, and that infancy is predominantly the age of conflict. This is really in harmony with what was said above about the nature of the conflicting forces. Before the infant can attain to the standards and requirements of civilized social life it has to submit its primitive nature to a every considerable number of violations. The greater part of this process goes on unseen and unheard by the grown-ups around, who content themselves with sometimes wondering what goes on inside a child's mysterious mind. The

small part that becomes manifest in the form of childish naughtiness, difficulties in upbringing, obstinacies, night terrors, and the like are dismissed or discounted as being a necessary part of the child's development. In the course of time the child comes to make some sort of compromise with the demands of life, to build up some system of adjustments, but the price paid in the form of mental restriction and inhibition, not to speak of the endless kinds and degrees of nervous troubles, is much greater than is generally recognized. The repressed unconscious of the adult is simply the continuation of what has been repressed in the child, that is, repudiated as being incompatible with the growing demands made on it by its environment. I should not omit to say, further, that what we consider to be the kernel and most important part of this unconscious is the famous Oedipus conflict, the group of longings, jealousies and hatreds to do with the sexual part of the child's relations to its parents.

Among the many ways in which the child blindly tries to deal with its difficulties two are especially worth mentioning here, the processes known technically as sublimation and reaction-formation respectively. By sublimation is meant the transforming and deflecting of a crude sexual striving so that it may achieve an indirect gratification in a permissible way; a simple example would be the gratification in school-boy sport of the sadistic component of the sexual instinct. Very many of our permanent interests and activities can be shown to be in great part sublimations of various infantile components of this instinct. It will be noted that the direction of the sublimation is forwards; it is the same as that of the impulse which it has replaced and from which its energy is ultimately derived. By reaction-formation, on the other hand, is meant a process derived from non-sexual elements of the mind. Its function is directly to check and oppose the striving of the repressed sexual tendency, against which it serves as a

barrier. Thus an attitude of repugnance or disgust may be built up as a defence against any childish tendency to take an interest in the coarser aspects of life, for instance, certain bodily processes. Modesty and extreme revulsion against pain are two further examples of reaction-formations. It is not hard to see that a given conscious activity may contain elements of both these kinds simultaneously. A tender-hearted surgeon, for instance, may be displaying at the same time a purified and permissible manifestation of what was originally a cruel impulse together with the reaction of tenderness that guards against too rude an expression of it.

We are now beginning to see how it may be possible to resolve the antinomy we discussed above when we spoke of the artistic impulse fulfilling at the same time the opposite functions of expressing and of guarding against what we called biological impulses. It is easy to see that of the two the reaction side is by far the more conscious. Not

only does the art purist indignantly repudiate, as we saw earlier, any association between the aesthetic and the biological, but he establishes a sharp contrast between art and life as a whole. I may remind you in this connection of the lives of Gauguin and Georges Sand or the attitude of Bernard Shaw's Louis Dubonnet. Aesthetic contemplation signifies withdrawal from attending to the practical daily aspects of the object or process. A useful work of art is a contradiction in terms. We see the same even in the fundamental canons of art. Worringer in his masterly study of these takes as the starting-point of all artistic creation and regards as the essence of style what he terms the impulse towards abstraction. This he traces to the desire to find some possibility of rest from the bewildering interplay of the outer world. He identifies the sense of beauty with the need for psychical security, and one sees the same trait in the respects in which he maintains that art goes beyond the mere sense of beauty, such as when it

evokes the emotional attitudes of awe, grandeur and sublimity. All this is profoundly true. Art seeks to transcend life; if I may descend to psychopathological terms I would say that it represents in part a flight from life.

But I am equally persuaded that the art critic is here describing only one half of what goes to constitute art. He ignores and rejects the endless hints of its connection with the more vital impulses of humanity, hints which in the searchlight of psycho-analysis become plain indications. Art is certainly more than a flight from life. It is also an expression of life, but it is an expression under the guise of flight. We need to carry our analysis further to ascertain what are the conditions under which this strange phenomenon occurs, and to do so I must return to certain clinical considerations which are the truisms of daily psycho-analytic work.

Failure to attain the goal of some conscious desire may come about either from inhibitions in development which

hinder one's devoting the necessary energy to attaining the goal or else from insurmountable obstacles in the Outer world. One man, on recognizing the unattainability of the goal, will exchange it for another, more accessible one; he will do this even if the second goal has somewhat less value than the first, on the same principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. The obstinacy with which he will adhere to the first aim before deciding to renounce it will of course vary greatly according to the optimism, tenacity and other character traits present. Another man, when faced with a similar situation, is able to withdraw himself without suffering, more than the necessary amount of pain and regret. A third man, however, may be unable to adopt either of these healthy solutions, being constitutionally unable to endure either the renunciation or the pain they involve. He will then take refuge in phantasy, achieving the desired gratification in his imagination. This is often an easy and attractive path and

it can lead to valuable results if proper use is made of the stimulus, but it is a path beset with dangerous possibilities. The imagined gratification is of course satisfying only for a time and some change has to take place in either a forward or backward direction. If the stimulus afforded by the phantasy is brought into relation with some aspect of reality, it will find some expression in action. If not, there is a considerable likelihood that the effect of the stimulus will reverberate inwards instead of outwards, and this means that older phantasies get stirred at a deeper mental level. This introversion, as it is called, proceeds further and further, ever deeper layers of phantasy being stirred through the bonds of association that are always present. A regression takes place in both depth and time: so that ultimately the repressed infantile impulses which we discussed earlier are reactivated. One might say that the original phantasy in consciousness has now become translated into infantile terms in the uncon-

scious.

The infantile impulses thus stirred clamour in their turn for expression and are met by the repressing forces that developed during the earliest stage of childhood. The fate of these impulses is in itself a complicated chapter of psychology which time does not allow me to expound. We are concerned here chiefly with the sublimations that may result from them and it is to the energy in this way set free that I would attribute the driving force which feeds the impulse to artistic creation. An interesting feature of the process is that the sublimity of the inspiration can be closely correlated with the extent of the previous regression: one has the impression of an almost physical rebound from the lowest depths to the greatest heights. It is certain that no artist can reach the heights who cannot also plumb the depths of human nature.

The chain of events just described under the names of introversion, regression and sublimation leads to many

other results, however, than that of artistic creation, so that here there must be further special factors at work. We may safely assume that one of these is a particular physiological endowment of the sense organs concerned, be it eye, ear or touch, and I think that something about the nature of this endowment can be specified; it is certainly not identical with simple hyperacuity. The necessary psychological conditions are still more subtle. One of them is a peculiar variety of the ways in which sublimations and reaction-formations can be combined. There is further an important specific feature in the preliminary regression. This has to proceed to a stage anterior to the Oedipus complex, to a stage at which the child is particularly concerned with certain bodily processes and sensations. It is at this level that we find the antithesis between self-preoccupation on the one hand and the relationships to other human beings on the other hand which corresponds with the conflict between art and life discussed

earlier in this paper. The particular regression just hinted at occurs only when there is a flight from the biological relationships to other people or from the derivatives of these, and this flight is a counterpart of the repudiation we have noted in the sphere of art.

I suggested, however, that this antagonism represented only one half of the relationship between art and life. They certainly have to be divorced for a work of art of any high quality to be produced. No artist reaches far unless he concentrates within himself creates to satisfy himself and is his own sternest critic; no work created solely to please someone else, even though this be the most beloved, will be truly great. On the other hand, the artist will only reach a certain level if he does not at some point escape from this self-concentration. His task is to find a formula in which his deepest feelings about his fellow-creatures, feelings of which he may be entirely unaware, are expressed through the medium of concentration on

purely aesthetic experience. An essential condition of this is that the ultimate origin of his inspiration, which must necessarily be a personal one, be expressed in impersonal feelings of wide or general validity. This once accomplished, he can emerge from his self-absorption and use his art to regain contact with his fellows. By means of his art he can achieve some measure, often a very deep one, of understanding, recognition or admiration. Both spiritual and material gains are available to him. Goethe once wittily said that the many disadvantages under which, the artist labours are at least partly compensated by his privilege of being paid for his follies.

When you invited me to speak about the artist from the point of view of psycho-analysis, which claims to be a branch of science, perhaps you also expected that I should say something of a general nature about the relationships between the artist and the man of science. There is assuredly a number of interesting, and indeed profound, re-

semblances between the mental functioning of the two. We see the same three characteristic stages in the mental operations of both. First comes a close and keen observation of the resemblances and differences between the various objects attended to. Then the observations are collected, classified and brought into some general order. Finally there supervenes an act of creative imagination in which the significant elements of an inevitable relationship are perceived. The emotions evoked when the inevitable orderliness of the relationship is apprehended must be extraordinarily similar with both art and science. And here I am happy to find myself at last in entire agreement with my friends the art purists. Roger Fry, for instance, writes: "The emotion which accompanies the clear recognition of unity in a complex seems to be so similar in art and in science that it is difficult not to suppose that they are psychologically the same".

We mentioned earlier another feature of resemblance between artistic and scientific functioning, the common attitude towards truth. With both this may reach an almost religious intensity, and certainly the presence of this attitude in high degree is a quite indispensable condition if the product is to possess a serious value. That this is so with science is evident, but it is not less so with art. The artist's constant endeavour to be true to himself, to be true to his art, as the phrases go, shows his appreciation of this. The attitude has the natural result that both men find truth, and it is very noteworthy how extensively the two sets of findings coincide. I do not speak merely of aesthetic truth, which is a province by itself. But the artists who have to express themselves in ideational form, for instance poets and dramatists, have revealed truths about the human mind so profound that hardly any psychologist has approached them. Such writers as Goethe and Shakespeare have taught us far more about human nature, in its

widest and deepest range, than all the text-books of psychology that have ever existed. With them the intuitive feeling for truth expressed itself harmoniously on both the aesthetic and scientific plane. The mental reaction at this final imaginative stage can be equally well expressed by the exclamations: How beautiful; how true. From this point of view we perceive once more how exhaustive was Keats' statement when he said:

*Beauty is truth, truth Beauty, – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*

I have probably not told you anything fresh about art itself. But the subject of my paper was "Psycho-Analysis and the Artist", and here I may hope that I have been able to direct your attention to some thoughts of general interest.

* Read before the New Castle Literary and Philosophical Society, November 28, 1927, in "Psyche" 1928, 8, pp. 73-88.

[This original version of the text is published without any introduction. If you are interested, see the "Nota introduttiva" in the Italian version. *Ed.*]

Ernest Jones (1879-1958), neurologist and psychoanalyst, was Freud's official biographer. He published *Sigmund Freud. Life and Work*, Hogarth Press, London 1953-57. Among his essays about psychoanalysis applied to the study of art, see *The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery*, "Am. Jour. of Psychol", XXI, 1910 (*Hamlet and Oedipus*, Gollancz, London 1949); *Artistic Form and the Unconscious*, "Mind", XLIV, 1935; *The Nature of Genius*, "British Medical Journal", LVI, 1956; *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis*, International Psycho-Analytical Press, London 1923 (revised and enlarged edition, Hogarth Press, London 1951).