

I have no doubt that the chronological and causal relations described here between the Oedipus complex, sexual intimidation (the threat of castration), the formation of the super-ego and the beginning of the latency period are of a typical kind; but I do not wish to assert that this type is the only possible one. Variations in the chronological order and in the linking-up of these events are bound to have a very important bearing on the development of the individual.

Since the publication of Otto Rank's interesting study, *Trauma of Birth* [1924], even the conclusion arrived at by this modest investigation, to the effect that the boy's Oedipus complex is destroyed by the fear of castration, cannot be accepted without further discussion. Nevertheless, it seems to me premature to enter into such a discussion at the present time, and perhaps inadvisable to begin a criticism or an appreciation of Rank's view at this juncture.¹

anatomical distinction between the sexes (1925f) and on female sexuality (1931b), pp. 331ff. and 371ff. below, in both of which he gave a very different account of the girl's Oedipus complex from the present one.]

1. [The question was taken up by Freud soon afterwards in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926d). Cf. Section (e) of the Editor's Introduction to that work.]

SOME PSYCHICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANATOMICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SEXES (1925)

EDITOR'S NOTE

EINIGE PSYCHISCHE FOLGEN DES ANATOMISCHEN GESCHLECHTS UNTERSCHIEDS

(A) GERMAN EDITIONS:

- 1925 *Int. Z. Psychoanal.*, **11** (4), 401-10.
- 1926 *Psychoanalyse der Neurosen*, 205-19.
- 1928 *Gesammelte Schriften*, **11**, 8-19.
- 1931 *Sexualtheorie und Traumlehre*, 207-20.
- 1948 *Gesammelte Werke*, **14**, 19-30.

(B) ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS:

- 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical
Distinction between the Sexes'
- 1927 *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, **8** (2), 133-42. (Tr. James Strachey.)
- 1950 *Collected Papers*, **5**, 186-97. (Revised reprint of above.)
- 1961 *Standard Edition*, **19**, 241-58. (A corrected and freshly
annotated version, with a slightly modified title, of
the one published in 1950.)

The present edition is a corrected reprint of the *Standard Edition* version, with some editorial changes.

This paper was finished by August 1925, when Freud showed it to Ferenczi. It was read on his behalf by Anna Freud at the Homburg International Psycho-Analytical Congress on

September 3, and was published in the *Zeitschrift* later in the autumn (Jones, 1957, 119).

What is in effect a first complete re-assessment of Freud's views on the psychological development of women will be found condensed in this short paper. It contains the germs of all his later work on the subject.

From early days Freud made complaints of the obscurity enveloping the sexual life of females, and of the fact that he had been obliged to base almost all his research into sexual development on material relating to males. See for instance his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d), p. 63 above, 'On the Sexual Theories of Children' (1908c), p. 189 above and again, much later, 'The Infantile Genital Organization' (1923e), p. 308f. above. Even after the date of the present paper in his pamphlet on lay analysis (1926e), he wrote: 'We know less about the sexual life of little girls than of boys. But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a "dark continent" for psychology.'¹

One result of this obscurity was to lead Freud to assume very often that the psychology of women could be taken simply as analogous to that of men. In his first full account of the Oedipus situation, for instance, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900d), he assumes that there is a complete parallel between the two sexes, that 'a girl's first affection is for her father and a boy's first childish desires are for his mother' (*P.F.L.*, 4, 358). Similarly, in his long description of the sexual development of children in Lecture 21 of the *Introductory Lectures*

1. Ernest Jones writes (1955, 468): 'There is little doubt that Freud found the psychology of women more enigmatic than that of men. He said once to Marie Bonaparte: "The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "What does a woman want?"' Unfortunately Jones gives no date for this remark. Freud himself suggests a part explanation of his difficulty in the last paragraph of Section I of his later paper on 'Female Sexuality' (1931b), where he attributes it to a peculiarity in his transference-relation with women. (Cf. p. 378 below.)

(1916-17) he writes: 'As you see, I have only described the relation of a boy to his father and mother. Things happen in just the same way with little girls, with the necessary changes: an affectionate attachment to her father, a need to get rid of her mother as superfluous . . .' (*P.F.L.*, I, 376.) Even as late as in *The Ego and the Id* (1923b) the complicated processes accompanying and following the dissolution of the Oedipus complex are supposed to be 'precisely analogous' in girls and boys (see the middle of Chapter III).

But in fact over a long period from the time of the 'Dora' analysis in 1900 (1905e), Freud's interest had not been directed to feminine psychology. It was not for fifteen years that he published any important case material dealing with a woman. Then came the case of female paranoia 'running counter to psychoanalytic theory' (1915f), the essence of which lay in the patient's relation to her mother. Not long after came the case of female homosexuality (1920a) of which the same might well be said. Between them came the study of beating phantasies (1919e), which was almost wholly concerned with the infantile sexual development of girls. And here already there is clear evidence of dissatisfaction with the 'precise analogy' between the two sexes: 'the expectation of there being a complete parallel was mistaken'. Thereafter the problem of the sexual history of women was no doubt constantly in Freud's mind. And although there is little about it in *The Ego and the Id* (1923b), it was the theories developed there concerning the end of the Oedipus complex which, linked with fresh clinical observations, gave the key to the new thesis. Freud was already feeling his way towards it in 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' (1924d), p. 315ff. above, but it is fully stated for the first time in the present paper. It was to be further enlarged on in the later paper on 'Female Sexuality' (1931b), p. 371ff. below (see the introductory Editor's Note to it), in Lecture 33 of the *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a) and finally in Chapter VII of the posthumous *Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940a [1938]).

Almost every detail is already present in a condensed form in this work. But it is remarkable that many of these details had been ready to hand long before and only required linking up. Thus certain peculiarities in the sexual development of girls had been noted and stressed. Already in the first edition of the *Three Essays* (1905d) Freud had maintained that in little girls the leading sexual organ was the clitoris, that, in conformity with this fact, 'the sexuality of little girls is of a wholly masculine character', and that 'a wave of repression at puberty' is required before the clitoris gives place to the vagina and masculinity to femininity (see above, pp. 141-4). Most of this had, indeed, been indicated many years before in a letter to Fliess of November 14, 1897 (Freud, 1950a, Letter 75). The matter was carried further in the paper on 'The Sexual Theories of Children' (1908c), where it was brought into relation with the girl's envy for the penis and the castration complex (see above, pp. 195-6), and this aspect was discussed afresh in 'The Taboo of Virginity' (1918d), p. 265ff. above. The fact that the injury to her narcissism caused by this leads to resentment against her mother was pointed out at the end of Section I of 'Some Character-Types' (1916d).

Nor had the fundamental basis of the new thesis been unstated - though for long periods it seemed forgotten. In the *Three Essays* we find the plain statement that a child's first sexual object is the mother's breast and that this is the prototype of every later love-relation (see above, p. 144f.). This was clearly meant to be true of girls as well as boys, but it seems to be repeated explicitly for the first time here (p. 334). The twofold change required of the little girl before she could arrive at the 'normal' Oedipus complex thus became evident: a change in her leading sexual organ and a change in her sexual object. And the path lay open for an investigation of her 'pre-Oedipus' phase, together with the differences between girls and boys implied by the hypotheses in *The Ego and the Id* - the difference in the relation of their castration and Oedipus com-

plexes and the further difference in the construction of their super-egos. It is the synthesis of these various pieces of knowledge, derived from such widely separated historical strata of Freud's work, which gives its importance to the present paper.

SOME PSYCHICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANATOMICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SEXES

IN my own writings and in those of my followers more and more stress is laid on the necessity that the analyses of neurotics shall deal thoroughly with the remotest period of their childhood, the time of the early efflorescence of sexual life. It is only by examining the first manifestations of the patient's innate instinctual constitution and the effects of his earliest experiences that we can accurately gauge the motive forces that have led to his neurosis and can be secure against the errors into which we might be tempted by the degree to which things have become remodelled and overlaid in adult life. This requirement is not only of theoretical but also of practical importance, for it distinguishes our efforts from the work of those physicians whose interests are focused exclusively on therapeutic results and who employ analytic methods, but only up to a certain point. An analysis of early childhood such as we are considering is tedious and laborious and makes demands both upon the physician and upon the patient which cannot always be met. Moreover, it leads us into dark regions where there are as yet no signposts. Indeed, analysts may feel reassured, I think, that there is no risk of their work becoming mechanical, and so of losing its interest, during the next few decades.

In the following pages I bring forward some findings of analytic research which would be of great importance if they could be proved to apply universally. Why do I not postpone publication of them until further experience has given me the necessary proof, if such proof is obtainable? Because the conditions under which I work have undergone a change, with

implications which I cannot disguise. Formerly, I was not one of those who are unable to hold back what seems to be a new discovery until it has been either confirmed or corrected. My *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900d) and my 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (1905e) (the case of Dora) were suppressed by me – if not for the nine years enjoined by Horace – at all events for four or five years before I allowed them to be published. But in those days I had unlimited time before me – 'oceans of time'¹ as an amiable author puts it – and material poured in upon me in such quantities that fresh experiences were hardly to be escaped. Moreover, I was the only worker in a new field, so that my reticence involved no danger to myself and no loss to others.

But now everything has changed. The time before me is limited. The whole of it is no longer spent in working, so that my opportunities for making fresh observations are not so numerous. If I think I see something new, I am uncertain whether I can wait for it to be confirmed. And further, everything that is to be seen upon the surface has already been exhausted; what remains has to be slowly and laboriously dragged up from the depths. Finally, I am no longer alone. An eager crowd of fellow-workers is ready to make use of what is unfinished or doubtful, and I can leave to them that part of the work which I should otherwise have done myself. On this occasion, therefore, I feel justified in publishing something which stands in urgent need of confirmation before its value or lack of value can be decided.

In examining the earliest mental shapes assumed by the sexual life of children we have been in the habit of taking as the subject of our investigations the male child, the little boy. With little girls, so we have supposed, things must be similar, though in some way or other they must nevertheless be

1. [In English in the original. It is not clear what author Freud had in mind. – The reference to Horace is to his *Ars Poetica*, line 388.]

different. The point in development at which this difference lay could not be clearly determined.

In boys the situation of the Oedipus complex is the first stage that can be recognized with certainty. It is easy to understand, because at that stage a child retains the same object which he previously collected with his libido – not as yet a genital one – during the preceding period while he was being suckled and nursed. The fact, too, that in this situation he regards his father as a disturbing rival and would like to get rid of him and take his place is a straightforward consequence of the actual state of affairs. I have shown elsewhere¹ how the Oedipus attitude in little boys belongs to the phallic phase, and how its destruction is brought about by the fear of castration – that is, by narcissistic interest in their genitals. The matter is made more difficult to grasp by the complicating circumstance that even in boys the Oedipus complex has a double orientation, active and passive, in accordance with their bisexual constitution; a boy also wants to take his *mother's* place as the love-object of his *father* – a fact which we describe as the feminine attitude.²

As regards the prehistory of the Oedipus complex in boys we are far from complete clarity. We know that that period includes an identification of an affectionate sort with the boy's father, an identification which is still free from any sense of rivalry in regard to his mother. Another element of that stage is invariably, I believe, a masturbatory activity in connection with the genitals, the masturbation of early childhood, the more or less violent suppression of which by those in charge of the child sets the castration complex in action. It is to be assumed that this masturbation is attached to the Oedipus complex and serves as a discharge for the sexual excitation belonging to it. It is, however, uncertain whether the masturbation has this character from the first, or whether on the

1. 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' [(1924d), this volume p. 315. Much of what follows is an elaboration of that paper.]

2. [Cf. *ibid.*, p. 318.]

contrary it makes its first appearance spontaneously as an activity of a bodily organ and is only brought into relation with the Oedipus complex at some later date; this second possibility is by far the more probable. Another doubtful question is the part played by bed-wetting and by the breaking of that habit through the intervention of training measures. We are inclined to make the simple connection that continued bed-wetting is a result of masturbation and that its suppression is regarded by boys as an inhibition of their genital activity – that is, as having the meaning of a threat of castration;¹ but whether we are always right in supposing this remains to be seen. Finally, analysis shows us in a shadowy way how the fact of a child at a very early age listening to his parents copulating may set up his first sexual excitation, and how that event may, owing to its after-effects, act as a starting-point for the child's whole sexual development. Masturbation, as well as the two attitudes in the Oedipus complex, later on become attached to this early experience, the child having subsequently interpreted its meaning. It is impossible, however, to suppose that these observations of coitus are of universal occurrence, so that at this point we are faced with the problem of 'primal phantasies'.² Thus the prehistory of the Oedipus complex, even in boys, raises all of these questions for sifting and explanation; and there is the further problem of whether we are to suppose that the process invariably follows the same course, or whether a great variety of different preliminary stages may not converge upon the same terminal situation.

In little girls the Oedipus complex raises one problem more than in boys. In both cases the mother is the original object; and there is no cause for surprise that boys retain that object in the Oedipus complex. But how does it happen that girls

1. [Cf. *ibid.*, p. 317.]

2. [Cf. the discussions in the 'Wolf Man' analysis (1918b), especially Section V and the passage added later to Section VIII, and Lecture 23 of the *Introductory Lectures* (1916–17).]

abandon it and instead take their father as an object? In pursuing this question I have been able to reach some conclusions which may throw light precisely on the prehistory of the Oedipus relation in girls.

Every analyst has come across certain women who cling with especial intensity and tenacity to the attachment to their father and to the wish in which it culminates of having a child by him. We have good reason to suppose that the same wishful phantasy was also the motive force of their infantile masturbation, and it is easy to form an impression that at this point we have been brought up against an elementary and unanalysable fact of infantile sexual life. But a thorough analysis of these very cases brings something different to light – namely, that here the Oedipus complex has a long prehistory and is in some respects a secondary formation.

The old paediatrician Lindner [1879] once remarked that a child discovers the genital zones (the penis or the clitoris) as a source of pleasure while indulging in sensual sucking (thumb-sucking).¹ I shall leave it an open question whether it is really true that the child takes the newly found source of pleasure in exchange for the recent loss of the mother's nipple – a possibility to which later phantasies (fellatio) seem to point. Be that as it may, the genital zone is discovered at some time or other, and there seems no justification for attributing any psychical content to the first activities in connection with it. But the first step in the phallic phase which begins in this way is not the linking-up of the masturbation with the object-cathexes of the Oedipus complex, but a momentous discovery which little girls are destined to make. They notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis.

There is an interesting contrast between the behaviour of the two sexes. In the analogous situation, when a little boy

1. Cf. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [(1905d), p. 95–6 above].

first catches sight of a girl's genital region, he begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest: he sees nothing or disavows¹ what he has seen, he softens it down or looks about for expedients for bringing it into line with his expectations. It is not until later, when some threat of castration has obtained a hold upon him, that the observation becomes important to him: if he then recollects or repeats it, it arouses a terrible storm of emotion in him and forces him to believe in the reality of the threat which he has hitherto laughed at. This combination of circumstances leads to two reactions, which may become fixed and will in that case, whether separately or together or in conjunction with other factors, permanently determine the boy's relations to women: horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her. These developments, however, belong to the future, though not to a very remote one.

A little girl behaves differently. She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it.²

Here what has been named the masculinity complex of women branches off: It may put great difficulties in the way of their regular development towards femininity, if it cannot

1. [See Editor's footnote to 'The Infantile Genital Organization', p. 310, n. 1 above.]

2. This is an opportunity for correcting a statement which I made many years ago. I believed that the sexual interest of children, unlike that of pubescents, was aroused, not by the difference between the sexes, but by the problem of where babies come from. We now see that, at all events with girls, this is certainly not the case. With boys it may no doubt happen sometimes one way and sometimes the other; or with both sexes chance experiences may determine the event. — [The statement mentioned at the beginning of this footnote appears in more than one place; see an editorial footnote to 'The Sexual Enlightenment of Children' (1907c), p. 177 above, where references will be found. In that early paper Freud in fact takes the opposite view — the one advocated here.]

3. [This term seems to have been introduced by Van Ophuijsen (1917). Cf. also p. 320 above, and pp. 376 and 377, n. 1 below.]

be got over soon enough. The hope of some day obtaining a penis in spite of everything and so of becoming like a man may persist to an incredibly late age and may become a motive for strange and otherwise unaccountable actions. Or again, a process may set in which I should like to call a 'disavowal',¹ a process which in the mental life of children seems neither uncommon nor very dangerous but which in an adult would mean the beginning of a psychosis. Thus a girl may refuse to accept the fact of being castrated, may harden herself in the conviction that she *does* possess a penis, and may subsequently be compelled to behave as though she were a man.

The psychical consequences of envy for the penis, in so far as it does not become absorbed in the reaction-formation of the masculinity complex, are various and far-reaching. After a woman has become aware of the wound to her narcissism, she develops, like a scar, a sense of inferiority. When she has passed beyond her first attempt at explaining her lack of a penis as being a punishment personal to herself and has realized that that sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect, and, at least in holding that opinion, insists on being like a man.²

1. [For the parallel process in boys, see 'The Infantile Genital Organization' (1923e), pp. 309–10 above.]

2. In my first critical account of the 'History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement' (1914d), I recognized that this fact represents the core of truth contained in Adler's theory. That theory has no hesitation in explaining the whole world by this single point ('organ-inferiority', the 'masculine protest', 'breaking away from the feminine line') and prides itself upon having in this way robbed sexuality of its importance and put the desire for power in its place! Thus the only organ which could claim to be called 'inferior' without any ambiguity would be the clitoris. On the other hand, one hears of analysts who boast that, though they have worked for dozens of years, they have never found a sign of the existence of a castration complex. We must bow our heads in recognition of the greatness of this achievement, even though it is only a negative one, a piece of virtuosity in the art of overlooking and mistaking. The two theories form an interesting pair of opposites: in

Even after penis-envy has abandoned its true object, it continues to exist: by an easy displacement it persists in the character-trait of *jealousy*. Of course, jealousy is not limited to one sex and has a wider foundation than this, but I am of opinion that it plays a far larger part in the mental life of women than of men and that that is because it is enormously reinforced from the direction of displaced penis-envy. While I was still unaware of this source of jealousy and was considering the phantasy 'a child is being beaten', which occurs so commonly in girls, I constructed a first phase for it in which its meaning was that another child, a rival of whom the subject was jealous, was to be beaten.¹ This phantasy seems to be a relic of the phallic period in girls. The peculiar rigidity which struck me so much in the monotonous formula 'a child is being beaten' can probably be interpreted in a special way. The child which is being beaten (or caressed) may ultimately be nothing more nor less than the clitoris itself, so that at its very lowest level the statement will contain a confession of masturbation, which has remained attached to the content of the formula from its beginning in the phallic phase till later life.

A third consequence of penis-envy seems to be a loosening of the girl's affectionate relation with her maternal object. The situation as a whole is not very clear, but it can be seen that in the end the girl's mother, who sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped, is almost always held responsible for her lack of a penis. The way in which this comes about historically is often that soon after the girl has discovered that her genitals are unsatisfactory she begins to show jealousy of another child on the ground that her mother is fonder of it than of her, which serves as a reason for her giving up her attachment to her mother. It will fit in with this if the child

the latter not a trace of a castration complex, in the former nothing else than its consequences.

1. "A Child is Being Beaten" [(1919c), in Section III of the paper].

which has been preferred by her mother is made into the first object of the beating-phantasy which ends in masturbation.

There is yet another surprising effect of penis-envy, or of the discovery of the inferiority of the clitoris, which is undoubtedly the most important of all. In the past I had often formed an impression that in general women tolerate masturbation worse than men, that they more frequently fight against it and that they are unable to make use of it in circumstances in which a man would seize upon it as a way of escape without any hesitation. Experience would no doubt elicit innumerable exceptions to this statement, if we attempted to turn it into a rule. The reactions of human individuals of both sexes are of course made up of masculine and feminine traits. But it appeared to me nevertheless as though masturbation were further removed from the nature of women than of men, and the solution of the problem could be assisted by the reflection that masturbation, at all events of the clitoris, is a masculine activity and that the elimination of clitoral sexuality is a necessary precondition for the development of femininity.¹ Analyses of the remote phallic period have now taught me that in girls, soon after the first signs of penis-envy, an intense current of feeling against masturbation makes its appearance, which cannot be attributed exclusively to the educational influence of those in charge of the child. This impulse is clearly a forerunner of the wave of repression which at puberty will do away with a large amount of the girl's masculine sexuality in order to make room for the development of her femininity. It may happen that this first opposition to auto-erotic activity fails to attain its end. And this was in fact the case in the instances which I analysed. The conflict continued, and both then and later the girl did everything she could to free herself from the compulsion to masturbate. Many of the later

1. [A reference to clitoral masturbation in girls appeared in the first edition of the *Three Essays* (1905d), p. 142f. above. In the course of his 'Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation' (1912f), Freud expressed regret at the lack of knowledge about female masturbation.]

manifestations of sexual life in women remain unintelligible unless this powerful motive is recognized.

I cannot explain the opposition which is raised in this way by little girls to phallic masturbation except by supposing that there is some concurrent factor which turns her violently against that pleasurable activity. Such a factor lies close at hand. It cannot be anything else than her narcissistic sense of humiliation which is bound up with penis-envy, the reminder that after all this is a point on which she cannot compete with boys and that it would therefore be best for her to give up the idea of doing so. Thus the little girl's recognition of the anatomical distinction between the sexes forces her away from masculinity and masculine masturbation on to new lines which lead to the development of femininity.

So far there has been no question on the Oedipus complex, nor has it up to this point played any part. But now the girl's libido slips into a new position along the line — there is no other way of putting it — of the equation 'penis-child'. She gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a wish for a child: and *with that purpose in view* she takes her father as a love-object.¹ Her mother becomes the object of her jealousy. The girl has turned into a little woman. If I am to credit a single analytic instance, this new situation can give rise to physical sensations which would have to be regarded as a premature awakening of the female genital apparatus. When the girl's attachment to her father comes to grief later on and has to be abandoned, it may give place to an identification with him and the girl may thus return to her masculinity complex and perhaps remain fixated in it.

I have now said the essence of what I had to say: I will stop, therefore, and cast an eye over our findings. We have gained some insight into the prehistory of the Oedipus complex in girls. The corresponding period in boys is more or less unknown. In girls the Oedipus complex is a secondary formation.¹ [Cf. 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', p. 321 above.]

mation. The operations of the castration complex precede it and prepare for it. As regards the relation between the Oedipus and castration complexes there is a fundamental contrast between the two sexes. *Whereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex,¹ in girls it is made possible and led up to by the castration complex.* This contradiction is cleared up if we reflect that the castration complex always operates in the sense implied in its subject-matter: it inhibits and limits masculinity and encourages femininity. The difference between the sexual development of males and females at the stage we have been considering is an intelligible consequence of the anatomical distinction between their genitals and of the psychical situation involved in it; it corresponds to the difference between a castration that has been carried out and one that has merely been threatened. In their essentials, therefore, our findings are self-evident and it should have been possible to foresee them.

The Oedipus complex, however, is such an important thing that the manner in which one enters and leaves it cannot be without its effects. In boys (as I have shown at length in the paper to which I have just referred [1924d] and to which all of my present remarks are closely related) the complex is not simply repressed, it is literally smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration. Its libidinal cathexes are abandoned, desexualized and in part sublimated; its objects are incorporated into the ego, where they form the nucleus of the super-ego and give that new structure its characteristic qualities. In normal, or, it is better to say, in ideal cases, the Oedipus complex exists no longer, even in the unconscious; the super-ego has become its heir. Since the penis (to follow Ferenczi [1924]) owes its extraordinarily high narcissistic cathexis to its organic significance for the propagation of the species, the catastrophe to the Oedipus complex (the abandonment of incest and the institution of conscience and morality) may be regarded as a victory of the race over the individual. This is

1. [Ibid., p. 319f. above.]

an interesting point of view when one considers that neurosis is based upon a struggle of the ego against the demands of the sexual function. But to leave the standpoint of individual psychology is not of any immediate help in clarifying this complicated situation.

In girls the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. Castration has already had its effect, which was to force the child into the situation of the Oedipus complex. Thus the Oedipus complex escapes the fate which it meets with in boys: it may be slowly abandoned or dealt with by repression, or its effects may persist far into women's normal mental life. I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Characteristics which critics of every epoch have brought up against women – that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility – all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego which we have inferred above. We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from such conclusions by the denials of the feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth; but we shall, of course, willingly agree that the majority of men are also far behind the masculine ideal and that all human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content.

I am inclined to set some value on the considerations I have brought forward upon the psychological consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes. I am aware, however, that this opinion can only be maintained if my findings, which

are based on a handful of cases, turn out to have general validity and to be typical. If not, they would remain no more than a contribution to our knowledge of the different paths along which sexual life develops.

In the valuable and comprehensive studies on the masculinity and castration complexes in women by Abraham (1921), Horney (1923) and Helene Deutsch (1925) there is much that touches closely on what I have written but nothing that coincides with it completely, so that here again I feel justified in publishing this paper.

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