

CHAPTER NINE

AN EVALUATION

We have now come to the end of our survey. We have tried to explain the nature of man - both in his individual and in his social aspects - from the standpoints of two great psycho-analytical thinkers of our times, Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. Freud was the pioneer of the psychoanalytical movement and it may be said that he brought about a revolution in the world of psychology. But no revolutionist can hold an undisputed sway over all his followers for all times. And Freud was no exception. There were dissidents within his own camp. As we know, Alfred Adler was one of the dissidents who broke off from Freud at a very early stage of psychoanalytical movement. It seems at first sight that when Adler snapped his ties with Freud, he took up the role of a thoroughgoing oppositionist. But, as we have pointed out in the preceding chapters, that the gap between the two gradually narrowed down. If Freud spoke of man, the individual, and Adler of man, the social, Freud admitted that man is moulded by the society to a great extent, and Adler had to recognise the uniqueness of the individual.

It is indeed very difficult to make a proper assessment of psychoanalytical theories, specially those of Freud.

The Freudian psychoanalytical theory has been criticised from various standpoints - methodological, clinical, moral, religious and so on. Thus it has been said that the theory postulates unobservable entities. But it may be said in reply that in other sciences we do not always deal with observable entities - thus electromagnetic fields and energy quanta of which Physics speaks are not observable. It is also argued that it is self-contradictory to talk of unconscious mental processes, inasmuch as we cannot have any genuine knowledge of that which is ex hypothesi unconscious. In other words, to be conscious of the unconscious is to negate it. It may be admitted that the objection is to some extent true, e.g., when we use expressions like 'unconscious desire', 'unconscious thought'. But in support of Freud it may be said that some stretching of terms is a recognised practice in the scientific world; e.g., the submicroscopic particles postulated in the kinetic theory of gases are postulated after the analogy of familiar physical objects like baseballs. Further, it is said that psychoanalytical theory is lacking in testable or verifiable hypothesis and that it assumes many things which are contrary to our everyday experience (e.g., the hypotheses of Oedipus Complex, penis envy on the part of girls etc.). The Freudians reply that they have clinical evidence in support of their hypotheses and that for testing a scientific hypothesis it is no use appealing to ordinary experience, inasmuch as it is

often concerned with the superficial and does not dive deep.¹

We have hinted above some of the objections against psychoanalysis and the replies thereto. It is very difficult to decide the issue in the face of these claims and counter-claims. For determining the place of psychoanalysis in the modern world we should rather state the actual contributions of Freudian psychoanalysis.

In discussing the motivational factors operative in individual and social minds we get great help from psychoanalysis. The position of importance given to sex and aggression (with their derivatives) in psychoanalysis is recognised in some form or other by specialists in social and cultural fields. This recognition has transformed the social sciences into 'disciplines concerned with dynamics rather than with statics'. Official sociology was busy with conceptualised descriptions of social phenomena, and academic psychology also simply described, analysed and classified mental phenomena. It was Freud who brought about a total change in outlook. He developed a depth-psychology of man and interpreted man in his dynamical aspect, i.e., man in action. This new outlook helped in understanding man as a concrete social being and not as an abstract concept. The Freudian psychoanalysis thus also uncovered certain basic human

¹ There are also charges of anti-religiosity and immorality against Freud, to which we have already referred to in Chapters V & VI.

mechanisms - it has brought to the forefront the mechanisms of repression and regression, projection and displacement, frustration and aggression, reaction formation and transference, with-fulfilment and symptom-formation and so on. Indeed, these have now become commonplace terminologies - the credit for introducing them in our social scientific vocabulary goes to Freud.

The Freudian psychoanalysis has introduced another dimension in our social thinking, viz., time-dimension, though in newer sense. The Freudians have drawn our attention to the fact that there is some basic similarity between primitive culture and modern culture, just as there is basic similarity between animal drive and human drive. The Freudians have all through emphasised a continuity between lower animals and men, between the primitive men and the civilised men, between primitive culture and contemporary culture. Freud always strove to discern the contemporary in the archaic and the archaic in the contemporary.

Freud's anthropological speculations about the primitive horde, primordial murder of father by a band of brothers, the consequential emergence of totem and taboo have no doubt been severely criticised and even caricatured; but still it must be admitted that these speculations no doubt emphasised the 'state of nature' to which the eighteenth century thinkers like Hobbes drew attention.

In spite of his many notable contributions, Freud was a much criticised (or, much misunderstood?) man. Freud of course had his own biases or idiosyncracies; but while, criticising Freud it must not be forgotten, as pointed out by Ira Progoff, "Freud was a neurologist by profession and the primary purpose of his studies was to put the theory of the unconscious to medical use. . . . Freud did not come to his discoveries by the road of philosophy but through clinical work and especially through his private practice with cases of 'hysteria'".² Freud as a theoretician is to be understood only in the light of a medical practitioner; and only then many of the criticisms will soften down. We should adopt a somewhat restrained attitude towards him when he theorises about man and makes some romantic flights. As Kaplan remarks "In his conception of man's place in nature, at bottom Freud belongs to the Age of Enlightenment. But in his view of man's relation to man his sober empiricism sometimes gives way to the dialectic of Romanticism."³

The insights that Freud acquired remained the exclusive basis of therapeutic work for about three decades. Freud was a rigid and uncompromising thinker and he insisted on parent-child relation being interpreted in terms of unconscious sexual drives. But his own followers - Stekel, Adler, Hung, Rank - gradually deviated from him.

² I. Progoff, The Death & Rebirth of Psychology, p. 16.

³ A. Kaplan, 'Freud and Modern Philosophy' in Freud and 20th Century (Ed. by B. Nelson), p. 226.

Like Freud, Adler also put emphasis on the contact between parent and child, but he read the problem in the context of 'the family constellation' as a whole and thereby reduced or minimized the 'sexual aspect' of the problem. He went beyond the sexual and even the family factors, and emphasised the aspect of 'meaning' of life for the individual. Adler showed that the individual unconsciously constructs a system of 'fictions' by which he finds ~~he~~ a 'meaning' for his life, even though from his own subjective standpoint. Adler was not satisfied with the long and laborious Freudian method of tracing the roots of a neurosis back to infantile sex experiences. Adler was anxious to help and heal people, and he felt that patients cannot solve the problems of daily life if their minds are diverted from the present to their past. To encourage the patient to move to his infantile past would be to make him retreat from the real problem, felt Adler. He objected to reducing every neurosis to a sex problem; but this does not mean that Adler undermined the importance of sex. All that he insisted was sexual life can be understood only in the context of an individual's total pattern of experience.

Adverse criticism was not the lot simply of Freud : Adler, too, had to face many critics. As against Adler it has been said that his "appeal to psychology, normal and abnormal, was

speculative rather than scientific. . . . He openly despised statistics. . . . He made no use of normal 'controls' . . . Adler never experimented, never firmly predicted, never attempted systematically to verify a hypothesis."⁴

But criticisms apart, it must be recognised that Adler introduced a refreshing note in the field of psychoanalytical investigation when he drew attention to the notions of 'compensation for inferiority', 'social feeling' and 'meaning of life'. But inspite of these novelties of Adlerian psychology and inspite of the early deviation of Adler from Freud, the two thinkers are not as wide apart as they seem to be. Strictly speaking, Freud and Adler in their mature stages, complement each other and give one another depth and perspective. Their psychologies in a way represent modern man's search for a soul.⁵ They carry on their enquiries in the unconscious depths of personality in such a way as to open the dormant potentialities of the spirit and to develop and enlarge. The social reality which the Revisionists headed by Adler emphasise is intertwined with the individual personality which formed the nucleus of Freudian investigation. As we have pointed out earlier, Freud

⁴ J. D. Uytman's Article on 'Alfred Adler' in Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Ed. by Paul Edwards), Vol. I.

⁵ Cf: The Title of C. G. Jung's book Modern Man in search of a Soul.

and Adler finally drew close to each other. As Herberg says, "The conflict between the ego and id takes place without the depths of the psyche, but it is a conflict writ large in the life of society. . . . The inner tension between the ego and the id is reflected in the tension between the self and the outer world".⁶ On the other hand, Adler in spite of his doctrine of 'social feeling' was primarily concerned with the individual, his problems, his weal and woe, his struggle to overcome his inferiority and to find a place in society along with others. Indeed, he himself gave the name Individual Psychology to his own way of psychological interpretation of man.

Whatever may be the inner conflict among Freud and Adler and their followers, psychoanalysis⁷ will serve its purpose if it can educate men as they meet each other on the social front, if it can enlarge their consciousness to understand themselves and their fellow-men and thereby ameliorate the evils of life. Psychoanalysis will do its real job if it moves in this direction. As Waelder expresses the hope, "In this sense, psychoanalysis may turn out to have been a great civilising force - the most hopeful, perhaps in the long run, that entered our world in the last century."⁸ We join our voice with Waelder's and express the same hope.

⁶ B. Nelson, Op. Cit., p. 148 (Herberg's Article, 'Freud and the Revisionists').

⁷ We use the term 'psychoanalysis' in a wide sense to mean not only the Freudian but also the post-Freudian thoughts of Adler, Jung, etc.

⁸ Robert Waelder, Basic Theory of Psychoanalysis, p. 251.