

EDITOR'S NOTE

TRAUER UND MELANCHOLIE

(a) GERMAN EDITIONS:

- 1917 *Int. Z. Psychoanal.*, 4 (6), 288-301.
1918 *S.K.S.N.*, 4, 356-77. (1922, 2nd ed.)
1924 *G.S.*, 5, 535-53.
1924 *Technik und Metapsychol.*, 257-75.
1931 *Theoretische Schriften*, 157-77.
1946 *G.W.*, 10, 428-46.

(b) ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

- 1925 *C.P.*, 4, 152-70. (Tr. Joan Riviere.)
'Mourning and Melancholia'

The present translation, though based on that of 1925, has been very largely rewritten.

As we learn from Dr. Ernest Jones (1955, 367-8), Freud had expounded the theme of the present paper to him in January, 1914; and he spoke of it to the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society on December 30 of that year. He wrote a first draft of the paper in February, 1915. He submitted this to Abraham, who sent him some lengthy comments, which included the important suggestion that there was a connection between melancholia and the oral stage of libidinal development (pp. 249-50). The final draft of the paper was finished on May 4, 1915, but, like its predecessor, it was not published till two years later.

In very early days (probably in January, 1895) Freud had sent Fliess an elaborate attempt at explaining melancholia (under which term he regularly included what are now usually described as states of depression) in purely neurological terms (Freud, 1950a, Draft G).

This attempt was not particularly fruitful, but it was soon replaced by a psychological approach to the subject. Only two

years later we find one of the most remarkable instances of Freud's pre-vision. It occurs in a manuscript, also addressed to Fliess, and bearing the title 'Notes (III)'. This manuscript, dated May 31, 1897, is incidentally the one in which Freud first foreshadowed the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1950a, Draft N). The passage in question, whose meaning is so condensed as to be in places obscure, deserves to be quoted in full:

'Hostile impulses against parents (a wish that they should die) are also an integral constituent of neuroses. They come to light consciously as obsessional ideas. In paranoia what is worst in delusions of persecution (pathological distrust of rulers and monarchs) corresponds to these impulses. They are repressed at times when compassion for the parents is active—at times of their illness or death. On such occasions it is a manifestation of mourning to reproach oneself for their death (what is known as melancholia) or to punish oneself in a hysterical fashion (through the medium of the idea of retribution) with the same states [of illness] that they have had. The identification which occurs here is, as we can see, nothing other than a mode of thinking and does not relieve us of the necessity for looking for the motive.'

The further application to melancholia of the line of thought outlined in this passage seems to have been left completely on one side by Freud. Indeed he scarcely mentioned the condition again before the present paper, except for some remarks in a discussion on suicide at the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society in 1910 (*Standard Ed.*, 11, 232), when he stressed the importance of drawing a comparison between melancholia and normal states of mourning, but declared that the psychological problem involved was still insoluble.

What enabled Freud to reopen the subject was, of course, the introduction of the concepts of narcissism and of an ego ideal. The present paper may, indeed, be regarded as an extension of the one on narcissism which Freud had written a year earlier (1914c). Just as that paper had described the workings of the 'critical agency' in cases of paranoia (see above p. 95 f.), so this one sees the same agency in operation in melancholia.

But the implications of this paper were destined to be more important than the explanation of the mechanism of one particular pathological state, though those implications did not become immediately obvious. The material contained here led

on to the further consideration of the 'critical agency' which is to be found in Chapter XI of *Group Psychology* (1921c), *Standard Ed.*, 18, 129 ff.; and this in turn led on to the hypothesis of the super-ego in *The Ego and the Id* (1923b) and to a fresh assessment of the sense of guilt.

Along another line, this paper called for an examination of the whole question of the nature of identification. Freud seems to have been inclined at first to regard it as closely associated with, and perhaps dependent on, the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development. Thus in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), *Standard Ed.*, 13, 142, he had written of the relation between the sons and the father of the primal horde that 'in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him'. And again, in a passage added to the third edition of the *Three Essays*, published in 1915 but written some months before the present paper, he described the cannibalistic oral phase as 'the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part'. In the present paper (pp. 249-50) he speaks of identification as 'a preliminary stage of object-choice . . . the first way in which the ego picks out an object' and adds that 'the ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development at which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it'.¹ And indeed, though Abraham may have suggested the relevance of the oral phase to melancholia, Freud's own interest had already begun to turn to it, as is shown by the discussion of it in the 'Wolf Man' case history (1918b) which was written during the autumn of 1914 and in which a prominent part was played by that phase. (See *Standard Ed.*, 17, 106.) A few years later, in *Group Psychology* (1921c), *Standard Ed.*, 18, 105 ff., where the subject of identification is taken up again, explicitly in continuation of the present discussion, a change in the earlier view—or perhaps only a clarification of it—seems to emerge. Identification, we there learn, is something that *precedes* object-cathexis and is distinct from it,

¹ The term 'introjection' does not occur in this paper, though Freud had already used it, in a different connection, in the first of these metapsychological papers (p. 136) above. When he returned to the topic of identification, in the chapter of his *Group Psychology* referred to in the text, he used the word 'introjection' at several points, and it reappears, though not very frequently, in his subsequent writings.

