

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## The aim of psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup> (1971)

**A**lthough I have tried to write this short paper in such a way that it can be understood without specific reference to any previous work of mine, it is in fact a supplement to my paper on 'Cognitive Development' (1968).

The aim of an analysis may be defined in various ways. One of these is that it is to help the patient understand, and so overcome, emotional impediments to his discovering what he innately already knows. My aim in this paper is to elaborate this statement.

It should be obvious from my reference to innate knowledge that it is with the cognitive aspect of instinct (instinctive knowledge) that I am most concerned; and that, since I am devoting a paper to it, I consider it to have been insufficiently stressed in psychoanalytic theory before. But, at this point, I am arrested by that inner voice which those who have been analysed acquire and which strives to continue the analysis long after it is over and those who did it are dead. 'You claim', so it seems to say, 'a creativity which you deny to us: the child we misconceived

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Collected Papers of Roger Money-Kyrle* (Perthshire: Clunice Press, 1978), pp. 442-449.

or misbegot is now to be correctly conceived or begotten by yourself. Remember that in the inner world, parthenogenetic creativity is a megalomaniac delusion. All you can do, and surely this is enough, is to allow your internal parents to come together and they will beget and conceive the child.' I believe this to be profoundly true. Freud, under the influence of his electrostatic model of the mind with its cathexes and counter-cathexes may have insufficiently stressed the cognitive element in instinct about which so little was known at the time. But the notion of innate knowledge, always latent in idealistic philosophy and recently systematically studied by ethologists, is not mine. All I have to do is to allow theories, taken from different fields, to fertilise each other.

In my previous paper I tried to make a start by allowing one of Bion's notions – that innate preconceptions mate with realisations to form concepts – to mate both with Schlick's theory that knowledge consists in recognising something as a member of a class and with Plato's Theory of Ideas: that a particular object is recognised as an imperfect copy of an ideal or general object laid up in heaven. For if, by heaven, we mean our own phylogenetic inheritance, it seems to me that Plato was here very near the mark. The difficulty of course is that we cannot imagine a general object, only a particular example of it, or the name of the class. Yet we have no difficulty in recognising a new member. Our phylogenetic inheritance, then, contains class notions which we cannot imagine, though we can recognise their members. This is the cognitive part of the innate response which precedes the affective and conative.

Variation and selection may be expected to have laid down an immense amount of potential information in this way, which probably comes into being in stages mainly during the first few weeks or months of postnatal life (not counting what develops before). Experience, through the mating of innate preconceptions with realisations to form concepts, both fixes and refines it in our preconscious and conscious thought.

It remains, as my major task, to allow these notions to fertilise the immense body of psychoanalytic experience. This is again a task of recognition, though immensely more difficult, not

because it is so hard to recognise what is significant, but because it is impossible to be sure that one has recognised all that is significant for the purpose. Moreover all adult thinking, all later acts of recognition, are hampered by the difficulties which beset the first ones, and we have all had some difficulties with these.

Among these first ones, and without being sure that I have selected all that are significant, I will select three: the recognition of the breast as a supremely good object, the recognition of the parents' intercourse as a supremely creative act, and the recognition of the inevitability of time and ultimately death. The third seems of a different order from the other two, and I am not sure in what sense it is to be regarded as innately predetermined. Certainly the fear of death is paranoid and results from the recognition of a murderously competitive split-off part of the self which threatens the self (persecutory anxiety) or its loved objects (depressive anxiety). But when the entity into which this part of the self is put is really as dangerous as it seems, there is no distortion; and one must suppose this to be the mechanism evolved to provide us with rational fear. But to fear death is not the same as to recognise its inevitability, which is a fact forced on us much against our will by the repeated experience that no good (or bad) experience can ever last for ever – a fact perhaps never fully accepted.

This brings me back to the first of the three acts of recognition I selected; for probably the main impediment to the recognition of the breast as a supremely good object is the fact that it cannot be enjoyed for ever. If, as I suppose, there is an innate preconception of such an object, and if no mothering that keeps a child alive is so bad that it fails to provide some realisation of it, the concept of a good breast must always at least begin to form. But the breast itself is first periodically, and then permanently, lost. If the development is to be favourable, the thought – the 'no-thing' in Bion's terms – or memory of the lost breast as signs or 'names' of the concept which has begun to form, survive and are most painfully mourned: a process which ends in what Melanie Klein called the internalisation of the first good object. To what extent the internalisation of the first good object is the same as establishing a concept, or the most primitive and concrete form of

this process, it may be hard to say, but at any rate the capacity to mourn, or pine for a loss, and the capacity to remember the lost object are inseparably linked. Without the memory there can be no mourning, and without the mourning there can be no memory. And if the development is to be unfavourable, this is what seems to happen: there is no concept and no capacity to mourn. The baby in whom this concept – the good internal breast – has been lost can have no memory or expectation, and cannot recognise it even if it is again put in his mouth. Thus, for example, a patient dreamed that *a friendly man helps him up to a platform to meet a very important lady, a duchess or queen. But the lady has no face, her head being a kind of fleshy knob, which he finds most unattractive.* But it is clearly the nipple itself which he has seen and cannot remember.

The more usual case, of course, is somewhere between these two extremes. Some concept of the first good object, some memory and some expectation, exists in the deep unconscious, but it is much impaired – and I would suppose the patient whose dream I have just quoted was of this type. This is think indeed the general case which explains why the earliest memories are always consciously lost, and possibly explains why no-one's capacity to think is wholly undisturbed. At any rate, as analysts we are all familiar with the way patients tend to forget us and our work over holidays and weekends, and sometimes seem to have little hope of ever seeing us again from one session to another.

Particularly after a holiday two things seem to happen which are not, perhaps, as closely related as they seem. On the one hand, it is not only that the memory of us as a good object has disappeared, we have turned into a bad one. And although we are blamed for many real and imaginary offences, the main one seems to be that we were not there when wanted. On the other, we no longer seem to be what the patient is really looking for; and this I think is not merely because we have become bad, but because the patient has found a spuriously satisfying substitute.

The discovery of the spuriously satisfying substitute comes about I think in this way. The baby who has been kept waiting too long in relation to his own capacity to wait and whose memory and expectation of the good breast begins to be destroyed will

begin to be lured by an even earlier memory which seems never to be entirely lost – that of the intrauterine condition. Quite often, as Meltzer has pointed out (1966), this is linked with the discovery and exploration of his own bottom, which both resembles the breast in shape and also seems to provide an entry into the kind of place from which he dimly remembers that he came. The result is a most confused and complicated state in which in fact he is in touch with a substitute for the breast and in projective identification with it inside it.

We may also suppose that in getting in this condition, he is also influenced by another innate preconception which is perhaps just beginning to develop, namely that of intercourse. But if he ‘recognises’ his own phantasy of getting totally inside his mother as an example of intercourse, the recognition is really a misconception likely to be used to counteract the true conception, which is beginning to form, of his parents’ creative relation to each other.

The point I am making here is that the more firmly a child’s first good object is established inside him, and his unconscious and even to some extent his conscious memory of his first good relationship is preserved, the easier it will be for him to conceptualise his parents’ intercourse as a supremely creative act; and this is so, not only because the memory of his first good object mitigates his jealousy, but also because he will have had much less incentive to construct a misconception of intercourse as a by-product of phantasies of projective identification.

Where there has been a favourable development, and the concept of the first good object is well established, together with the capacity to remember it with love, there is far less difficulty in being able to recognise the parental relation as an example of the innate preconception of coitus as a supremely creative act – especially as this is reinforced by a memory of a good relation between the nipple and the mouth. Of course, this discovery or recognition arouses jealousy and ushers in all the conflicts of the Oedipus complex. But it will be easier to overcome them, and after a renewed period of mourning for the child–parent marriage that can never be, to internalise and establish a good concept of parental intercourse as the basis of a subsequent

marriage which may in fact take place. But where the development has been unfavourable, the misconception of intercourse as a by-product of fantasies of total projective identification will remain as a nodal point for the development of every form of perversion and insanity. The commonest – indeed perhaps the universal case – involves a mixture of the two extremes, one part of the personality developing normally or sanely, while other parts stay still or develop in a perverted or insane way.

The perversions are so varied, and perhaps still so imperfectly understood, that I will only attempt to deal with one which also puzzled Freud in his paper 'A child is being beaten' (1919). It seems to me that perversions of this kind can be correctly, but incompletely, interpreted by any of a large number of statements, which collectively disclose the many steps of its development. 'A sadistic father is having intercourse with the child' takes us a little way, but is unlikely to do much to remove the perversion. 'A good father is beating the devil out of the child's inside' may also be appropriate and takes us a little further with its implication that the child suffers from the fantasy of having a devil penis inside his gut. But this contrasts with 'A bad part of the child in the father is killing the babies inside the mother with whom the child is in projective identification.' Then there are other statements which may take us deeper still: 'The child's oral sadistic impulses are in the beater while he himself, or rather his bottom, is in identification with the breasts.' If this is indeed the pattern there will probably be some notion that the beating is to go on forever (in the next world as in the *Rodiad*), so that the concept of mortality, which I think is the initial difficulty, is itself denied. Moreover, the whole perversion begins with the misrecognition of the baby's own bottom as the spurious substitute for the breasts which have been forgotten.

To sum up in a few points what I have been trying to say:

- 1) Our innate inheritance includes certain general ideas, which we cannot imagine, but which enable us to recognise examples of them, and so to form corresponding concepts. I think the essential difference between a preconception and a concept is that the concept has something corresponding to a name – originally the

image of the first example of the preconception to be recognised – and so can become an object of thought.

2) Among the many innate preconceptions we may be endowed with, two are of particular analytic importance: the good breast, and the good creative intercourse. And I think they are of such particular importance because there is so much difficulty in establishing the corresponding concepts.

(3) Whether and in what sense the idea of death is an innate preconception I cannot say. But apart from the paranoid fear of being killed by one's own projected aggression, the baby has the experience forced upon him that no good experience can last for ever. In the short run, it may be easier to forget a lost good object, or to forget its goodness, than to mourn for it – especially if its loss is attributed to hating it for being absent. To a variable degree, the memory always seems to be impaired.

4) At the same time, an object falsely recognised as the lost good object comes into being as the apparent object of desire. When this is the baby's own bottom, confused with its mother's breasts, it becomes the nodal point for a great variety of perverse formations. These act as a substitute not only for the lost breast-relation but also for the good creative intercourse, which therefore fails to be recognised as such. But I do not wish to imply that this is the sole type of misconception that can arise.

5) Only so far as the good breast is mourned and remembered without a substitute can the developing child recognise the creativity of his parents' intercourse, pass through the turmoil of the Oedipus complex, and eventually internalise them as the model for his later marriage.

At the end of this short paper, I ask myself again if there is anything in it to justify my rather pretentious opening paragraphs in which I seemed to promise something new which, by implication, would be useful to the practice of analysis. From a personal point of view, all I can find, perhaps all one can ever expect to find, is the sort of cross-fertilisation I spoke of, in which – to quote another example – Bion's notion of innate preconceptions are linked with Meltzer's on anal masturbation and projective identification to produce the notion of a 'spurious substitute'

for the real object which is no longer remembered. But in what sense is this notion and others like it of value either in the theory or the practice of analysis? Perhaps I can claim some theoretical advantage if they help to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and ethology. But to justify this paper to this Society I would have to show that they are of use to the practising analyst; and here I can only say that I think they have been useful to myself, and could be useful to others who think in the same way.

As to the main differences between this and my previous paper on cognitive development, I have here much more stressed the fear of its death as a major factor in the loss of the memory of the first good object, and linked this directly with the discovery of the 'spurious substitute', which I had previously discussed under the heading of 'disorientations' .

*Acknowledgement*

I am indebted to Dr H. Segal, who read the manuscript and made suggestions which I have gratefully incorporated.