

A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF AN "INFERIORITY COMPLEX"

by

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Introductory Summary

This study is based on the psychoanalysis of one young man whose major complaint was of a "life-long inferiority complex."

Reference is made to some of the remarkable amount of attention that is given to feelings of inferiority in the general field of psychotherapy and by the laity.

It is the thesis of this paper that in some cases these attitudes of personal inferiority are not only complexly multi-determined, but more important, are woven into the character structure in ways that have major importance in maintaining psychic equilibrium-serving active defensive function as well as being major avenues of instinctual gratification.

The analysis of this case revealed that the major factors contributing to his sense of inferiority occurred in infancy, pre-oedipally and oedipally--each succeeding factor making the self-esteem more vulnerable to the next. There were many specific memories of severe narcissistic blows highlighting a continuous atmosphere of vacillating over-stimulation and depreciating rejection as the neurotic character structure developed, large expenditures of counter-cathetic energy contributed to ego-impoverishment and the sense of general impotency.

However, much more interesting and more important to his character functioning and to this thesis were the attitudes of self-depreciation which developed as components of identifications with certain specific introjects. These "inferior" introjects related primarily to the mother as perceived through the bias and projection of his own infantile wishes, frustrations, fears and devaluation reactions.

An outstanding aspect of this man's character, was the presence and variable function of these and numerous other introjects, consisting of the good and bad fathers, the good and bad mothers, the part-mother, the whole mother, etc. Each was highly specific in form and related directly to infantile instinctual conflicts. The situation suggested a large reservoir of internalized objects which were available, when sufficiently cathected, for the expression of and/or defense against instinctual drives. These same introjects could vary remarkably in their structural position. One such internalized object would function as part of the id, the super-ego, the ego-ideal or as the ego-identity at different times yet retaining its distinctive characteristics in each position.

The consequent clinical picture was one of abrupt shifting of states of mind, each state being distinctive according to the particular introject-identification process predominating at the time. The state of mind most frequently in evidence, because most successful in maintaining his psyche equilibrium, was that of the inferior, acquiescent and subservient "number two." The emphasis of the

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Introduction

The present study was designed to investigate the effects of the environment on the development of the child. It is based on the theory that the child's behavior is determined by the interaction of his heredity and his environment. The study was conducted in a hospital where the children were observed in their natural environment. The results of the study are presented in the following sections.

The first section of the report deals with the general characteristics of the children who were observed. It is found that the children were of various ages and that their behavior was influenced by their environment. The second section of the report deals with the results of the study. It is found that the children who were observed in a hospital environment showed a different pattern of behavior than those who were observed in a home environment.

It is concluded that the environment has a significant effect on the development of the child. The results of the study suggest that the child's behavior is determined by the interaction of his heredity and his environment. The study also suggests that the environment can be used to influence the child's development.

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paper is on the dynamic and economic usefulness of the attitude of inferiority.

The speculation is made that similar complexities, involving multiple and mainly unchanging internalized objects, are present in all character disorders which present prominent and repetitious attitudes and behavior patterns.

While these various introjects can function in economic, dynamic and structural intra-psychic relationship, they are also strongly isolated with the assistance of much denial and repression. This situation made for a major technical problem in the analysis which modified somewhat an otherwise classical approach. The analysis was colorful and stormy with much dramatic acting-out of these various identifications but progressively brought about considerable character modification and maturation with a therapeutic result gratifying to both patient and analyst.