

Outline of Dr. Greenson's lecture on:

INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOANALYTIC CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

Fifth evening

Wednesday, November 20, 1946

8:15 P.M.

563 N. Alfred Street

Short repetition of the previous lecture.

OEDIPUS SITUATION

The Oedipus complex arises out of the family situation. This family situation in our culture is significant for our way of living. In this setting the masturbatory activities at the age between five and seven are the executive of the sexual drives towards the parents.

Before the Oedipus situation the little boy already wanted the mother exclusively for himself as an undivided love object. At the height of the Oedipus complex the boy develops sexual impulses proper toward the mother and the father acquires the significance of a hated rival. Many attempts to disturb the relation of the parents.

The relation of girls towards the father corresponds to that in boys towards the mother, but it is of lesser intensity. Special circumstances may influence this kind of relationship. There are possibilities to create a stronger attachment for the love object of the same sex.

Ambivalence in a primitive and undifferentiated way existed already from the times of oral incorporation as the main way of expressing a relation toward people. By the time of the Oedipus complex ambivalence proper, which means love and hate, starts to be established. The sexual sensations, orgasm-like states, are at this period nearer towards adult sexuality than before.

The masturbation itself becomes more exclusively genital masturbation and increases in intensity. Therefore, possibilities of increase in anxiety and guilt. When sexual urges become imperative, the child again looks for the mother to give satisfaction as in the former periods with their needs. Therefore, it is natural for the boy to make his mother the person from whom satisfaction is expected.

Why is it that the parent of the opposite sex is chosen?

- 1) There seems to be a biological factor, though it is in no way proven.
- 2) The environment shows constantly the preference for a heterosexual love object.
- 3) The attitudes of the parents, mother preferring boy, father preferring daughter, are of great influence upon the child.
- 4) Disturbances of sexual activities at the time of the Oedipus complex: Experiences of sexual stimulation with adults are very disturbing to the child. The excessive amount of stimulation and the inability to master it creates a traumatic shock. As a result the child is forced into regression. Very often sexuality as a whole is given up because of the "danger". Also seeing naked adults may create a shock-like reaction. How the child will handle the Oedipus complex will depend

upon his former history: history of relation to the parents; of oral (weaning, sucking) experiences; on anal (training) experiences; on exhibitionism, masturbation, etc. The mother's attitude towards instinctual expression is of paramount importance.

The parents' past experiences are of equal importance for the child's handling the Oedipus situation. Their own repressed infantile sexuality and experience, their own Oedipus conflicts reflect upon the child. Additional influences on the Oedipus development:

- 1) Relationship with siblings. Ideas of pregnancy, child birth, conception.
- 2) Death of one parent: The effect will depend upon the individual personality of that parent. For instance, father's death for the boy if it occurs at a phase of boy's acute rivalry and hate towards the father, will create intense guilt feelings. Mother's death coming in times of great attachment for the mother will result in overidealization for her. Later development can be permanently influenced through these events at such a crucial period.
- 3) Divorce, going to war of the father, may have similar repercussions.

Question often asked: whether children in institutions would not grow up without developing an Oedipus situation. Facts are that the children immediately try to find themselves substitute parents, since in our society the family institution is the only known setup.

CASTRATION FEAR

Boy: all sexual sensations centered in the penis. Satisfaction expected from the mother, who rejects sexual advances. The father rival who is hated, on his part forbids the sexual demands towards the mother and all threats are perceived as dangerous attacks upon the sexual organ. In the choice to demand sexual satisfaction from the mother or give up the organ in which sexual desires are centered, the only decision possible for the little boy is to renounce his Oedipus sexuality in order to be able to keep his sexual organ.

Girl: development different. The little girl starts with a feeling of lacking something. The shift from the attachment to the mother towards the father and the giving up of the interest in her having a penis creates the Oedipus situation, in which the father becomes the desired love object and where the wish to have a penis changes into the desire for a child. This desire, too, has to be given up, but the passing of the Oedipus complex is less intense, since there is no threat to lose the precious organ. Also, the attachment toward the heterosexual object is never as violent as in the boy. The need for love is more in the foreground and the fear of the loss of that love induces the passing of the Oedipus complex in the little girl.

How is the passing of the Oedipus complex achieved? The sexual relations to father and mother can be given up by incorporating them into them, whereby the super-ego is established. Not only prohibitions but also ideals and ideas of the parents are incorporated. Only at that time can one talk of the establishment of the superego proper, though there were some forerunners in the form of policemen, devils, fairies, etc.