Reviews and Notices of Books.


The last volume of the collected papers consists of two parts. The first eight papers are on what is termed metapsychology, that is to say the theoretical deductions which Professor Freud has drawn from his observations of his clinical and other material. The sympathetic general reader will turn to these with the expectation that here at last he will find a firm psychological basis for what at first sight appears far-fetched in psychoanalytical literature, but which may after all hang together with the more physiological treatment of psychology, but he will be disappointed, for we still find the purely empirical standpoint. Psychoanalysis has established certain "facts" and everything must be explained on these facts. To quote from another essay of the author's: "I presuppose their (the findings of psychoanalysis) soundness and I then make use of them to explain..." This is the attitude all through this first part. For example, he admits that "we must recollect that all our provisional ideas in psychology will some day be based on an organic sub-structure..." It may be that—when we penetrate deepest and furthest—sexual energy, the libido, will be found to be only the product of a differentiation in the energy at work generally in the mind. But such a statement is of no importance." And so we go on with libido, narcissism, eroticism and the rest. For instance, a promising chapter heading is "Instincts and their vicissitudes," but this is concerned with sadism, masochism, exhibitionism, scotophilia, etc., and we look in vain for any link with our more familiar instincts about which the orthodox psychologist has taught us. The objection may be raised that Freud is not discussing orthodox psychology but psychoanalytic theory, but after all orthodox psychology is no Dodo, but rather a flourishing member of the family of the sciences, and the correct road to the difficult subject of psychoanalysis ought to be through orthodox psychology and not by initiation into a cult from a previous condition of psychological ignorance. Freud himself and all his reputable followers are able and distinguished neurologists and psychologists and it is a pity that they do not give more assistance to the neophyte to bridge the gap between these established sciences and the new discoveries.

The second part consists of sixteen papers on applied psychoanalysis. These deal with various non-medical subjects, ranging from art, through telepathy, to demoniacal possession and, providing psychoanalytical interpretation is accepted, they are full of interest and instruction. Like the other volumes of these papers it is imperative that all who pretend to take an interest in modern psychology should read this last one, but perhaps only the devoted disciples will find full and complete satisfaction therein.

R. G. G.
Collected Papers. Volume iv

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