

MAN'S UNCONSCIOUS PASSION



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MAN'S UNCONSCIOUS
PASSION



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WILFRID LAY



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CHAPTER I

THE TOTAL SITUATION

A. *Influence*

SOME infinitesimal influence is exerted by you on everything else in the universe, if only from the fact that you occupy space. And some influence is exerted upon you by every other thing in space, a greater influence from the things of your environment, a still greater from the immediate environment. But what is the environment? It is safe to say that unless there were some interrelation of cause and effect between the individual and his environment, there would be no significance in its being called an environment. The things that cause changes in your mental and physical behaviour are your environment, and the more effect they have, the more are you environed by them.

It would be difficult to say by what you are most influenced. Some might think that it was by your physical surroundings, some by your

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heredity. The most catholic will see that you are the net result of all the causes, physical and mental, that have operated on you from the beginning of time, and that there are many elements entering into the total situation that could be called causative of it, but that are not apparent to your consciousness, although undoubtedly they do make impressions upon your sense organs.

The total situation for the unconscious is always much more extensive than it is for consciousness. Outside of conscious hearing there are sound waves continually impinging upon the ear-drum, and, whether or not they are in the form of spoken words, they will have an influence upon the psyche, even if they never enter consciousness. In the realm of sight there are impressions that never enter consciousness at all, however much they may be making vibrations in the rods and cones of the retina. In touch you have constant skin pressures of which you are rarely conscious, though you may from time to time become aware of them.

In general, the impressions that are constantly being made upon all the sense organs, external and internal, are the total situation in which, at any given time, you are involved; and only a very small number of these are illuminated by the searchlight of consciousness, as it turns now

in one direction (to one sense quality) and now in another.

But however narrow is the scope of consciousness itself, and however few of the elements of this total situation it illuminates for your mental gaze, to speak figuratively, the total situation, consisting of all the impressions from without, whether in consciousness or not, and of all the impressions from within (organic sensations), and of all the ideas, verbal, and otherwise sensory, both conscious and unconscious,—this total situation is always perceptible to the unconscious mind. Your behaviour is never determined by what is in consciousness alone. The total situation as I have called it, you have always with you. No part of it is without influence upon your behaviour, physical and mental. Your physical behaviour is partly visible to your eyes, and otherwise consciously perceptible to other senses, but only a small proportion of it. Similarly your mental behaviour, which is the ideas, feelings, images, emotions, wishes, desires, volitions, etc., or whatever else you include by the terms usually applied to mental phenomena, your total mental behaviour is almost entirely outside of that circle of conscious illumination referred to above.

No definite idea can be gained by the observer concerning the actual shape of an iceberg *below*

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the surface of the water, but, whatever shape it may be, we know that it is from eight to nine times as great in volume as what appears above the surface. Whatever then may be in our consciousness at any time, we may be quite sure that a great deal more is in our mind but not in our consciousness. If a sphere of wood, a hundred feet in diameter, were in the water, and its specific gravity were 90%, one-tenth of it would be above the surface. If it were a perfect sphere of homogeneous density throughout, it could be rotated on any axis by the slightest touch of a finger, and any part of its surface could be brought into view above the level of the water.

But, to carry out this metaphor, the mind is neither spherical, nor is it of homogeneous density throughout. Possibly the iceberg is the best illustration of the extent of the conscious and unconscious mind, because it is irregular in shape, may be melted off at the bottom by warm currents, and lean over or turn turtle according to circumstances. The work of psychoanalysis is to make the thing spherical, so to speak, in order that it may be turned over and examined on every side. If one attempted to overturn a large, flat piece of ice in the water one would have to lift a goodly proportion of its weight.

The whole iceberg in this figure represents the total situation. Most of the total situation is

imperceptible to consciousness, but to the mental elaboration of what enters consciousness, it is the amount of ice under the water necessary to raise the rest of it above the surface. There would not be so much above, if there were less underneath. The centre of gravity of the whole mass determines the part of the iceberg that shall appear above the water's surface. Every part that appears, does so because of the weight and shape of the whole.

Exactly the same may be said of the conscious elements of the total mental situation, so much of which is unconscious. The most active and aggressive men are so because of the greatness of their unconscious desires. What appears on the surface of their conduct, both words and actions, is largely, if not totally, determined by what is beneath. We do not see what is beneath; we merely deduce the existence of it, but the deduction is quite as valid as that for the existence of other consciousness besides our own.

B. *The Unconscious Deducible*

That another person has a consciousness like mine is deduction only, not experience. That my own mind is part unconscious is similarly deducible and with exactly the same logic. My own unconscious is to me as little a matter of

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direct perception as is to me the consciousness of a person other than myself. I infer both, and with absolutely equal validity. Never do I doubt for a minute that others have consciousness as I have. Never should I doubt that my mind has means of modifying, as it has means of storing, my experiences and other expressions. I see the acts of others, and make my own inferences as to what caused these acts. I see my own acts and should make the same kind of inferences as to what caused them. I can see perfectly that what Brown really admires about Miss Green is her money, and not her character or her person. I can see clearly how he is deceiving himself. But I never make the same inference about myself—that I am deceiving myself about the true motives of any wooing or doing of my own. In order fully to know myself I should have to make the same inferences about myself that I make about others.

C. *Unconscious and Foreconscious*

It must not be supposed that there is a sharp line of demarkation between consciousness and the unconscious, but that certain mental activities can be brought at once and with little effort into full consciousness, while others can never be brought into clear consciousness at all,

for one reason, possibly, that they are not expressible in the ordinary medium of verbal, pictorial or other sensory-motor means of expression, possibly because the effort would be too great to have any value. The results would either be unrecognizable or would be worth little or nothing.

But between the mental activities that are so unconscious, so inaccessible, and so unavailable for conscious presentation, and the mental activities that pop into, and out of, consciousness spontaneously or accompanied by a feeling of volition, there is an endless series of gradations. To that degree of difficulty of resuscitation shown by the multiplication table, the Lord's Prayer and sundry prices, street and telephone numbers, some writers give the name *Foreconscious*. The mental activities labelled with this name are comparatively easy to evoke, and they are accompanied by a more vividly pleasant sense of effort than are the attempts to evoke the activities that generally take place in the lower strata of the truly and inexorably unconscious.

There is no doubt, however, that a great many of the complexes and other difficulties, irregularities of functioning and mild mental disorders are connected with activities of the so-called foreconscious level.

Another important consideration must not be

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overlooked that distinguishes foreconscious activities from the truly unconscious kind.

The foreconscious mental processes are presentable, that is, available for ready revivification or illumination, by virtue of their being unopposed by the influences of society which works upon and through the upper, more conscious, levels of the mind. By more conscious here, is meant more presentable. The more presentable are those which find less opposition from the influences exerted through the upper levels, and thus come into consciousness more frequently and more clearly than those against which society has raised obstructions.

Thus there struggle up toward expression in the higher mental levels, vague, amorphous cravings for activity, for warmth and light, and for mere assertiveness and aggrandizement of the ego. These take definite form from the individual's perception of things in the external world. The infant having been contented with aimlessly exercising its muscles, the child now begins to realize the difference between himself and the external world, and, if left to himself, would first grasp and gather around him, everything from which came pleasant sensations, and would push away everything unpleasant; and second, would expend his energy on the things found pleasant until, by destroying them, he found them unpleas-

ant. By this extension of his physical activity, he expands his objective ego and thus satisfies his indefinite craving for aggrandizement.

But about this time he becomes aware of the similar tendency of the other personalities to enlarge themselves. This tumescent tendency, if left to itself, would result in the greater or stronger of two individuals annihilating the lesser or weaker. Then first enters the embryo concept of concerted action, in which even two children will work together and make a pile of pleasant things greater than the sum of the two separate piles. Then the social instinct comes into play, which is the basis of all later team work, organized effort and community work of every sort. Here the objects of the previously exceedingly indefinite craving become more and more definite desires. In other words, the desire becomes loosely attached to definite objects and experiences, always presupposing that they fulfil the requirements of the still existing powerful craving for activity, aggrandizement, warmth and light. It is not to be doubted that the search for the North Pole was ultimately based on a craving for the warmth and light of public appreciation, no matter how cold and dark the actual experiences may have been.

The more definite the objects to which desire is attached, the more numerous are the individ-

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uals who desire the same thing. This leads to the necessary conflict between two individuals desiring the same; and an ultimate compromise, a division of the thing into parts, either spatially or temporally. A cake or an apple or an estate can be divided, a chair can be used by two persons in turn. This works very well until the still more developed individual is not satisfied with communal possession, but only with possession containing the element of exclusiveness. Then the parts of the objective ego, be they chairs or estates, must be carefully kept for exclusive use. No one else may use them, even when the person, of whose external ego they form a part, is not using them, a feeling probably due to the feeling of unpleasantness experienced in finding another sitting in one's chair or occupying one's estate, and in getting him to vacate. The unpleasantness of this feeling is in turn largely determined by an unconscious feeling that the other fellow really has as much right to it morally as oneself.

That the number of individuals desiring the same thing is increased by the definiteness of desires arises from the innateness of imitation. Imitation in turn comes from the interrelation of sensory and motor processes in the body. For example, I reproduce in my own body, minute muscular contractions, when I see others moving,

as in walking, dancing, playing ball. These minute contractions are made in me reflexly, automatically, and are a transmuted visual sensation. That is, they are transmuted from a visual impression into a movement, or innervation of muscles, very minute, but which, if carried out in large, would constitute the same motions in me that are being made by the person at whom I am looking. This is true not only of movements but of positions of the body, when it is not moving. Seeing a person sitting makes me unconsciously, for a moment at least, imagine myself as sitting. This means that it causes a nerve impulse tending to produce the sitting posture, to be sent to the muscles which would put me or hold me in the sitting posture looked at. Seeing a person yawn produces in me the same imitative unconscious tendency. So does seeing a person laugh make me laugh, although I may not know what he is laughing about. Thus it is clear that unconscious imitation of the acts of others goes on in us all the time. In children it is quite noticeable.

Reflex, unconscious, minute imitation is an important psychical as well as physical fact. It is true, too, not only of the contractions of the larger so-called voluntary muscles, but also of those of the smaller involuntary muscles controlling the calibre of various vessels in the body

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and the working of various glands that produce both internal and external secretions.

But in the working of the smaller vessels and glands, a great part is played by ideas. It should not be forgotten that an idea has many forms in the mind. The same idea may have a visual form, an auditory form, a gustatory form, an olfactory form, a tactual form, a muscular form, or a form consisting of organic or any other kind of images. It may be difficult to accept the fact that a visual idea may be the same idea as an organic idea. It may be even doubted that such a thing as an organic idea exists. But we may suppose, for the sake of argument, that every visual idea has its organic correspondent, which is quite similar to the concept expressed above, in other words, that every visual idea has its motor form. We might just as well say that every visual idea had its auditory form, and every olfactory idea had its auditory form and so on, throughout the entire list of twenty odd qualities of sensation.

How does the visual idea get its motor form? How does it get its organic form? What does it mean when we say that a visual idea has a motor form? It cannot mean anything else than that the visual idea, or visual impression, is inherently and by heredity associated with the motion. That this is the case can hardly be doubted. Imita-

tion of action is necessary for collective action in herds, flights, swarms, shoals, droves and other social units, that act as a unit without thinking individually. The fish in a shoal all swimming rapidly in one direction, and turning in unison, if obstructed or frightened, are manifestly guided by visual impressions. The visual impression instantly issues in appropriate action. The action is the motor form of the visual impression or visual idea.

The infant in the cradle will smile if it sees a smile, and wave its arms in imitation of arms or other moving things. Before three years of age the elaborate mechanism of speech, largely imitative, is the motor form of an auditory impression. It is one of the many miracles of human activity. That a child should instinctively use a set of muscles in lips, throat and lungs (muscles which it can neither see nor separately feel), successfully to reproduce a sound which it has heard, is no more surprising, when "curiously considered" than that any impression of any sense quality should have any form whatever in any other sense quality.

Now in the emotions we have an instinctive motor reaction, a behaviour pattern, which is determined partly by external and partly by internal impressions. An emotion is the motor or organic form of a visual, an auditory or any

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other sense quality of idea. This is very clear in the case of the emotions we call love. The organic or motor form of the visual idea, and particularly of the tactual, cutaneous, olfactory and thermal ideas, is a reflex of the sense idea of vision, just as is the baby's imitative act in smiling the motor form of the visual idea. And it is the same idea, only in another form.

The point chiefly to be emphasized in all this is that the motor reaction or organic reaction is more frequently than not an entirely unconscious matter. Only when the reactions have been accumulated in summation to a degree which shakes the whole body do we speak of them as conscious emotions. Only at a certain intensity do they burst into consciousness and draw our attention to them alone. And then they completely upset us, and we do not know how to handle them. We are as if unconscious ourselves of all else save the emotion, and the so-called "expression" of it is generally so far outside of our conscious control that we "are not ourselves." Contemporary psychologists define the emotions as reflexes that "interrupt" the ordinary stream of consciousness, and reserve the term emotion for the interruption, maintaining that there is no such thing as an unconscious emotion.

But the emotions of love are the organic and

motor reactions to the total situation, a situation chiefly constituted by the presence (remembered or imagined) of a member of the other sex. Furthermore, like most of our mental life, they are more unconscious than conscious. That is, they carry on their activities in consciousness less frequently than in various depths of the unconscious.

It will appear, too, as we proceed, that not only is love not one emotion but many emotions, but also it is, in all of its passionate forms, more active in the unconscious than it is in consciousness. Thus we shall have to speak of conscious passion, but quite as much of unconscious passion, the latter being quite as real and quite as active as the former, and infinitely more extensive, involving as it does practically every atom of tissue in the human body.

“Love” may be an auditory word, a visual word, a motor word; it may be an auditory idea, a visual idea, a motor idea. In the human mind-body incorporation love is however only sometimes a word but more frequently it takes other forms, now an organic impression, now a muscular activity. So protean is it that it may and does take any form of impression or expression (sensation or action) of which the human psychophysical incorporation is capable. In a happy child it takes the form of ebullition of