William Halse Rivers Rivers.
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THE RELATIONS OF COMPLEX AND SENTIMENT. I.¹

BY THE LATE W. H. R. RIVERS.

IN considering the relation to one another of the concepts denoted by 'complex' and 'sentiment,' it is necessary to consider briefly the history of the two terms which in spite of its recency is already far from simple.

The term 'complex' was first employed by Jung² but without any attempt to define it exactly. He distinguished between normal and dissociated complexes, but both he and others came to use the term with a pathological implication. It came to denote a system which has become, or tends to become, separated from the rest of the mental structure or personality and by its domination of the mind has destroyed, or tends to destroy, the unity which is essential to mental health.

Bernard Hart³ extended the meaning of the term by using it for any "emotionally toned system of ideas" which determines conscious behaviour, taking the hobby and political bias as his special examples.

Tansley⁴ has extended the meaning of the term still further and applies it to a system of associated mental elements the stimulation of any one of which tends to call the rest into consciousness through the medium of their common affect. The connotation thus given to the term is so wide as to destroy any value which the term, as used by Jung and Hart, possesses. Except in those cases in which mental states are wholly free from affective accompaniment, every act of perception, association, memory or other mental process would depend on the activity of a complex in the sense in which Tansley uses the term. Hart, and still more Tansley, by giving 'complex' so wide a connotation have gone far to deprive the term of any value as a serviceable instrument of thought.

Moreover, in the broad sense in which Hart uses the term it becomes almost, if not quite, identical with the 'sentiment' of recent British psychology. A sentiment may best be defined as an organized system of emotional tendencies grouped about an object, the distinction from affect

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² *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, New York, 1909, 36 *et. seq.*

³ *The Psychology of Insanity*, Cambridge, 1912, 61.

⁴ *The New Psychology*, London, 1920, 49.

lying in the emphasis laid on tendency in place of activity, and the features of mental life cited by Hart as examples of the complex answer to this definition of the sentiment. The place of the hobby in the mental life of a person depends on the existence in the mind of the person of a group of emotional tendencies centering round the scientific, literary or other special kind of activity which forms the essential feature of the hobby. Again, political bias depends on the presence of an organized system of emotional tendencies centering round the political party to which a person belongs, or round some group of political ideas which have not yet become the watchword of a party. If we are to use the term 'complex' in Hart's sense it is unnecessary, for psychology already possesses a term admirably adapted to the concept which needs denotation.

In his original use of the term it seems clear that Jung had especially in his mind the process of dissociation, but in my opinion we shall be making the term of more value if we make suppression¹ the outstanding element in its meaning, this process being absent or taking only a secondary place in the production of the sentiment.

In considering the part which the process of suppression is to take in the formation of our concept of the complex, it will be well briefly to summarise the place it occupies in mental development and its relation to the alternative process of fusion². According to the point of view from which I am approaching the subject, the great problem which had to be solved in the process of mental development was how mental processes and activities should be treated when, being adapted to one kind of existence or one phase of evolution, they had to be modified to meet circumstances of a different kind. Two main alternatives were open. The earlier activity with its products could be suppressed and treated so as to make them inaccessible to consciousness when incompatible with later developments; or they could be utilised by fusing them, or parts of them, with the products of later development. In the first case the suppressed activity will maintain its individuality in so far as it continues to exist; in the second case, it loses its individuality and becomes merged in the product of the process of fusion so that its nature can only be revealed by a special process of analysis. The processes of suppression and fusion represent two widely different, and to a large extent anti-

¹ I use this term with the significance attached to it in my book *Instinct and the Unconscious*, Cambridge, 2nd edit. 1921, 17. It corresponds in some measure with the 'repression' of the psycho-analytic school, but as used by that school this term has come to have so confused a meaning and covers processes so different from one another that it has little value as a scientific term.

² See *Instinct and the Unconscious*, 32.

thetical, modes of treating experience, and I suggest that we can give to the terms 'complex' and 'sentiment' their greatest value in psychology and psycho-pathology if we make suppression the keynote of the complex while fusion forms the essence of the process upon which depends the formation of a sentiment. According to this usage the concept of 'complex' is closely linked with that of the unconscious. The term is appropriate to those cases in which experience shut off from direct access to consciousness is nevertheless capable of influencing conduct or of producing changes in consciousness, the underlying conditions of which cannot be reached by the ordinary process of introspection. Characteristic examples of a complex would be found in the suppressed experience upon the activity of which depends a phobia or the compulsive act or thought of a compulsion-neurosis. The complex is usually of a relatively simple kind and may consist only of some body of experience which has been suppressed, though more usually the suppressed experience takes with it into the unconscious experience of other kinds with which it has been associated.

Such a feature of mental life as political bias, on the other hand, is the product of large and varied experience from childhood, youth and adult life, much of which is readily accessible to consciousness, though much may lie on its threshold, while other elements may involve experience which has been suppressed. Into the process of fusion which forms the essential mechanism of production of the sentiment there enter experiences of many kinds, some of which may be closely linked with the content of the unconscious and have only escaped from becoming part of its content because they have been utilised in the process of fusion in place of being suppressed. The bias is a highly complex product of a process of fusion between trends of thought and conduct which may sometimes be influenced by unconscious experience, just as any other mental process may be so influenced. Prominent among the elements of the bias, however, it is often possible to distinguish the influence of relatives, friends and teachers which has never been the subject either of suppression or repression.

It is an interesting example of Jung's failure to realise the nature of the mental product he was denoting that he should have chosen the term 'complex.' If he had called it 'simplex' he would have been far nearer the truth, but it is unfortunate that the criterion of simplicity or complexity should have been made the basis of nomenclature. The two outstanding features of the complex are its relation to suppression and its affective importance and if, as seems likely, the widespread misuse of

the term makes it necessary to invent another, it is to be hoped that this new term will bear a relation to these two characters.

Another feature which serves to distinguish complex from sentiment is the greatly different degree in which they are capable of modification. The complex, once having come into being through the process of suppression, is highly constant. It may persist for years, even for life, unchanged and unchanging. It may disappear when brought into direct relation with the consciousness from which it has been separated, and in this respect shares with other features of the unconscious and its mechanisms the 'all-or-none' character which I have ascribed to them. It either exists or disappears. It is not capable of the variations of which the experience of the conscious life is continually the subject. Months or years may pass without the complex revealing its presence, and then it may manifest its influence by some profound and far-reaching disturbance of the mental life.

The sentiment, on the other hand, is not only capable of modification, but this capacity is frequently utilised in experience. The sentiment is a fluid product which in an active life is always changing through the influence of new experience. Thus, the pronounced conservative bias of the schoolboy brought up in the manor house or the country parsonage may change insensibly into a sentiment of a very different kind through the influence of education, the new surroundings of the adult, and intercourse with persons from many different callings and ranks of life to which the boy had been a stranger. To use the language adopted in my book, *Instinct and the Unconscious*, the complex is a characteristic example of a protopathic product of the mental life, while the sentiment, through its capacity for graduated activity and modification, can be assigned with confidence to the epicritic category.

A third distinction between the complex and the sentiment, a distinction perhaps more important than either of the others, is that the sentiment is a necessary and constant feature of the normal mental life. Most of our sentiments come into action daily and influence the behaviour of every moment of the life of every day. The complex, on the other hand, may lie dormant for long periods of time and is in no way necessary to the harmony and fitness of the mental life. Indeed, it is a question whether its activity does not always involve a lack of harmony or a failure of adaptation to the circumstances with which the organism is called upon to deal.

This raises the problem to what extent the complex can be regarded as having always a pathological implication. There seems to be little

doubt that, as originally used by Jung, it had to a large extent this connotation, and if morbidity be made a fourth character of the complex and means of distinguishing it from the sentiment, the usefulness of the term would be enhanced.

It is convenient that morbid psychology should have, at any rate in some cases, its own terms, just as it undoubtedly has its own concepts. In psychology, quite as much as in physiology, the morbid shades off insensibly into the normal, and cases constantly present themselves where it is a task of the utmost difficulty to state the exact position of a mental product between the two ends of the series of which the healthy and the morbid form the limits. Nothing but confusion, however, can result from the inclusion under one heading of definitely pathological states and states so normal and so necessary as the sentiments. I believe that we shall be making the two terms 'complex' and 'sentiment' of most service to psychology if among their other distinctions we include that between the healthy and the morbid, always recognising the existence of transitions, and making it our task to evaluate the two aspects in cases intermediate between the definitely healthy and the definitely morbid.

Moreover, just as cases occur in which a mental state or process occupies an intermediate position in respect of healthiness and morbidity, so will there be many states which cannot at once be classed with complex or sentiment since they are intermediate between the two. Thus, while the hobby in general may be regarded as a perfectly healthy and normal feature of the mental life, it may sometimes acquire a character which can hardly be regarded as other than morbid. When a collector becomes so absorbed in his hobby that he steals an object needed to make his collection more complete, we have a case in which the hobby has acquired a morbid character. Moreover, such a case gives us a further clue to the nature of the distinction between complex and sentiment, for there is little doubt that this approach of the sentiment to the complex has arisen through the activity of an instinct, the instinct of acquisition, which is normally modified owing to its incompatibility in its crude form with social sentiments and traditions¹.

Again, when political bias has reached such an acme of development that the great majority of an electorate vote for a notorious swindler simply because he has been chosen to be the representative of a party, we are dealing with an outgrowth of a sentiment which is only not regarded as morbid because we are accustomed to think of disease as a feature of the individual and not of the social life. There is little doubt

¹ *Psyche*, 1921, vol. II, 100; see also *Instinct and the Unconscious*, 2nd ed. 1922, 248.

that in such development and in the acquirement of such a morbid character, political bias owes much to the inclusion in its formation of activities closely allied to, if not actually themselves, complexes. It is noteworthy that in such cases as I have cited, the hobby or the political bias have other characters in which they approach the complex. It is probable that the theft of a bookplate or a woodcut by a collector is rarely a premeditated act, the nature of which is clearly discriminated, but has the impulsive character normally associated with the activity of a complex, while those who vote for a notorious scoundrel are not those who have developed their political sentiment, but are people whose political behaviour resembles so many other examples of collective behaviour in having the explosive and 'all-or-none' character of instinct.

It is noteworthy that the sentiments chosen by Bernard Hart to illustrate his concept of the complex should be two which so often lead to behaviour resembling in many respects that dependent on the activity of the complex in the stricter sense which I have given to it in this opening paper of our Symposium. But I believe that even in that extreme form in which they can be regarded as morbid, the hobby and the political bias differ from the complex in that they are not simple products of the process of suppression, but far more complex products into the complicated tissue of which there have been woven elements in which the process of suppression has taken part. While the hobby or the political bias may sometimes resemble the complex in leading to morbid behaviour, or at least to behaviour having an explosive and ungraduated character, there still remains the fundamental distinction between the complex and the sentiment that one is wholly the product of suppression, while the other is the highly complicated product of a process of fusion in which suppression only plays a part in that it enters into the make-up of some of the elements upon which the process of fusion has acted. Both the hobby and the political bias belong to the category of sentiment because of their highly complex character, because of the high degree in which they possess the character of complexity which Jung has so unfortunately and inappropriately chosen as a means of denoting suppressed and dissociated experience.