

INTUITION VI. THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF INTUITION

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In previous publications by this author, various aspects of clinical intuition were discussed: intuition of social factors such as occupation,¹ diagnostic intuition,² the problem of latent communications,³ intuitions concerning instinctual strivings,⁴ and intuitions concerning the patient's ego state.⁵ The ultimate question of how intuition can be cultivated, controlled, and activated at will still remains unanswered, and for some decades or even centuries may stay in the province of metaphysical speculation. Meanwhile, clinical observation does provide some hints, at least as to the conditions under which this faculty is most likely to function effectively. Some of the external conditions were outlined in the first paper of this series.¹ The present communication will deal with the psychodynamics of intuition, that is, with the internal conditions which promote or interfere with the workings of the intuitive process.

The term "intuitive individual" as used here is not intended to refer to the "intuitive type" of Jungian psychology, but to the clinician who deliberately uses his intuitive faculties when desirable in his diagnostic and therapeutic work. Descriptively, such a clinician is curious, mentally alert, interested, and receptive of latent and manifest communications from his patients. Genetically, these attitudes are well-sublimated derivatives of scopophilia, watchfulness, and oral receptivity. Secondary gains may be influential in activating this state of mind in laymen: attention in the socially insecure, financial profit in confidence men, and power-hunger in leaders of men and seducers of women. These gains are related to genital exhibitionism, anal trickery, and oral sadism, respectively. Thus intuitions may be used as instruments for satisfaction at any level of psychosexual development. This refers only to intuitions proper, that is, intuitions about people, and not to hunches about events. Perhaps the commonest example is the ability of homosexuals to spot one another quickly. In the same sphere is the perceptivity of the clinician who intuitively knows that an American adult of either sex who uses the word "madcap" is probably a homosexual.

The clinician who is afraid of his own scopophilia, his need to be alert, or his own oral receptivity, is also likely to repress or

suppress his own intuitive faculties, and even to criticize or scoff at others who are more at ease with them. Conversely, if the individual abuses his intuition for the sake of the secondary gains, if he is too anxious for attention, profit, or power, it may fail him. If he is too eager to be exhibitionistic, tricky, or sadistic, he will over-exploit himself and in effect sterilize the goose that lays the golden egg. Between these two extremes, the intuitive individual, to be consistently successful, must be a well-balanced person. Curiously enough, however, a feeling of omnipotence or omniscience does not seem to interfere with the exercise of intuition, although it may cause interpersonal difficulties and is better curbed.

There is little doubt that intuition is an archaic faculty. It is well-known that "logical" thinking interferes with its efficiency and distorts its messages. Ferenczi once remarked that education is not only the acquisition of new faculties but is also the forgetting of others, which, if not forgotten, would be called supernormal. Intuition does not seem to be "supernormal," but it is certainly something which modern education does not tend to encourage. Engineers and psychologists are among the most highly educated individuals in modern society and at the same time have, generally speaking, the greatest resistance against intuitive cognition. The psychologist who wishes to engage in clinical work is forced to resurrect this lost faculty if he is to be successful, and for that very reason he is often derogated by his more academic colleagues. It is not so well-known that "ethical" thinking also interferes with intuition, a point which will be illustrated shortly.

Although intuition has the quality of an archaic process, revealing its insights most readily when neopsychie faculties are at rest, as in the hypnogogic state, it cannot be called a manifestation of the id, since, according to Freud, the id is merely "a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement," with no organization⁶ and no direct relations with the external world.⁷ In Freudian structural terminology, it is most conveniently classed as a faculty of the archaic ego. It is more readily understood, however, in a slightly different structural framework in which psychic influences are considered, not in the classical conceptual triad of id, ego, and super-ego, but from a functional point of view as archaicpsychic, neopsychie, or extero-psychic in origin. These three types of influences manifest themselves phenomenologically as archaicpsy-

chie, neopsychie, or extero-psychie ego states, which may be colloquially spoken of as child, adult, and parent ego states, respectively. (This approach was broached in the fifth article of the present series⁵ and has been more fully elaborated elsewhere.⁶)

In this terminology, it can be said that intuition is an archaic-psychie phenomenon. Hence its function is repressed when the neopsychie adult ego state predominates, and is impaired when the extero-psychie parent ego state encroaches on the freedom of the archaic-psychie. Operationally, this means that both logical thinking and "ethical" thinking impair the efficiency of intuition. The latter point will now be illustrated by an example.

The writer once told some friends that he had gone to a café and played chess with a man who was sitting there before a chess-board drinking coffee, that the man was a waiter, and that, as a professional intellectual, the writer was somewhat chagrined at being beaten at chess by a waiter.

"You mean that he was a waiter in the café?" asked the friends.

"No, no. He was a customer, and he was just sitting there enjoying his coffee."

"How did you know he was a waiter? Was he dressed like a waiter?"

"No, he was dressed like anybody else, but you could tell he was a waiter."

"How could you tell?"

"Because you can tell when a man is a waiter just as you can tell when a man is a plainclothes policeman, after you've met one. A waiter looks like a waiter, and a plainclothesman looks like a plainclothesman. Any competent criminal can spot a plainclothes policeman, no matter what kind of clothes he's wearing. And vice versa, for that matter."

"It just sounds snobbish to me," said one of the friends.

"Me too," said another, "I couldn't tell a waiter on sight. Waiters are just people, like you and me. They're not some special kind of animal."

"They're not a special kind of animal," replied the writer, "but they are a special kind of man."

It should be added, if it is not already clear, that the friends were Democrats, which is the essential point of this story. A real Democrat is supposed to regard all people as equal members of the human race, and it is a kind of wickedness to distinguish them

by trade. This is an example of "ethical" thinking, imposed from without by parents or people who are *in loco parentis*, and reinforced continually by other people who are *in loco parentis* as far as education is concerned. Hence the attitude that it is snobbish, and thus in Democratic dialect unethical, to distinguish people socially by trade, is of extero-psyche origin, and constitutes an intrusion of the parent ego state on the freedom of the archaopsyche. The friends in question were in truth quite unperceptive regarding occupational identity, and their disapproval of such perceptions interfered with their intuition in this respect. This is analogous to a certain kind of countertransference problem at the clinical level, where a therapist's prejudice (in favor of creative personalities, or against wife-beaters, for example) keeps him from perceiving his patient clearly. Both situations demonstrate that parental influences can impair the archaopsychic intuitive capacity as effectively as neopsychic "logical" thinking can.

Structurally, then, intuition is an archaopsychic faculty. Dynamically, its efficiency can be impaired by neopsychic or extero-psyche activity. Hence it works best when an archaopsychic ego state predominates, and when neopsychic and extero-psyche ego states are deattached and decommissioned. This conclusion is confirmed by the observations noted in the first paper of this series.¹ Similarly, fears of one's own scopophilia, one's need to be alert, or oral receptivity, which seem to hinder the intuitive process, are based on extero-psyche influences, so that again it is those influences which cause difficulty by interfering with archaopsychic freedom. There are some possible indications that fundamentally, clinical intuition is a well-sublimated derivative of infantile cannibalistic tendencies, so that resistance to intuition may represent a failure of sublimation in this area.

In order to understand certain specific problems concerning intuition, it is necessary to consider the relationships between the three types of ego states, as they have been demonstrated in more detail elsewhere.² In general, the younger the individual, the freer his archaopsyche is from extero-psyche and neopsychic influences. Hence young children, in the manner hinted at by Ferenczi, can assess the potentialities of other people without interference from artifacts introduced by "education," which includes such factors as parental influences (extero-psyche) and logical thinking (neopsychic).

The truth of the matter is that people in all societies are taught not to look at each other except in the manner permitted by social sanctions. The infant, on the other hand, does not hesitate to stare at whichever part of the other person's body interests him the most. In addition, his libido is free to make whatever use he cares to of the data he gathers in this manner. Schizophrenics enjoy similar freedoms. Hence children and schizophrenics can gather more data and process this information in a more personal way than normal adults are permitted to do. In effect this means that their intuitive powers, which are libidinally motivated, are less trammled and more available to them, resulting in the oft-remarked "intuitiveness" of these two classes of people.

As a corollary, the more "ethical" a person is, the more manerly and philanthropic in deed and thought, the less his powers of observation and intuition are free to function without unconscious moral intervention. The effect is similar if his observations and appraisals are narrowed to meet the demands of logical categories. If his logic or ethics are in the nature of reaction formations, his powers of observation will be still further stultified, and in addition, productions from the archaicpsyche will be subject to more active moral or intellectual distortion. Both the constriction and the distortion will contribute to erroneous judgments. Even if he starts off with a correct, if stilted, assessment, it will be warped for defensive reasons into something different. Confusion in the archaicpsyche itself may have a similar effect. A man who appears "bad" to a child of a certain age can sometimes make himself appear "good" by a direct appeal to the child's oral needs, such as an offer of candy which fogs, temporarily at least, the first intuitive impression. This kind of approach is well-known to confidence men and other exploiters. After the fogging clears, the original impression may emerge clearly again.

For the intuitive clinician, the whole mechanism must be sublimated, that is, delibidinized and put in the service of his neopsyche and his extero-psyche's social aims. To make his intuitive capacities available in his work, he must have a clear separation between the three types of ego states. His archaicpsyche must be able to function independently during a longer or shorter period of observation; he must be free to observe and to integrate his data as an infant would, without interference from morals or

logic. The impressions thus gained must be delivered to the neopsyche so that they can be translated into clinical language, and exploited under the influence of the extero-psyche for the benefit of the patient. The effect is that of a kind of psychological robbery to which the libidinous archaopsyche becomes a willing victim, perhaps in return for other gains such as a feeling of omniscience. If this feeling becomes too greatly desired, further accretions may be sought by the delivery of adulterated or *ersatz* goods—a further source of inaccurate intuitions. Hence, as soon as the clinician becomes overconfident about his intuition, it is time for a rest. On the other hand, if the sublimation is incomplete, the archaopsyche may try to exploit its intuitions for its own pleasure; in that case, greed, over-eagerness, or anxiety may lead to incomplete or distorted assessments.

In this system, the intellect enters as follows: What are “conclusions” for the archaopsyche become “data to be processed” for the neopsyche. The raw, un verbalized, but operative, intuitions regarding another person’s instinctual tendencies are independent of the intellect, as demonstrated by the intuitive reactions of very young children; but the verbalization and sorting into logical frameworks of these raw intuitions is a neopsyche function, the efficiency of which will depend to some extent on the intellectual capacity of the individual.

SUMMARY

The psychodynamics of intuition are considered from the viewpoints of psychoanalysis and “structural analysis.” An example is offered to illustrate the fact that “ethical” as well as logical thinking can interfere with the intuitive process. Defenses against scopophilia, the need to be alert, and oral receptivity seem to give rise to a resistance against the whole topic. Conversely, intuitive faculties are probably most readily available to individuals who have successfully sublimated scopophilic, paranoid, and oral receptive tendencies. Sources of error, and the role of the intellect in clinical intuition, are discussed.

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