Book Reviews

Freud's Science

The Logic of Explanation in Psychoanalysis. MICHAEL SHERWOOD. Academic Press, New York, 1969. x + 278 pp. $9.50.

One hears on all sides, even among psychoanalysts, of the decline in influence and prestige of psychoanalysis. This decline can be a salutary thing, even for psychoanalysis, to the extent that it means that those who are looking for magical solutions are seeking elsewhere: behavior therapy, sensitivity training, nude marathons, Zen, drugs, or large molecules. These too shall pass. Among sober academic types the clamor against psychoanalysis has always been that it does not qualify for membership in the family of sciences. Sherwood's book is a constructive addition to that discussion. That the book came to be written at this time is also an answer. Psychoanalysis still attracts prolonged study by outstanding persons outside the ranks of its medical practitioners. (Sherwood is a psychiatrist trained in philosophy of science.) No other therapeutic ideology or explanation of human behavior has enough intellectual content to attract comparable study.

The purpose of this book is to examine the reasoning underlying psychoanalytic case histories. As prototype Sherwood takes the case of Paul Lorenz, the "rat man," whose history Freud published in 1909. The author does not undertake to defend particular propositions in the case; his subject is the format of the reasoning. Is it satisfactory in principle as a kind of explanation? Does it differ in principle from explanation elsewhere in science?

Sherwood begins by asking, what is explanation anyhow? We must begin with a frame of reference that specifies what interests us and what we take for granted by virtue of common sense and other knowledge. Then there must be some puzzle or incongruity, something we cannot make fit. A satisfactory explanation must solve the puzzle in the proper frame of reference at the proper level of complexity. That is precisely what the psychoanalytic narrative attempts to do.

Along the way Sherwood argues against many misconceptions of science and of explanation that are common in psychology and psychiatry. Explanation is not all of science. Straightforward filling of gaps in knowledge may not partake of puzzle solution; it remains part of science, though a small one. Furthermore, explanation does not reduce to prediction; in one usage explanation is contrasted with prediction. One might predict the weather by the behavior of some animals, but no one would be satisfied to say that the behavior of the animals explained the weather. Moreover, neurological explanations will not suffice, though no one doubts that there is a chain of neurological occurrences to go along with every bit of behavior. The neurological substratum is part of the situational given, not because it is known in detail but because we presume it can be known. Ordinarily in psychoanalytic cases the neurological details are not part of the incongruity for which explanation is needed.

The book derives its form from its central thesis: the essence of psychoanalytic reasoning is best seen in a case history, the psychoanalytic narrative. The unit of study is not a symptom, wish, dream, choice, or mistake but the life history of a person. The psychoanalyst tries to detect common themes running through the patient's life and manifest in many alternative ways. The explanatory power of his reconstruction is far clearer in relation to a life history than in relation to isolated dreams, symptoms, or acts. Indeed, Freud once remarked that complete analysis of a single dream would entail an entire case history. (Sherwood chooses the case of Paul Lorenz as the most complete and satisfactory of Freud's published cases.) To suppose that the analyst explains this symptom, that dream, then another act and that the case history is a sum of such explanations is to miss the force of the psychoanalytic narrative. The psychoanalyst traces themes through many aspects of a person's life, even though those themes do not exhaustively account for any single manifestation.

Although the book is a single coherent argument, several sections could stand on their own as essays. There are lengthy discussions of kinds of explanations and kinds of causation, drawing illustrations from and having application to various fields of science and even the law. Sherwood shows that Freud had a remarkably sophisticated analysis of causation in his early writings on hysteria and other neuroses, possibly being influenced by Mill. In the case of Lorenz, Freud used explanation of symptoms, wishes, and behaviors in terms of their origin, their genesis, their current function, and in terms of prediction, in addition to the well-known ("Freudian"!) explanations in terms of symbolic significance.

Another topic Sherwood discusses at length is whether there can be a science of human behavior at all, and granted that there can be, whether it constitutes a separate domain to which the reasoning and standards of the physical sciences are not appropriately applied. The thesis of the separate domain may be justified in terms of a distinction between movements and actions or between causes and reasons, with reasons distinguished from other causal factors by the element of human awareness. But it was just Freud's mission to show that these are not two different sorts of things. Unconscious motives, which must be causes since they are specifically excluded from awareness, affect behavior in a manner closely similar to that of the corresponding conscious motives or reasons. That this is the main thrust of psychoanalysis has been argued by philosophers before, for example, by Flew. In sum, Sherwood argues for the possibility of a science of human behavior and separate domain; further, causes and reasons are not distinguished in the event but in the explanatory context.

Sherwood's critique of the hypothetico-deductive model as applied to the psychoanalytic narrative could also stand as a separate essay, though a tedious one, like all discussions of the hypothetico-deductive method. The relation between theoretical generalizations and explanations in particular cases is a loose one, he shows. Many

statements in Freud's writings, however, are empirical generalizations for which the evidence can be clearly defined; but other generalizations are hard to evaluate. Sherwood gives as example of the latter the statement that the longer an obsession lasts, the more the obsessional acts approximate to "infantile sexual acts of a masturbatory character." The problem is, when is an act other than masturbation to be considered of "masturbatory character"? This blurring of the line between observation and interpretation is a pervasive flaw in psychoanalytic writing today. The import of Sherwood's discussion would appear to be that this defect is unnecessary.

A book sufficiently similar in its topic to invite comparison is Leon Levy's *Psychological Interpretation* (1963). Levy takes his own variant of the hypothetico-deductive method as the model for all scientific reasoning. Levy refers to psychoanalytic theory vaguely and at times grossly inaccurately; Sherwood refers to Freud's writings with meticulous exactness. Anyone who reads both books will agree that Sherwood has written a more scholarly and more closely reasoned book. On one point, however —the difficulty of applying the criterion of consistency to a psychoanalytic explanation—Levy has a stronger case.

In evaluating the adequacy of explanations, Sherwood suggests as criteria self-consistency, coherence, and comprehensiveness. He recognizes and discusses the difficulties in applying the criterion of self-consistency. The existence of opposite motives or trends in a person is not evidence for inconsistency, since this is a patent feature of human nature; here he might have stressed more strongly that psychoanalysis postulates inner conflict as the core of every neurosis. The example he gives as evidence of inconsistency, something along the line of the existence of both a positive and a negative Oedipus complex in a single case, is the sort of thing that a psychoanalyst would say is the general rule rather than an exception. There are few diseases, neurotic or otherwise, that protect one against other diseases. Sherwood has not helped us to apply the criterion of consistency to psychoanalytic explanations; indeed, there may be no help. Perhaps the other criteria, coherence and comprehensiveness, suffice.

If psychoanalysis bypasses the distinction between causes and reasons, ego psychology does not, and therein lies the riddle of a psychoanalytic ego psychology. Again Sherwood offers no help. One can see how he missed the difficulty, since he took as point of departure psychoanalysis as of 1909, when the problem still lay more than a decade ahead for Freud. Paul Ricoeur's *De l'Interpretation: Essai sur Freud* (1965), a book hardly known among American psychoanalysts, contributes profoundly to this topic. Ricoeur develops his argument beginning from the word "decoding," a term that Sherwood tosses aside in one sentence as a mere synonym for interpretation. Ricoeur concludes that to understand the person one needs both an archeology and a teleology, that is, in Sherwood's terms, one must understand both causes and reasons, and that this dialectic can be found in Freud's later writings.

In the United States psychoanalysis has, as Freud feared, become a medical specialty, bloodless surgery, rather than a psychological science. It has sequestered itself in its own institutes apart from other academic disciplines and other therapeutic ideologies. The ecumenical spirit does not prevail there. If contemporary analysts admired Mill as much as Freud did, they would understand that the quickest way to kill an idea is to isolate it from all challenge and all competition. The competence, vitality, and interest of such books as those of Sherwood and Ricoeur point to a potential rejuvenation of psychoanalysis as theory if some way can be found to open the door to philosophers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and others on the basis of competence rather than of membership in the guild and certification of orthodoxy.

> Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
> From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

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An Unparalleled Success

Think. A Biography of the Watsons and IBM. WILLIAM RODGERS. Stein and Day, New York, 1969. 320 pp. + plates. $7.95.

Rodgers has written an unauthorized and officially disapproved account of the Watsons and IBM, and it bears the marks of its independence: reasonably malicious and poorly informed. On the whole one prefers this tolerably conscientious version to the usual authorized biography, which presents a nauseatingly bland description of a shiny, lifeless knight suitable for immediate presentation at Madame Tussaud's waxworks. Whatever the merits of either type of biography as light reading, and I hold them to be negligible, they both succeed in avoiding the central question of business success.

Thomas J. Watson, the First, was a superb salesman who served a demanding apprenticeship at National Cash Register under another remarkable entrepreneur, John H. Patterson. Discharged by this irascible man shortly after both were sentenced to jail (a sentence later dismissed) for antitrust law violations, Watson joined the Computer-Tabulating-Recording Company in 1914. One of its products was the Hollerith tabulating machine. Three years later the company's name was changed to International Business Machines. Sales were about $4 million Watson's first year, a figure now equaled five times each day of the year.

The utterly remarkable thing about Watson's next 40 years and IBM's next 55 years was that a position of dominance was achieved and maintained in an area of unceasing, and at times wildly revolutionary, changes in technology and product. Surely no comparable achievement can be found in industrial history. Henry Ford's economic triumph was immensely larger in the first 20 years of his company's life, but thereafter his enterprise faltered to a dismal halt—in an industry in which basic technology was and continues to be remarkably smooth in its evolution, and hence much easier to cope with. The success of IBM, to repeat, is without parallel.

How did Watson, and later his sons, maintain the IBM leadership? Decisions of critical importance had to be made frequently, with very incomplete information on costs, performance, and customer acceptance of new products. A number of powerful firms, such as Honeywell, National Cash Register, General Electric, and RCA, entered the computer industry. Sperry Rand was for a time the technological leader. Confronted with an erratic flow of opportunities, opportunities to make ruinous error as well as ever-rising profits, how did the Watsons mostly guess right? Rodgers does not help us to understand this unprecedented performance. We are told of the accidental meeting of Watson with Benjamin D.