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THE
PSYCHOANALYSIS
OF CHILDREN

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

THE
PSYCHOANALYSIS
OF CHILDREN

MELANIE KLEIN

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY
ALIX STRACHEY

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TO THE MEMORY OF
KARL ABRAHAM
IN GRATITUDE AND
ADMIRATION

'SOMETIMES we may feel dismayed in face of the mass of phenomena which meets us in the wide field of human mentality, from the play of children and other typical products of the early activity of phantasy, through the first development of the child's interests and talents, up to the most highly valued achievements of mature human beings and the most extreme individual differentiations. But then we must remember that Freud has given us in the practice and theory of Psycho-Analysis an instrument with which to investigate this wide subject and to open up the road to infantile sexuality, that inexhaustible source of life.'

ABRAHAM, *Selected Papers*, p. 406.

Preface to the First Edition

HIS book is based on the observations I have been able to make in the course of my psycho-analytic work with children. My original plan was to devote the first part of it to a description of the technique I have elaborated and the second to a statement of the theoretical conclusions to which my practical work has gradually brought me, and which now seem in their turn well fitted to assist the technique I employ. But in the course of writing this book—a task which has extended over several years—the second part has outgrown its limits. In addition to my experience of Child Analysis, the observations I have made in analysing adults have led me to apply my views concerning the earliest developmental stages of the child to the psychology of the adult as well, and I have come to certain conclusions which I shall bring forward in these pages as a contribution to the general psycho-analytic theory of the earliest stages of the development of the individual.

That contribution is in every respect based on the body of knowledge transmitted to us by Freud. It was by applying his findings that I gained access to the minds of small children and could analyse and cure them. In doing this, moreover, I was able to make those direct observations of early developmental processes which have led me to my present theoretic conclusions. Those conclusions contain a full confirmation of the knowledge Freud has gained from the analysis of adults, and are an endeavour to extend that knowledge in one or two directions.

If this endeavour should in any way be successful, and

if this book should really add a few more stones to the growing edifice of psycho-analytic knowledge, my first thanks would be due to Freud himself, who has not only raised that edifice and placed it on foundations that will allow of its further elaboration, but who has always directed our attention to those points where the new work should properly be added.

I should next like to mention the part which my two teachers, Dr. Sándor Ferenczi and Dr. Karl Abraham, have played in furthering my psycho-analytic work. Ferenczi was the first to make me acquainted with Psycho-Analysis. He also made me understand its real essence and meaning. His strong and direct feeling for the unconscious and for symbolism, and the remarkable *rapport* he had with the minds of children, have had a lasting influence on me in my understanding of the psychology of the small child. He also pointed out to me my aptitude for Child Analysis, in whose advancement he took a great personal interest, and encouraged me to devote myself to this field of psycho-analytic therapy, then still very little explored. He furthermore did all he could to help me along this path, and gave me much support in my first efforts. It is to him that I owe the beginnings of my work as an analyst.

In Dr. Karl Abraham I had the great good fortune to find a second teacher with the faculty of inspiring his pupils to put out their best energies in the service of Psycho-Analysis. In Abraham's opinion the progress of Psycho-Analysis depended upon each individual analyst—upon the value of his work, the quality of his character and the level of his scientific attainments. These high standards have been before my mind, when, in this book on Psycho-Analysis, I have tried to repay some part of the great debt I owe to that science. Abraham fully grasped the great practical and theoretic possibilities of Child Analysis. At

the First Conference of German Psycho-Analysts at Würzburg in 1924, in summing up a report I had read upon an obsessional neurosis in a child,¹ he declared in words that I shall never forget: 'The future of Psycho-Analysis lies in Play Analysis'. My study of the mind of the small child brought certain facts before me which seemed strange at first sight. But the confidence in my work which Abraham expressed encouraged me to go forward on my way. My theoretic conclusions are a natural development of his own discoveries, as I hope this book will show.

In the last few years my work has received the most whole-hearted support from Dr. Ernest Jones. At a time when Child Analysis was still in its first stages, he foresaw the part it would play in the future. It was at his invitation that I gave my first course of lectures in London in 1925 as a guest of the British Psycho-Analytical Society; and these lectures have given rise to the first part of my present book. (A second course of lectures, entitled 'Adult Psychology viewed in the light of Child Analysis', given in London in 1927, forms the basis of the second part.) The deep conviction with which Dr. Jones has made himself an advocate of Child Analysis has opened the way for this field of work in England. He himself has made important contributions to the problem of early anxiety-situations, the significance of the aggressive tendencies for the sense of guilt, and the earliest stages of the sexual development of woman. The results of his studies are in close touch with my own in all essential points.

I should like in this place to thank my other English fellow-workers for the sympathetic understanding and cordial support they have given to my work. My friend Miss M. N. Searl, whose views agree with mine and who works along the same lines as myself, has done lasting

¹ This report forms the basis of Chapter III. of this book.

service towards the advancement of Child Analysis in England, both from a practical and a theoretical point of view, and towards the training of child analysts. My thanks are also due to Mrs. James Strachey for her very able translation of the book, and to her and Mr. Strachey for the great assistance which their stimulating hints and suggestions have given me in its composition. My thanks are next due to Dr. Edward Glover for the warm and unfailing interest he has shown in my work, and for the way in which he has assisted me by his sympathetic criticism. He has been of special service in pointing out the respects in which my conclusions agree with the already existing and accepted theories of Psycho-Analysis. I also owe a deep debt of gratitude to my friend Mrs. Joan Riviere, who has given such active support to my work and has always been ready to help me in every way.

Last but not least, let me very heartily thank my daughter, Dr. Melitta Schmideberg, for the devoted and valuable help which she has given me in the preparation of this book.

MELANIE KLEIN

LONDON, *July* 1932.

Preface to the Third Edition

IN the years which have elapsed since this book first appeared, I have arrived at further conclusions—mainly relating to the first year of infancy—and these have led to an elaboration of certain essential hypotheses here presented. The purpose of this Preface is to give some idea of the nature of these modifications. The hypotheses I have in mind in this connection are as follows: In the first few months of life infants pass through states of persecutory anxiety which are bound up with the 'phase of maximal sadism'; the young infant also experiences feelings of guilt about his destructive impulses and phantasies which are directed against his primary object—his mother, first of all her breast. These feelings of guilt give rise to the tendency to make reparation to the injured object.

In endeavouring to fill in the picture of this period in greater detail, I found that certain shifts of emphasis and time relations were inevitable. Thus I have come to differentiate between two main phases in the first six to eight months of life, and I described them as the 'paranoid position' and the 'depressive position'. (The term 'position' was chosen because—though the phenomena involved occur in the first place during early stages of development—they are not confined to these stages but represent specific groupings of anxieties and defences which appear and re-appear during the first years of childhood.)

The paranoid position is the stage when destructive impulses and persecutory anxieties predominate and extends from birth until about three, four, or even five months of life. This necessitates an alteration in dating the phase of maximal sadism but does not involve a

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