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LECTURE.

PSYCHOLOGY.

BY DR. SLOAN CHESSEY.

Dr. Sloan Chessy gave a lecture on psychology on Tuesday, April 10th, which met with great appreciation. In commencing the lecture she stated that it was given under the British Social Hygiene Council. If one is to be of value as a nurse or a doctor, one must know something about oneself. The ego consists of a conscious self and a vast sub-conscious self, the subliminal or "under the threshold" self, where primitive desires and memories, personal and racial, are stored. In sleep the sub-conscious self comes more to the surface. At the threshold of consciousness there is what is called a censor which prevents the primitive motives, hidden in that self, from overwhelming the conscious self. The ego or "I" consists of (1) primitive instincts and inherited tendencies. Each instinct may be said to be associated with a special emotion—pugnacity and anger for example. Curiosity has its emotional counterpart in wonder which, if properly applied, in curiosity about science for instance, will have an elevating effect upon the psychology of an individual. Repulsion has, as its corresponding emotion, disgust which, when controlled by the intelligence, is also not without its good aspects. Then the instinct of self display may be negative (producing sometimes muscular instability as in stammering for instance). There is positive self feeling when an individual feels pride or satisfaction in looking well or in accomplishing some artistic or intellectual task. There is the sex instinct which is not ugly except when used wrongly, as in promiscuity, and without feelings of respect between man and woman. The emotion corresponding to the instinct of flight is fear; fear may almost be said to govern the world to-day. Worry is simply chronic fear and it can upset the whole physiological working of the body. Here the influence of the nurse may be very great. She should try to keep high ideals before her patient, encourage a desire for health and get the patient persuaded to some degree of self-discipline. Jealousy is often present in patients who suffer from a chronic fear or worry and is rooted in egoism, sometimes in vanity, and yet certain egoistic sentiments, ambition for instance, are often valuable not only to the person concerned but to the people around him. The parental instinct has as its emotion tenderness or love which should be strong in nurses and doctors and makes medicine something of an avocation. The herd instinct is very important.

Associated with the ego we have (2) sentiments such as love of home and country which are of value in forming the self. Sentiments of hatred of other nationalities or religions are of no service to anyone. (3) *Will* is another factor in the making of personality. Will should be the servant of the self. There is an idea that people who become drug addicts are weak-willed; on the contrary they have allowed their very strong wills to master them.

(4) *Disposition* lies very much in the subconscious self and so it is the more difficult to alter. A mean person is

bereft of many pleasures which a generous person enjoys. Nobody need be continuously unhappy who has eyes to read and museums and art galleries to visit. The rich can only get the value of their wealth when it is wisely spent.

(5) Temperament is largely affected by the endocrine glands; indications as to the knowledge regarding them enters into the treatment of various diseases. (6) Character was described as what we make of ourselves, as the quality of personality.

People if they are to be happy must have a good adjustment or adaptation to life. Unless there is this good adjustment to things and to life generally they may be either cringing or communistic, rebellion arising in the self. Thus peculiarities in character develop. An instance was given of a patient who insisted on living in a wardrobe. Her husband had received a title—"You know how men threw about titles to one another not long ago!" This lady was an artist; she could not spell very well and did not care for society. Her husband had made money, she was called upon to go more into society. She lost, so to speak, the artist's life and retreated more and more into herself; then she took to living in her bedroom and at last in her wardrobe. She was not "mad," she was only completely egocentric. She had retrogressed from an adult attitude to life, to the prenatal.

It is interesting in child psychology to observe the various stages in the child's development. Let us consider the boy. First there is the mother phase, lasting to four years of age, when the child is devoted to the mother or whoever looks after him. Next, at about four or five, comes the phase when the boy turns to his father and if he does not come to this stage he will probably grow up a childish and fussy man. Then there is the school time and the "gang" stage when boys admire one another and have "no use" for girls. Next comes the mating phase and later the adult stage of responsibility with the capacity to form a home and family. At any one of the earlier stages people may get "fixed" which leads to neurosis. There is practically no such thing as overwork of the brain; most nervous breakdowns arise from ill-balanced emotions—conflicts and complexes in the emotional life. Everyone must exercise a certain amount of repression, to control the primitive instincts. Adjustment is necessary all round, in every aspect of life; without adaptation and adjustment there can be no happiness. Hereon arises the importance of being a worker; a person is never of the same value if he is not giving something to the world. Then, lastly, there is the great matter of adjustment to infinity through religion and philosophy. The finest psychology is to be found in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Love and Service.

Dr. Sloan Chessy invited questions at the close of her lecture and, on those, a most interesting discussion arose. Afterwards Miss Macdonald expressed the thanks of the audience to Dr. Chessy for a lecture which had proved so helpful and full of suggestions. The doctor had brought a number of copies of her book "Psychology for Nurses" which she said could be bought by those present and the

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