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Paul
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Psychoanalysis

By
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Deacidified

PSYCHOANALYSIS

BY CHARLES BRUEHL, PH.D.



WITHIN a reasonably short space of time, psychoanalysis has become a fashion and a cult with a numerous body of ardently devoted followers. It was proposed in the early nineties by Dr. Breuer and Dr. S. Freud, two prominent Vienna nerve specialists, as a new therapeutic method for the cure of hysteria and allied mental disorders, but it rapidly developed into a psychological system aiming at the explanation of all human activities, both normal and abnormal, and gained a vogue and a popularity rarely vouchsafed to scientific movements. This phenomenal rise of the new theory must be attributed to the fact that its fundamental tenets fall in with certain prevailing trends of modern thought, notably evolutionism, determinism, and anti-intellectualism, and that it affords a plausible and specious interpretation of the psychic life of man, an interpretation which, by its very superficiality and easy obviousness, is calculated to captivate the unthinking, and by its elaborate show of scientific thoroughness and profoundness is devised to catch

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the fancy and to impress the judgment of the multitude. What opposition there has arisen against psychoanalysis has come from the strictly professional circles of eminent neurologists, who not only belittle its merits as a method of treatment, but see in it a menace and a danger. Thus, Dr. George Matheson Cullen, an English physician of high standing, writing in the *Dublin Review* (April, 1921), declares: "That psychoanalysis is a real danger to society is my serious conviction."

The basic contention of the psychoanalysts is, that in the unconscious part of man's mind there exist forces, urges, and impulses, which are at cross-purposes with his conscious life, and which, though unknown and concealed, exercise a paramount influence on his conscious activities and determine his decisions, emotional attitudes, and external actions, though he is not at all aware of this fact, and continues to ascribe them to entirely different motives. According to Freud and his followers, this influence of the unconscious is so great that it eliminates free will as a determining factor and reduces the conscious life to a state of secondary importance. To have made this discovery, Freud regards as his chief merit, and it entitles him, in his estimation, to rank with Copernicus. One enthusiastic admirer speaks of the Freudian discovery in this exalted strain, al-

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most verging on hysteria: "It would seem as though this new psychological knowledge and method will ultimately have to be reckoned along with the great epoch-making discoveries of the past—for instance, Newton's Theory of Gravitation, or the Darwinian Theory—and may go further than these in the extent of its application."

The psychoanalysis theory arose in this way. As a result of various observations, Dr. Freud came to the conclusion that mental disturbances and hysterical phenomena—such as uncontrollable laughing or weeping spells, unreasonable likes or dislikes, violent outbursts of passion without adequate motive, compulsory actions, muscular spasms, various dreads and fears (phobias), unaccountable forgettings of words, loss of speech, local paralysis, obsessions and manias of different kinds—had their origin in some forgotten emotional experience that completely eluded the present knowledge of the sufferer. This original emotional shock, in psychoanalysis, is known as trauma or soul-wound. With regard to it, the question naturally presented itself, how did it come about that this experience dropped completely out of consciousness, and why, in spite of that, did it continue to exert a disturbing influence in the psychic life of the individual? To explain this strange fact and to account for the startling



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manner by which an idea was converted into a disease, the Freudian hypothesis was put forth.

Explanation
What had actually happened was this. In the past experience, mostly dating back to the days of childhood, the memory of the occasion that caused the emotional tension, had been dissociated from the accompanying feeling and had slipped into oblivion, while the affective state still persisted and became the source of actions for which no reason could be assigned. This dissociation of idea and corresponding affective concomitant produced the morbid condition which tormented the unfortunate patient. The idea, however, had been purposely ejected from consciousness on account of its unpleasant, revolting, and immoral nature. No morbid symptoms would have resulted, had the occasion been deliberately faced and overcome by reasoning or proper emotional reaction. But mere automatic repression leads to psychic troubles.

A cure can be effected if the submerged idea of memory (complex) is again brought to light and deprived of its sinister influence, which it can exert only as long as it is not properly adjusted to the rest of the mental life. As soon as the split-off and isolated complex is broken up and reintegrated, psychic harmony is restored, and the mind again functions normally and without inter-

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ference. The disturbances caused by a buried complex may, by way of illustration, be likened to the aberrations of a star from its regular orbit because of the presence of some other heavenly body, the existence of which is so far unknown to the astronomer, who, in consequence, is puzzled by these seeming deviations from the law of gravitation. It is in this way that the concealed complex reaches out from the dark and interferes with the normal working of conscious life.

The cure might seem easy; but there are various difficulties to be reckoned with, which block the way to recovery and frustrate the efforts of the physician. The guilty complex is unknown to the patient, and its unearthing is a laborious task requiring great skill and infinite patience. For the complex resists discovery, and the patient actually abets its evasions, since he secretly clings to his morbid symptoms, which afford him emotional relief and procure him some mysterious gratification. This is an exhibition of that double self which accounts for the many striking inconsistencies of man. Of this opposition, Dr. Brill complains when he writes: "The time required to cure a patient is directly proportional to the degree in which he is morbidly benefited by his neurosis. The patient dreads the disclosure, and offers opposition rather than assistance." Con-

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sequently, a complicated technique had to be elaborated in order to trick the offending complex, by subtle and devious means, into self-betrayal. One of these devices is the word-reaction method, in which the patient is tested by his responses to a list of carefully selected stimuli-words. Besides, the whole life of the patient is subjected to a minute and rigorous scrutiny; his idiosyncrasies, little mannerisms, slips of speech, embarrassments, and unaccountable likes and dislikes are made the subject of detailed study, for they all are, in some way, leakings from the unconscious, and may, therefore, assist in the discovery of the hidden complex. A slip of the tongue, consisting in the substitution of one word for another, may prove highly suggestive, for all such little mistakes are purposeful, that is, directed by unconscious tendencies. A name is forgotten on purpose, because it is connected with an unpleasant situation. Through such and other errors, the unconscious reveals itself.

The chief means, however, to get at the stored contents of the unconscious is the dream. The dream is the *via regia* to the unconscious. Through it, we obtain glimpses of things which at all other times are carefully screened from view. Dream interpretation, accordingly, plays an important part in psychoanalysis. Every dream is

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the fulfillment of a suppressed wish, still lurking in the unconscious, but, by reason of its unconventional or immoral character, not daring to manifest itself in its real form. Even in the dream, the evil tendencies, relegated to the region of the unconscious, appear in some disguise, or they would not at all be tolerated in consciousness. Hence arises a very intricate dream symbolism which must be deciphered, if the real meaning of the dream is to be disclosed. Freud holds that dreams never deal with trivial matters, but always with vital concerns of the individual. They revert, with special preference, to childhood, when the instincts and passions are still uncurbed, and revive experiences of a great emotional and passional tension. No better key to the locked secrets of the unconscious exists than correct interpretation of the symbolic events through which the dream takes us. The dream is a great revealer of character, and mercilessly exposes the hidden and real self; because in it man tastes surreptitiously, and in a symbolic form, of the forbidden fruit which, in his waking hours, he denies himself.

In the course of the treatment, a stage occurs when the emotional component of the complex is transferred to the person of the analyst. By this transference, the surcharge of emotional energy,

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which lay at the root of the trouble, is worked off (abreacted), the mind is purged of the distorted affections, and psychic equilibrium is regained. This process of cleaning the soul of the psychic poison, by which it had become infected, is called the cathartic method.

Sublimation { The cure cannot be regarded as complete and final until the emotional energy, liberated by the destruction of the complex, is directed to some beneficial end and turned into useful channels. In this process, which is designated as sublimation, the psychoanalytical treatment culminates. A dangerous urge, a misdirected passion, a destructive tendency may be, through sublimation—which does not suppress, but utilizes the existing emotional forces—not only rendered harmless, but converted into potency for good and harnessed to the noblest and sublimest aims. This is excellent pedagogy, but it cannot be claimed by the psychoanalysts as an original discovery of their own. It is, in fact, an axiom recognized by all educators, who unanimously regard mere repression as baneful and extremely dangerous.

Psychoanalysis, as a special therapeutic method, is built upon a new conception of psychology, which gives a fuller perspective and larger background to its peculiar postulates. These more comprehensive aspects and more basic

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implications of psychoanalysis we cannot ignore, and it is on their account particularly that we have a serious quarrel with the new theory.

The mind, according to the view of the psychoanalysts, is divided into two main sections: the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious needs no further explanation. It embraces all of which we are aware at any given moment, the thoughts, memories, feelings, and acts that come within the focus of our attention or that may, without any difficulty, be brought within the field of our vision. The conscious mind, in the normal man, seeks to adapt itself to the realities of life and the exigencies of society. It is controlled by ethical principles, universally accepted standards of behavior, and due regard for the opinion of our fellow men.

Below the narrow field of the conscious, and all around it, lies the much wider realm of the unconscious, the terrific dynamic energy of which is supplied by the vital urge that incessantly impels all animate creation. Freud frankly identifies this basic life impulse with the sex urge (libido), and all psychoanalysts put upon it a more or less sexual construction, whence the predominantly erotic tone of psychoanalytic literature, which is so offensive to the normal reader.

In the region of the unconscious dwell the

The Conscious

The Subconscious

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primitive instincts that dominated the cave man, but which civilization has outlawed, and which now growl and sulk in their cavernous depths, tearing at the chains with which they have been shackled. Here, also, are herded together brutal tendencies that would make the individual blush if their existence were known, untamed and fierce impulses that would wreck society if left to go unchecked, vile and shameless cravings which the conscious mind disowns, and, in a word, everything that is too ugly and loathsome to show itself in the light of consciousness. The unconscious is a terrible prison that holds the things which are incompatible with culture and civilization; it is a room of awful mysteries, too horrible to be faced; but it is also a storehouse of enormous energy, since the things that are kept there are not dead, but alive with a fearful vitality that constantly tries to break forth and overflow into the conscious. The forces gathered in this dark region acknowledge no law; they only obey selfish impulses; they seek gratification at any cost; they are essentially egotistical and antisocial. Into this chamber of horrors also such individual desires and wishes are shoved as are at variance with the individual's cultural and moral level. There they become allied with some basal urge and form the emotional cluster that is known as the complex.

*The
Complex*

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If the repression of the latter is not successful, it breaks through all barriers and leads either to criminal conduct or to abnormal psychic phenomena. The complex which, according to Freud, works the greatest havoc and is of the most frequent occurrence, is of such vile nature that the mere mention of it would stain the pages of a decent periodical and make it unfit for the eyes of the pure-minded.

On account of the turbulent and violent character of the inhabitants of this frightful den that is situated right below the threshold of the conscious, a vigilant guard is required to prevent them from gaining access to consciousness and finding an outlet in actions. This inhibitive agency, which represents the self-protective urge and the restraining force of society, is called the censor. In the normal man, the censor fulfills his functions well, and forestalls any escape from the motley crew over which he presides. Some men, however, are not equal to the continual strain which society puts on them; their resistance weakens, and the dark powers of the abyss manage to get away from the control of the censor. In this deplorable case, they begin to interfere with the conscious activity of the unfortunate individual, and either make him a criminal or a neurotic. A neurosis, in this view, is a kind of substitute for

The Censor

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Neurosis

criminal behavior. Both conditions are deviations from normal health. Thus Dr. Brill: "There is no doubt that civilization, with its manifold inhibitions, impositions, and prohibitions, makes it indeed very difficult for us to live. There is not a human being who does not feel the burden of civilization lie heavy on his shoulders; and though we all bear the cross as patiently as we know how, who of us in his heart of hearts does not find himself sometimes discontented and complaining? That is the price we have to pay for civilization. Sometimes the injustice heaped upon a predisposed individual is so great and overwhelming, that, as his deeper sense of morality stays his rash hand from some criminal act, he becomes neurotic; and sometimes he goes even further, he becomes psychotic. That is the way he tries to purge his bosom of all perilous stuff."

The Dream
&
Sleep

During sleep, the vigilance of the censor becomes somewhat relaxed, and the loathsome monsters of the deep come forth to disport themselves in the open and to enjoy their temporary freedom. Not, however, in their real hideous identity, but cleverly masquerading under some less offensive symbol; for otherwise they could not get by the watchfulness of the censor. Moreover, the dream has the function to protect sleep: it could not allow the banished wishes and cravings

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to assume their real form, since that would immediately startle the sleeper into wakefulness and rob him of his needed rest. The dream, for the benefit of the imprisoned urges, enacts little dramas of jealousy, envy, hatred, and other vile passions, in which the repressed wishes find a vicarious gratification without shocking the moral sense of the dreamer. In the dream, the well-concealed antipathies crop out, and the secretly nursed criminal desires come to the foreground of the stage. When stripped of the symbolical disguise, the dream lays bare the stark nakedness of the soul and unveils all the little hypocrisies of the mind.

The repression exercised by the censor must not be confounded with deliberate self-control. From that it is separated by an impassable gulf. The psychoanalytic censorship is an unconscious activity, an instinctive control exercised by the social and self-protective urges over the antisocial and pleasure-seeking urges.

The idea of the censor is almost humorous. That a sober scientist should have invented such a thing is truly incredible. The censor and the office assigned to him by the psychoanalysts does not belong to the domain of science; his place is in a fairy tale or story for the nursery. There is no warrant to assume the existence of such an

*Criticism
of Henry J
Censor*

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entity, with its utterly impossible functions. The idea of the censor, with the absurdities and cruelties which it involves, is enough to discredit the whole psychoanalytical theory. Dr. Cullen is right when he says: "Over the censor, we need waste no words; for the idea so utterly transcends all common sense that any attempt to criticize it would be an insult to the intelligence."

Many other assumptions upon which the new theory rests are equally gratuitous and unwarranted; for example, the hypothesis of the unconscious, which is supposed to explain the possibility of mental conflicts and psychic disturbances. To account for these, it is not necessary to hark back to an alleged legacy of primitive instincts transmitted to us from ancestors living in savagery; all these phenomena can be understood on the basis of the old theory of man, which admits in him the existence of a double law, that may give ample occasion for the most torturing mental conflicts and for the most humiliating psychoses. The animal side of man and the taint of original sin, on the other hand, offer fearful possibilities of degradation and degeneration, which make the appeal to the unconscious, in which slimy monsters of iniquity are precariously held in leash, utterly unnecessary. The theory of dream symbolism has not a leg to stand on. It

*Original Sin
St. Paul's
Christians*

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would imply that the suppressed instincts possess a veritable genius for the invention of appropriate imagery, and that they are endowed with a resourcefulness and a plastic power which would be the admiration and envy of every artist. It stands condemned by its fanciful and artificial character.

As a therapeutic method, psychoanalysis has not yet proved its claims to superiority over other methods. Of course, it has affected some cures, but these most likely are not due at all to that which is distinctive of psychoanalysis, but rather to a candid disclosing of the patient's troubles, elicited by the sympathetic interest of the physician, to a general reëducation and reorientation of the mental life, and, especially, to a deliberate and patient training of the will. At all events, it may be laid down as a law that there can be no permanent recovery from nervous disease except through will-training, a matter which the psychoanalyst sadly neglects.

Morally, there seems to be no objection to the psychoanalytic treatment if it is surrounded by appropriate safeguards and if it does not cater unnecessarily to sex curiosity. It is difficult, however, to see how erotic inquisitiveness can be avoided, since the psychoanalyst is stubbornly convinced that every neurosis has its origin in a

*As a
Therapeutic
Theory?*

*a
Sound
Law*

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maladjustment of sex life, and insists on prying into the most remote memories and the most recondite secrets of the heart. In this respect, he is far more exacting than the most rigorous confessor, who would shrink from asking the questions which the psychoanalyst unblushingly puts to the patient, and to which inexorably he demands an unevasive answer. It goes without saying that a treatment fraught with so much danger should be applied only by an experienced and reputable physician. But even at the best, the promise of success is slight, if we believe the words of Dr. Peterson, who writes in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*: "I doubt if any persons have been benefited by this treatment. It requires months or years of work over each case, and it is very expensive. I have, on the other hand, seen very bad results from the psychoanalysis of young men and women, permanent insanity, and even suicide."

Opinion
of
Dr. Peterson

Criticism
as a

Pastime
Theory

The use of psychoanalysis as a pastime deserves the severest strictures, and must be condemned as immoral, because it fosters morbid self-introspection, creates sex obsessions, and induces a passivity that renders one unfit for the tasks of life. The mind is a delicate and nicely balanced mechanism; if tampered with, it takes bitter revenge. Psychoanalysis is not meant to be

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a toy; and if handled by the inexperienced, it will cause precisely those ills which it was devised to cure.

Against the use of psychoanalysis in education, we must utter a solemn warning. It is bound to affect unfavorably the mentality of the child, by raising questions and making suggestions which would filter down into the mind of the unhappy victim, and become the seeds of morbidness and perversity. Psychoanalysis is too coarse an instrument and too blunt a tool to be applied to the innocent soul of happy childhood. Even Dr. R. H. Hingley, in many respects an admirer of the new theory, frowns on its application to pedagogics. "We do not believe it desirable, necessary, or possible," he writes, "to apply the full technique of this method to the task of educating the ordinary child. We must remember that rapid as the growth of this study has been, it is still in its infancy, and it would be nothing less than a blunder and a crime to allow our children to be the victims of some enthusiast with a smattering of what is recognized as a most difficult and complicated branch of knowledge."

In Education

At present, there is no prospect that psychoanalysis will revolutionize education or that it will remake all our accepted pedagogical ideas. We do not deny that psychoanalysis has made some

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valuable contributions to pedagogical theory. These do not consist in new ideas, but in having called attention to the dangers of mere external repression and in emphasizing the necessity of diverting the energies of the child from evil purposes to inspiring and ennobling ends. Education must be positive, not merely negative; it must direct, utilize, and exploit the disposition and native tendencies of the child rather than repress them. But this is, in reality, a pedagogical commonplace.

To deny the merits of psychoanalytic research along some lines, would be unfair and puerile; so much human industry and fervor as have gone into this movement, even if ill directed, cannot but have some beneficial results. It is true, then, that psychoanalysis has increased our experimental knowledge of certain mental processes; it is also true that it has laid the foundations of a scientific sex psychology, such as is needed by the criminologist and the neurologist. It has opened new outlooks on the pathology of the human mind and has shown us the ravages of disease. As a science of the diseased and the disordered mind, we are willing to acknowledge its merits, though even these have been grossly exaggerated by its exponents. But when it goes beyond this sphere and pretends to speak with authority on the normal and healthy human mind; when it applies the

Positive
Education
not
negative

Benefits
or
Merits

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distorted views of a deranged mind and the lascivious symbolism of an erotic patient to the interpretation of religion, morality, and art; when it effaces the landmarks between health and disease, and judges the normal by the abnormal; then we are compelled to repudiate its claims and to rebuke its intolerable arrogance, that contrasts so vividly with the habitual modesty, diffidence, and reserve characteristic of the genuine scientist.

The popularity, undeservedly enjoyed by psychoanalysis, is largely owing to the blatant advertising of its champions and the prurient appeal of its literature, in which the pornographic taint is but too apparent. There is no earthly excuse for the threshing out of sexual perversions, with all their minute and nauseating details, in books that are intended for popular consumption. It would be impossible to find a book of this kind that could be safely introduced into a decent Christian home.

Psychoanalysis cannot be hailed as a new psychology. Its conception of mental life is too mechanical. Its personification of the urges and emotions is suited only to the intellectual level of childhood. It destroys the unity of human personality and makes the continuity of consciousness inexplicable. In this fanciful system, the soul is not the chief actor in psychic happenings, but

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merely the battle ground that furnishes the scene for the interplay of unconscious forces, the mind looking helplessly upon the raging struggle. For free will there is no room in this psychology. Only one power rules the universe, and that is the unconscious.

Summary
This history

The creed of the psychoanalyst may be summed up in five words: the omnipotence of the unconscious. Men are not responsible agents, who control their own actions or think their own thoughts. Their thoughts well up from the depths of the unconscious and stream into consciousness. They themselves are only marionettes, moved from behind the scene, where the unconscious holds absolute sway. Freedom of action is a delusion; responsibility, a myth. Behind everything is the irresistible urge. The word *sin* has no meaning for the psychoanalyst. Crime is a disease. The only values that remain in this strange world of the psychoanalyst are health and disease. With all desirable candor, Dr. André Tridon states the case: "Man's duty in the future shall be represented by one word: Health." Criminals, artists, heroes, all are bunched together. Quite bluntly, Dr. D. W. Stekel writes: "Lessing thought that the quickest thing in the world is the passing of good from evil, because good and evil are precisely identical; because the ethical motives build

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themselves over the criminal motives, and from the murderer to the surgeon there runs a continuous line of development. In fact, the surgeon is only the murderer, who has fitted himself to the demands of civilization, and has sublimated his asocial impulses to higher forms. All neurotics are people of strong impulses. They are, in my view, throwbacks like the criminal and the artist."

Under such circumstances, we cannot regard the psychoanalyst as a safe and trustworthy moral guide. Neither would we place much confidence in him as a vocational adviser, though he makes high claims in that respect. But when he usurps the office of a physician of the soul, it is difficult to remain calm and patient in the face of a presumption that grates painfully on the mind of the Catholic, who looks upon the priest as exclusively entitled, by historical and divine right, to that exalted dignity and difficult office.

But be this as it may, psychoanalytic investigation has brought home to us the protective and curative value of the Catholic practices of asceticism and confession. Asceticism, by banishing evil thoughts, anticipates the formation of hidden complexes and thus safeguards against mental disturbances. Confession has a wonderful power to keep the mind clean and free from perilous stuff that might lead to morbid psychic conditions.

*Value
of
Asceticism
&
Confession*

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What is good and beneficial in psychoanalysis can be found in Catholic asceticism in a much purer form and without the pseudo-scientific terminology which the psychoanalyst so complacently affects.

*Final
Bakunin* The philosophy implied in psychoanalysis is destructive of everything that mankind holds sacred. By its vile theory of sublimation, it reduces the loftiest religious ideas to sex symbols. God is the transfiguration of the father-image without any objective reality behind it. Other religious concepts are reinterpreted in even grosser and more blasphemous fashion. Into this morass, where a foul and diseased imagination may find itself at home, we cannot follow the ravings and vagaries of psychoanalysis. But, verily, psychoanalytic world interpretation falls as a blight upon all human ideals. It kills beauty and takes the glamour out of life, leaving it a broken and wilted flower. With irreverent hands, it breaks every altar and empties every shrine at which humanity is wont to worship with bowed head and bent knee. Nothing truly great and inspiring remains in the world; for everything flows from the same foul source of brutal instinct, that energizes in virtue as well as in vice. In the distorting light of psychoanalytic world philosophy, we see grinning at us, wherever we turn, the death's head of sex-

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uality and the grotesque gargoyles of animal urges and sordid passions. If such a philosophy, which glorifies the lowest tendencies and drags the finest products of the mind into the slime, became universally accepted, life would lose its value, the world its charm, religion its dignity, morality its majesty, and art its fascination.

We turn away from this nightmare of ugliness to breathe the fresh and bracing air of Christian philosophy, that makes the heavens glow with beauty and the earth reflect the splendors of the sky; that warms the soul with holy enthusiasm and kindles the imagination with the fires of inspiration and visions of Divine glory.

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