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STUDIES IN GENIUS: VI
GRODDECK

IF the work and teachings of Georg Walther Groddeck (1866–1934) are not as well known today as they deserve to be it is perhaps largely his own fault. His first job, he considered, was to heal; the writer and the teacher took second place. Over and above this Groddeck also knew how quickly the disciple can convert the living word into the dead canon. He knew that the first disciple is also very often the first perverter of the truth. And this knowledge informs his written work with that delightful self-deprecating irony which so many of his readers profess to find out of place; an irony which says very clearly ‘I am not inviting you to follow me, but to follow yourself. I am only here to help if you need me.’ The age does need its Groddecks, and will continue to need them until it can grasp the full majesty and terror of the ‘It’ which he has talked so much about in his various books, and particularly in that neglected masterpiece *The Book of the It*.

In considering Groddeck's place in psychology, however, there are one or two current misunderstandings which deserve to be cleared up for the benefit of those who have mistaken, or continue to mistake, him for an orthodox disciple of Freud. Groddeck was the only analyst whose views had some effect on Freud; and Freud's *The Ego and the Id* are a tribute to, though unfortunately a misinterpretation of, Groddeck's It theory. Yet so great was his admiration for Freud that the reviewer might well be forgiven who once described him as 'a popularizer of Freudian theory'. No statement, however, could be farther from the truth, for Groddeck, while he accepts and employs much of the heavy equipment of the master, is separated for ever from Freud, by an entirely different conception of the constitution and functioning of the human psyche. His acknowledgements to Freud begin and end with those wonderful discoveries on the nature of the dream, on the meaning of resistance and transference. In his use of these great conceptual instruments, however, Groddeck was as different from Freud as Lao Tzu was from Confucius. He accepted and praised them as great discoveries of the age: he employed them as weapons in his own way upon organic disease: he revered Freud as the greatest genius of the age: but fundamentally he did not share Freud's views upon the nature of the forces within the human organism which make for health or sickness. And this is the domain in which the doctrines of Groddeck and of Freud part company. In this domain, too, Groddeck emerges as a natural philosopher, as incapable of separating body and mind as he is incapable of separating health and disease.

To Freud the psyche of man was made up of two halves, the conscious and the unconscious parts; but for Groddeck the whole psyche with its inevitable dualisms seemed merely a function of something else—an unknown quantity—which he chose to discuss under the name of the 'It'. 'The sum total of an individual human being,' he says, 'physical, mental, and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as a self unknown and forever unknowable, and I call this the "It" as the most indefinite term available without either emotional or intellectual associations. The It-hypothesis I regard not as a truth—for what do any of us know about absolute truth?—but as a useful tool in work and in life; it has stood the test of years of medical work and experiment and so far nothing

has happened which would lead me to abandon it or even to modify it in any essential degree. I assume that man is animated by the It which directs what he does and what he goes through, and that the assertion "I live" only expresses a small and superficial part of the total experience "I am lived by the It" . . .

This fundamental divergence of view concerning the nature of health and disease, the nature of the psyche's role, is something which must be grasped at the outset if we are to interpret Groddeck to ourselves with any accuracy. For Freud, as indeed for the age and civilization of which he was both representative and part, the ego is supreme. There it lies, like an iron-shod box whose compartments are waiting to be arranged and packed with the terminologies of psycho-analysis. But to Groddeck the ego appeared as a contemptible mask fathered on us by the intellect, which by imposing upon the human being, persuaded him that he was motivated by forces within the control of his conscious mind. Yet, asks Groddeck, what decides how the food which passes into the stomach is subdivided? What is the nature of the force which decrees the rate of the heart-beat? What persuaded the original germ to divide and subdivide itself and to form objects as dissimilar as brain cortex, muscle, or mucus?

'When we occupy ourselves in any way either with ourselves or with our fellow-man, we think of the ego as the essential thing. Perhaps, however, for a little time we can set aside the ego and work a little with this unknown It instead . . . We know, for instance, that no man's ego has had anything to do with the fact that he possesses a human form, that he is a human being. Yet as soon as we perceive in the distance a being who is walking on two legs we immediately assume that this being is an ego, that he can be made responsible for what he is and what he does, and, indeed, if we did not do this everything that is human would disappear from the world. Still we know quite certainly that the humanity of this being was never willed by his ego; he is human through an act of will of the All, or, if you go a little further, of the It. The ego has not the slightest thing to do with it . . . What has breathing to do with the will? We have to begin as soon as we leave the womb, we cannot choose but breathe. "*I love you so dearly, I could do anything for you.*" Who has not felt that, heard it, or said it? But try to hold your breath for the sake of your love. In ten seconds, or at most in a quarter of a minute, the proof of your

love will disappear before the hunger for air. No one has command over the power to sleep. It will come or it will not. No one can regulate the beating of the heart . . .’

Man, then, is himself a function of this mysterious force which expresses itself through him, through his illness no less than his health. To Groddeck the psycho-analytic equipment was merely a lens by which one might see a little more deeply than heretofore into the mystery of the human being—as an It-self. Over the theory of psycho-analysis, as he used it, therefore, stood the metaphysical principle which expressed itself through man’s behaviour, through his size, shape, beliefs, wants. And Groddeck set himself up as a watchman, and where possible, as an interpreter of this mysterious force. The causes of sickness or health he decided were unknown; he had already remarked in the course of his long clinical practice that quite often the same disease was overcome by different treatments, and had been finally led to believe that disease *as an entity* did not exist, except inasmuch as it was an expression of a man’s total personality, his It, expressing itself through him. Disease was a form of self-expression.

‘However unlikely it may seem, it is nevertheless a fact that any sort of treatment, scientific or old-wife’s poultice, may turn out to be right for the patient, since the outcome of medical or other treatment is not determined by the means prescribed but by what the patient’s It likes to make of the prescription. If this were not the case then every broken limb which had been properly set and bandaged would be bound to heal, whereas every surgeon knows of obstinate cases which despite all care and attention defy his efforts and refuse to heal. It is my opinion, backed by some experience with cases of this nature, that a beneficent influence may be directed upon the injured parts . . . by psycho-analysing the general Unconscious, indeed I believe that every sickness of the organism, whether physical or mental, may be influenced by psycho-analysis . . . Of itself psycho-analysis can prove its value in every department of medicine, although of course a man with pneumonia must be put immediately to bed and kept warm, a gangrened limb must be amputated, a broken bone set and immobilized. A badly built house may have to be pulled down and reconstructed with all possible speed when no alternative accommodation is available, and the architect who built it so badly must be made to see his mistakes . . . and an It

which has damaged its own work, lung, or bone, or whatever it may be, must learn its lesson and avoid such mistakes in future . . .

‘Since everything has at least two sides, however, it can always be considered from two points of view, and so it is my custom to ask a patient who has slipped and broken his arm: “*What was your idea in breaking your arm?*” whereas if anyone is reported to have had recourse to morphia to get sleep the night before, I ask him: “*How was it the idea of morphine became so important yesterday that you make yourself sleepless, in order to have an excuse for taking it?*” So far I have never failed to get a useful reply to such questions, and there is nothing extraordinary about that, for if we take the trouble to make the search we can always find an inward and an outward cause for any event in life.’

The sciences of the day have devoted almost the whole of their interest to the outward cause; they have not as yet succeeded in escaping from the philosophic impasse created by the natural belief in causality, and side by side with this a belief in the ego as being endowed with free-will. In all the marvellous pages of Freud we feel the analytical intellect pursuing its chain of cause—and effect; if only the last link can be reached, if only the first cause can be established, the whole pattern will be made clear. Yet for Groddeck such a proposition was false; the Whole was an unknown, a forever unknowable entity, whose shadows and functions we are. Only a very small corner of this territory was free to be explored by the watchful, only the fringes of this universe lay within the comprehension of the finite human mind which is a function of it. Thus while Freud speaks of cure, Groddeck is really talking of something else—liberation through self-knowledge; and his conception of disease is philosophical rather than rational. In the domain of theory and practice he is Freud’s grateful and deeply attentive pupil, but he is using Freud for ends far greater than Freud himself could ever perceive. Psycho-analysis has been in danger of devoting itself only to the tailoring of behaviour, too heavily weighted down by its superstructure of clinical terminology it has been in danger of thinking in terms of medical entities rather than patients. This is the secret of Groddeck’s aversion to technical phrases, his determination to express himself as simply as possible using only the homely weapons of analogy and comparison to make his points. In *The Book of the It*, which is cast in the form of letters to a friend, he discusses

the whole problem of health and disease from a metaphysical point of view, and with an ironic refusal to dogmatize or tidy his views into a system. But the book itself, brimming over with gay irony and poetry, does succeed in circumscribing this territory of experience with remarkable fidelity; and from it Groddeck emerges not only as a great doctor but also as a philosopher whose It-concept is positively ancient Greek in its clarity and depth. 'In vain', says Freud somewhere, 'does Groddeck protest that he has nothing to do with science.' Yes, in vain, for Groddeck's findings are being daily called upon to supplement the mechanical findings of the science which he respected, but of which he refused to consider himself a part. 'Health and sickness', he says, 'are among the It's forms of expression, always ready for use. Consideration of these two modes of expression reveals the remarkable fact that the It never uses either of them alone, but always both at once: that is to say, no one is altogether ill, there is always some part which remains sound even in the worst illnesses; and no one is altogether well, there is always something wrong, even in the perfectly healthy. Perhaps the best comparison we could give would be a pair of scales. The It toys with the scales, now putting a weight in the right pan, now in the left, but never leaving either pan empty; this game, which is often puzzling but always significant, never purposeless, is what we know as life. If once the It loses its interest in the game, it lets go of life and dies. Death is always voluntary; no one dies except he has desired death . . . The It is ambivalent, making mysterious but deep-meaning play with will and counter-will, with wish and counter-wish, driving the sick man into a dual relation with his doctor so that he loves him as his best friend and helper, yet sees in him a menace to that artistic effort, his illness.'

The illness, then, bears the same relation to the patient as does his handwriting, his ability to write poetry, his ability to make money; creation, whether in a poem or a cancer, was still creation, for Groddeck, and the life of the patient betrayed for him the language of a mysterious force at work under the surface—behind the ideological scaffolding which the ego had run up around itself. Disease, then, had its own language no less than health, and when the question of the cure came up, Groddeck insisted on approaching his patient, not to meddle with his 'disease' but to try and interpret what his It might be trying to express through

the disease. The cure, as we have seen above, is for Groddeck always a result of having influenced the It, of having taught it a less painful mode of self-expression. The doctor's role is that of a catalyst, and more often than not his successful intervention is an accident. Thus the art of healing for Groddeck was a sort of spiritual athletic for both doctor and patient, the one through self-knowledge learning to cure his It of its maladjustments, the other learning from the discipline of interpretation how to use what Graham Howe has so magnificently called 'The will-power of desireless': in other words, how to free himself from *the desire to cure*. This will seem a paradox only to those—and today they are very many—who have no inkling of what it is like to become aware of states outside the comfortable and habitual drowsings of the ego. We are still the children of Descartes, and it is only here and there you will find a spirit who dares to replace that inexorable first proposition, with the words: 'I am, therefore I can love.'

It was this dissatisfaction with the current acceptance of disease as clinical entity that drove Groddeck finally to abandon, wherever possible, recourse to the pharmacopoeia or the knife; in his little clinic in Baden-Baden he preferred to work with a combination of diet, deep massage, and analysis as his surest allies. On these years of successful practice his reputation as a doctor was founded, while his writings, with their disturbing, disarming, mocking note, brought him as many pupils as patients, as many enemies as admirers. The majority of his theories and opinions, together with the It-concept on which his philosophy is based, were already worked out before he had read Freud. Yet he gladly and joyfully accepted the Freudian findings in many cases, and never ceased to revere Freud; but whereas the work of Jung, Adler, Rank, Stekel, might well be considered as modifications and riders to basic Freudian theory, Groddeck's case is unique and exceptional. He stands beside Freud as a philosopher and healer in his own true right.

'With Groddeck', wrote Keyserling after his death, 'has gone one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. He is indeed the only man I have known who continually reminded me of Lao-Tzu; his non-action had just the same magical effect. He took the view that the doctor really knows nothing, and of himself can do nothing, that he should therefore interfere as little as possible,

for his very presence can invoke to action the patient's own powers of healing. Naturally he could not run his sanatorium at Baden-Baden purely on this technique of non-intervention, so he healed his patients by a combination of psychotherapy and massage in which the pain he inflicted must have played some part in the cure, for in self-protection they developed the will-to-life, while the searching questions he put in analysis often touched them on the raw! . . . In this way Groddeck cured me in less than a week of a relapsing phlebitis which other doctors had warned me would keep me an invalid for years, if not for the rest of my life.'

For the patient Groddeck sought to interpret, through the vagaries of outward symptom and clinical manifestation, the hidden language of the It; 'I do maintain', he writes, 'that man creates his own illnesses for a definite purpose, using the outer world merely as an instrument, finding there an inexhaustible supply of material which he can use for this purpose, today a piece of orange peel, tomorrow the spirochete of syphilis, the day after a draught of cold air, or anything else that will help him pile up his woes. And always to gain pleasure, no matter how unlikely that may seem, for every human being experiences something of pleasure in suffering; every human being has the feeling of guilt and tries to get rid of it by self-punishment.' To Groddeck plainly the ego is only a reflexive instrument to be used as a help in interpreting the motive force which lies behind the actions and reactions of the whole man; it is perhaps this which gives his philosophy its bracing life-giving quality. It is a philosophy with a boundless horizon, whereas the current usages of psycho-analysis plainly show it to have been built upon a cosmogony as limited in scope as that which bounded the universe of Kelvin or of Huxley. If Freud gives us a calculus for the examination of behaviour, the philosophy on which it rests is a philosophy of causes; to Groddeck, however, all causes derive from an unknowable principle which animates our lives and actions. So we are saved from the hybris of regarding ourselves as egos and of limiting our view of man to the geography of his reflexes; by regarding the ego as a function we can reorientate ourselves more easily to the strains and stresses of a reality which too often the ego rejects, because it cannot comprehend, or because it fears it. So much, then, for the basic difference between the philosophies of Freud and Groddeck; it will be evident, if I have stated my case clearly, that

they complement one another, that they are not antithetical, as some have believed them to be; for Freud supplies much of the actual heavy machinery of analysis, and Groddeck joyfully accepts it. In return Groddeck offers a philosophy of orientation and humility which justifies the technocratic contributions of Freud, and allows us to understand more clearly the problems and penalties not merely of disease, for that does not exist *per se*—but of suffering itself. With Freud we penetrate more deeply into the cognitive process; with Groddeck we learn the mystery of participation with the world of which we are part, and from which our ego has attempted to amputate us.

And what of the It? Groddeck does not claim that there is any such thing. He is most careful to insist that the It is not a thing-in-itself, but merely a way-of-seeing, a convenient rule-of-thumb method for attacking the real under its many and deceptive masks; indeed in this his philosophy bears a startling resemblance to the Tao-concept of the Chinese. The It is a way, not a thing, not a principle or a conceptual figment. Having accepted so much, Groddeck is prepared to attempt a half-length portrait of it.

‘Some moment of beginning must be supposed for this hypothetical It, and for my own purposes I quite arbitrarily suppose it to start with fertilization . . . and I assume that the It comes to an end with the death of the individual—though the precise moment at which we can say an individual is dead is again not so simple a matter as it seems . . . Now the hypothetical It-unit, whose origin we have placed at fertilization, contains within itself two It-units, a male and a female . . . It is perhaps necessary here to comment upon the extent of our ignorance concerning the further development of the fertilized ovule. For my purposes it is sufficient to say that after fertilization the egg divides into two separate beings, two cells as science prefers to call them. The two then divide again into four, into eight, into sixteen and so on, until finally there comes to be what we commonly designate a human being . . . Now in the fertilized ovule, minute as it is, there must be something or other—the It, we have assumed?—which is able to take charge of this multitudinous dividing into cells, to give them all distinctive forms and functions, to induce them to group themselves as skin, bones, eyes, ears, brain, etc. What becomes of the original It in the moment of division? It must obviously impart its powers to the cells into which it divides,

since we know that each of them is able to exist and re-divide independently of the other . . . It must not be forgotten that the brain, and therefore the intellect, is itself created by the It . . . Long before the brain comes into existence the It of man is already active and "thinking" without the brain, since it must first construct the brain before it can use it to think with. This is a fundamental point and one we are inclined to ignore or forget. In the assumption that one thinks only with the brain is to be found the origin of a thousand and one absurdities, the origin also of many valuable discoveries and inventions, much that adorns life and much that makes it ugly . . . Over and against the It there stands the ego, the I, which I take to be merely the tool of the It, but which we are forced by nature to regard as the It's master; whatever we say in theory there remains always for us men the final verdict "I am I" . . . We cannot get away from it, and even while I assert the proposition is false I am obliged to act as if it were true. Yet I am, by no means, I, but only a continuously changing form in which my "It" displays itself, and the "I" feeling is just one of its ways of deceiving the conscious mind and making it a pliant tool . . . I go so far as to believe that every single separate cell has this consciousness of individuality, every tissue, every organic system. In other words every It-unit can deceive itself, if it likes, into thinking of itself as an individuality, a person, an I. This is all very confusing but there it is. I believe that the human hand has its I, that it knows what it does, and knows that it knows. And every kidney-cell and every nail-cell has its consciousness just the same . . . its "I" consciousness. I cannot prove this, of course, but as a doctor I believe it, for I have seen how the stomach can respond to certain amounts of nourishment, how it makes careful use of its secretion according to the nature and quantity of the material supplied to it, how it uses eye, nose and mouth in selecting what it will enjoy. This "I" which I postulate for cells, organs, etc., like the general-I (or the ego-awareness of the whole man) is by no means the same thing as the It, but is produced by the It, as a mode of expression on all fours with a man's gestures, speech, voice, thinking, building, etc. . . . About the It itself we can know nothing.'

At this point the orthodox objections of the Rationalist deserve to be stated and considered. They are questions which Groddeck himself did not bother to answer, believing as he did that no

hypothesis could be made to cover all the known facts of a case without special pleading or sophistry, and being unwilling to strain for interpretations which might appear to cover the whole of reality and yet in truth yield only barren formulae. Groddeck believed that whatever was posited as fact could sooner or later be disproved; hence his caution in presenting the It-hypothesis not as a truth, but as a method. Yet a critic of the proof-of-the-pudding school would have every right to ask questions along the following lines: 'That a case of inoperable cancer, say, which defies every other form of treatment, can be made to yield before a Groddeckian attack by massage and analysis, is within the bounds of belief. Even the It-hypothesis might be conceded as a useful working tool in this case. Freud has so far altered the boundaries between the conscious and unconscious intention that we are inclined to respond to suggestions which fifty years ago would have seemed fantastic. But if a thousand people contract typhoid from a consignment of fruit are we to assume that the individual It of each and every one of them has chosen this form of self-expression in a desire for self-punishment?' It is the sort of question to which you will find no answer in Groddeck's books; yet if he seems content to present the It as a partial hypothesis it is because his major interest is in its individual manifestation. Yet there is nothing in the hypothesis as such to preclude a wider application. Had he addressed himself to such a question he might very easily have asserted that just as the cell has its It-ego polarity, and the whole individual his, so also could any body or community develop its own. The conventions of the logic that we live by demand that while we credit the individual with his individuality, we deny such a thing to concepts such as 'state', 'community', 'nation'—concepts which we daily use as thought-counters. Yet when our newspapers speak of a 'community decimated by plague' or a 'nation convulsed by hysteria' we accept the idea easily enough, though our consciousness rejects these formations as fictions. Yet in time of war a nation is treated as an individuality with certain specified characteristics; politicians 'go to the nation'; *The Times* discusses the 'Health of the Nation' with the help of relevant statistics. This unity which we consider a fiction—could it not reflect, in its component parts, the shadows of the individual unity, which is, according to Groddeck, no less a fiction? If a national ego why not a national It? But I am aware that in

widening the sphere of application for the It-hypothesis I am perhaps trespassing: for if Groddeck himself remained silent on the score he no doubt had his reasons.

And what of the domain of pure accident or misadventure? A man hurt by a falling wall? The victim of a railway accident? Are we to assume that his It has made him a victim of circumstances? We know next to nothing about predisposition—yet it is a term much used by medical men to cover cases where the link of causality appears obvious, the effect related satisfactorily to the cause; thus the victim of hereditary syphilis satisfies the syntax of our logic, while the victim of a railway accident seems simply the passive object of fate. And yet we do unconsciously recognize predisposition in individuals, in our friends, for how often when the news of the accident reaches us, do we exclaim: 'But it *would* happen to someone like X'? The truth is that all relations between events and objects in this world partake of the mystery of the unknown, and we are no more justified in covering one set of events with words like 'disease' or 'illness', than we are of dismissing another with words like 'accident' or 'coincidence'. Groddeck himself was too wily a metaphysician to put himself at the mercy of words. 'I should tell you something', he writes, 'of the onset of diseases, but the truth is that on this subject I know nothing. And about their cure . . . Of that, too, I know just nothing at all. I take both of them as given facts. At the utmost I can say something about the treatment, and that I will do now. The aim of the treatment, of all medical treatment, is to gain some influence over the It . . . Generally speaking, people have been content with the method called "symptomatic treatment" because it deals with the phenomena of disease, the symptoms. And nobody will assert that they were wrong. But we physicians, because we are forced by our calling to play at being God Almighty, and consequently to entertain overwhelming ideas, long to invent a treatment which will do away not with the symptoms but with the cause of the disease. We want to develop causal therapy as we call it. In this attempt we look around for a cause, and first theoretically establish . . . that there are apparently two essentially different causes, an inner one, *causa interna*, which the man contributes of himself, and an outer one, *causa externa*, which springs from his environment. And accepting this clear distinction we have thrown ourselves with

raging force upon the external causes, such as bacilli, chills, overheating, overdrinking, work, and anything else . . . Nevertheless in every age there have always been physicians who raised their voices to declare that man himself produced his diseases, that in him are to be found the *causae internae* . . . There I have my jumping-off point. One cannot treat in any way but causally. For both ideas are the same; no difference exists between them . . . In truth I am convinced that in analysing I do no differently than I did before when I ordered hot baths, gave massage, issued masterful commands, all of which I still do. The new thing is merely the point of attack in the treatment, *the one symptom which appears to me to be there in all circumstances, the "I"* . . . My treatment . . . consists of the attempt to make conscious the unconscious complexes of the "I" . . . That is certainly something new, but it originated not with me, but with Freud; all that I have done in this matter to apply the method to organic diseases, because I hold the view that the object of all medical treatment is the It: and I believe the It can be influenced as deeply by psychoanalysis as It can by a surgical operation.'

If we have spent much time and space in letting Groddeck, as far as possible in his own words, define and demarcate the territory of the It, the reason should by now be apparent. Not only is the ego-It polarity the foundation-stone upon which his philosophy is built, but without an understanding of it we cannot proceed to frame the portrait of this poet-philosopher-doctor with any adequacy; since his views concerning the function and place of the ego in the world are carried right through, not only in his study of health and disease, but also into the realms of art-criticism and cosmology, where his contributions are no less original and beautiful. Groddeck, like Rank, began as a poet and writer, only to turn aside in middle life and embrace the role of healer; lack of first-hand acquaintance with Groddeck's poetry, his one novel, and what his translator describes as 'an epic', prevents me from saying anything about this side of his activities; but in his one incomplete volume of art-criticism, published here under the title of *The World of Man*, the reader will be able to follow Groddeck's study of painting in terms of the It-process—for he believed that man creates the world in his own image, that all his inventions and activities, his science, art, behaviour, language and so on, reflect very clearly the nature of his primitive

experience, no less than the confusion between the ego and the It which rules his thoughts and actions. Unfortunately his death in 1934 prevented him from carrying out more than the groundwork of his plan, which was to review every department of science and knowledge in terms of this hypothesis; but in the fragments he has left us on art, language, and poetry, the metaphysical basis of his philosophy is carefully illustrated and discussed. The humour, the disarming simplicity and poetry of his writing cannot be commented upon by one who has not read his books in the original German, but it is sufficient to say that enough of Groddeck's personality comes through in translation to make the adventure of reading him well worth while, both for the doctor and for the contemporary artist—for the knowledge and practice of the one supplements the ardours and defeats of the other; and art and science are linked more closely than ever today by the very terms of the basic metaphysical dilemma which they both face. All paths end in metaphysics.

Groddeck was often approached for permission to set up a society in England bearing his name, on the lines of the Freudian and Adlerian Societies; but he always laughed away the suggestion with the words: 'Pupils always want their teacher to stay put.' He was determined that his work should not settle and rigidify into a barren canon of law: that his writings should not become molehills for industrious systematizers, who might pay only lip-service to his theories, respecting the letter of his work at the expense of the spirit. In a way this has been a pity, for it has led to an undeserved neglect—not to mention the downright ignominy of being produced here in a dust-jacket bearing the fatal words: 'Issued in sealed glaccine wrapper to medical and psychological students only.' And this for *The Book of the It*, which should be on every bookshelf!

There has been no space in this study to quote the many clinical case-histories with which Groddeck illustrates his thesis as he goes along; I have been forced to extract, as it were, the hard capsules of theory, and offer them up without their riders and illustrations. But it is sufficient to say that no analyst can afford to disregard Groddeck's views about such matters as resistance and transference any more than they can afford to disregard him on questions like the duration of analysis, the relation of analysis to organic disorders, and the uses of massage. If he wholeheartedly accepted

many of Freud's views there were many reservations, many amendments which he did not hesitate to express. For if Freud's is a philosophy of knowledge, Groddeck's is one of acceptance through understanding.

Another fundamental difference deserves to be underlined—a difference which illustrates the temperamental divergence between Freud and Groddeck as clearly as it does the divergence between the two attitudes to medicine which have persisted, often in opposition, from the time of Hippocrates until today. While Groddeck is campaigning wholeheartedly for the philosophy of non-attachment, he refuses to relinquish his heritage as a European in favour of what he considers an Asiatic philosophy. In his view the European is too heavily influenced by the Christian myth to be capable of really comprehending any other; so it is that his interpretation of the religious attitude to life refers us back to Christ, and if he accepts the Oedipus proposition of Freud, he does not hesitate to say that it seems to him a partial explanation. But Groddeck's Christ differs radically from the attenuated portraits which have been so much in favour with the dreary puritan theologians of our age and time. 'Christ was not, neither will He be; He is. He is not real. He is true. It is not within my power to put all this into words; indeed I believe it is impossible for anyone to express truth of this sort in words, for it is imagery, symbol, and the symbol cannot be spoken. It lives and *we are lived by it*. One can only use words that are indeterminate and vague—that is why the term It, completely neutral, was so quickly caught up—for any definite description destroys the symbol.' And man, by the terms of Groddeck's psychology, lives by the perpetual symbolization of his It, through art, music, disease, language. The process of his growth—his gradual freeing of himself from disease, which is malorientation towards his true nature, can only come about by a prolonged and patient self-study; but the study not of the ego in him so much as of the Prime Mover, the It which manifests itself through a multiplicity of idiosyncrasies, preferences, attitudes and occupations. It is this thorough-going philosophic surrender of Groddeck's to the It which makes his philosophy relevant both to patient, to artist, and to the ordinary man. Thus the symbol of the mother on which he lays such stress in his marvellous essay on childhood fuses into the symbol of the crucifixion, which expresses in artistic terms, this

profound and tragic preoccupation. 'The cross, too, is a symbol of unimaginable antiquity . . . and if you ask anyone to tell you what the Christian cross may seem to him to resemble, he will most invariably answer: "A figure with outstretched arms." Ask why the arms are outstretched and he will say they are ready to embrace. But the cross has no power to embrace, since it is made of wood, nor yet the man who hangs upon it, for he is kept rigid by the nails; moreover he has his back turned to the cross . . . What may that cross be to which man is nailed, upon which he must die in order to redeem the world? The Romans use the terms *os sacrum* for the bone which is over the spot where the birth-pangs start, and in German it is named the cross-bone, Kreuzbein. The mother-cross longs to embrace, but cannot, for the arms are inflexible, yet the longing is there and never ceases . . . Christ hangs upon the cross, the Son of Man, the man as Son. The yearning arms which yet may not embrace are to me the mother's arms. Mother and son are nailed together, but can never draw near to each other. For the mother there is no way of escape from her longing than to become dead wood . . . but the Son, whose words "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" gave utterance to the deepest mystery of our human world, dies of his own Will and in full consciousness upon that cross . . .'

It is in his writings on the nature of art and myths that we can see, most clearly revealed, the kernel of his thought concerning the nature of symbolism and the relation of man to the ideological web he has built about himself; it is here too that one will see how clearly and brilliantly Groddeck interpreted the role of art in society. He is the only psycho-analyst for whom the artist is not an interesting cripple but someone who has, by the surrender of his ego to the flux of the It, become the agent and translator of the extra-causal forces which rule us. That he fully appreciated the terrible ambivalent forces to which the artist is so often a prey is clear; but he also sees that the artist's dilemma is also that of everyman, and that this dilemma is being perpetually restated in art, just as it is being restated in terms of disease or language. We live (perhaps I should paraphrase the verb as Groddeck does) we are lived by a symbolic process, for which our lives provide merely a polished surface on which it may reflect itself. Just as linguistic relations appear as 'effective beliefs' in the dreams of Groddeck's patients, so the linguistic relations of symbolism,

expressed in art, place before the world a perpetual picture of the penalties, the terror and magnificence of living—or of being lived by this extra-causal reality whose identity we cannot guess. 'However learned and critical we may be,' writes Groddeck, 'something within us persists in seeing a window as an eye, a cave as the mother, a staff as the father.' Traced back along the web of affective relations these symbols yield, in art, a calculus of primitive preoccupation, and become part of the language of the It; and the nature of man, seen by the light of them, becomes something more than a barren ego with its dualistic conflicts between black and white. Indeed the story of the Gospels, as reinterpreted in the light of Groddeck's non-attachment, yields a far more fruitful crop of meanings than is possible if we are to judge it by the dualistic terms of the ego, which is to say, of the will. 'Only in the form of Irony can the deepest things of life be uttered, for they lie always outside morality; moreover truth itself is always ambivalent, both sides are true. Whoever wants to understand the Gospel teachings would do well to bear these things in mind.' And Groddeck's Christ, interpreted as an Ironist, is perhaps the Christ we are striving to reinterpret to ourselves today. There is no room here for the long-visaged, long-suffering historical Christ of the contemporary interpretation, but a Christ capable of symbolizing and fulfilling his artistic role, his artistic sacrifice, against the backcloth of a history which, while it can never be fully understood, yet carries for us a deliberate and inexorable meaning disguised in its symbolism.

If we have insisted, in the course of this essay, on the presentation of Groddeck as a philosopher it is because what he has to say has something more than a medical application. In medicine he might be considered simply another heretical Vitalist, for whom the whole is something more than the sum of its parts: certainly he has often been dismissed as a doctor 'who applied psycho-analysis to organic disease with remarkable results'. While one cannot deny his contributions to psycho-analysis, it would not be fair to limit his researches to this particular domain, although the whole of his working life was spent in the clinic, and although he himself threw off his writings without much concern for their fate. Yet it would also be unjust to represent him as a philosopher with a foot-rule by which he measured every human activity. The common factor in all his work is the attitude and the It-precept

which was sufficiently large as to include all manifestations of human life; it does not delimit, or demarcate, or rigidify the objects upon which it gazes. In other words he refused the temptations of an artificial morality in his dealings with life, and preferred to accord it full rights as an Unknown from which it might be possible for the individual to extract an equation for ordinary living; in so doing he has a message not only for doctors but for artists as well, for the sick no less than for the sound. And one can interpret him best by accepting his It-concept (under the terms of the true-false ambivalence on which he insisted so much) both as truth and as poetic figment. And since Groddeck preferred to consider himself a European and a Christian it would be equally unjust to harp on the eastern religious systems from which the It may seem to derive, or to which it may seem related. ('The power of the eye to see depends entirely on the power of vision inherent in that Light which sees through the eye but which the eye does not see; which hears through the ear, but which the ear does not hear; which thinks through the mind but which the mind does not think. It is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker. Other than It there is no seer, hearer, thinker.' *Shri Khrishna Prem.*)

Groddeck would have smiled and agreed, for the principle of non-attachment is certainly the kernel of his philosophy; but the temper of his mind is far more Greek than Indian. And his method of exposition combines hard sane clinical fact with theory in exactly balanced quantities. One has the feeling in reading him that however fantastic a proposition may seem it has come out of the workshop and not out of an ideological hothouse.

Four books bearing his name have been published in England. Of these the only one which pretends to completeness is *The Book of the It*;¹ the three other titles are composed of essays and various papers, strung together by his translator. They are *The World of Man*, *The Unknown Self* and *Exploring the Unconscious*. At the time of writing they are all unfortunately out of print. The first and third volumes contain a thorough exposition of his views on the nature of health and disease; *The World of Man* contains the unfinished groundwork of his projected study on the nature of

¹The English version of *The Book of the It* has been cut: it is not the full text of the German edition.

pictorial art. The last volume also contains some general art-criticism, but is chiefly remarkable for an essay entitled *Unconscious Factors in Organic Process* which sets out his views on massage, and contains a sort of new anatomy of the body in terms of psychological processes. Despite the fearfully muddled arrangement of these papers, not to mention a translation which confessedly misses half the poetry and style of the original, these books should all be read if we are to get any kind of full picture of Groddeck's mind at work.

Even Groddeck's greatest opponents in Germany could not but admit to his genius, and to the wealth of brilliant medical observations contained in his books; it is to be sincerely hoped that he will soon occupy his true place in England as a thinker of importance and a doctor with something important to say. It is fourteen years since Groddeck's death and his complete work is still not available to the general public in England. Why?

For the purposes of this brief essay, however, I have stuck as far as possible to the philosophy behind his practice, and have not entered into a detailed exposition of his medical beliefs and their clinical application; with a writer as lucid and brilliant as Groddeck one is always in danger of muddying the clear waters of his exposition with top-heavy glozes and turbid commentaries. In his work theory and fact are so skilfully woven up that one is always in danger of damaging the tissue of his thoughts in attempting to take it to pieces. I am content if I have managed to capture the ego-It polarity of his philosophy, and his conception of man as an organic whole. But as with everything in Groddeck one feels that manner and matter are so well-married in him that any attempt to explain him in different words must read as clumsily as a schoolboy's paraphrase of Hamlet. This fear must excuse my ending here with a final quotation.

'Every observation is necessarily one-sided, every opinion a falsification. The act of observing disintegrates a whole into different fields of observation, whilst in order to arrive at an opinion one must first dissect a whole and then disregard certain of its parts . . . At the present time we are trying to recover the earlier conception of a unit, the body-mind, and make it the foundation of our theory and action. My own opinion is that this assumption is one we all naturally make and never entirely abandon, and, further more, that by our heritage of thought, we

Europeans are all led to trace a relationship between the *individuum* and the cosmos . . . We understand man better when we see the whole in each of his parts, and we get nearer to a conception of the universe when we look upon him as part of the whole.'