

REVIEWS

The Review Section of E&A consists of three parts. The first is made up of brief reviews of books and articles (and perhaps films, etc.) that are concerned in some way with the rights and wrongs of human treatment of non-human animals. The second part of this Section is entitled 'Replies' and contains comments on or responses to reviews published in earlier issues of E&A. By letter the Editor invites the authors of works reviewed to respond, and by this proclamation in each issue invites all other interested readers to submit comments. The third part of the Reviews Section is a list of works of which reviews are invited. Any member who wishes to review any work in this continuing 'Reviews Needed' list should contact the Editor.

Stanley Friedman, "On Vegetarianism,"
American Psychoanalytic Association Journal, 23, 1975

SHRINKING THE VEGETARIAN'S HEAD

Psychoanalysis may, I suppose, be dubbed "the funny science". Even those who have undergone treatment can hardly help getting, if they have the slightest sense of humor, a chuckle or two from reading the "scientific literature" in such journals as the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *Psychoanalytic Review*, and *American Psychoanalytic Association Journal*. The most hilarious interpretations of behavior and symptoms are beautifully carved out of thin air, and then they are "confirmed" by appeal to yet wilder interpretive theses; the number of cases on which generalizations are made is commonly limited to one; and there is a steadfast, almost indignant refusal to verify the incidents reported by patients. The criticisms of psychoanalytic methodology are by now as numerous as the criticisms of the substantive doctrines. Nevertheless, as the journals provide the living proof, most psychoanalysts go serenely along, quite indifferent to, or ignorant of, this substantial body of criticism. I have no heart for adding to the body of the ignored. Instead I shall simply report on

something that ought to be of some mild interest to readers of this journal, to wit the first full-fledged psychoanalysis of vegetarians to appear in one of the learned journals.¹

It is rather remarkable, I think, that there has been very little "professional" speculation concerning why vegetarians are vegetarians. This essay reports on the single effort appearing in a psychoanalytic journal to delve into the mysteries of the vegetarian mind. To paraphrase Freud, we shall ask the burning question: WHAT DOES A VEGETARIAN WANT?

The pschoanalyst Stanley Friedman has analyzed a vegetarian and a pseudovegetarian and, on the basis of these two cases has drawn some wonderful conclusions. He labels his two cases as follows: (1) Intermittent, unconscious vegetarianism; (2) True vegetarianism. As it turns out, however, what one can say of the true variety one can as easily say of the other.

Case 1. A 40 year old man comes for therapy complaining of chronic

depression, retarded ejaculation, and occasional impotence. During the analysis it is revealed that occasionally he becomes nauseated while eating meat. Physical tests rule out gall bladder disease as the explanation. The analyst learns that the patient's mother nursed the patient's younger brother while he, the patient, had to drink cocoa. The analyst explains that the retarded ejaculation meant "Just as you didn't give me the nipple and milk, now I will refuse to give you any milk/semen from my nipple/penis.". He thus revenged himself on all women.

Case 2. A 27 year old man has appeared for therapy complaining of lifelessness and an inability to maintain relationships with women. He is, moreover, still a virgin. It turns out that he has been a vegetarian since age 5 but he denies discontent with that aspect of himself and says it has nothing to do with his seeking therapy. But, of course, he is wrong, because his "symptom" (i.e. his vegetarianism) reflects his fear of cannibalism. He thinks (unconsciously, of course,) that eating meat would make him "animalistic" and transform him into a killer and rapist. His vegetarianism derives from his intense castration anxiety, reinforced by his father's death when he, the patient,

was only 11. Incorporating dead flesh would bring him closer to his own death. He fears (unconsciously, of course) that women have teeth in their vaginas. So he fears on a projective basis that "since I have a penis and want to bite yours off, I can just imagine what women want to do to me". (It is not clear whether the quotation is being attributed to the patient or is the author's way of highlighting what he takes to be a standard interpretation of a castration fear.) The patient's vegetarianism interferes with his reading and learning. It does this because, as a vegetarian, he prefers to skim the surface of things; the patient doesn't want materials that are "difficult to digest"; he prefers not to read things that are too "meaty"; finally, he does not like to get at the "meat or the marrow" of matters.

In conclusion, it is a testimony to Friedman's tough, scientific mind that he does not want to draw any hasty conclusions from his two cases. Since, he says, the history of the psychoanalytic literature reveals many ego-alien impulses that did not lead to vegetarianism he can only conclude that oral cannibalistic wishes are necessary for the development of vegetarianism and not that they are sufficient.

Sidney Gendin
Eastern Michigan University

¹ I am indebted to Professor Edward Erwin for calling my attention to this article.