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FIQWS 10108 & 10008

27 September 2023

Doctors and Their Choices

You would think doctors would do the best of their ability to attend to their patients with empathy and respect. However, this isn't always the case. Patients suffering from hysteria have been left to fend for themselves and their pain is overlooked. In Freud's *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Freud illustrates the dismissive nature of some doctors compared to Dr. Breuer, one of the few doctors who have taken the initiative in helping patients; this contributes to the character John in "The Yellow Wallpaper," who represents Freud's criticism of dismissive doctors.

Throughout "Lecture One," Freud continuously talks about the doctor's attitude toward hysterical patients. Freud illustrates the behavior of a few doctors and shows their carelessness toward their patients that "it comes about that hysterical patients forfeit [the doctors] sympathy...And [the doctor] punishes them by withdrawing his interest from them,"(2201). Freud explains that some doctors show no care toward the patient and make them feel that what they suffer from is less important. Doctors think that just because they know nothing about hysteria, they can disregard it and not help or give comfort to the patient. Freud criticizes them in comparison to Dr. Breuer's treatment of patients, in which he was more inclined to try and help the patients. This portrays the ignorance that some doctors, fail to uphold the standards in saving

people. Freud sheds light on doctors who have no intention of helping hysterical patients and explains that “[the patient] whose vital internal organs (heart, kidneys, etc.) are shown on objective examination to be normal, but who has been subjected to violent emotional shocks..then doctors are not inclined to take the case too seriously,”(2200). Freud discusses that doctors could not distinguish the differences between organic and non-organic diseases. If doctors see that the patient's organs are alright despite the symptoms, they are less concerned. Due to this way of thinking, doctors would completely ignore the pleas of their patients and disregard them. Compared to Dr. Breuer, he took the time and tried to help the patients by using the “talking cure.” This cleaned the patients' minds of their trauma, helping Dr. Breuer find the cause of their hysteria and what triggered their responses.

As previously discussed, doctors were ignorant of hysteria and mental health. Similarly, in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the narrator experiences neglect with her husband who is also her doctor. Gilman writes, “It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?”(652). This describes what Freud talked about in his lecture and how doctors dismissed claims of how patients felt if they saw their vital organs were fine. John, the narrator's husband, reflects this behavior and cannot see that his wife is physically wrong so, he then believes there is nothing to worry about. While discussing it with her, he tries to convince her that it's all in her head and tries to gaslight her by questioning her reasoning clearly not taking into account her feelings. Unlike Dr. Breuer, his attitude was sympathetic and interested in his patient's concern. The narrator also wrote “John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him,” (Gilman, 649). Considering Freud's criticism of dismissive doctors in relation to John is similar, he continues to dismiss his wife's

concerns and feelings and doesn't believe she is sick. Ultimately, he ends up isolating the narrator and restricting her from work which proves to be an ineffective treatment, and the rest cure which prohibits working and any strenuous activity. This is detrimental to the narrator because she slowly loses herself. Doctors' view of people who suffered from hysteria was unsympathetic and their approach to patients dealing with hysteria was wrong and unhelpful.

In the end, Freud's negative critique of dismissive doctors shows how wrong that treatment is in comparison to Dr. Breuer, who was one of the few who showed concern for his patients and did what he could to help. The attitude of dismissive doctors is supported by the character John in "The Yellow Wallpaper," the importance of this is to convey how doctors were ignorant toward hysteria and mental health issues. Freud's criticism should be taken into account to make sure patients are treated with compassion and don't feel as if their doctor is disregarding them.

Work Cited

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