

SIGMUND FREUD FIVE LECTURES ON PSYCHOANALYSIS (1910)
(sometimes entitled The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis)

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In 1910, Freud was invited to give a series of lectures at Clark University in the USA in order to introduce the relatively new 'science' of Psychoanalysis to a North American audience. These were later published in the form given here. Freud begins by describing how Psychoanalysis originated in medical experiments which he conducted in conjunction with a Dr. Breuer in an attempt to discover the cause of ailments without any ascertainable physiological cause. Not insignificantly, the first 'patient' was a woman, henceforth establishing a close (even if always strained) and enduring relationship between Psychoanalysis and Feminism. The careful study of the case history of 'Anna O.' (a pseudonym) – her symptoms included rigid paralysis, restricted vision, fragmented speech – revealed to Freud that the pathology of her condition (and thus of many others) was not due to organic causes. He used hypnosis to trace her predicament to the scene (note the visual implications of this term, that is, what she saw and experienced) at her father's deathbed. What Freud was in fact doing is a move that has been integral to Psychoanalytic practice ever since: he sought to trace the 'parthenogenesis' of her physical symptoms. These, he argued, were "residues of emotional experiences" (14) and of the "psychical traumas" (14) suffered at her father's passing.

Freud came to the conclusion that the 'hysteria' from which Anna O. was thought to suffer from (and to which women in general were thought to be subject in the masculine world of nineteenth century medicine and earlier varieties thereof) was the product, essentially, of reminiscences. Neurotic symptoms are "mnemonic symbols of particular (traumatic) experiences" (16). (Note the tension which informs this and other writings of Freud between a manifest scientific terminology and a latent literary rhetoric [e.g. terms such as 'symbol' or, later, 'sublime'] derived from the conflict between the scientific aspirations of Freud's project and its dependency on literary and related sources of knowledge.) The crucial event here is the suppression of a powerful emotion, the symptoms of which intensify when the determining cause is approached once more and are reduced when it is removed. As Freud puts it, hysteria occurs when the "affects generated in the parthogenic situations had their normal outlet blocked" (18), the "strangled affects" () being put to abnormal use (i.e. they were rechannelled) and manifesting themselves in physical symptoms. (While a certain part of all mental excitation is expressed physically with the remainder being repressed, hysterical conversion in the face of traumatic situations exaggerates this process.)

In positing his famous dictum 'I think therefore I am,' Descartes had argued that one could become fully aware of the nature of one's self by a close examination of one's thoughts: nothing was or could be hidden from oneself with the result that full self-consciousness is possible. By contrast, Freud argues that the fact that Anna O. was not aware of this connection between her symptoms and the parthenogenetic scenes at the deathbed reveals the split nature of consciousness: there is both a conscious and an unconscious part to our selves. (In coming up with the notion of an unconscious, Freud rejects other contemporaneous medical theories: he rejects both his colleague Breuer's theory that there exists a hypnoid state, of which normal consciousness is unaware, which does not provide opportunities for the normal discharge of excitation and which produces corresponding physical symptoms, and Janet's theory that hysteria is due to the degeneration of the nervous system which eventuates in the weakening in the power of psychical synthesis.) It was Freud's view initially that, in the psyche, certain forces

emerge which resist conscious recall and operate to 'repress' the traumatic memories of the parthenogenetic experience. The fact that not all efforts to ward off painful memories produce such splitting of consciousness indicates, however, that there are other specific determinants involved as well. Later (and more importantly), Freud came to argue (somewhat differently) that all repressions have in common the emergence of a "wishful impulse" (24), most often sexual in nature, out of synch with the "ethical and aesthetic standards of the personality" (24). The "irreconcilable wish" (24) is repressed in order to maintain the moral "integrity" (24) of the personality. Psychical splitting is not due to a biological degeneration of the capacity for psychical synthesis as Janet contends: such "dissociation" (26) is the outcome of the conflict of two opposed "psychical groupings" (26), that is, certain ethical standards versus specific, most often sexual, desires which are in conflict with these standards.

Freud describes the mechanism by which physical symptoms are produced in the following manner: the suppression of an "intolerable wish" (27) gives rise to a "substitute" (27) form in the individual's consciousness (that is, an alternative but related idea). The pleasure sought in the gratification of the original desire becomes no longer pleasurable in the light of the individual's moral standards. The "unpleasure" (27) thought to have been avoided through substitution is then manifested in the form of a physical symptom(s) (this is, as it were, a secondary substitution) in which there are traces of an "indirect resemblance" (27) to the repressed idea. For example, a problem with swallowing might be linked to the individual's sentiment that a certain idea or view or desire was one which (s)he just could not swallow (or accept). The body, in this sense, 'speaks' a metaphorical language. The cure consists in leading the patient back along the path taken by the substitution of the physical symptom(s) for the original repression. Freud's 'talking cure' (the patient literally talks his/her problems over with the therapist, that is, constructs a narrative about him/herself) is a cathartic procedure independent of hypnosis and is proof that many forgotten memories are not forever lost but merely suspended in the unconscious. Thereafter, the patient may either be convinced that the repression was wrong (and the repressed wish thus liberated) or justified, whereupon the wish may be sublimated (rechannelled).

The key to understanding the repression is to focus on the substitutions, mental and physical, the extent of the distortion or complexity of which (some degree of resemblance must, at the same time, be retained) attests to the degree of resistance on the conscious part of the individual to the revelation of the repressed wishes (the repressed wishes and the form that their substitutions take together constitute what is termed the "neurosis" [28]). These ideas make an "allusion to the repressed element" (30) and much of what the patient says about him/herself will, via the free associations encouraged by the therapist on the part of the patient, indirectly refer to the 'complex,' i.e. the "group of interdependent ideational elements cathected with affect" (31), as Freud puts it. Resistance to revealing the repression may initiate pauses on the part of the patient that disguise themselves as "critical judgements about the value of the idea that has occurred to him" (32) – such as 'this trivial thing which I am about to tell you could not possibly be important.'

Psychoanalysis uses various interpretive devices upon the patient's "associative material" (32) revealed in this way (the narrative about his/her self, as it were, that (s)he is constructing) in order to detect the repressed wishes. Equally important, however, is the patient's dreams, his/her seemingly "haphazard actions" (33), his/her jokes, his/her slips of the tongue (parapraxes – the so-called Freudian slip [not a woman's undergarment]) and all the other pathological symptoms which indirectly allude to the patient's repressed desires. Everyday actions that may seem trivial are often, in fact, very

symptomatic of the individual's repressed wishes. Other such actions include: forgetfulness, misreadings, miswritings, doodles, mistatements, bungled actions, losing objects, breaking objects, fiddling with things, humming or fingering one's body.

However, it is the dream in particular which is, for Freud, the "royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious" (33) even though we generally tend to disregard it as irrelevant and nonsensical. The same interplay of repressive forces is at work in the 'dream-work' as in the construction of the pathological symptoms. In Freud's earliest formulation, dreams are wish-fulfilling fantasies, a view he came to revise somewhat: sometimes in dreams, he came to argue, we revisit traumatic situations in dream form in order to come to terms with them or master them. The alleged unintelligibility of dreams is explicable once one understands the dichotomy between the manifest (what the dream is ostensibly and often confusingly about) and the latent content (the repressed wishes which are disguised in and by the manifest content). The manifest content is the substitute for unconscious dream thoughts, that is, the "disguised fulfilment of repressed wishes" (36). The distortion inherent in the manifest content is due to the work of the ego's resistance.

The 'dream-work' is the term given to the process of distortion by which unconscious dream thoughts are formed into the manifest content of the dream. The main processes involved in this regard are those of "condensation" and "displacement" (36). Later, Freud's most important heir, Jacques Lacan, will argue that the unconscious is structured linguistically and will substitute the terms metaphor and metonymy for Freud's two terms respectively (see, in this regard, his "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious"). The raw material of dreams consists of more than merely the residue of the previous day's experiences: Freud came to argue that it is ultimately the ungratified sexual impulses of childhood which are the most important object of dreams and which it is the function of the dream-work to conceal. The sexual complexes are represented by a symbolism peculiar to each individual but which is consistent within all the dreams of that individual.

It is Freud's most important contention that the experiences of childhood play a crucial role in human development. The child is socialised and becomes an adult via the "numerous repressions" () and "sublimations" (36) of those bodily pleasures which are a natural part of the infant's experience. These repressions are, in fact, the foundation of civilisation which would not otherwise be possible were it not for the sacrifice of those pleasures (this he would term later the conflict between the pleasure and the reality principles). Anxiety is one example of the "ego's reaction in repudiation of repressed wishes that have become powerful" (37) and anxiety dreams occur when too much wish-fulfillment has occurred in dream-life and in contravention of the psyche's moral sense. As the scientific pretensions of psychoanalysis developed, Freud came to the conclusion that, like dreams, *all* neuroses have a "sexual aetiology" (40) (i.e. are sexual in origin). That is, all neurotic symptoms are traceable to the "erotic disturbances" (40) which occur during "infantile sexuality" (41). Moreover, the impressions and events experienced during early childhood and puberty lead to a later susceptibility to psychological traumas: the repressed sexual impulses of childhood not only provide power for the construction of symptoms but also the "reaction to later traumas would have taken a different course" (41) without them.

Freud's assertion that children possessed sexual desires was at the time (and still is) a real shocker. Infantile sexuality, he argues, is present from birth and leads via several stages (oral, anal, etc.) to what Freud describes initially as the "normal sexuality of the adult" (42). He came to the view that any given adult sexual practice is normal only in so far as it meets certain social criteria of behaviour. Heterosexuality is, he would come to

argue, the function of repression. Initially, however, the child's desires are 'polymorphously perverse' to use a particularly resonant phrase which he would come up with elsewhere. Sexual difference plays no role at this stage as the cathexis of the child's affections are both hetero- and homosexual in organisation. The child's sexual instinct (the German word 'triebe' denoted by 'instinct' is most often today translated more accurately by the word 'drive') is at this stage "independent of the reproductive function, into the service of which it will later be brought" (43). It "serves for the acquisition of different kinds of pleasurable feeling" (43) not limited to the genital organs but extending over the entire surface of the body but which may be grouped under the idea of "sexual pleasure" (43). Infantile sexual pleasure, or "libido" (43), is based on the "appropriate excitation" (44) of various sensitive parts of the body, oral, anal, urethral, the skin, etc. (that is, stimulation of any of what Freud called the "erotogenic zones" [44]).

The first stage of infantile sexuality consists of "autoerotism" (44), i.e. thumb-sucking, masturbation, etc. At the same time, the infant also takes the nearest extraneous person as the object of his/her libido (it does not differentiate between its own and other bodies at this stage): during this period, the most important "object-choice" (45) is precisely that person who ensures by meeting its nutritional needs both the child's preservation and satisfaction – the (m)other and, in particular, her breast. Freud's term for this attachment to the mother as the principle object of its libido is the Oedipal complex, named evidently after the situation described in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex.

The child's "dissociated sexual life" (44) is eventually organised in two main directions. Firstly, the separate instincts/drives are eventually subordinated to the genital zone: the "whole sexual life enters in the service of reproduction" (45). The instinctual sexual pleasures will be repressed by certain familial educational practices that frown upon certain activities: cocophylic impulses, for example, are a real 'no-no.' Secondly, the extraneous object-choice gradually and entirely pushes the child's autoeroticism into the background. Ultimately, however, it is this "fixation to the figures to which the child's original object-choice was attached" (45), to wit, the mother, in particular, which will need to be repressed because of the universal cultural prohibition against incest. The process by which this occurs resolves the Oedipal complex.

It must be pointed out that Freud's initial account of the Oedipal complex is biased in that it is one that largely concerns the 'psychosexual' development of the *male* individual. The infant boy, in Freud's early formulation of the Oedipal complex, is motivated by his desire for the mother to wish to replace the father, a rival for his mother's affections, with himself. (In order to understand the Oedipal complex of the infant girl, Carl Jung, initially Freud's colleague and later his rival, would simply and symmetrically invert this whole process which he would term the Electra complex). The boy's desire for the mother is erotic in nature. He views the mother's body as an undifferentiated extension of his own. This affective relationship with his mother during what is termed the dyadic phase of the Oedipal complex is subjected to repression precisely at the moment of the intrusion of a third party, the father, into the hitherto essentially exclusive mother-son relationship: the father forbids access to the satisfaction afforded by the mother's body and the infant's sense of indistinction therefrom on threat of castration. It must be pointed out that this is all going on not at some obvious level: that is, the father does not have to say out loud 'don't touch my wife or else,' or something of the sort. In a massively elliptical manner that foregrounds the role of vision inherent in the whole process (what Freud's French heirs with the French gift of the gab would come to term a 'specular economy'), Freud contends that it is the sight of the mother's vagina, which appears as a lack or a gap in contrast to the fullness (or, to use another popular French phrase, the plenitude) of his own phallic member, which causes him to fear that

this too could happen to him. The male child balances concern for the preservation of his penis with his desire for satisfaction (the pleasure afforded by unmitigated contact with the mother's body conceived as his own but which necessitates the severing of the penis) and, in the normal course of development, opts for the former. It is in this manner that the male child develops a sense of separateness from his mother and thus a sense of a distinct self. It is this moment, which occurs during the triangular phase of the Oedipal complex involving mother, son and father, that is destined to exert a lasting influence on the psycho-sexual development of the individual: the unconscious is formed precisely at the moment when, in the normal scheme of things, desire for the mother is repressed. Indeed, the unconscious is formed out of and thus consists of the repressed desire for the mother at the same time that a sense of the prevailing ethical norms of the social milieu into which the child has been born (represented by the threatening figure of the father) is simultaneously internalised (the superego). It is in this manner that the psyche is split into the ego/consciousness, the unconscious, and the superego/conscience.

Freud came to recognise the heterosexual bias that underpins his early formulation of the Oedipal complex, arguing that the child's polymorphously perverse desires could be directed towards a parent of either sex. The male child might, for example, want to be copulated with by the father (this is the case with one of his patients to whom he gave the pseudonym the Wolfman). Also, he attempted to articulate an understanding of the way in which women pass through this Oedipal period in terms of his theory of the penis envy to which women are allegedly subject, a notion to which many, perhaps most, feminists have taken exception. (See such articles by Freud as "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes", "The Dissolution of the Oedipal Complex" and "Femininity" in this regard.)

Where this process does not proceed apace, complications in later life may ensue. Sexuality is, in this sense, the "nuclear complex of every neurosis" (47). All neuroses are rooted in the infantile stage of sexuality, in the unresolved complex of the child's desire for the mother. By focusing on the child's psychosexual development" (48), psychoanalysis effects the "prolongation of education for the purpose of overcoming the residues of childhood" (48), as Freud puts it. It should be clear that the male adult's "social fitness" (48) derives from his detachment at a certain age from the fixation of his libido on his mother, that is, his normality is a function of a necessary process of repression. The necessary concomitant of this is that neurotic illnesses are the result of frustrated "erotic needs in reality" (49), pathological symptoms being substituted for a "portion of the subject's sexual activity or even the whole of his sexual life" (49). Repressed sexual instincts are reluctant to give up their "substitutive satisfaction" (49) if no better alternative can be found. The flight from an unsatisfactory reality takes a "temporal" (49) form of a return to an earlier stage of sexual development and a "formal" (49) one where "original and primitive methods of psychical expression" (49) are employed.

To give an example which Freud does not mention here, in the case of the "Wolfman", the primal scene (which consists of the sight of copulation between mother and father) led the Wolfman to interpret the sight of the mother's vagina as a wound, castration thus becoming a precondition for intercourse with the father. The Wolfman transposed a homosexual wish to be copulated with by his father (the proof of which was the genital excitement felt by the child watching his parents make love) into repressed desires that later manifested themselves as various physical symptoms. (See, in this regard, his Three Case Studies.)

All mental products, including artistic and other forms of creation, are neuroses in a way (or, rather, they are healthy alternatives to neuroses). They are wish-fulfilling fantasies that make up for the insufficiency, in some way, of reality. They are fantasies

that could have become physical symptoms. Energetic men (and women) when frustrated by external obstacles often resort to fantasies but the danger always exists of a regression to an earlier stage of sexuality: any physical neurosis is a refuge where artistic expression is absent or unattainable and where the libido follows the path of regression to revive infantile wishes. Art, in Freud's view, is a form of compensation akin to a dream. Accordingly, the language of a literary work can be analysed like a dream for what it reveals about the author's psyche and his/her repressed desires, attention being paid in particular to process of condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy) therein.

'Transference' is Freud's term for the process which catalyses and liberates affects that were repressed and hidden from the memory. It allows the patient to re-experience them in relation to the physician and thus to bring them out into the open. It allows the patient to see and thus be aware of the power of his unconscious sexual impulses. It is the true vehicle of therapeutic cures: the patient acts out the hidden impulses in his behaviour towards the psychoanalyst.

Indeed, according to one school of thought, Psychoanalysis operates as one of the most important civilising tools precisely because, far from liberating the instincts and destroying a patient's "cultural character" (53), it actually serves to weaken those impulses by making them conscious. The liberated impulses are deflected along relatively harmless paths by replacing the repression with "rational condemnation" (53) or their "sublimation" (53) along higher, less sexual and more "socially valuable" (53) avenues. The school of psychoanalysis in question, American Ego-Psychology, would later emphasise this process whereby the ego must of necessity gain ascendancy over the repressed desires which constitute the unconscious if civilisation is to prosper. Freud warns, however, that the individual's happiness does not consist in merely the advancement of civilisation: some energy must be devoted to satisfying "what was originally animal in our nature" (54). To ignore the animal in us would be to imperil civilisation and culture which necessarily has a undeniable physical basis in man's human, i.e. animal nature.