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Fantasy and the origins of sexuality¹

Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis

From its earliest day, psychoanalysis has been concerned with the material of fantasy. In the initial case of Anna O., Breuer was apparently content to plunge into the patient's inner world of imagination, into her "private theatre," in order to achieve catharsis through verbalization and emotive expression. "I used to visit her in the evening," he writes, "when I knew I should find her in her hypnosis, and I then relieved her of the whole stock of imaginative products which she had accumulated since my last visit (Breuer and Freud, p. 30)."

It is remarkable to note, when studying this case, how Breuer, unlike Freud, is little concerned to recover the elements of experience which might underlie these daydreams. The event which provoked the trauma is considered to contain an imaginary element, a hallucination leading to trauma. There is a circular relationship between the fantasy and the dissociation of consciousness which leads to the formation of an unconscious nucleus: fantasy becomes trauma when it arises from a special hypnoid state but, equally, the panic states it induces help to create this fundamental state by a process of autohypnosis.

If Breuer worked from within the world of imagination and tried

to reduce its pathogenic force without reference to extrinsic factors, the same can be said of the methods of certain contemporary analysts, notably the followers of Melanie Klein. Firstly, the imaginary dramas underlying the verbal or behavioural material produced by the patient during the session—for instance, introjection or projection of the breast or penis, intrusions, conflicts or compromises with good or bad objects and so on—are made explicit and verbalized (no doubt in this case by the analyst (Klein, 1960)). A successful outcome to the treatment, if it does lead eventually to a better adaptation to reality, is not expected from any corrective initiative, but from the dialectic “integration” of the fantasies as they emerge. Ultimately, the introjection of the good object (no less imaginary than the bad), permits a fusion of the instincts in an equilibrium based on the predominance of the libido over the death instinct.

Fantasy, in German “Phantasie,” is the term used to denote the imagination, and not so much the faculty of imagining (the philosophers’ *Einbildungskraft*) as the imaginary world and its contents, the imaginings or fantasies into which the poet or the neurotic so willingly withdraws. In the scenes which the patient describes, or which are described to him by the analyst, the fantastic element is unmistakable. It is difficult therefore to avoid defining this world in terms of what it is not, the world of reality. This opposition antedates psychoanalysis by many centuries, but is liable to prove restrictive both to psychoanalytic theory and practice.

Psychoanalysts have fared rather badly with the theory itself, all too often basing it on a very elementary theory of knowledge.

Analysts such as Melanie Klein, with techniques devoid of any therapeutic intention, are, more than others, careful to distinguish between the contingent imagery of daydreams and the structural function and permanence of what they call “unconscious phantasies”. (We shall discuss this distinction later.) Yet in the last resort they maintain that the latter are “false perceptions”. The “good” and “bad” object should, for us, always be framed in quotation marks,² even though the whole evolution of the patient will occur within this framework.

Turning to Freud, we shall find a marked ambiguity of his conceptions as new avenues open out to him with each new stage in his ideas. If we start with the most accepted formulation of his

doctrine, the world of fantasy seems to be located exclusively within the domain of opposition between subjective and objective, between an inner world, where satisfaction is obtained through illusion, and an external world, which gradually, through the medium of perception, asserts the supremacy of the reality principle. The unconscious thus appears to inherit the patient’s original world, which was solely subject to the pleasure principle. The fantasy world is not unlike the nature reserves which are set up to preserve the original natural state of the country:

With the introduction of the reality principle one species of thought-activity was split off; it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subject to the pleasure principle alone. This activity is “fantasying” (Freud, 1911, p. 222).

The strangest characteristic of unconscious processes is due to their entire disregard of reality testing; they equate reality of thought with external actuality, and wishes with their fulfilment (Freud, 1911, p. 225).

This absence of the “standards of reality” in the unconscious may lead to its being depreciated as a lesser being, a less differentiated state.

In psychoanalytic practice any inadequacy of the conceptual background cannot fail to make itself felt. It is no purely formal necessity to recall how many techniques are founded on this opposition between the real and the imaginary, and which envisage the integration of the pleasure principle into the reality principle, a process which the neurotic is supposed to have only partially achieved. No doubt any analyst would find it incorrect to invoke “realities” external to the treatment, since the material must be developed in the context of the analyst-patient relationship, the transference. But unless we are careful, any interpretation of the transference: “You are treating me as if I ...” will imply the underlying “... and you know very well that I am not really what you think I am.”

Fortunately we are saved by the technique: we do not actually make this underlying comment.³ Speaking more fundamentally, the analytical rule should be understood as a Greek epoch, an absolute suspension of all reality judgments. This places us on the same level as the unconscious, which knows no such judgments. A patient tells

us that he is an adopted child, and relates fantasies in which, while searching for his true mother, he perceives that she is a society woman turned prostitute. Here we recognize the banal theme of the "family romance", which might equally well have been composed by a child who had not been adopted. In the course of our "phenomenological reduction" we should no longer make any distinction, except to interpret, as a "defence by reality", the documents which the patient brings to prove his adoption.⁴

Preoccupied, understandably, by the urge to discover at what level he was working, Freud does not come out so well when he has to justify the suspension of reality judgments in the course of treatment. At first he feels it almost his duty to show the patient what is under the counter. But, caught like the patient himself between the alternatives real-imaginary, he runs the double risk of either seeing the patient lose all interest in the analysis, if he is told that the material produced is nothing but imagination (*Einbildung*), or of incurring his reproaches later for having encouraged him to take his fantasies for realities (Freud, 1916-17, p. 368). Freud has recourse here to the notion of "psychical reality," a new dimension not immediately accessible to the analysand. But what does Freud mean by this term?

Frequently it means nothing more than the reality of our thoughts, of our personal world, a reality at least as valid as that of the material world and, in the case of neurotic phenomena, decisive. If we mean by this that we contrast the reality of psychological phenomena with "material reality" (Freud, 1916-17, p. 369), the reality of thought with "external actuality" (Freud, 1911, p. 225), we are in fact just saying that we are dealing with what is imaginary, with the subjective, but that this subjective is our object: the object of psychology is as valid as that of the sciences of material nature. And even the term itself, "psychical reality," shows that Freud felt he could only confer the dignity of object on psychological phenomena by reference to material reality, for he asserts that "they too possess a reality of a sort" (Freud, 1916-17, p. 368). In the absence of any new category, the suspension of reality judgments leads us once more into the "reality" of the purely subjective.

Yet this is not Freud's last word. When he introduces this concept of "psychical reality," in the last lines of the Interpretation of Dreams, which sums up his thesis that a dream is not a

fantasmagoria, but a text to be deciphered, Freud does not define it as constituting the whole of the subjective, like the psychological field, but as a heterogeneous nucleus within this field, a resistant element, alone truly real, in contrast with the majority of psychological phenomena:

Whether we are to attribute reality to unconscious wishes, I cannot say. It must be denied, of course, to any transitional or intermediate thoughts. If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that psychical reality is a particular form of existence which is not to be confused with material reality.⁵

There are therefore three kinds of phenomena (or of realities, in the widest sense of the word): material reality, the reality of intermediate thoughts or of the psychological field, and the reality of unconscious wishes and their "truest shape": fantasy. If Freud, again and again, finds and then loses the notion of psychical reality, this is not due to any inadequacy of his conceptual apparatus: the difficulty and ambiguity lie in the very nature of its relationship, to the real and to the imaginary, as is shown in the central domain of fantasy.⁶

The years 1895-1899 which completed the discovery of psychoanalysis are significant not only because of the dubious battle taking place but also because of the oversimplified way in which its history is written.

If we read, for instance, Kris's introduction to the Origins of Psychoanalysis (Freud, 1950),⁷ the evolution of Freud's views seems perfectly clear: the facts, and more especially Freud's own self-analysis, apparently led him to abandon his theory of seduction by an adult. The scene of seduction which until then represented for him the typical form of psychological trauma is not a real event but a fantasy which is itself only the product of, and a mask for, the spontaneous manifestations of infantile sexual activity. In his "History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement" Freud (1914) thus traces the development of his theory from his experience:

If hysterical subjects trace back their symptoms to traumas that are fictitious, then the new fact which emerges is precisely that they create such scenes in fantasy, and this psychical reality requires to

be taken into account alongside practical reality. This reflection was soon followed by the discovery that these fantasies were intended to cover up the autoerotic activity of the first years of childhood, to embellish it and raise it to a higher plane. And now, from behind the fantasies, the whole range of a child's sexual life came to light.

Freud would, in these lines, be admitting his error in imputing to the "outside" something that concerns the "inside".

The very words, theory of sexual seduction, should arrest our attention: the elaboration of a schema to explain the aetiology of neuroses, and not the purely clinical observation of the frequency of the seduction of children by adults, nor even a simple hypothesis that such occurrences would preponderate among the different kinds of traumas. Freud was concerned theoretically to justify the connection he had discovered between sexuality, trauma, and defence: to show that it is in the very nature of sexuality to have a traumatic effect and, inversely, that one cannot finally speak of trauma as the origin of neurosis except to the extent that sexual seduction has occurred. As this thesis becomes established (1895–1897), the role of the defensive conflict in the genesis of hysteria, and of the defence in general, is fully recognized, although the aetiological function of trauma is not thereby reduced. The notions of defence and trauma are closely articulated one to the other: the theory of seduction, by showing how only a sexual trauma has the power to activate a "pathological defence" (repression) is an attempt to do justice to a clinically established fact (Studies on Hysteria), that repression concerns specifically sexuality.

We should consider a moment the schema propounded by Freud. The action of the trauma can be broken down into various time sequences and always implies the existence of at least two events. In the first scene, called "seduction scene," the child is subjected to a sexual approach from the adult ("attempt" or simply advances), without arousing any sexual excitation in himself. To try to describe such a scene as traumatic would be to abandon the somatic model of trauma, since there is neither an afflux of external excitation nor an overflow of the defences. If it can be described as sexual, it is only from the point of view of the external agent, the adult. But the child has neither the somatic requisites of excitation nor the representations to enable him to integrate the event:

although sexual in terms of objectivity, it has no sexual connotation for the subject, it is "presexually sexual" (Freud, 1950, letter 30). As for the second scene, which occurs after puberty, it is, one might say, even less traumatic than the first: being non-violent, and apparently of no particular significance, its only power lies in being able to evoke the first event, retroactively, by means of association. It is then the recall of the first scene which sets off the upsurge of sexual excitation, catching the ego in reverse, and leaving it disarmed, incapable of using the normally outward-directed defences, and thus falling back on a pathological defence, or "posthumous primary process"; the recollection is repressed.

If we dwell on concepts which might, at first sight, appear only of historic interest since they seem to presuppose an innocent child, without sexuality, thus contradicting undeniable later findings, it is not solely to outline the various stages of a discovery.

This explanatory schema, which Freud described as *proton pseudos*, is of remarkable value in considering the significance of human sexuality. In fact, it introduces two major propositions. On the one hand, in the first stage, sexuality literally breaks in from outside, intruding forcibly into the world of childhood, presumed to be innocent, where it is encysted as a simple happening without provoking any defence reaction—not in itself a pathogenic event. On the other hand, in the second stage, the pressure of puberty having stimulated the physiological awakening of sexuality, there is a sense of unpleasure, and the origin of this unpleasure is traced to the recollection of the first event, an external event which has become an inner event, an inner "foreign body", which now breaks out from within the subject.⁸

This is a surprising way to settle the question of trauma. The question often arises, whether it is an afflux of external excitation which creates the trauma or whether, on the contrary, it is the internal excitation, the drive, which, lacking an outlet, creates a "state of helplessness"⁹ in the subject.

However, with the theory of seduction, we may say that the whole of the trauma comes both from within and without: from without, since sexuality reaches the subject from the other;¹⁰ from within, since it springs from this internalised exteriority, this "reminiscence suffered by hysterics" (according to the Freudian formula), reminiscence in which we already discern what will be

later named fantasy. This is an attractive solution, but it is liable to collapse when the meaning of each term deviates: the external towards the event, the internal towards the endogenous and biological.

Let us look at the seduction theory more positively and try to salvage its deeper meaning. It is Freud's first and sole attempt to establish an intrinsic relationship between repression and sexuality.¹¹ He finds the mainspring of this relationship, not in any "content", but in the temporal characteristics of human sexuality, which make it a privileged battlefield between both too much and too little excitement, both too early and too late occurrence of the event: "Here we have the one possibility of a memory subsequently producing a more powerful release than that produced by the corresponding experience itself" (Draft K). Hence the repartition of the trauma into two stages, as the psychological trauma can only be conceived as arising from something already there, the reminiscence of the first scene.

But how can we conceive the formation of this "already there," and how can this first scene, which is "pre-sexually sexual", acquire a meaning for the subject? Given a perspective which tends to reduce temporal dimensions to chronology, one must either embark on an infinite regression in which each scene acquires sexual quality solely through the evocation of an earlier scene without which it would have no meaning for the subject or, on the other hand, one must stop short arbitrarily at a "first" scene, however inconceivable it may be.

No doubt the doctrine of an innocent world of childhood into which sexuality is introduced by perverse adults is pure illusion: illusion, or rather a myth, whose very contradictions betray the nature. We must conceive of the child both as outside time, a *bon sauvage*, and as one already endowed with sexuality, at least in germ, which is ready to be awakened; we must accept the idea of an intrusion from without into an interior which perhaps did not exist as such before this intrusion; we must reconcile the passivity which is implied by merely receiving meaning from outside with the minimum of activity necessary for the experience even to be acknowledged, and the indifference of innocence with the disgust which the seduction is assumed to provoke. To sum up, we have a subject who is pre-subjectal, who receives his existence, his sexual

existence, from without, before a distinction between within and without is achieved.

Forty years later Ferenczi (1933) was to take up the theory of seduction and give it analogous importance. His formulations are no doubt less rigorous than Freud's, but they have the advantage of filling out the myth with two essential ingredients: behind the facts, and through their mediation, it is a new language, that of passion, which is introduced by the adult into the infantile "language" of tenderness. On the other hand, this language of passion is the language of desire, necessarily marked by prohibition, a language of guilt and hatred, including the sense of annihilation linked with orgasmic pleasure.¹² The fantasy of the primal scene with its character of violence shows the child's introjection of adult eroticism.

Like Freud in 1895, Ferenczi is led to assign a chronological location to this intrusion, and to presuppose a real nature of the child before seduction. One might, on the other hand, be tempted to close the discussion once and for all by introducing the concept of myth: the seduction would become the myth of the origin of sexuality by the introjection of adult desire, fantasy and "language". The relationship of the myth to the time factor (the event) is present and, as it were, embedded in the myth itself. But we cannot rest there. This myth (or fantasy) of the intrusion of the fantasy (or myth) into the subject, cannot but occur to the organism, the little human being, at a point in time, by virtue of certain characteristics of his biological evolution, in which we can already distinguish what is too much or too little, too early (birth) and too late (puberty).

In 1897 Freud abandoned his theory of seduction. On September 21st he wrote to Fliess:

I will confide in you at once the great secret that has been slowly dawning on me in the last few months: I no longer believe in my neurotica . . .

He adduces a number of arguments. Some were factual: the impossibility of conducting analyses to their conclusion, that is, back to the first pathogenic event; even in the deepest psychosis—where the unconscious seems the most accessible—the key to the enigma is not available. Others were of a logical nature: one would have to generalize the father's perversity even beyond the cases of

hysteria, since when hysteria supervenes it entails the intervention of other factors. On the other hand, and this is the point that interests us,

... there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between the truth and fiction that is cathected with affect.

Two solutions are mentioned by Freud, either to consider fantasies of childhood as only the retroactive effect of a reconstruction performed by the adult (which would amount to the Jungian concept of retrospective fantasies (*Zurückphantasieren*) which Freud rejected), or to revert to the idea of hereditary predisposition. If this second possibility—which Freud admitted he had always “repressed”—returns to favour, it is because the search for the first scene has led to an impasse. But it is also because Freud, momentarily at a loss, did not succeed in isolating the positive element, lying beyond the realistic chronological approach, in the seduction theory. If the event evades us, then the alternative factor, constitution, is rehabilitated. Since reality, in one of its forms, is absent, and proves to be only fiction, then we must seek elsewhere for a reality on which this fiction is based.

When the historians of psychoanalysis tell us, picking up Freud’s own version of his evolution, that the abandonment of the seduction theory in the face of facts cleared the ground for the discovery of infantile sexuality, they oversimplify a much more involved process. To a contemporary psychoanalyst, to Kris as to us, infantile sexuality is inseparable from the Oedipus complex. And in effect, at the very moment of the “abandonment” of seduction, we find three themes predominant in the correspondence with Fliess: infantile sexuality, fantasy, and the Oedipus complex. But the real problem lies in their interrelation. And we find that inasmuch as real trauma and the seduction scene have been effectively swept away,¹³ they have not been replaced by the Oedipus complex but by the description of a spontaneous infantile sexuality, basically endogenous in development. Libidinal stages succeeding each other in a natural and regular evolution, fixation considered as an inhibition of development, genetic regression, form at least one of the perspectives suggested in the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905). In this direction, we must notice that the second Essay, on Infantile

Sexuality, discusses neither the Oedipus complex nor fantasy. An article which appeared at the same time as the *Three Essays* is typical of this point of view: in it Freud is able to discuss his “Views on the Part Played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses” (1906) without a single word about the Oedipus complex. The sexual development of the child is here defined as endogenous, and determined by the sexual constitution:

Accidental influences derived from experience having thus receded into the background, the factors of constitution and heredity necessarily gained the upper hand once more; but there was this difference between my views and those prevailing in other quarters, that on my theory the “sexual constitution” took the place of a “general neuropathic disposition”.

It may however be objected that it was also in 1897, at the very moment when he abandoned the seduction theory, that Freud in his self-analysis discovered the Oedipus complex. We should emphasize, though, that in spite of Freud’s immediate recognition of its importance, the Oedipus complex was, for twenty years, to lead a marginal existence alongside his theoretical syntheses. It was deliberately set apart in a section devoted to “the choice of objects at puberty” (in the *Three Essays*), or to studies of “typical dreams” (in *The Interpretation of Dreams*). In our opinion the discovery of the Oedipus complex in 1897 was neither the cause of the abandonment of the seduction theory, nor clearly indicated as its successor. It seems much more probable that, being encountered in a “wild” form in the seduction theory, the Oedipus complex nearly suffered the same fate of being replaced by biological realism.

Freud himself recognized, much later, all that was positive and foreboding in the seduction theory: “here I had stumbled for the first time upon the Oedipus complex” (1925) or again,

I came to understand that hysterical symptoms are derived from fantasies and not from real occurrences. It was only later that I was able to recognize in this fantasy of being seduced by the father the expression of the typical Oedipus complex ... (1933).¹⁴

At that time (1897) Freud had discarded on the one hand the idea, contained in the seduction theory, of a foreign body which introduces human sexuality into the subject from without, and, on

the other hand, discovered that the sexual drive becomes active before puberty. But for some time he was not able to articulate the Oedipus complex with infantile sexuality. If the latter existed, as clinical observation undoubtedly proved, it could henceforward only be conceived as biological reality, fantasy being no more than the secondary expression of this reality. The scene in which the subject describes his seduction by an older companion is, in fact, a double disguise: pure fantasy is converted into real memory, and spontaneous sexual activity into passivity.¹⁵ One is no longer justified in attributing psychical reality—in the stricter sense sometimes employed by Freud—to the fantasy, since reality is now totally attributed to an endogenous sexuality, and since fantasies are only considered to be a purely imaginary efflorescence of this sexuality.

Something was lost with the discarding of the seduction theory: beneath the conjunction and the temporal interplay of the two "scenes" there lay a pre-subjective structure, beyond both the strict happening and the internal imagery. The prisoner of a series of theoretical alternatives, subject-object, constitution-event, internal-external, imaginary-real, Freud was for a time led to stress the first terms of these "pairs of opposites".

This would suggest the following paradox: at the very moment when fantasy, the fundamental object of psychoanalysis, is discovered, it is in danger of seeing its true nature obscured by the emphasis on an endogenous reality, sexuality, which is itself supposed to be in conflict with a normative, prohibitory external reality, which imposes on it various disguises. We have indeed the fantasy, in the sense of a product of the imagination, but we have lost the structure. Inversely, with the seduction theory we had, if not the theory, at least an intuition of the structure (seduction appearing as an almost universal datum, which in any case transcended both the event and, so to speak, its protagonists). The ability to elaborate the fantasy was however, if not unknown, at least underestimated.

It would be taking a very limited view to describe as follows the evolution of Freud's ideas during the period around 1897: from historical foundation of the symptoms to the establishment of an ultimately biological theory, to the causal sequence, sexual constitution@fantasy@symptom. Freud never makes the theory entirely his own until he is obliged to present his aetiological views in systematic fashion. If we intended, which we do not, to present a

step-by-step account of the development of his thought, we should have to distinguish at least two other currents in this central period.

The one derives from the fresh understanding of fantasy which is effective from 1896 onwards: fantasy is not merely material to be analysed, whether appearing as fiction from the very start (as in daydreaming) or whether it remains to be shown that it is a construction contrary to appearances (as in screen-memory), it is also the result of analysis, an end-product, a latent content to be revealed behind the symptom. From mnesic symbol of trauma, the symptom has become the stage-setting of fantasies (thus a fantasy of prostitution, of street-walking, might be discovered beneath the symptom of agoraphobia).

Freud now starts to explore the field of these fantasies, to make an inventory, and to describe their most typical forms. Fantasies are now approached from two aspects at once, both as manifest data and latent content; and, located thus at the crossroads, they acquire in due course the consistency of an object, the specific object of psychoanalysis. Henceforward analysis will continue to treat fantasy as "psychical reality" whilst exploring its variants and above all analysing its processes and structure. Between 1897 and 1906 appear all the great works which explore the mechanisms of the unconscious, that is to say, the transformations (in the geometric sense of the word) of fantasy, namely, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905).

But, and here is the third current, the development of Freudian research and psychoanalytic treatment display at the outset a regressive tendency towards the origin, the foundation of the symptom and the neurotic organization of the personality. If fantasy is shown to be an autonomous, consistent and explorable field, it leaves untouched the question of its own origin, not only with regard to structure, but also to content and to its most concrete details. In this sense nothing has changed, and the search for chronology, going backwards into time towards the first real, verifiable elements, is still the guiding principle of Freud's practice.

Speaking of one of his patients, he writes in 1899:

Buried deep beneath all his fantasies we found a scene from his primal period (before twenty-two months) which meets all

requirements and into which all the surviving puzzles flow (Letter 126).

A little later we come across these lines, eloquent of his passion for investigation, pursued ever deeper and with certainty of success, and the resort to a third person, if necessary, to verify the accuracy of his enquiry:

In the evenings I read prehistory, etc., without any serious purpose [our italics], and otherwise my only concern is to lead my cases calmly towards solution. . . . In E's case the second real scene is coming up after years of preparation, and it is one that it may perhaps be possible to confirm objectively by asking his elder sister. Behind it there is a third, long-suspected scene. . . . (Letter 127).

Freud defines these scenes from earliest infancy, these true scenes, as Urszenen (original or primal scenes). Later, as we know, the term will be reserved for the child's observation of parental coitus. The reference is to the discussion in *From the History of a Childhood Neurosis* (1918) of the relationship between the pathogenic dream and the primal scene on which it is based. When reading the first draft of the clinical account composed during "the winter of 1914/15, shortly after the end of treatment", one is struck by the passionate conviction which urges Freud, like a detective on the watch, to establish the reality of the scene down to its smallest details. If such concern is apparent so long after the abandonment of the seduction theory, it is surely a proof that Freud had never entirely resigned himself to accepting such scenes as purely imaginary creations. Although discarded as concerns the seduction scene, the question re-emerges in identical terms twenty years later, in the case of the observation of parental coitus by the Wolf Man. The discovery of infantile sexuality has not invalidated in Freud's mind the fundamental schema underlying the seduction theory: the same deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*) is constantly invoked; we meet once more the two events (here the scene and the dream), separated in the temporal series, the first remaining un-understood and, as it were, excluded within the subject, to be taken up later in the elaboration of the second occasion.¹⁶ The fact that the whole process develops in the first years of infancy affects nothing essential in the theoretical model.

It is well known that before publishing his manuscript Freud added, in 1917, two long discussions which showed that he was disturbed by the Jungian theory of retrospective fantasy (*Zurückphantasieren*). He admits that since the scene is, in analysis, the culmination of a reconstruction, it might indeed have been constructed by the subject himself, but he nevertheless insists that perception has at least furnished some indications, even if it were only the copulation of dogs. . . .

But, more particularly, just at the moment when Freud appears to lose hope of support from the ground of reality—ground so shifting on further enquiry—he introduces a new concept, that of the *Urphantasien*, primal (or original) fantasy. The need for a theoretical foundation has now undergone a veritable transmutation. Since it has proved impossible to determine whether the primal scene is something truly experienced by the subject, or a fiction, we must in the last resort seek a foundation in something which transcends both individual experience and what is imagined.

For us too it is only at a deferred date (*nachträglich*) that the full meaning of this new direction of Freud's thought becomes apparent. Nothing appears to be changed: there is the same pursuit of an ultimate truth, the same schema is used once more, the dialectic of the two successive historical events, the same disappointment—as if Freud had learned nothing—as the ultimate event, the "scene", disappears over the horizon. But simultaneously, thanks to what we have described as the second current, there is the discovery of the unconscious as a structural field, which can be reconstructed, since it handles, decomposes and recomposes its elements according to certain laws. This will henceforward permit the quest for origins to take on a new dimension.

In the concept of original fantasy,¹⁷ there is a continuation of what we might call Freud's desire to reach the bedrock of the event (and if this disappears by refraction or reduction, then one must look further back still), and the need to establish the structure of the fantasy itself by something other than the event.

The original fantasies constitute this "store of unconscious fantasies of all neurotics, and probably of all human beings" (Freud, 1915, p. 269). These words alone suggest that it is not solely the empirical fact of frequency, nor even generality, which characterises them. If "the same fantasies with the same content are created on

every occasion" (1916, p. 370), if, beneath the diversity of individual fables we can recover some "typical" fantasies,¹⁸ it is because the historical life of the subject is not the prime mover, but rather something antecedent, which is capable of operating as an organizer.

Freud saw only one possible explanation of this antecedence, and that was phylogenesis:

It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us in analysis as fantasy ... were once real occurrences in the primaevaeal times of the human family [what was factual reality would, in this case, have become psychological reality] and that children in their fantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truths.

Thus once again a reality is postulated beneath the elaborations of fantasy, but a reality which, as Freud insists, has an autonomous and structural status with regard to the subject who is totally dependent on it. He pursues this some considerable way, since he admits the possibility of discordance between the schema and individual experiences, which would lead to psychological conflict.¹⁹

It is tempting to accept the "reality" which inspires the work of imagination according to its own laws, as a prefiguration of the "symbolic order" defined by Levi-Strauss and Lacan in the ethnological and psychoanalytic fields respectively. These scenes, which Freud traces back in Totem and Taboo to the prehistory of man, are attributed by him to primaevaeal man (Urmensch), to the primal father (Urvater). He invokes them, less in order to provide a reality which escapes him in individual history, than to assign limits to the "imaginary" which cannot contain its own principle of organization.

Beneath the pseudo-scientific mask of phylogenesis, or the recourse to "inherited memory-traces", we should have to admit that Freud finds it necessary to postulate an organization made of signifiers anteceding the effect of the event and the signified as a whole. In this mythical prehistory of the species we see the need to create a pre-structure inaccessible to the subject, evading his grasp, his initiatives, his inner "cooking pot", in spite of all the rich ingredients our modern sorceresses seem to find there. But Freud is in fact caught in the trap of his own concepts; in this false synthesis

by which the past of the human species is preserved in hereditarily transmitted patterns, he is vainly trying to overcome the opposition between event and constitution.

However we should not be in a hurry to replace the phylogenetic explanation by a structural type of explanation. The original fantasy is first and foremost fantasy: it lies beyond the history of the subject but nevertheless in history: a kind of language and a symbolic sequence, but loaded with elements of imagination; a structure, but activated by contingent elements. As such it is characterized by certain traits which make it difficult to assimilate to a purely transcendental schema, even if it provides the possibility of experience.²⁰

The text in which Freud first mentions primal fantasies ("A Case of Paranoia", 1915), leaves no doubt in this respect. In it he describes the case of a woman patient who declared that she had been watched and photographed while lying with her lover. She claimed to have heard a "noise", the click of the camera. Behind this delirium Freud saw the primal scene: the sound is the noise of the parents who awaken the child; it is also the sound the child is afraid to make lest it betray her listening. It is difficult to estimate its role in the fantasy. In one sense, says Freud, it is only a provocation, an accidental cause, whose role is solely to activate "the typical fantasy of overhearing, which is a component of the parental complex," but he immediately corrects himself by saying: "It is doubtful whether we can rightly call the noise 'accidental'. ... Such fantasies are on the contrary an indispensable part of the fantasy of listening." In fact, the sound alleged by the patient,²¹ reproduces in actuality the indication of the primal scene, the element which is the starting point for all ulterior elaboration of the fantasy. In other words, the origin of the fantasy is integrated in the very structure of the original fantasy.

In his first theoretical sketches on the subject of fantasy, Freud stresses, in a way which may intrigue his readers, the role of aural perception.²² Without placing too much importance on these fragmentary texts, in which Freud seems to be thinking more particularly of paranoid fantasies, one must consider why such a privileged position was accorded to hearing. We suggest there are two reasons. One relates to the sensorium in question: hearing, when it occurs, breaks the continuity of an undifferentiated

perceptual field and at the same time is a sign (the noise waited for and heard in the night), which puts the subject in the position of having to answer to something. To this extent the prototype of the signifier lies in the aural sphere, even if there are correspondences in the other perceptual registers. But hearing is also—and this is the second reason to which Freud alludes explicitly in the passage—the history or the legends of parents, grandparents and the ancestors: the family sounds or sayings, this spoken or secret discourse, going on prior to the subject's arrival, within which he must find his way. Insofar as it can serve retroactively to summon up the discourse, the noise—or any other discrete sensorial element that has meaning—can acquire this value.

In their content, in their theme (primal scene, castration, seduction . . .), the original fantasies also indicate this postulate of retroactivity: they relate to the origins. Like myths, they claim to provide a representation of, and a solution to, the major enigmas which confront the child. Whatever appears to the subject as something needing an explanation or theory, is dramatized as a moment of emergence, the beginning of a history.

Fantasies of origins: the primal scene pictures the origin of the individual; fantasies of seduction, the origin and upsurge of sexuality; fantasies of castration, the origin of the difference between the sexes.²³ Their themes therefore display, with redoubled significance, that original fantasies justify their status of being already there.

There is convergence of theme, of structure, and no doubt also of function: through the indications furnished by the perceptual field, through the scenarios constructed, the varied quest for origins, we are offered in the field of fantasy, the origin of the subject himself.

Since we encounter fantasy as given, interpreted, reconstructed or postulated, at the most diverse levels of psychoanalytic experience, we have obviously to face the difficult problem of its metapsychological status, and first of all, of its topography within the framework of the distinction between the unconscious, preconscious and conscious systems.

There are certain tendencies in contemporary psychoanalysis to settle the question by making a theoretical transposition, which seems inevitable in practice, between the fantasy as it presents itself for interpretation and the fantasy which is the conclusion of the

work of analytic interpretation (S. Isaacs, 1948). Freud would thus have been in error in describing by the same term, *Phantasie*, two totally distinct realities. On the one hand there is the unconscious *Phantasie*, "the primary content of unconscious mental processes" (Isaacs), and on the other, the conscious or subliminal imaginings, of which the daydream is the typical example. The latter would be only a manifest content, like the others, and would have no more privileged relationship to unconscious *Phantasie* than dreams, behaviour, or whatever is generally described as "material". Like all manifest data, it would require interpretations in terms of unconscious fantasy.²⁴

Freud's inspiration is shown by his persistent employment of the term *Phantasie* up to the end, in spite of the very early discovery that these *Phantasien* might be either conscious or unconscious. He wishes thereby to assert a profound kinship:

The contents of the clearly conscious fantasies of perverts (which in favourable circumstances can be transformed into manifest behaviour), of the delusional fears of paranoics which are projected in a hostile sense on to other people), and of the unconscious fantasies of hysterics (which psychoanalysis reveals behind their symptoms)—all these coincide with one another even down to their details (Freud 1905, pp. 165–166).

That is to say, that the same content, the same activation can be revealed in imaginary formations and psychopathological structures as diverse as those described by Freud, whether conscious or unconscious, acted out or represented, and whether or not there is a change of sign or permutation of persons.

Such an affirmation (1905) does not come from any so-called proto-Freud. It is of cardinal importance, particularly in the period 1906–1909, when much research was devoted to the subject. (In "Gradiva", "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", "Hysterical Fantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality", "On the Sexual Theories of Children", "Some General Remarks on Hysterical Attacks", "Family Romances".) At this time the unconscious efficacy of fantasy was fully recognised as, for instance, underlying the hysterical attack which symbolizes it. Freud however takes the conscious fantasy, the daydream, not only as paradigm, but as source. The hysterical fantasies which "have important connections with the causation of the neurotic symptoms" (we must be dealing

with unconscious fantasies) have as "common source and normal prototype what are called the daydreams of youth" (Freud, 1908). In fact it is conscious fantasy itself which may be repressed and thus become pathogenic. Freud even considers fantasy as the privileged point where one may catch in the raw the process of transition from one system to another, repression, or the return of repressed material.²⁵ It is indeed the same mixed entity, the same "mixed blood" which, being so close to the limits of the unconscious, can pass from one side to the other, particularly as the result of a variation of cathexis.²⁶ It may be objected that Freud is not here taking fantasy at its deepest level, and that we are not dealing with a true fantasy, but simply with a subliminal reverie. But Freud does describe the process of dismissal as repression and the frontier of which he speaks is indeed that of the unconscious in the strict, topographical, sense of the term.

We do not of course deny that there are different levels of unconscious fantasy, but it is remarkable to note how Freud, when studying the metapsychology of dreams, discovers the same relationship between the deepest unconscious fantasy and the daydream: the fantasy is present at both extremities of the process of dreaming. On the one hand it is linked with the ultimate unconscious desire, the "capitalist" of the dream, and as such it is at the basis of that "zigzag" path which is supposed to follow excitation through a succession of psychological systems: "The first portion [of this path] was a progressive one, leading from the unconscious scenes of fantasies to the preconscious" (Freud, 1900, p. 574), where it collects "the day residues" or transference thoughts. But fantasy is also present at the other extremity of the dream, in the secondary elaboration which, Freud insists, is not part of the unconscious work of the dream, but must be identified "with the work of our waking thought." The secondary elaboration is an a posteriori reworking which takes place in the successive transformations which we impose on the story of the dream once we are awake. This consists essentially in restoring a minimum of order and coherence to the raw material handed over by the unconscious mechanisms of displacement, condensation and symbolism, and in imposing on this heterogeneous assortment a façade, a scenario, which gives it relative coherence and continuity. In a word, it is a question of making the final version relatively similar to a daydream.

Thus the secondary elaboration will utilize those ready-made scenarios, the fantasies or daydreams with which the subject has provided himself in the course of the day before the dream.

This is not necessarily to say that there is no privileged relationship between the fantasy which lies at the heart of the dream, and the fantasy which serves to make it acceptable to consciousness. Preoccupied by his discovery of the dream as the fulfilment of unconscious desire, it was no doubt natural for Freud to devalue anything close to consciousness which might appear to be defence and camouflage, in fact, the secondary elaboration.²⁷ But he quickly returns to a different appreciation:

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that these dream-façades are nothing other than mistaken and somewhat arbitrary revisions of the dream-content by the conscious agency of our mental life. . . . The wishful fantasies revealed by analysis in night-dreams often turn out to be repetitions or modified versions of scenes from infancy; thus in some cases the façade of the dream directly reveals the dream's actual nucleus, distorted by an admixture of other material (Freud, 1901, p. 667).²⁸

Thus the extremities of the dream, and the two forms of fantasy which are found there, seem, if not to link up, at least to communicate from within and, as it were, to be symbolic of each other.

We have spoken of a progression in Freud's thought with regard to the metapsychological status of fantasy. It does, of course, move towards differentiation, but we believe we have already shown that this goes without suppression of the homology between different levels of fantasy, and above all there is no attempt to make the line of major differentiation coincide with the topographical barrier (censorship), which separates the conscious and preconscious systems from the unconscious. The difference occurs within the unconscious:

Unconscious fantasies have either been unconscious all along or—as is more often the case—they were once conscious fantasies, daydreams, and have since been purposely forgotten and have become unconscious through "repression" (Freud, 1908, p. 161).

This distinction is later, in Freudian terminology, to coincide with that between original fantasies and others, those that one might call secondary, whether conscious or unconscious.²⁹

Apart from this fundamental difference, the unity of the fantasy whole depends however on their mixed nature, in which both the structural and the imaginary can be found, although to different degrees. It is with this in mind that Freud always held the model fantasy to be the reverie, that form of novelette, both stereotyped and infinitely variable, which the subject composes and relates to himself in a waking state.

The daydream is a shadow play, utilizing its kaleidoscopic material drawn from all quarters of human experience, but also involving the original fantasy, whose dramatis personae, the court cards, receive their notation from a family legend which is mutilated, disordered and misunderstood. Its structure is the primal fantasy in which the Oedipus configuration can be easily distinguished, but also the daydream—if we accept that analysis discovers typical and repetitive scenarios beneath the varying clusters of fable.

However, we cannot classify or differentiate different forms of fantasy³⁰ as they shift between the poles of reverie or primal fantasy, simply, or even essentially, by the variability or inversion of the ratios between imaginary ingredient and structural link. Even the structure seems variable. In terms of daydream, the scenario is basically in the first person, and the subject's place clear and invariable. The organization is stabilized by the secondary process, weighted by the ego: the subject, it is said, lives out his reverie. But the original fantasy, on the other hand, is characterized by the absence of subjectivization, and the subject is present in the scene: the child, for instance, is one character amongst many in the fantasy "a child is beaten." Freud insisted on this visualization of the subject on the same level as the other protagonists, and in this sense the screen memory would have a profound structural relationship with original fantasies.³¹

"A father seduces a daughter" might perhaps be the summarized version of the seduction fantasy. The indication here of the primary process is not the absence of organization, as is sometimes suggested, but the peculiar character of the structure, in that it is a scenario with multiple entries, in which nothing shows whether the subject will be immediately located as daughter; it can as well be fixed as father, or even in the term seduces.

When Freud asked himself whether there was anything in man

comparable to the "instinct in animals" (Freud, 1915, p. 195), he found the equivalent, not in the drives (Triebe) but in primal fantasies (Freud, 1918, p. 120, note). It is a valuable clue, since it demonstrates indirectly his unwillingness to explain fantasy on biological grounds: far from deriving fantasy from the drives, he preferred to make them dependent on earlier fantasy structures. It is also valuable in clarifying the position of certain contemporary concepts. Finally, it leads us to investigate the close relationship between desire and fantasy involved in the term *Wunschphantasie* (wish-fantasy).

Isaacs, for instance, considered unconscious fantasies to be "an activity parallel to the drives from which they emerge." She sees them as the "psychological expression" of experience, which is itself defined by the field of force set up by libidinal and aggressive drives and the defences they arouse. Finally she is concerned to establish a close link between the specific forms of fantasy life and the bodily zones which are the seat of the drives, though this leads her to underestimate one part of the Freudian contribution to the theory both of fantasy and drives. In her view, fantasy is only the imagined transcription of the first objective of any drive, which is a specific object: the "instinctual urge" is necessarily experienced as a fantasy which, whatever its content (desire to suck, in a baby), will be expressed, as soon as verbalization is possible,³² by a phrase consisting of three parts: subject (I), verb (swallow, bite, reject), object (breast, mother).³³ Of course, in so far as the drives are, for the Kleinians, in the first place in the nature of relationships, Isaacs shows how such a fantasy of incorporation is also experienced in the other sense, the active becoming passive. Furthermore, this fear of a return to sender is a constituent element of the fantasy itself. But it is hardly enough to recognize the equivalence of eating and being eaten in the fantasy of incorporation. So long as there is some idea of a subject, even if playing a passive role, are we sure to reach the structure of deepest fantasy?

For Isaacs, fantasy is the direct expression of a drive, and almost consubstantial with it, and can, in the last resort, be reduced to the relationship which links subject to object by a verb of action (in the sense of the omnipotent wish). This is because, for her, the structure of the drive is that of a subjective intentionality and inseparable from its object: the drive "intuits" or "knows" the object which will

satisfy it. As the fantasy, which at first expresses libidinal and destructive drives, quickly transforms itself into a form of defence, so finally it is the whole of the subject's internal dynamic which is deployed in accordance with this unique type of organization. Such a concept postulates, in agreement with certain Freudian formulations, that "all that is conscious has passed through a preliminary unconscious stage," and that the ego is "a differentiated part of the id." One is therefore obliged to provide every mental operation with an underlying fantasy which can itself be reduced on principle to an instinctual aim. The biological subject is in a direct line of continuity with the subject of fantasy, the sexual, human subject, in accordance with the series: soma ® id ® fantasy (of desire, of defence) ® ego mechanism: the action of repression is difficult to grasp, since "fantasy life" is more implicit than repressed, and contains its own conflicts by virtue of the co-existence within the psyche of contradictory aims. There is, in fact, a profusion of fantasy, in which it is impossible to recognize the special type of structure which Freud tried to distinguish and where the elusive but elective relationship which he established between fantasy and sexuality also dissolves.

It is a little surprising that Freud, at a time when he fully recognized the existence and extent of sexuality and fantasy in the child, should have continued, as for instance in a footnote to the *Three Essays* in 1920 (1905, p. 226), to consider the period of maximum fantasizing activity to occur in the period of pubertal and pre-pubertal masturbation.³⁴ It is perhaps because to him there was a close correlation between fantasy and auto-erotism, which was not sufficiently accounted for by the belief that the second is camouflaged by the first. In fact he seems to be sharing the common belief that in the absence of real objects the subjects seeks and creates for himself an imaginary satisfaction.

Freud himself did much to authorize this viewpoint when he tried to establish a theoretical model of desire, both in its object and purpose.³⁵ The origin of fantasy would lie in the hallucinatory satisfaction of desire; in the absence of a real object, the infant reproduces the experience of the original satisfaction in a hallucinated form. In this view the most fundamental fantasies would be those which tend to recover the hallucinated objects linked with the very earliest experiences of the rise and the resolution of desire.³⁶

But before we try to discover what the Freudian fiction (*Fiktion*) is really intended to cover, we must be clear about its meaning, more particularly since it is rarely formulated in detail, but always presupposed in Freud's concept of the primary process. One might consider it a myth of origin: by this figurative expression Freud claims to have recovered the very first upsurgings of desire. It is an analytic "construction", or fantasy, which tries to cover the moment of separation between before and after, whilst still containing both: a mythical moment of disjunction between the pacification of need (*Befriedigung*) and the fulfilment of desire (*Wunscherfüllung*), between the two stages represented by real experience and its hallucinatory revival, between the object that satisfies and the sign³⁷ which describes both the object and its absence: a mythical moment at which hunger and sexuality meet in a common origin.

If, caught in our own turn by the fantasy of origins, we were to claim to have located the emergence of fantasy, we should start from the standpoint of the real course of infantile history, and the development of infantile sexuality (see from the viewpoint of Chap. 2 of *Three Essays*), and we should relate it to the appearance of auto-erotism, to the moment of what Freud calls the "pleasure premium." This is not a pleasure in the fulfilment of function, or the resolution of tension created by needs, but a marginal product, emerging from the world of needs, these vitally important functions whose aims and mechanisms are assured and whose objects are pre-formed.

But in speaking of the appearance of auto-erotism, even when taking care not to transform it into a stage of libidinal development, and even stressing its permanence and presence in all adult sexual behaviour, one is liable to lose sight of all that gives the notion its true meaning, and all that can illuminate the function as well as the structure of fantasy.

If the notion of auto-erotism is frequently criticized in psycho-analysis, this is because it is incorrectly understood, in the object-directed sense, as a first stage, enclosed within itself, from which the subject has to rejoin the world of objects. It is then easy to demonstrate, with much clinical detail, the variety and complexity of the links which, from the beginning, relate the infant to the outer world and, particularly, to its mother. But when Freud, principally in the *Three Essays*, speaks of auto-erotism, he has no intention of denying the existence of a primary object relationship. On the

contrary, he shows that the drive becomes auto-erotic, only after the loss of the object.³⁸ If it can be said of auto-erotism that it is objectless, it is in no sense because it may appear before any object relationship,³⁹ nor because on its arrival no object will remain in the search for satisfaction, but simply because the natural method of apprehending an object is split in two: the sexual drive separated from the non-sexual functions, such as feeding, which are its support (*Anlehnung*⁴⁰) and which indicate its aim and object.

The "origin" of auto-erotism would therefore be the moment when sexuality, disengaged from any natural object, moves into the field of fantasy and by that very fact becomes sexuality. The moment is more abstract than definable in time, since it is always renewed, and must have been preceded by erotic excitation, otherwise it would be impossible for such excitation to be sought out. But one could equally state the inverse proposition, that it is the breaking in of fantasy which occasions the disjunction of sexuality and need.⁴¹ The answer to the question of whether this is a case of circular causality or simultaneous appearance is that however far back one may go they originate from the same point.

Auto-erotic satisfaction, in so far as it can be found in an autonomous state, is defined by one very precise characteristic: it is the product of the anarchic activity of partial drives, closely linked with the excitation of specific erogenous zones, an excitation which arises and is stilled on the spot. It is not a global, functional pleasure, but a fragmented pleasure, an organ pleasure (*Organlust*) and strictly localized.

It is known that erogeneity can be attached to predestined zones of the body (thus, in the activity of sucking, the oral zone is destined by its very physiology to acquire an erogenous value), but it is also available to any organ (even internal organs), and to any region or function of the body. In every case the function serves only as support, the taking of food serving, for instance, as a model for fantasies of incorporation. Though modelled on the function, sexuality lies in its difference from the function: in this sense its prototype is not the act of sucking, but the enjoyment of going through the motions of sucking (*Ludeln*), the moment when the external object is abandoned, when the aim and the source assume an autonomous existence with regard to feeding and the digestive system. The ideal, one might say, of auto-erotism is "lips that kiss

themselves."⁴² Here, in this apparently self-centred enjoyment, as in the deepest fantasy, in this discourse no longer addressed to anyone, all distinction between subject and object has been lost.

If we add that Freud constantly insisted on the seductive role of the mother (or of others), when she washes, dresses or caresses her child,⁴³ and if we note also that the naturally erogenous zones (oral, anal, uro-genital, skin), are not only those which most attract the mother's attention, but also those which have an obvious exchange value (orifices or skin covering) we can understand how certain chosen parts of the body itself may not only serve to sustain a local pleasure, but also be a meeting place with maternal desire and fantasy, and thus with one form of original fantasy.

By locating the origin of fantasy in the auto-erotism, we have shown the connection between fantasy and desire. Fantasy, however, is not the object of desire, but its setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequence of images. He forms no representation of the desired object, but is himself represented as participating in the scene although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it (hence the danger, in treatment, of interpretations which claim to do so). As a result, the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question. On the other hand, to the extent that desire is not purely an upsurge of the drives, but is articulated into the fantasy, the latter is a favoured spot for the most primitive defensive reactions, such as turning against oneself, or into an opposite, projection, negation: these defences are even indissolubly linked with the primary function of fantasy, to be a setting for desire, insofar as desire itself originates as prohibition, and the conflict may be an original conflict.

But as for knowing who is responsible for the setting, it is not enough for the psychoanalyst to rely on the resources of his science, nor on the support of myth. He must also become a philosopher.

Summary

1. The status of fantasy cannot be found within the framework of the opposition reality-illusion (imaginary). The notion of

psychical reality introduces a third category, that of structure.

2. Freud's theory of seduction (1895–97) is re-examined from the point of view of its pioneering and demonstrative value: it permits the analysis of the dialectic relationship between fantasy productions, the underlying structures, and the reality of the scene. This "reality" is to be sought in an ever more remote or hypothetical past (of the individual or of the species), which is postulated on the horizon of the imaginary, and implied in the very structure of the fantasy.
3. Freud's so-called abandonment of the reality of infantile traumatic memories, in favour of fantasies which would be based only on a biological, quasi-endogenous evolution of sexuality, is only a transitional stage in the search for the foundation of neurosis. On the one hand seduction will continue to appear as one of the data of the relationship between child and adult (Freud, Ferenczi); on the other hand, the notion of primal (or original) fantasies (Urphantasien), of "inherited memory traces" of prehistoric events, will in turn provide support for individual fantasies.

The authors propose an interpretation of this notion: such a pre-history, located by Freud in phylogenesis, can be understood as a prestructure which is actualized and transmitted by the parental fantasies.

4. Original fantasies are limited in their thematic scope. They relate to problems of origin which present themselves to all human beings (Menschenkinder): the origin of the individual (primal scene), the origin of sexuality (seduction), and the origin of the difference between the sexes (castration).
5. The origin of fantasy cannot be isolated from the origin of the drive (Trieb) itself. The authors, reinterpreting the Freudian concept of the experience of satisfaction, locate this origin in the auto-erotism, which they define not as a stage of evolution but as the moment of a repeated disjunction of sexual desire and non-sexual functions: sexuality is detached from any natural object, and is handed over to fantasy, and, by this very fact, starts existing as sexuality.
6. The metapsychological status of this mixed entity, the fantasy, is finally established. The authors refuse to accept the main line of separation between conscious and unconscious fantasies

(Isaacs). They place this division between the original and the secondary fantasies (whether repressed or conscious) and demonstrate the relationship and the profound continuity between the various fantasy scenarios—the stage-setting of desire—ranging from the daydream to the fantasies recovered or reconstructed by analytic investigation.

Notes

1. Translated from the French, "Fantasme originaire, fantasmes des origines, origine du fantasme", in *Les Temps Modernes* (1964) 19, no. 215.
2. "Good" and "bad" objects are "imagos which are a phantastically distorted picture of the real objects upon which they are based" (Klein, 1934).
3. It is fascinating to observe how Melanie Klein, who provides an uninterrupted interpretation of the transference relationship, never brings in any "in reality", or even an "as if."
4. However, we have found in the case of actual adoption to which we are referring clinical manifestations quite obviously different from those encountered in adoption fantasies: an actualization, quickly blurred, of fantasies of the recovery of the mother, episodes where the attempts to rejoin the true mother, are worked out symbolically in a kind of secondary state, etc. Even in treatment, from the very beginning, many elements such as dream contents, the repeated occurrence of sleep during the session, showing a massive working out of a far-reaching tendency, demonstrated the disjunction between crude reality and verbalization.
5. S.E., 4–5. p. 620. The successive reformulations of this principle in the various editions of the *Traumdeutung* show both Freud's concern to define accurately the concept of psychical reality, and the difficulties he experienced in so doing—Cf. Strachey's note to this passage.
6. One further word about the suspension of judgment in the analytic rule: "Verbalize everything, but do no more than verbalize." This is not suspension of the reality of external events for the benefit of subjective reality. It creates a new field, that of verbalization, where the difference between the real and the imaginary may retain its value (cf. the case of the patient referred to above). The homology between the analytic and the unconscious field, whose emergence it stimulates, is not due to their common subjectivity, but to the deep kinship between the unconscious

- and the field of speech. So it is not: "It is you who say so," but "It is you who say so."
7. Especially the section entitled "Infantile Sexuality and Self-Analysis".
 8. In *Studies on Hysteria* we already find the idea that psychological trauma cannot be reduced to the once and for all effect on an organism of some external event. "The causal relation between the determining psychical trauma and the hysterical phenomenon is not of a kind implying that the trauma merely acts like an agent provocateur, in releasing the symptom which thereafter leads an independent existence. We must presume rather that the psychical trauma—or more precisely the memory of the trauma—acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must be regarded as an agent that is still at work" (S.E., 2, p. 6).
 9. The problem is constantly present in these terms in such works as Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, and Rank's *Trauma of Birth*.
 10. "It seems to me more and more that the essential point of hysteria is that it results from perversion on the part of the seducer, and more and more that heredity is seduction by the father" (Letter 52).
 11. He never ceased to assert this relationship, (cf. *Outline of Psychoanalysis*, S.E., 23 pp. 185–6) but without stating the theory.
 12. From the beginning Freud rejected the banal thesis which attributed the unpleasure provoked by sexuality to a purely external prohibition. Whether they are of internal or external origin, desire and prohibition go hand in hand. "We shall be plunged deep into the riddles of psychology if we enquire into the origin of the unpleasure which is released by premature sexual stimulation and without which the occurrence of a repression cannot be explained. The most plausible answer will recall the fact that shame and morality are the repressing forces and that the neighbourhood in which nature has placed the sexual organs must inevitably arouse disgust at the same time as sexual experiences. . . . I cannot think that the release of unpleasure during sexual experiences is the consequence of a chance admixture of certain unpleasurable factors. . . . In my opinion there must be some independent source for the release of unpleasure in sexual life: if that source is present, it can activate sensations of disgust, lend force to morality, and so on" (Draft K).
 13. It would be easy to demonstrate that Freud, throughout his life, continued to insist on the reality of the fact of seduction.
 14. And no longer the expression of the child's spontaneous, biological sexual activity.
 15. "I have learned to explain a number of fantasies of seduction as attempts at fending off memories of the subject's own sexual activity (infantile masturbation)" (Freud, 1906, p. 274).

16. There is an obvious similarity between the Freudian schema of *Nachträglichkeit* and the psychotic mechanism of "repudiation" (forclusion) described by Lacan: that which has not been admitted to symbolic expression ("repudiated") reappears in reality in the form of hallucination. This non-symbolization corresponds precisely to the earliest time described by Freud. As Lacan and Freud illustrate their theory by the case of the Wolf Man, it may be asked whether Lacan may not have treated as specifically psychotic what is really a very general process, or whether Freud has not taken the exception to be the rule, when basing his demonstration on case of psychosis.

Freud's demonstration is strengthened by the fact that in this particular case the primal scene is very probably authentic. But one might conceive of such absence of subjective elaboration or of symbolization, normally characteristic of the first stage, as not a prerogative of a truly experienced scene. This "foreign body", which is to be internally excluded, is usually brought to the subject, not by the perception of a scene, but by parental desire and its supporting fantasy. Such would be the typically neurotic case: in the first stage (not locatable in time, since it is fragmented into the series of transitions to autoerotism (Cf. pp. 15–16 below)), a pre-symbolic symbolic, to paraphrase Freud, is isolated within the subject who will, at a later stage, recover and symbolize it. In psychosis the first stage would consist of naked reality, and is evidently not symbolized by the subject, but will offer an irreducible nucleus for any later attempt at symbolization. Hence, in such cases, the failure, even the catastrophe, of the second stage.

This offers an approach to a distinction between repression (original) and the psychotic mechanism which Freud tried to delimit throughout his work (more particularly by describing it as *Verleugnung*: denial), and which Lacan called "forclusion".

17. We might be accused of exaggeration in speaking of concept. "Original fantasy" does not, of course, form part of the classical psychoanalytic concepts. Freud uses it marginally in his very precise study of the question whose development we have traced. The phrase therefore has the value of an "index" and requires clarification.
18. An ever present concern of Freud's (Cf. Draft M): "One of our brightest hopes is that we may be able to define the number and species of fantasies as well as we can those of the 'scenes'."
19. "Wherever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodelled in the imagination. . . . It is precisely such cases that are calculated to convince us of the independent existence of the schema. We are often able to see the schema triumphing over the

experience of the individual; as when in our present case, the boy's father became the castrator and the menace of his infantile sexuality in spite of what was in other respects an inverted Oedipus complex. . . . The contradictions between experience and the schema seem to supply the conflicts of childhood with an abundance of material" (Freud, 1918, pp. 119–20).

20. We are not here trying to develop a coherent psychoanalytic theory which would involve the relationship between the level of the Oedipus structure and that of the original fantasies. One would first have to define what was meant by the Oedipus structure. Indeed the structural aspect of the Oedipus complex—considered both in its basic function and in its triangular form—was worked out much later by Freud: it does not appear at all, for instance, in the *Three Essays* (1905). The so-called generalized formulation of the complex appeared first in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), and the generalization in question cannot be taken in any formal sense: it describes a limited series of concrete positions within the interpsychological field created by the father-mother-child triangle. From the point of view of structural anthropology, one might see this as one of the forms of the law governing human interchanges, a law which in other cultures might be incarnated in other persons and in other forms. The prohibitory function of the law might, for instance, be expressed by an agency other than the father. By adopting this solution the analyst would feel he had lost an essential dimension of his experience: the subject is, admittedly, located in a structure of inter-relationship, but the latter is transmitted by the parental unconscious. It is therefore less easy to assimilate it to a language system than to the complexities of a particular speech.

Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex is, in fact, remarkable for its realism: whether it is represented as an inner conflict (nuclear complex) or as a social institution, the complex remains a given fact; the subject is confronted by it: "every new arrival on this planet is faced by the task of mastering it" (*Three Essays*, S.E., 7, p. 226, footnote).

Perhaps it was the realism of the concept which led Freud to allow the notion of original fantasy to co-exist alongside the Oedipus complex, without being concerned to articulate them: here the subject does not encounter the structure, but is carried along by it.

21. According to Freud it is, incidentally, a projection, the projection of a beat in her clitoris, in the form of a noise. There would be a new, circular, relationship between the pulsation which actualizes the fantasy, and the drive which arouses it.
22. "Built up out of things that have been heard about and then subsequently turned to account, they combine things that have been

experienced and things that have been heard about past events (from the history of parents and ancestors) and things seen by the subject himself. They are related to things heard in the same way as dreams are related to things seen" (Draft L). And again: "Fantasies arise from an unconscious combination of things experienced and heard" (Draft M).

23. If we ask what these fantasies mean to us, we are embarking on a different level of interpretation. We then see that they are not only symbolic, but represent the insertion, mediated by an imagined scenario, of the most radically formative symbolism, into corporeal reality. The primal scene represents for us the conjunction of the biological fact of conception and birth with the symbolic fact of filiation: it unites the "savage act" of coitus and the existence of a mother-child-father triad. In the fantasies of castration the conjunction of real and symbolic is even more apparent. With regard to seduction, we should add that it was not only, as we believe we have shown, because Freud had come across numerous actual cases, that he was able to use a fantasy as a scientific theory, and thus, by a roundabout way, hit on the true function of fantasy. It was also because he was trying to account, in terms of origins, for the advent of sexuality to human beings.
24. The proposal to eliminate the unfortunate confusion by the graphological device (using "ph" for unconscious fantasies and "f" for the daydream type) has been declared at times to be real progress, the result of half a century of psychoanalysis. Whether or not this distinction is in fact justified, it seems undesirable to use it in translations of Freud's work. It betrays little respect for the text to render words such as *Phantasie* or *Phantasieren*, which Freud invariably employed, by different terms according to the context. Our opposition to this terminological and conceptual innovation rests on three grounds: (i) the distinction should not be introduced into translations of Freud's work, even if the interpretation of his thought were correct; (ii) this interpretation of Freud's thought is incorrect; (iii) this distinction contributes less to the study of the problem than Freud's concept.
25. "In favourable circumstances, the subject can still capture an unconscious fantasy of this sort in consciousness. After I had drawn the attention of one of my patients to her fantasies, she told me that on one occasion she had suddenly found herself in tears in the street and that, rapidly considering what it was she was actually crying about, she had got hold of a fantasy to the following effect. In her imagination she had formed a tender attachment to a pianist who was well known in the town (though she was not personally acquainted with him); she had had a child by him (she was in fact childless); and he had then deserted her and her child and left them in poverty. It was at this point in her

- romance that she had burst into tears" (Freud, 1908).
26. "They draw near to consciousness and remain undisturbed so long as they do not have an intense cathexis, but as soon as they exceed a certain height of cathexis they are thrust back." (Freud, 1915, p. 191.)
 27. There must of course be a dismantling of the secondary elaboration in order to be able to take the dream element by element. But Freud does not forget that by setting everything on the same level, which is one of the aspects of psychoanalytic listening, the structure, the scenario, becomes itself an element, just as much, for instance, as the global reaction of the subject to his own dream.
 28. Freud seems also to have indicated that, generally speaking, desire can be more readily discovered in the structure of the fantasy than in the dream, unless the dream has been much restructured by the fantasy, as is particularly the case in "typical dreams". "If we examine the structure [of fantasies] we shall perceive the way in which the wishful purpose that is at work in their production, has mixed up the material of which they are built, has re-arranged it and has formed it into a new whole" (S.E., 5, p. 492).
 29. We suggest the following schema:-

The repression which returns secondary fantasies to the unconscious would be that described by Freud as "secondary repression" or "after-pressure". A further type of repression, more mythical and obscure, which Freud called "primal repression" (Urverdrängung) corresponds to the constitution of the primal fantasies or their reception by the individual. We attempt later to indicate an approach to this subject. Cf. also Laplanche and Leclaire, "L'inconscient, une étude psychanalytique," *Les Temps Modernes*, July 1961.
 30. Amongst which we should obviously include screen memories and infantile sexual theories.
 31. Freud saw in this characteristic of screen-memories that they were not true memories, yet of all conscious fantasies, they are the only ones to claim reality. They are true scenes, the screens of primal fantasies or scenes.
 32. According to Isaacs, "primary phantasies are ... dealt with by mental processes far removed from words." It is only through practical necessity that we express them in words, but we thereby introduce a "foreign element". Isaacs, using one of Freud's expressions, speaks of "the language of drives", and it is true that it is not its verbal or non-verbal character which defines the nature of language. But if Isaacs confuses language and the power of expression, perhaps this leads here to a failure to appreciate the originality of Melanie Klein's concepts: her attempt to describe a language which is non-verbal, but nonetheless

- structured, on the basis of pairs of opposites (good-bad, inner-outer). The audacity of the technique does at least assume a reference, not to the mobile expression of instinctual life, but to some fundamental oppositions.
33. Cf. the variants formulated by Isaacs: "I want to eat her all up," "I want to keep her inside me," "I want to tear her to bits," "I want to throw her out of me," "I want to bring her back," "I must have her now," etc.
 34. More often than not masturbation implies, of course, an imaginary relationship with an object: thus it can only be described as auto-erotic from an external standpoint, to the extent that the subject obtains satisfaction by resorting solely to his own body. But an infantile auto-erotic activity, such as sucking the thumb, in no sense implies the absence of any object. What makes it eventually auto-erotic is, as we shall show later, a special mode of satisfaction, specific to the "birth" of sexuality, which lingers on into pubertal masturbation.
 35. "The first wishing (Wünschen) seems to have been a hallucinatory cathecting of the memory of satisfaction" (Freud, 1900, p. 598).
 36. Cf. for instance Isaacs's interpretation of Freud's hypothesis of the first hallucination: "It seems probable that hallucination works best at times of less instinctual tension, perhaps when the infant half-awakes and first begins to be hungry. ... The pain of frustration then stirs up a still stronger desire, viz. the wish to take the whole breast into himself and keep it there as a source of satisfaction; and this in its turn will for a time omnipotently fulfil itself in belief, in hallucination. ... This hallucination of the internal satisfying breast may, however, break down altogether if frustration continues, and hunger is not satisfied, the instinct-tension proving too strong to be denied."

It is obvious that the author is in difficulty about reconciling a hallucinated satisfaction with the demands of a frustrated instinct. How indeed can an infant feed itself on wind alone? The Freudian model is incomprehensible unless one understands that it is not the real object, but the lost object; not the milk, but the breast as a signifier, which is the object of the primal hallucination.
 37. The breast, wrongly named "object of desire" by psychoanalysts.
 38. "At a time at which the first beginnings of sexual satisfaction are still linked with the taking of nourishment, the sexual instinct has a sexual object outside the infant's own body in the shape of his mother's breast. It is only later that the instinct loses that object, just at the time, perhaps, when the child is able to form a total idea of the person to whom the organ that is giving him satisfaction belongs" (Freud, 1905, p. 222). The passage is also invaluable as a further indication that the very constitution of the auto-erotic fantasy implies not only the partial object

- (breast, thumb or substitute), but the mother as a total person, withdrawing as she becomes total. This "totalization" is not to be understood as in the nature of a Gestalt, but by reference to the child's demand, which may be granted or refused by the mother.
39. Described by some psychoanalysts as an "objectless" stage, on a genetic basis, which one might call totalitarian, since it confuses the constitution of the libidinal object with that of objectivity in the external world, and claims to establish stages in the development of the ego as "organ of reality", stages which they also hold to be correlative with those of the libido.
40. Elsewhere (in our *Vocabulaire de psychanalyse*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1967), we are developing this notion which is fundamental to the Freudian theory of instincts.
41. In one of his first reflections on fantasy Freud notes that the Impulse could perhaps emanate from fantasy (Draft N).
42. Cf. also in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, the analysis of the pairs of opposites, sadism-masochism, voyeurism-exhibitionism. Beneath the active or passive form of the phrase (seeing, being seen, for instance), we must assume a reflexive form (seeing oneself) which, according to Freud, would be primordial. No doubt this primordial degree is to be found when the subject no longer places himself in one of the different terms of the fantasy.
43. "... A child's intercourse with anyone responsible for his care affords him an unending source of sexual excitation and satisfaction from his erotogenic zones. This is especially so since the person in charge of him, who, after all, is as a rule his mother, herself regards him with feelings that are derived from her own sexual life, and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object" (1905, p. 223). It is however customary to say that Freud took a long time to recognize the link with the mother.

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