

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF MEMORY IN FREUDIAN WRITINGS

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the nature of memory and its functioning is raised in Freudian writings from two different approaches: on the one hand as memorization (i.e. as an unconscious process of storing information) and on the other, as a process of conscious evocation of past events. In the words of Freud himself: "...*Conscious memory, moreover, seems to depend wholly on the Pcs. This should be clearly distinguished from the memory-traces in which the experiences of the Ucs. are fixed...*" (Freud S.; 1915; p. 3011).

Due to the complexity of the subject, it is impossible to deal with these two points of view together, since the first has a close relationship with the formulation of the concept of unconscious and the second with clinical issues such as defensive mechanisms and remembering. This link between memory and defense is evident in the following lines that Freud wrote to Fließ in the "Letter 27" on August 16, 1895, shortly before beginning the writing of "*The Project for a Scientific Psychology*". He wrote: "...*All I was trying to do was to explain defense, but I found myself explaining something from the very heart of nature. I found myself wrestling with the problems of quality, sleep, memory: in short, the whole of psychology...*" (Freud S.; 1895; p. 136).

Because of this obvious difficulty, I have decided to divide the present work into three parts. In the first part, I will focus especially on the description of the unconscious phenomena of inscription of experiences, in order to underline their importance in the structuring of the psychoanalytic framework. In the second, I will add some considerations regarding the role played by the phylogenetic heritage in Freudian writings and its influence on memory. Finally, I will try to highlight Freud's contributions to the conscious reproduction of mnemonic-traces in the analysis session. For the sake of brevity, I will briefly take into account the subject of temporality in psychoanalysis, the phenomenon of "*nachträglichkeit*" and the conceptualization of psychic trauma.

PART I THE MEMORIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

The Freudian conception of the psychic apparatus proposed in the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*" is clearly biologically connoted and results from the complexity of a basic motor scheme: the reflex movement of force in the protoplasm. Two "guiding ideas" are added to this elemental mechanism: the assumption of a quantity of energy ($Q\eta$), which circulates through the central nervous system and the presence of the neurons, which are elemental particles constituents of the system itself. In this theoretical model, energy flows into the neuronal apparatus from two different places: the exterior and the interior of the body. In the first case, sensitive neurons react with the same charge to external stimuli; this charge is transmitted to motor neurons which in turn produce a muscular reaction away from the stimulus. The result is a condition of energetic equilibrium: the charges that entered the system from outside are used to re-establish the previous order, returning the energetic quantity back to zero. Freud defined this reflex mechanism as "*Primary Function*." The fall to zero of the energetic quantity that disturbed the equilibrium of

the system is called "*Principle of Inertia*" and it is the supposition which this reflex mechanism is based on.

In contrast, the response to internal ("endogenous") stimuli cannot be performed in the same manner. In this second case, it is a lacking state; a condition of exigency induced by great needs such as hunger, respiration, sexuality, etc. These can be satisfied, that is to say the quantity can fall, only by means of a particular action, defined as a "*Specific Action*", which only leads to a decrease in the energetic charge without exhaustion. A collection of energy is absolutely necessary to carry out the "*Specific Action*", which momentarily puts an end to the state of necessity. It is no longer possible to release the entire amount present in the system; it can only be reduced and kept at the lowest possible level. This is the so-called "*Secondary Function*". For economic reasons, the "*Principle of Neuronic Inertia*" is thus replaced by the "*Principle of Constance*".

According to Freud, the microscopic structure of neurons reflects the neuronal system as a whole, with discharge at the lowest possible frequency being the true purpose of the nervous system. Consequently, every neuron is equipped with extensions to receive charges and cylinder-axes to dump them. The point of conjunction between two neurons, which is carried out by means of these cellular structures, is defined as a "*Contact-barrier*". The two functions described above, primary and secondary, are carried out by different neurons, although they are equipped with the same architecture. One type of neuron lets energy pass through its contact barrier without retaining it or without any consequences; it is a type of "*sense cell*" or " Φ " neuron ("phi", physical). On the contrary, the other type of neuron opposes resistance to the transfer of quantity and partly retains it; this last "*memory cell*" is the so-called neuron " Ψ " ("psi", psychological). Freud's reason to explain this cellular differentiation concerns Darwinian natural selection: the "*memory cells*" would have been selected throughout evolution as necessary to the quantity collection, usable by the system to face "*exigencies of life*" [Not des Lebens']. However, from this apparently simple distinction between neuronal functions, Freud found the answers to numerous questions, opening the way for the clarification of the entire psychic functioning.

As far as memory is concerned, he believed that it is structured from quantity storage in contact barriers. These, after each excitation, are left "...in a modified condition..." (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 360), due to the resistance that has been opposed to the displaced charges. Consequently, the contact barriers of the neurons invested by excitation become more susceptible to conduction. A "*Facilitation*" ["*Bahnung*"] takes place. This is an extremely important concept that Freud continued to develop throughout his research; it was successively defined as the "*Principle of the Insusceptibility to Excitation of Uncathected Systems*", according to which "...a complete emptying of a system renders it little susceptible to instigation..." (Freud S.; 1917 [1915]; p. 3032). The fact of retaining quantity is revealed as an equivalent of "*Facilitation*" and therefore "...memory is represented by the facilitations existing between the Ψ -neurons..." (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 361).

It must be considered that every neuron establishes connections with many others by means of multiple terminations, creating a tangled network of links. Consequently, the quantity could move casually along innumerable different paths. The predilection of one route instead of another, which in fact constitutes memory, is verified on the basis of the quantity that remained in the contact barriers of the neurons " Ψ ", having been absorbed by them during the previous excitations. Nevertheless, it must also be conceived in the mind that the charge "...passes from one neuron " $\Psi\alpha$ " to another " β " if α and β have at some time been simultaneously cathected from Ψ (or elsewhere)..." (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 380). This theme was taken up and deepened by Freud, both in "Letter 52" to Wilhelm Fließ and in chapter seven of "*The Interpretation of Dreams*".

The possibility of remembering is based on the intensity in how an experience has left its alteration in the contact-barriers, that is to say, traces remain: the quantity determines the conductivity and therefore the facilitation and the association between neurons. The magnitude of the impression that an experience exerts on the nervous system or the number of times the experience is repeated determines a corresponding alteration in the contact-barriers. There is a direct proportional relationship between the intensity of the experience, or its number of repetitions, and the absorption of quantity by the contact-barriers, which diminishes their resistance. Under no circumstances, do they completely terminate opposing the transfer of the impulse: "...*During the passage of the quantity ($Q\eta$) the resistance is suspended, but afterwards it is restored-but only to a particular height, according to the quantity ($Q\eta$) that has passed; so that next time a smaller quantity will be able to pass, and so on...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 378).

It is interesting to note how in this theory a psychological factor (the intensity of an experience or its repetition in time) influences a biological factor (the bio-electric quantity that flows in the system). This, in turn, exerts its effects on a third factor of a mechanical nature: the material alteration of the neuronal connection. It could be said that a psychological concept such as memory is based on a biological and mechanical vision of the psychic apparatus: as the depth and size of a river bed varies according to the amount of water that formed it, or according to the duration in which the current has flowed. In the same way the mnemonic-trace depends on the amount of energy that marks the path, or the number of times it flows in the same direction. The energetic "quantum" is what determines the conductivity, although the quantity that allows the passage of electricity is only a quotient of the quantity of the stimulus. Memory is consequently defined in the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*" in relation to these different approaches. It is at the same time, in a more strictly psychological sense, "...*the persisting force of an experience...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 361), from a more biological point of view "...*one of the determining and directing forces in relation to the path taken by excitations...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 361) and in a more mechanical conceptualization "...*a susceptibility to permanent alteration by a single process. This offers a striking contrast to the behavior of a material that allows a wave-movement to pass through it and then returns to its former condition...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 359). In this last definition, the first that we actually find in the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*", it is evident how much already in this same work Freud's interest was directed in differentiating two antithetical functions: perception and memory.

The following year, in "Letter 52", Freud returned to this argument. In this letter he formulated some concepts of fundamental importance, which were to be expressed again in chapter seven of "The Interpretation of Dreams". He stated: "...*consciousness and memory are mutually exclusive...*" (Freud S.; 1896; p. 208), i.e. there is no possibility of attributing two opposing functions to the same system. According to Breuer, whom Freud points out as the author of this hypothesis, the condition of perception is the quickest restitution to the previous state of the perceptive apparatus that allows the continuation of sensory impressions. On the contrary, the condition of memory is that the restitution does not take place, so that these impressions create lasting alterations. In Breuer's words: "...*The mirror of a reflecting telescope cannot at the same time be a photographic plate...*" (Breuer J. - Freud S.; 1893-95; p. 168). In terms of the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*" we can conclude that neurons " Φ " and neurons " Ψ " are not interchangeable; "*sense cells*" cannot be "*memory cells*". In addition, "...*our psychic mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances- to a retranscription. Thus what is essentially new about my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is laid down in various kinds of indications...*" (Freud S.; 1896; p. 207). The signs or mnemonic-traces present different transcriptions that are "rearranged"

throughout the epochs of life in a dynamic remodeling induced by new experiences. This is one of the basic concepts of psychoanalysis.

In chapter seven of *"The Interpretation of Dreams"* Freud analyzes this concept again, asserting that the first elements "Mn", that is, the first unconscious mnemic-traces, are linked to each other according to the factor of simultaneity, as already stated in the *"Project for a Scientific Psychology"*. On the contrary, the "Mn" elements, furthest from the perceptive pole, have different relationships, based on similarity for example. In "Letter 52" Freud points out at least three intertwined signs that give rise to new associations, not only by simultaneity, but "...according to other, perhaps causal, relations..." (Freud S.; 1896; p. 208). Since some of these, defined as "Ic traces", probably correspond to memories of concepts not accessible to the consciousness, the new experiences can retroactively create causal links in relation to past events, modifying their conceptualization or meaning. These mnemic-traces do not belong to the perception-consciousness agency, as this system and memory are exclusive and consequently it is necessary to raise the existence of unconscious psychic processes (that is, a set of unconscious causal links between concepts): "...the most complicated and most rational thought-processes, which can surely not be denied the name of psychical processes, can occur without exciting the subject's consciousness..." (Freud S.; 1900; p. 1037). The function of consciousness is therefore limited in focusing on these links, transcribed in *"Word Presentations"* from the preconscious, and whether to accept or reject them. The fundamental matter is that consciousness is not the only instance in which causal links can be created.

In other words, reasoning does not belong only to the "Reason". This is the true center of Freud's discussion against the opinion of previous and contemporary philosophers, in relation to the presence of a non-conscious thought. This is also, in synthesis, his revolutionary discovery: it is impossible to establish any flow of ideas that is not directed by "Purposive Ideas": "...When I instruct a patient to abandon reflection of any kind and to tell me whatever comes into his head, I am relying firmly on the presumption that he will not be able to abandon the purposive ideas inherent in the treatment and I feel justified in inferring that what seem to be the most innocent and arbitrary things which he tells me are in fact related to his illness..." (Freud S.; 1900; p. 964). These ideas are known, in conscious decisions, and are unknown or unconscious when thoughts lead us "adrift". These associations between unconscious representations, neurons "Ψ", "Mn" elements or "Ic" signs govern the determinism of involuntary thoughts.

If we take Kant into account, according to his philosophy, we notice that the categories that determine the "Phenomenon", the object of conceptualized knowledge, are mental categories that, in Freudian work, would be part of consciousness as well as space and time if they are possible to compare. This concept is clearly expressed by Schopenhauer who interprets space, time and causality as categories of the *"Principle of Reason"*. Conversely, according to Freud, the genesis of the representation of time is a function of consciousness which can either coexist with causality, as in the case of conscious purposive ideas, or cannot coexist with it, as in the case of unknown purposive ideas. In *"The Unconscious"*, quoting Kant, Freud writes: "...so psycho-analysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object..." (Freud S.; 1915; p. 2995). He compares the inner perception of the unconscious psychic process (and therefore also of memories) with the perception of the "external reality". Also the inner perception is the knowledge of a "Phenomenon" and not of the unconscious psychic processes, which are impossible to know "in-themselves." In other words, both the conscious perception of inner phenomena, and that of external phenomena, are subjectively conditioned by consciousness. As evidenced in *"The Interpretation of Dreams"* written more than fifteen years prior to *"The Unconscious"*, in regards to the perception of the sensory organ of consciousness, the psychic apparatus is comparable to an "external world". The perception of any phenomenon frames

and locates it in a scheme proper to consciousness, which also separates it in relation to its unconscious nature, or in relation to its "true external reality". However, causal links that are not related to this same scheme therefore belong to the "*thing-in-itself*", to the Kantian "*Noumenon*".

These causal relationships are not always determined by consciousness but are simply translated by it. The facilitated paths described in the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*" produce the intertwining of the neurons " Ψ " which are not only responsible for memory but also for "conceptual associations": the neurons " Ψ " are "...*the vehicles of memory and presumably, therefore, of psychological processes in general...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895] p. 360). These same associations between traces constitute a memory and express a meaning as a whole, that is actually a message which is derived from the unconscious. Even the conflicting expressions of the unconscious that we call symptoms have a specific meaning, although they have a common and general purpose which is the reproduction of pleasure according to the "*Principle of Constancy*." These meanings are provided precisely by the particular associations between unconscious links. For example, "...*a hysterical attack is not a discharge but an action...*" (Freud S.; 1896; p. 212).

Without going into too much depth, even the physiological correlate of a particular mnemonic image, which appears as a memory instead of a simple perceptual representation, is something of the nature of a process. It has a specific location, however this spreads along "particular routes", producing a modification. These sets of marks, traces and facilitations left by the physiological process are not conscious: our conscience knows nothing of something similar, something that justifies the name of "latent mnemonic image" from the psychic side.

In conclusion, the study of mnemonic processes represented one of the fundamental instruments that allowed Freud to open the way towards the formulation of psychoanalysis. His consideration of the relevance of this issue is clearly expressed in the words he wrote at the beginning of the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*" that "...*any psychological theory deserving consideration must provide an explanation of memory...*" (Freud S.; 1950 [1895]; p. 359).

PART II

THE INFLUENCE OF PHYLOGENETIC HERITAGE ON MEMORY

A more careful and in-depth study of mnemonic processes entails the need to deal with problems that go beyond the subject of this paper. In particular two interrelated issues deserve the greatest attention: 1) the modifications and alterations to which the unconscious contents are subject and 2) their relationship with what is inherited by phylogenetic means. These are, of course, fundamental issues to which I can only allude to insofar as they relate to memorization and recollection, and which deserve to be developed in isolation and in greater detail.

One of the foundations on which the psychoanalytic framework is based, as we saw before, is that perception and memory are mutually exclusive functions, such as a reflection telescope and a photographic plate as Breuer stated. In his last great work, "*Moses and Monotheistic Religion*," Freud again uses the example of photographic impressions. The latter constitute a suitable model to explain the processes of recording the stimuli that affect the perceptive apparatus of the infant from an early age. They also make it easier to understand the origin of the compulsion to which human behavior is subject to, and the underlying causes of the onset of mental pathologies. In fact, in the Freudian model, the human psychic apparatus is based on two different and superimposed mental activities. The first, defined as "*Inherited Schema*" (Freud S.; 1918 [1914], pag. 3594) is more

archaic and instinctive. The second, phylogenetically more recent and exclusively human, regulates cognitively superior and more complex functions. The "*inherited schemata*" are responsible for the instinctive "innate knowledge", similar to how animals adapt to their environment from birth. This is possible because animals, and among them the 'human animal', "*...have preserved memories of what was experienced by their ancestors...*" (Freud, S.; 1939 [1934-38]; p. 4922). In the psychic apparatus of the human species, two different models of behavior coexist and overlap: on the one hand, a model that regulates behavior on the basis of "knowledge" acquired by the individual and on the other hand, different schemata direct mankind towards a path previously established by phylogenetic development. This form of "predetermination" is due to the sediments of the most relevant experiences lived by the human species.

From these statements it becomes evident that the issue of memory also becomes more complex. We said earlier that mnemonic traces are subject to an intertwining of which the consciousness is not aware. This ends up even more strongly complicating the recollection of memories. For this very reason, they cannot be isomorphic with those which were memorized. The experiences lived by an individual intertwine with "memories" which are characteristic of inherited congenital schemata formed by the "sedimentation" of human culture.

Let us return to the example of the photographic plate. Freud states that "*...the strongest compulsive influence arises from impressions which impinge upon a child at a time when we would have to regard his psychological apparatus as not yet completely receptive...*" (Freud, S.; 1939 [1934-38]; p. 4944). This lack of complete receptivity contributes to the fact that the stimuli which affected the perceptive system cannot yet be considered "perceptions". They are not images and do not constitute a message that can be received by consciousness at that moment. It would be as if a photographic plate was briefly exposed to a light source and an image would hence develop in the darkness. In a few cases, this image which is an unconscious message or meaning may be illuminated by consciousness successively. In most cases it will continue to secretly exert its influence on character and behavior: "*... What we describe as our 'character' is based on the memory-traces of our impressions; and, moreover, the impressions which have had the greatest effect on us - those of our earliest youth - are precisely the ones which scarcely ever become conscious...*" (Freud S.; 1900; p. 972).

A careful analysis of what Freud conjectured at the end of the "Wolf Man's" treatment is necessary in understanding why only a few impressions have the capacity to produce these important and profound "delayed effects". Above all, the distinction between ontogenetic and phylogenetic human heritage is decisive. Some stimuli received during early childhood, in spite of not producing traumatic effects in that precise historical moment, have the characteristic of "contributing material" to the inherited unconscious schemata. It is precisely this peculiarity, characteristic of some early impressions, that constitutes one of the premises of the successive traumatic development. These stimuli facilitate the reactivation and permanence in the psychic apparatus of contents proper to congenital instinctive "knowledge". Consequently, the most recently recorded stimuli are attracted by the mnemonic-traces of the experience of previous generations until they are fused together. In this way, a conflictive situation is determined with the most evolved of mental activities, and for that same reason, the ground for the development of a neurosis originates.

At the most basic level, this conception is a very well achieved attempt by Freud to understand the mechanisms underlying one of the first phenomena described by him. During the observation of his neurotic patients he stressed that two opposing "wills" commanded their behavior; he defined these manifestations accordingly with the name "*Gegenwille*" or "counter-will". Hysterical attacks, for example, signify an internal struggle that patients have with themselves. This means that the patient simultaneously wants and does not want his conscious

thought prevailing on his inherited instinct. In the aforementioned "Letter 52" to Wilhelm Fließ there are already traces of the description of these mechanisms at work.

When Freud underlines the importance of the conscious translation of psychic material, he points to the need for a change of "psychological rules" between successive epochs of life. He points to the need for a passage from more primitive and anachronistic stages to more developed laws. The latter have to inhibit the previous rewriting and divert the excitatory process from it. Consciousness has to accept and translate the message coming from the unconscious for this process to take place. However, this does not often occur, as the translation operated by consciousness entails displeasure. Therefore, it is a pathological defense that does not destroy the mnemic-traces. The latter, not translated into a verbal language, would continue to produce their effects on the psychic apparatus, remaining at an earlier stage of development. The repression is therefore a "...*failure of translation...*" (Freud, S.; 1896; p. 208) that initiates "relics" in certain psychic areas.

The problem becomes more complicated if the mnemic-traces relative to individual experiences continue to exist outside of consciousness, and are intertwined in different varieties of signs with the contents belonging to congenital schemata. As described by Freud in his 1915 work on repression, unconscious contents develop with greater wealth if repression subtracted them from the conscious influence. The representative agency of impulse "...*develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when they are translated and presented to the neurotic are not only bound to seem alien to him, but frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength of instinct...*" (Freud, S., 1915; p. 144). Nevertheless, this proliferation, far from being random, follows precise paths that lead to unconscious "*Purposive Ideas*". The causal links, to which Freud referred to in "Letter 52", seem to be determined by the phylogenetic inheritance. The true "nucleus of the unconscious", is thus formed by the "instincts" which are hereditary mnemic-traces that attract to themselves the most recent contents acquired during early childhood. In fact: "...*Wherever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodeled in the imagination...*" (Freud, S.; 1918 [1914]; p. 3595); "...*All that we find in the prehistory of neuroses is that a child catches hold of this phylogenetic experience where his own experience fails him. He fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth; he replaces occurrences in his own life by occurrences in the life of his ancestors...*" (Ibid. p. 3577). So a father, despite being loved by his son, could be unconsciously regarded as threatening and castrating at the same time. The mnemic-traces of an ancestral father who actually used to execute castration overlap in the child's fantasy until they prevail over his "true" childhood memories.

Freud also believed that congenital schemata inherited by phylogenetic means would be comparable to "philosophical categories" in that they "...*are concerned with the business of 'placing' the impressions derived from actual experience...*" (Ibid. p. 3594). If we want to continue with this philosophical comparison, we would have to consider the archaic heritage as a set of a priori contents that shape new experiences. This comparison between philosophical categories and congenital schemata entails a fundamental consequence on the way of conceiving not only memory, but also the perception of reality itself. I believe that when Freud affirms that "...*it is hard to dismiss the view that some sort of hardly definable knowledge, something, as it were, preparatory to an understanding, was at work in the child at the time...*" (Ibid. p. 3595), he is saying that, through hereditary schemata, the child is constitutionally oriented towards the perception of certain stimuli from the external world. Some particular aspects of reality are thus "understood" more than others, in this sense the early actual impressions are "placed" in the psychic apparatus according to a priori

schemata. These impressions are merged into imagination as they could not be adapted to these schemata.

Consequently, every individual passes through the main stages of human evolution again, with modifications specific to each individual experience. The motives and the phylogenetic productions would "...emerge once more as a concrete event in the experience of the individual..." (Ibid. p. 3577). Therefore, every human being has to reacquire "in his own flesh" what has been transmitted to him by his ancestors. He has to re-experience, through his contact with the world, all the most important achievements of previous generations. This is the true meaning of Goethe's phrase, quoted by Freud: "*What you inherited from your fathers, you must acquire yourself in order to possess it*". Thus the "*Law of Heackel*", according to which ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, acquires a fundamental importance in Freudian theorization. At the same time, we understand why neurosis is always lurking in the human psychic apparatus. The new evolutionary stages replace the more archaic ones, fading the latter into oblivion. From this condition, the mnemonic-traces of the previous stages continue to produce relevant effects on human action and thought.

In particular, childhood amnesia plays a fundamental role in this theorization, insofar as it is constituted as the determining element that makes the development in two times of human sexuality possible. The latter lays the foundations for the successive emergence of neuroses. As Freud writes: "*...In my opinion we take the fact of infantile amnesia - the loss, that is, of the memories of the first years of our life - much too easily; and we fail to look upon it as a strange riddle. We forget how high are the intellectual achievements and how complicated the emotional impulses of which a child of some four years is capable, and we ought to be positively astonished that the memory of later years has as a rule preserved so little of these mental processes, especially as we have every reason to suppose that these same forgotten childhood achievements have not, as might be thought, slipped away without leaving their mark on the subject's development, but have exercised a determining influence for the whole of his later life. And in spite of this unique efficacy they have been forgotten! This suggests that there are conditions for remembering (in the sense of conscious reproducing) of a quite special kind, which have evaded recognition by us up to now. It may very well be that the forgetting of childhood can supply us with the key to the understanding of those amnesias which lie, according to our more recent discoveries, at the basis of the formation of all neurotic symptoms...*" (Freud, S.; 1901; p. 1140).

Summarizing, it is clear why it is so complex to differentiate memories and imagination or "*Material Truth*" and "*Historical Truth*". The "*Screen Memories*" resurface disguised with all the freshness of what "really" happened, and what was repressed and forgotten a long time ago, returns to our consciousness with all the power of a "truth" despite its unconscious modifications. This "truth" is not only historical but fused with a "prehistoric truth". Thus, if we go back to the clinical case of the "Wolf Man", we could keep asking ourselves, without finding an answer, what scenes that patient witnessed when he was only a year and a half old. However, from what we said earlier, it is not fundamental to answer this question. The "*Primal Scene*", the representation of the sexual intercourse between parents, is a heritage of humanity, it is an "*Urszene*". It may be that this patient actually witnessed sexual intercourse between his parents. However it is entirely possible that he did not and from other impressions received at such an early age, he has constructed that image in his fantasy.

The mnemonic-traces of the most recent impressions, insofar as they are capable of contributing material to the congenital schemata, would have been disguised by the unconscious. Two ordinary scenes could have stimulated his imagination in this direction: the observation of sexual intercourse between sheepdogs and the sight of his parents "innocently" lying in bed. The

content of both scenes could have been fused together as a result of the influence of phylogenetic heritage.

PART III

REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION IN THE ANALYSIS SESSION: TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF REPRODUCING THE PAST

In 1909, in *"Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis"*, Freud introduced his famous phrase: "...*Our hysterical patients suffer from reminiscences...*" In this same work, a little later he adds: the neurotics all "...*not only do remember painful experiences of the remote past, but they still cling to them emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate...*" (Freud S.; 1909; p. 2206). Three years later, in *"The Dynamics of Transference"*, referring to the conduct of his patients in session, he writes something which, if the two texts were read superficially, would seem to contradict the previous affirmation: "...*The unconscious impulses do not want to be remembered in the way the treatment desires them to be, but endeavor to reproduce themselves in accordance with the timelessness of the unconscious and its capacity for hallucination...*" (Freud S.; 1912; p. 2464). However, by reading the above lecture more carefully, we realize that Freud already had the notion that neurotics express their abnormal adherence to the past through their behaviors, not their memories. The phrase "*they suffer from reminiscences*" does not mean that they suffer from recalled memories, but that they suffer from not being able to remember memories. In *"Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis"* Freud describes neurotics as "unpractical Londoners", the type of people who adhere to their distant past and continue crying in front of a monument even though this behavior marginalizes them from both "reality" and the present. It is precisely the impossibility of remembering past events that generates the "acting out". As Freud states in 1914, in the article *"Remembering, Repeating and Working-through"*, this compulsion to repeat is the patient's way of remembering.

If we continue with this example proposed by Freud in the *"Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis"*, we can better understand the change in the analytical techniques mentioned in the 1914 article. In alignment with the "cathartic method", the Londoners would have stopped crying in front of the monument. They would have been "cured" of their symptoms, at the moment of remembering the events that caused their formation. In other words, they would have been "cured" when the memory of the pathogenic traumatic scene appeared in their consciences: "... *Remembering and abreacting, with the help of the hypnotic state, were what was at that time aimed at...*" (Freud S.; 1914; p. 2498). With the new method, we would have to imagine an analytical session in which a patient would cry instead of freely associating. The therapeutic effort of the therapist would then be directed towards the relational meaning of this behavior. "What is the patient trying to communicate to me that he cannot say to himself"; "What is the meaning of his behavior that even he is not aware of?". Once the analyst understands this meaning and communicates it to the patient, his hitherto forgotten associations would likely emerge in him. The analyst would thus "translate" a message expressed in action into a verbal language, as evidenced by Freud himself in "Letter 52" to Wilhelm Fließ. In this more recent procedure, the objective of "making the unconscious conscious" remains, however the therapeutic work develops in reverse with respect to the previous technique. The behavior of the patient in the session represents another expressive form of his unconscious memories.

In *"Observations on Transference-love"* Freud compares the appearance of the latter to the rise of an underground world spirit. In *"Totem and Taboo"* he specifies that "...*spirits and demons, [...]* are only projections of man's own emotional impulses. He turns his emotional cathexes into

persons, he peoples the world with them and meets his internal mental processes again outside himself ..." (Freud, S.; 1913-14; p. 2735). Therefore, the patient, through the transference, projects his repressed feelings onto the therapist. However, for primitive man, who does not have a developed endo-psychic capacity, animistic projection is a forced natural mechanism. On the contrary, as a result of repression the analysand uses this same mechanism the moment he cannot focus his unconscious contents by means of introspection. The repressed contents, by the very fact of being unconscious, express themselves with all their strength; they become a "spirit". As Freud states: "...our memories [...] can be made conscious; but there can be no doubt that they can produce all their effects while in an unconscious condition..." (Freud S.; 1900; p. 972). On the one hand, these effects are the capacity to hallucinate, which is manifested in dreams and in the vivacity of "Screen Memories". On the other hand, they are the capacity to manifest unaltered unconscious contents through timelessness in conduct and character. This also means that the communication that a patient gives us about a particularly vivid memory points out that this memory is a deceptive reconstruction. The "transference" is manifested due to the resistance to connect the rejected associations with consciousness, and therefore transcribe them into word representations in consonance with the timelessness and hallucinatory capacity of the unconscious. The unsatisfied motions of children and the libidinous expectations of the analysand are projected onto the doctor. From an emotional point of view, the result is that the analyst becomes an important person in relation to the patient's past. This process is a substitute for the "external reality", although only related to an affective perception favored by the very structure of the analytical framework. The transference is an "...intermediate region between illness and real life..." (Freud S.; 1914; p. 156).

Based on what we have discussed so far, transference is a dynamic phenomenon and consequently, the fundamental rule induces a libidinal mobilization and is not something innocuous. In fact, the greater the proximity of the patient to the nucleus of his repressed contents, the more he acts out instead of continuing to associate. He transfers the repressed contents to the therapist and behaves according to what he perceives affectively. There is a hypothetical dividing line, beyond which thoughts sink into the unconscious, which establishes the interruption of free associations and the passage to the action: "...the patient regards the products of the awakening of his unconscious impulses as contemporaneous and real; he seeks to put his passions into action without taking any account of the real situation..." (Freud S.; 1912; p. 2464). To abide by this fundamental rule doesn't mean to think at random, but to let unconscious "purposive ideas" manage the course of thought.

I believe that at this point a precision is necessary with respect to the term "*Purposive Ideas*", since the technique used by Freud in 1900 differs from that used in the successive works cited. The subject is extraordinarily complex and, in my opinion, represents one of the darkest, most controversial and at the same time stimulating aspects of Freudian thought. This begs the question: How should we consider unconscious purposive ideas? As we saw before, the nucleus of the unconscious seems to be constituted by primitive and instinctive mental activities. In "*Moses and Monotheistic Religion*" Freud further argues that "...the archaic heritage of human beings comprises not only dispositions but also subject-matter - memory-traces of the experience of earlier generations..." (Freud, S.; 1939 [1934-38]; p. 4921). This statement clearly points in the direction of a congenital "knowledge" that is prior to any experience. This is difficult to reconcile with what Freud writes in "*The Ego and the Id*" in that "...all knowledge has its origin in external perception..." (Freud, S.; 1923; p. 3957). I believe that in order to remove ourselves from this apparent contradiction, we have to consider the purposive ideas not as congenital or unmodifiable traces of the past, but rather as a set of unconscious associative connections. According to the "*Project for a Scientific Psychology*", it may be possible to call them "inherited facilitations". Although they have the possibility of guiding thought, action and even perception, these links can also be modified by new experiences. The accent falls on the knowledge originated by the

perception of external reality and as soon as new perceptual material does not fit into the mnemic-trace "mold", it is transcribed. This modification of the congenital categories takes place, according to new experiences.

Memory is considered by Freud as a dynamic phenomenon of "a posteriori" transcriptions ("*Nachträglich*"), but not as a reproduction of memories "isomorphic" with past experiences. These transcriptions refer to the associative resignification, according to the analyst's interpretation of the forgotten signs. In their linkage with other collateral associations, these signs can be translated into word presentations. On the contrary, what makes a scene traumatic is not always the "true reality" of what happened, but its association with other scenes. Consequently, an ordinary, banal or indifferent event can be transformed into something unintelligible because of its successive transcriptions, and as a result is cut off from the conscious associative trade and repressed from the clinical point of view. This modification occurs from the transcription the analysand makes of the mnemic-traces of a former experience, which started from the current associations.

The analytical situation could therefore be considered as a "battle" between the analyst and the patient's instinctive life: "*...The physician... is prepared for a perpetual struggle with his patient to keep in the psychical sphere all the impulses which the patient would like to direct into the motor sphere...*" (Freud S.; 1914; p. 2504). The analysand does not want to submit to the cognitive approach that takes place during the analysis of the transference and the session is therefore structured as a struggle between instinct and reason, affection and cognition, or primary and secondary processes.

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