

THE FREUDIAN UNCONSCIOUS AND OURS

*Pensée sauvage · There is cause only in something that doesn't work ·
Gap, obstacle, discovery, loss · Discontinuity · Signorelli*

Because I am beginning on time today, I will start by reading a poem which, in actual fact, has no relation to what I am about to say, but which is related to what I said last year, in my seminar, about the mysterious object, the most concealed object, that of the scopic drive.

It is a short poem to be found on page 73 of *Fou d'Elsa*, which Aragon entitles 'Contre-chant'.

*Vainement ton image arrive à ma rencontre
Et ne m'entre où je suis qui seulement la montre
Toi te tournant vers moi tu ne saurais trouver
Au mur de mon regard que ton ombre rêvée*

*Je suis ce malheureux comparable aux miroirs
Qui peuvent réfléchir mais ne peuvent pas voir
Comme eux mon œil est vide et comme eux habité
De l'absence de toi qui fait sa cécité*

In vain your image comes to meet me
And does not enter me where I am who only shows it
Turning towards me you can find
On the wall of my gaze only your dreamt-of shadow.

I am that wretch comparable with mirrors
That can reflect but cannot see
Like them my eye is empty and like them inhabited
By your absence which makes them blind.

I dedicate this poem to the nostalgia that some of you may feel for that interrupted seminar in which I developed the theme of anxiety and the function of the *objet petit a*.

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They will appreciate, I think, those who were with me last year—I apologize for being so allusive—they will appreciate the fact that Aragon—in this admirable work in which I am proud to find an echo of the tastes of our generation, so much so that I am forced to turn to friends of my own age if I am to make myself understood about this poem—follows his poem with this enigmatic line—*Thus said An-Nadjî once, as he was invited to a circumcision.*

This is the point at which those who heard my seminar last year will find a correspondence between the various forms of the *objet a* and the central symbolic function of the *minus-phi* $[(-\phi)]$ —evoked here by the strange reference, which is certainly no accident, that Aragon confers on the historical connotation, if I may put it this way, of the propagation by his character, the mad poet, of this ‘counter-song’.

I

There are some of you here, I know, who are being introduced to my teaching for the first time. They are being introduced to it through writings that are already dated. I would like them to know that one of the indispensable co-ordinates in appreciating the meaning of this first teaching must be found in the fact that they cannot, from their present position, imagine to what degree of contempt for, or simply *méconnaissance* of, the instrument of their work the practitioners of psycho-analysis can attain. They should know that for some years all my effort has been required in a struggle to bring to the attention of these practitioners the true value of this instrument, *speech*—to give it back its dignity, so that it does not always represent for them those words, devalued in advance, that force them to fix their gaze elsewhere, in order to find their guarantor.

Thus, for a time at least, I was thought to be obsessed with some kind of philosophy of language, even a Heideggerian one, whereas only a *propaedeutic* reference was involved. The fact that I am speaking here will not make me speak more philosophically.

But let me turn to something else, which indeed I will find easier to specify here. I am referring to something that I can only call the refusal of the concept. That is why, as I announced at the end of my first seminar, I will try to introduce you today

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to the major Freudian concepts—I have isolated four that seem to come within this category.

The few words on the blackboard under the heading Freudian concepts are the first two—the unconscious and repetition. The transference—I hope to approach it next time—will introduce us directly to the algorithms that I thought necessary to set out in practice, especially with a view to the implementation of the analytic technique as such. Lastly, the drive is still so difficult to approach—so neglected, one should say—that I do not think I can do more this year than touch upon it after we have dealt with the transference.

We shall see, therefore, only the essence of analysis—especially that which is profoundly problematic, though at the same time crucial, about it, namely, the function of the training analysis. It is only by going through this exposition that we may, at the end of the year—without wishing myself in any way to minimize the shifting, not to say scabrous, side of the approach to this concept—begin our examination of the drive. In this respect, our approach will provide a contrast with those who boldly venture into this terrain with incomplete and flimsy references.

The two small arrows that you see indicated on the blackboard after *The unconscious* and *Repetition* point towards the question-mark that follows. This question-mark indicates that our conception of the concept implies that the concept is always established in an approach that is not unrelated to that which is imposed on us, as a form, by infinitesimal calculus. Indeed, if the concept is modelled on an approach to the reality that the concept has been created to apprehend, it is only by a leap, a passage to the limit, that it manages to realize itself. We are then required to say in what respect—under what form of finite quantity, I would say—the conceptual elaboration known as the unconscious may be carried out. The same goes for repetition.

It is in relation to the other two terms written on the blackboard at the end of the line, *The subject* and *The real* that we will be led to give form to the question posed last time—can psychoanalysis, with all its paradoxical, odd, aporic qualities, be regarded, among us, as constituting a science, a potential science?

I shall take first the concept of the unconscious.

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Most of you will have some idea of what I mean when I say — *the unconscious is structured like a language*. This statement refers to a field that is much more accessible to us today than at the time of Freud. I will illustrate it by something that is materialized, at what is certainly a scientific level, by the field that is explored, structured, elaborated by Claude Lévi-Strauss, and which he has pinpointed in the title of his book, *La Pensée Sauvage*.

Before any experience, before any individual deduction, even before those collective experiences that may be related only to social needs are inscribed in it, something organizes this field, inscribes its initial lines of force. This is the function that Claude Lévi-Strauss shows us to be the truth of the totemic function, and which reduces its appearance—the primary classificatory function.

Before strictly human relations are established, certain relations have already been determined. They are taken from whatever nature may offer as supports, supports that are arranged in themes of opposition. Nature provides—I must use the word—signifiers, and these signifiers organize human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them.

The important thing, for us, is that we are seeking here —before any formation of the subject, of a subject who thinks, who situates himself in it—the level at which there is counting, things are counted, and in this counting he who counts is already included. It is only later that the subject has to recognize himself as such, recognize himself as he who counts. Remember the naïve failure of the simpleton's delighted attempt to grasp the little fellow who declares—*I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest and me*. But it is quite natural—first the three brothers, Paul, Ernest and I are counted, and then there is I at the level at which I am to reflect the first I, that is to say, the I who counts.

In our time, in the historical period that has seen the formation of a science that may be termed human, but which must be distinguished from any kind of psycho-sociology, namely, linguistics, whose model is the combinatory operation, functioning spontaneously, of itself, in a presubjective way

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—it is this linguistic structure that gives its status to the unconscious. It is this structure, in any case, that assures us that there is, beneath the term unconscious, something definable, accessible and objectifiable. But when I urge psycho-analysts not to ignore this field, which provides them with a solid support for their labours, does this mean that I hope to include the concepts introduced historically by Freud under the term unconscious? No, I don't think so. The unconscious, the Freudian concept, is something different, which I would like to try to get you to grasp today.

It is certainly not enough to say that the unconscious is a dynamic concept, since this would be to substitute the most common kind of mystery for a particular mystery—in general, force is used to designate a locus of opacity. It is to the function of cause that I will refer today.

I am well aware that I am entering here on a terrain which, from the point of view of philosophical criticism, suggests a whole world of references, so many, in fact, as to make me hesitate among them—but let's take our pick. Some of you at least will remain unsatisfied if I simply point out that, in his *An attempt to introduce the concept of negative quantities into philosophy*, we can see how closely Kant comes to understanding the gap that the function of cause has always presented to any conceptual apprehension. In that essay, it is more or less stated that cause is a concept that, in the last resort, is unanalysable—impossible to understand by reason—if indeed the rule of reason, the *Vernunftregel*, is always some *Vergleichung*, or equivalent—and that there remains essentially in the function of cause a certain *gap*, a term used by Kant in the *Prolegomena*.

I will not go so far as to remark that the problem of cause has always been an embarrassment to philosophers, and that it is not as simple as might be thought when, in Aristotle, one sees the four causes balancing one another—for I am not philosophizing here, and would not claim to carry out so heavy an undertaking with so few references. However, these references are enough to bring out the meaning of what I am insisting on. For me, cause—any modality, even if Kant inscribes it in the categories of pure reason—to be more precise, he inscribes it in the table of relations, between inherence and community—cause is not any the more rationalized for this.

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Cause is to be distinguished from that which is determinate in a chain, in other words the *law*. By way of example, think of what is pictured in the law of action and reaction. There is here, one might say, a single principle. One does not go without the other. The mass of a body that is crushed on the ground is not the cause of that which it receives in return for its vital force—its mass is integrated in this force that comes back to it in order to dissolve its coherence by a return effect. There is no gap here, except perhaps at the end.

Whenever we speak of cause, on the other hand, there is always something anti-conceptual, something indefinite. The phases of the moon are the cause of tides—we know this from experience, we know that the word cause is correctly used here. Or again, miasmas are the cause of fever—that doesn't mean anything either, there is a hole, and something that oscillates in the interval. In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work.

Well! It is at this point that I am trying to make you see by approximation that the Freudian unconscious is situated at that point, where, between cause and that which it affects, there is always something wrong. The important thing is not that the unconscious determines neurosis—of that one Freud can quite happily, like Pontius Pilot, wash his hands. Sooner or later, something would have been found, humoral determinates, for example—for Freud, it would be quite immaterial. For what the unconscious does is to show us the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with a real—a real that may well not be determined.

In this gap, something happens. Once this gap has been filled, is the neurosis cured? After all, the question remains open. But the neurosis becomes something else, sometimes a mere illness, a *scar*, as Freud said—the scar, not of the neurosis, but of the unconscious. I am not handling this topology very skilfully, because I do not have time—I have simply jumped into the deep end—but I think you will be able to feel guided by the terms that I have introduced when you come to read Freud's own works. Observe the point from which he sets out—*The Aetiology of the Neuroses*—and what does he find in the hole, in the split, in the gap so characteristic of cause? Something of the order of the *non-realized*.

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One uses the term refusal. This is rather hasty—indeed, for some time now, one has no longer been sure what the term refusal means. At first, the unconscious is manifested to us as something that holds itself in suspense in the area, I would say, of the *unborn*. That repression should discharge something into this area is not surprising. It is the abortionist's relation to limbo.

Certainly, this dimension should be evoked in a register that has nothing unreal, or dereistic, about it, but is rather unrealized. It is always dangerous to disturb anything in that zone of shades, and perhaps it is part of the analyst's role, if the analyst is performing it properly, to be besieged—I mean *really*—by those in whom he has invoked this world of shades, without always being able to bring them up to the light of day. One can never be sure that what one says on this matter will have no harmful effect—even what I have been able to say about it over the last ten years owes some of its impact to this fact. It is not without effect that, even in a public speech, one directs one's attention at subjects, touching them at what Freud calls the navel—the *navel of the dreams*, he writes, to designate their ultimately unknown centre—which is simply, like the same anatomical navel that represents it, that gap of which I have already spoken.

There is a danger in public discourse, precisely in so far as it is addressed to those nearest—Nietzsche knew this, a certain type of discourse can be addressed only to those furthest away.

In actual fact, this dimension of the unconscious that I am evoking *had been forgotten*, as Freud had quite clearly foreseen. The unconscious had closed itself up against his message thanks to those active practitioners of orthopaedics that the analysts of the second and third generation became, busying themselves, by psychologizing analytic theory, in stitching up this gap.

Believe me, I myself never re-open it without great care.

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Now, of course, at this stage in my life, I am in a position to introduce into the domain of cause the law of the signifier, in the locus in which this gap is produced. Nevertheless, we must, if we are to understand what it means in psycho-analysis, go back and trace the concept of the unconscious through the

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various stages of the process in which Freud elaborated it—since we can complete that process only by carrying it to its limits.

The Freudian unconscious has nothing to do with the so-called forms of the unconscious that preceded it, not to say accompanied it, and which still surround it today. To understand what I mean, open the Lalande dictionary. Or read the delightful list provided by Dwelshauvers in a book published some forty years ago. In it he lists ten or so forms of the unconscious that will tell nobody anything that he did not already know, and which simply designate the non-conscious, the more or less conscious, etc.—in the ever-expanding field of psychology, one finds hundreds of additional varieties.

Freud's unconscious is not at all the romantic unconscious of imaginative creation. It is not the locus of the divinities of night. This locus is no doubt not entirely unrelated to the locus towards which Freud turns his gaze—but the fact that Jung, who provides a link with the terms of the romantic unconscious, should have been repudiated by Freud, is sufficient indication that psycho-analysis is introducing something other. Similarly, we can say that the hold-all, heteroclite unconscious that Edward von Hartmann spent his life elaborating is not Freud's unconscious, but we should not be over-hasty, for Freud, in the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, himself referred to it in a footnote—that is to say, we must look more closely at it if we are to discover in what way Freud's unconscious is to be distinguished from it.

To all these forms of unconscious, ever more or less linked to some obscure will regarded as primordial, to something pre-conscious, what Freud opposes is the revelation that at the level of the unconscious there is something at all points homologous with what occurs at the level of the subject—this thing speaks and functions in a way quite as elaborate as at the level of the conscious, which thus loses what seemed to be its privilege. I am well aware of the resistances that this simple remark can still provoke, though it is evident in everything that Freud wrote. Read, for example, the paragraph of that seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, called 'Forgetting in Dreams', concerning which Freud merely refers to the play of the signifier.

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I will not content myself with this portentous reference. I have spelt out to you point by point the functioning of what was first produced for us by Freud as the phenomenon of the unconscious. In the dream, in parapraxis, in the flash of wit—what is it that strikes one first? It is the sense of impediment to be found in all of them.

Impediment, failure, split. In a spoken or written sentence something stumbles. Freud is attracted by these phenomena, and it is there that he seeks the unconscious. There, something other demands to be realized—which appears as intentional, of course, but of a strange temporality. What occurs, what is *produced*, in this gap, is presented as *the discovery*. It is in this way that the Freudian exploration first encounters what occurs in the unconscious. 7

This discovery is, at the same time, a solution—not necessarily a complete one, but, however incomplete it may be, it has that indefinable something that touches us, that peculiar accent that Theodor Reik has brought out so admirably—only brought out, for Freud certainly noted it before him—namely, *surprise*, that by which the subject feels himself overcome, by which he finds both more and less than he expected—but, in any case, it is, in relation to what he expected, of exceptional value.

Now, as soon as it is presented, this discovery becomes a rediscovery and, furthermore, it is always ready to steal away again, thus establishing the dimension of loss. 45 - 43

To resort to a metaphor, drawn from mythology, we have, in Eurydice twice lost, the most potent image we can find of the relation between Orpheus the analyst and the unconscious.

In this respect, if you will allow me to add a touch of irony, the unconscious finds itself, strictly speaking, on the opposite side to love, which, as everyone knows, is always unique; the expression 'one lost, ten to be found again' finds its best application here.

Discontinuity, then, is the essential form in which the unconscious first appears to us as a phenomenon—discontinuity, in which something is manifested as a vacillation. Now, if this discontinuity has this absolute, inaugural character, in the development of Freud's discovery, must we place it—as was later the tendency with analysts—against the background of a totality?

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Is the (one) anterior to discontinuity? I do not think so, and everything that I have taught in recent years has tended to exclude this need for a closed one—a mirage to which is attached the reference to the enveloping psyche, a sort of double of the organism in which this false unity is thought to reside. You will grant me that the one that is introduced by the experience of the unconscious is the one of the split, of the stroke, of rupture.

At this point, there springs up a misunderstood form of the un, the Un of the Unbewusste. Let us say that the limit of the Unbewusste is the Unbegriff—not the non-concept, but the concept of lack.

Where is the background? Is it absent? No. Rupture, (split), the stroke of the opening makes absence emerge—just as the cry does not stand out against a background of silence, but on the contrary makes the silence emerge as silence.

If you keep hold of this initial structure, you will avoid giving yourself up to some partial aspect of the question of the unconscious—as, for example, that it is the subject, qua alienated in his history, at the level at which the syncope of discourse is joined with his desire. You will see that, more radically, it is in the dimension of a synchrony that you must situate the unconscious—at the level of a being, but in the sense that it can spread over everything, that is to say, at the level of the subject of the enunciation, in so far as, according to the sentences, according to the modes, it loses itself as much as it finds itself again, and in the sense that, in an interjection, in an imperative, in an invocation, even in a hesitation, it is always the unconscious that presents you with its enigma, and speaks—in short, at the level at which everything that blossoms in the unconscious spreads, like mycelium, as Freud says about the dream, around a central point. It is always a question of the subject qua indeterminate.

Oblivium is levis with the long e—smooth. Oblivium is that which effaces—effaces what? The signifier as such. Here we find again the basic structure that makes it possible, in an operatory way, for something to take on the function of barring,

¹ Lacan is playing on the French un (one) and the German negative prefix un, moving from 'oneness' to 'negation'. The Unbewusste is Freud's 'unconscious'. Lacan's gloss, on Unbegriff shifts the notion of 'negation' into one of 'lack' [Translator's note].

anxiety
not
despair ✓

only one
moment found
outside of time,
not in time.
ie pre-umbilical

Repetition of
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always
changing
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distinction of
always last
and changing
form

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striking out another thing. This is a more primordial level, structurally speaking, than repression, of which we shall speak later. Well, this operatory element of effacement is what Freud designates, from the outset, in the function of the censor.

It is the censorship by scissors, the Russian censorship, or again the German censorship, see Heinrich Heine, at the beginning of the *Book of Germany. Herr and Frau Such-and-such have pleasure in announcing the birth of a child as beautiful as liberty*—and Dr Hoffmann, the censor, strikes out the word *liberty*. Certainly one may ask oneself what effect this word can have as a result of this strictly material censorship, but that is another problem. But it is certainly here that the dynamism of the unconscious operates in the most efficient way.

Let us turn again to an example that has never been sufficiently exploited, the first used by Freud to demonstrate his theory, namely, his forgetting, his inability to remember the word *Signorelli* after his visit to the paintings at Orvieto. Is it possible not to see emerging from the text itself, and establishing itself, not metaphor, but the reality of the disappearance, of the suppression, of the *Unterdrückung*, the passing underneath? The term *Signor, Herr*, passes underneath—the absolute master, I once said, which is in fact death, has disappeared there. Furthermore, do we not see, behind this, the emergence of that which forced Freud to find in the myths of the death of the father the regulation of his desire? After all, it is to be found in Nietzsche, who declares, in his own myth, that God is dead. And it is perhaps against the background of the same reasons. For the myth of the *God is dead*—which, personally, I feel much less sure about, as a myth of course, than most contemporary intellectuals, which is in no sense a declaration of theism, nor of faith in the resurrection—perhaps this myth is simply a shelter against the threat of castration.

If you know how to read them, you will see this threat in the apocalyptic frescos of Orvieto cathedral. If not, read Freud's conversation in the train—where only the end of sexual potency is referred to. Freud's interlocutor, a doctor—the same interlocutor in fact before whom he is unable to remember the name *Signorelli*—is describing to Freud the dramatic character that a loss of potency usually has for his patients.

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Thus the unconscious is always manifested as that which vacillates in a split in the subject, from which emerges a discovery that Freud compares with desire—a desire that we will temporarily situate in the denuded metonymy of the discourse in question, where the subject surprises himself in some unexpected way.

As far as Freud and his relation to the father are concerned, let us not forget that, despite all his efforts to understand, he was forced to admit, to a woman of his acquaintance, that, for him, the question—*What does a woman want?*—remained unanswered. He never resolved this question, as we can see from what was in fact his relations with women, his uxorious character, as Jones rather delicately puts it. I would say that Freud would certainly have made a perfect impassioned idealist had he not devoted himself to the other, in the form of the hysteric.

I have decided to stop my seminar always at a particular time, at twenty-to-two. As you see, I have not managed today to deal fully with the function of the unconscious.

(Questions and answers are missing.)

22 January 1964

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Psycho-analysis is not an idealism > *The real as trauma · Theory of the dream and of waking · Consciousness and representation · God is unconscious · The objet petit a in the fort-da*

Today I shall continue the examination of the concept of repetition, as it is presented by Freud and the experience of psycho-analysis.

I wish to stress here that, at first sight, psycho-analysis seems to lead in the direction of idealism.

God knows that it has been reproached enough for this—it reduces the experience, some say, that urges us to find in the hard supports of conflict, struggle, even of the exploitation of man by man, the reasons for our deficiencies—it leads to an ontology of the tendencies, which it regards as primitive, internal, already given by the condition of the subject.

We have only to consider the course of this experience from its first steps to see, on the contrary, that it in no way allows us to accept some such aphorism as *life is a dream*. No praxis is more orientated towards that which, at the heart of experience, is the kernel of the real than psycho-analysis.

I

Where do we meet this real? For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter, an essential encounter—an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us. That is why I have put on the blackboard a few words that are for us, today, a reference-point of what we wish to propose.

First, the *tuché*, which we have borrowed, as I told you last time, from Aristotle, who uses it in his search for cause. We have translated it as *the encounter with the real*. The real is beyond the *automaton*, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the

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signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle. The real is that which always lies behind the automaton, and it is quite obvious, throughout Freud's research, that it is this that is the object of his concern.

If you wish to understand what is Freud's true preoccupation as the function of phantasy is revealed to him, remember the development, which is so central for us, of the *Wolf Man*. He applies himself, in a way that can almost be described as anguish, to the question—what is the first encounter, the real, that lies behind the phantasy? We feel that throughout this analysis, this real brings with it the subject, almost by force, so directing the research that, after all, we can today ask ourselves whether this fever, this presence, this desire of Freud is not that which, in his patient, might have conditioned the belated accident of his psychosis.

So there is no question of confusing with repetition either the return of the signs, or reproduction, or the modulation by the act of a sort of acted-out remembering. Repetition is something which, of its true nature, is always veiled in analysis, because of the identification of repetition with the transference in the conceptualization of analysts. Now, this really is the point at which a distinction should be made.

The relation to the real that is to be found in the transference was expressed by Freud when he declared that nothing can be apprehended *in effigie, in absentia*—and yet is not the transference given to us as effigy and as relation to absence? We can succeed in unravelling this ambiguity of the reality involved in the transference only on the basis of the function of the real in repetition.

What is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs—the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to the *tuché*—*as if by chance*. This is something that we analysts never allow ourselves to be taken in by, on principle. At least, we always point out that we must not be taken in when the subject tells us that something happened to him that day that prevented him from realizing his wish to come to the session. Things must not be taken at the level at which the subject puts them—in as much as what we are dealing with is precisely this obstacle, this hitch, that we find at every moment. It is this mode of apprehension above all that governs the new decipher-

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ing that we have given of the subject's relations to that which makes his condition.

The function of the *tuché*, of the real as encounter—the encounter in so far as it may be missed, in so far as it is essentially the missed encounter—first presented itself in the history of psycho-analysis in a form that was in itself already enough to arouse our attention, that of the trauma.

Is it not remarkable that, at the origin of the analytic experience, the real should have presented itself in the form of that which is *unassimilable* in it—in the form of the trauma, determining all that follows, and imposing on it an apparently accidental origin? We are now at the heart of what may enable us to understand the radical character of the conflictual notion introduced by the opposition of the pleasure principle and the reality principle—which is why we cannot conceive the reality principle as having, by virtue of its ascendancy, the last word.

In effect, the trauma is conceived as having necessarily been marked by the subjectifying homeostasis that orientates the whole functioning defined by the pleasure principle. Our experience then presents us with a problem, which derives from the fact that, at the very heart of the primary processes, we see preserved the insistence of the trauma in making us aware of its existence. The trauma reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled. How can the dream, the bearer of the subject's desire, produce that which makes the trauma emerge repeatedly—if not its very face, at least the screen that shows us that it is still there behind?

Let us conclude that the reality system, however far it is developed, leaves an essential part of what belongs to the real a prisoner in the toils of the pleasure principle.

It is this that we have to investigate, this reality, one might say, whose presence is supposed to be required by us, if the motive force of development, as it is represented for us by someone like Melanie Klein, for example, is not reducible to a formula like the one I used earlier, namely, *life is a dream*.

To this requirement correspond those radical points in the real that I call encounters, and which enable us to conceive reality as *unterlegt*, *untertragen*, which, with the superb ambiguity of the French language, appear to be translated by the same

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word—*souffrance*.¹ Reality is in abeyance there, awaiting attention. And *Zwang*, constraint, which Freud defines by *Wiederholung*, governs the very diversions of the primary process.

The primary process—which is simply what I have tried to define for you in my last few lectures in the form of the unconscious—must, once again, be apprehended in its experience of rupture, between perception and consciousness, in that non-temporal locus, I said, which forces us to posit what Freud calls, in homage to Fechner, *die Idee einer anderer Lokalität*, the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, *the between perception and consciousness*.

2

We can, at any moment, apprehend this primary process.

The other day, I was awoken from a short nap by knocking at my door just before I actually awoke. With this impatient knocking I had already formed a dream, a dream that manifested to me something other than this knocking. And when I awake, it is in so far as I reconstitute my entire representation around this knocking—this perception—that I am aware of it. I know that I am there, at what time I went to sleep, and why I went to sleep. When the knocking occurs, not in my perception, but in my consciousness, it is because my consciousness reconstitutes itself around this representation—that I know that I am waking up, that I am *knocked up*.

But here I must question myself as to what I am at that moment—at the moment, so immediately before and so separate, which is that in which I began to dream under the effect of the knocking which is, to all appearances, what woke me.²

¹ In French, the phrase '*en souffrance*' means 'in suspense', 'in abeyance', 'awaiting attention', 'pending'. It is this sense that translates the German word. '*Souffrance*' also means 'pain', of course. Hence the ambiguity referred to by Lacan. [Tr.].

² There follows a passage in which Lacan comments on the use in French of the 'pleonastic *ne*', that is, the '*ne*' used without the usually accompanying '*pas*', '*que*' or '*jamais*', etc. Since the passage includes examples of this use in French, it is strictly untranslatable. I therefore give it below in the original:

'Je suis, que je sache, *avant que je ne me réveille*—ce *ne* dit explétif, déjà dans tel de mes écrits désigné, est le mode même de présence de ce *je suis* d'avant le réveil. Il n'est point explétif, il est plutôt l'expression de mon impléance,

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Observe what I am directing you towards—towards the symmetry of that structure that makes me, after the awakening knock, able to sustain myself, apparently only in a relation with my representation, which, apparently, makes of me only consciousness. A sort of involuted reflection—in my consciousness, it is only my representation that I recover possession of.

Is that all? Freud has told us often enough that he would have to go back to the function of consciousness, but he never did. Perhaps we shall see better what is at issue, by apprehending what is there that motivates the emergence of the represented reality, namely the phenomenon, distance, the gap itself that constitutes awakening.

To make things quite clear, let us return to the dream—which is also made up entirely of noise—that I left you time to look up in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. You will remember the unfortunate father who went to rest in the room next to the one in which his dead child lay—leaving the child in the care, we are told, of another old man—and who is awoken by something. By what? It is not only the reality, the shock, the knocking, a noise made to recall him to the real, but this expresses, in his dream, the quasi-identity of what is happening, the very reality of an overturned candle setting light to the bed in which his child lies.

Such an example hardly seems to confirm Freud's thesis in the *Traumdeutung*—that the dream is the realization of a desire.

What we see emerging here, almost for the first time, in the *Traumdeutung*, is a function of the dream of an apparently secondary kind—in this case, the dream satisfies only the need to prolong sleep. What, then, does Freud mean by placing, at this point, this particular dream, stressing that it is in itself full confirmation of his thesis regarding dreams?

If the function of the dream is to prolong sleep, if the dream, after all, may come so near to the reality that causes it, can we not say that it might correspond to this reality without emerging

chaque fois qu'elle a à se manifester. La langue, la langue française le définit bien dans l'acte de son emploi. *Aurez-vous fini avant qu'il ne vienne?* — cela m'importe que vous ayez fini, à Dieu ne plaise qu'il vint avant. *Passerez-vous, avant qu'il vienne?* — car, déjà, quand il viendra, vous ne serez plus là.'

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from sleep? After all, there is such a thing as somnambulistic activity. The question that arises, and which indeed all Freud's previous indications allow us here to produce, is—*What is it that wakes the sleeper?* Is it not, in the dream, another reality?—the reality that Freud describes thus—*Dass das Kind an seinem Bette steht*, that the child is near his bed, *ihn am Arme fasst*, takes him by the arm and whispers to him reproachfully, *und ihm vorwurfsvoll zuraunt: Vater, siehst du denn nicht*, Father, can't you see, *dass ich verbrenne*, that I am burning?

Is there not more reality in this message than in the noise by which the father also identifies the strange reality of what is happening in the room next door. Is not the missed reality that caused the death of the child expressed in these words? Freud himself does not tell us that we must recognize in this sentence what perpetuates for the father those words forever separated from the dead child that were said to him, perhaps, Freud supposes, because of the fever—but who knows, perhaps these words perpetuate the remorse felt by the father that the man he has put at his son's bedside to watch over him may not be up to his task: *die Besorgnis dass der greise Wächter seiner Aufgabe nicht gewachsen sein dürfte*, he may not be up to his job, in fact, he has gone to sleep.

Does not this sentence, said in relation to fever, suggest to you what, in one of my recent lectures, I called the cause of fever? And is not the action, apparently so urgent, of preventing what is happening in the next room also perhaps felt as being in any case too late now, in relation to what is at issue, in the psychical reality manifested in the words spoken? Is not the dream essentially, one might say, an act of homage to the missed reality—the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening? What encounter can there be henceforth with that forever inert being—even now being devoured by the flames—if not the encounter that occurs precisely at the moment when, by accident, as if by chance, the flames come to meet him? Where is the reality in this accident, if not that it repeats something actually more fatal *by means of* reality, a reality in which the person who was supposed to be watching over the body still remains asleep, even when the father re-emerges after having woken up?

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Thus the encounter, forever missed, has occurred between dream and awakening, between the person who is still asleep and whose dream we will not know and the person who has dreamt merely in order not to wake up.

If Freud, amazed, sees in this the confirmation of his theory of desire, it is certainly a sign that the dream is not a phantasy fulfilling a wish.

For it is not that, in the dream, he persuades himself that the son is still alive. But the terrible vision of the dead son taking the father by the arm designates a beyond that makes itself heard in the dream. Desire manifests itself in the dream by the loss expressed in an image at the most cruel point of the object. It is only in the dream that this truly unique encounter can occur. Only a rite, an endlessly repeated act, can commemorate this not very memorable encounter—for no one can say what the death of a child is, except the father *qua* father, that is to say, no conscious being.

For the true formula of atheism is not *God is dead*—even by basing the origin of the function of the father upon his murder, Freud protects the father—the true formula of atheism is *God is unconscious*.

The awakening shows us the waking state of the subject's consciousness in the representation of what has happened—the unfortunate accident in reality, against which one can do no more than take steps! But what, then, was this accident? When everybody is asleep, including the person who wished to take a little rest, the person who was unable to maintain his vigil and the person of whom some well intentioned individual, standing at his bedside, must have said, *He looks just as if he is asleep*, when we know only one thing about him, and that is that, in this entirely sleeping world, only the voice is heard, *Father, can't you see I'm burning?* This sentence is itself a fire-brand—of itself it brings fire where it falls—and one cannot see what is burning, for the flames blind us to the fact that the fire bears on the *Unterlegt*, on the *Untertragen*, on the real.

This is certainly what brings us to recognizing in this detached sentence from the dream of the grief-stricken father the counterpart of what will be, once he is awake, his consciousness, and to ask ourselves what is the correlative, in the dream, of the representation. This question is all the more striking in that,

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here, we see the dream really as the counterpart of the representation; it is the imagery of the dream and it is an opportunity for us to stress what Freud, when he speaks of the unconscious, designates as that which essentially determines it, the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. This means not, as it has been mistranslated, the representative representative (*le représentant représentatif*), but that which takes the place of the representation (*le tenant-lieu de la représentation*). We shall see its function later.

I hope I have helped you to grasp what is nodal in the encounter, *qua* encounter forever missed, and which really sustains, in Freud's text, what seems to him, in his dream, absolutely exemplary.

The place of the real, which stretches from the trauma to the phantasy—in so far as the phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary, something determinant in the function of repetition—this is what we must now examine. This, indeed, is what, for us, explains both the ambiguity of the function of awakening and of the function of the real in this awakening. The real may be represented by the accident, the noise, the small element of reality, which is evidence that we are not dreaming. But, on the other hand, this reality is not so small, for what wakes us is the other reality hidden behind the lack of that which takes the place of representation—this, says Freud is the *Trieb*.

But be careful! We have not yet said what this *Trieb* is—and if, for lack of representation, it is not there, what is this *Trieb*? We may have to consider it as being only *Trieb* to come.

How can we fail to see that awakening works in two directions—and that the awakening that re-situates us in a constituted and represented reality carries out two tasks? The real has to be sought beyond the dream—in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us, behind the lack of representation of which there is only one representative. This is the real that governs our activities more than any other and it is psychoanalysis that designates it for us.

3

Thus Freud finds himself providing the solution to the problem which, for the most acute of the questioners of the

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soul before him—Kierkegaard—had already been centred on repetition.

I would ask you to re-read Kierkegaard's essay on *Repetition*, so dazzling in its lightness and ironic play, so truly Mozartian in the way, so reminiscent of *Don Giovanni*, it abolishes the mirages of love. With great acuteness, and in a quite unanswerable way, Kierkegaard stresses the feature that, in his love, the young man—whose portrait Kierkegaard paints for us with a mixture of emotion and derision—addresses only to himself through the medium of memory. Really, is there not something here more profound than La Rochefoucauld's remark that few would experience love if they had not had its ways and means explained to them? Yes, but who began it? And does not everything essentially begin by deceiving the first to whom the enchantment of love was addressed—who has passed off this enchantment as the exaltation of the other, by making himself the prisoner of this exaltation, of this breathlessness which, with the other, has created the most false of demands, that of narcissistic satisfaction, the ego ideal whether it is or the ego that regards itself as the ideal?

Freud is not dealing with any repetition residing in the natural, no return of need, any more than is Kierkegaard. The return of need is directed towards consumption placed at the service of appetite. Repetition demands the new. It is turned towards the ludic, which finds its dimension in this new—Freud also tells us this in the chapter I referred to last time.

Whatever, in repetition, is varied, modulated, is merely alienation of its meaning. The adult, and even the more advanced child, demands something new in his activities, in his games. But this 'sliding-away' (*glissement*) conceals what is the true secret of the ludic, namely, the most radical diversity constituted by repetition in itself. It can be seen in the child, in his first movement, at the moment when he is formed as a human being, manifesting himself as an insistence that the story should always be the same, that its recounted realization should be ritualized, that is to say, textually the same. This requirement of a distinct consistency in the details of its telling signifies that the realization of the signifier will never be able to be careful enough in its memorization to succeed in designating the primacy of the significance as such. To develop it by

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varying the significations is, therefore, it would seem, to elude it. This variation makes one forget the aim of the significance by transforming its act into a game, and giving it certain outlets that go some way to satisfying the pleasure principle.

When Freud grasps the repetition involved in the game played by his grandson, in the reiterated *fort-da*, he may indeed point out that the child makes up for the effect of his mother's disappearance by making himself the agent of it—but, this phenomenon is of secondary importance. Wallon stresses that the child does not immediately watch the door through which his mother has disappeared, thus indicating that he expects to see her return through it, but that his vigilance was aroused earlier, at the very point she left him, at the point she moved away from him. The ever-open gap introduced by the absence indicated remains the cause of a centrifugal tracing in which that which falls is not the other *qua* face in which the subject is projected, but that cotton-reel linked to itself by the thread that it holds—in which is expressed that which, of itself, detaches itself in this trial, self-mutilation on the basis of which the order of significance will be put in perspective. For the game of the cotton-reel is the subject's answer to what the mother's absence has created on the frontier of his domain—the edge of his cradle—namely, a *ditch*, around which one can only play at jumping.

This reel is not the mother reduced to a little ball by some magical game worthy of the Jivaros—it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained. This is the place to say, in imitation of Aristotle, that man thinks with his object. It is with his object that the child leaps the frontiers of his domain, transformed into a well, and begins the incantation. If it is true that the signifier is the first mark of the subject, how can we fail to recognize here—from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear—that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in act, the reel, that we must designate the subject. To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra—the *petit a*.

The activity as a whole symbolizes repetition, but not at all that of some need that might demand the return of the mother, and which would be expressed quite simply in a cry. It is the

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repetition of the mother's departure as cause of a *Spaltung* in the subject—overcome by the alternating game, *fort-da*, which is a *here or there*, and whose aim, in its alternation, is simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort*. It is aimed at what, essentially, is not there, *qua* represented—for it is the game itself that is the *Repräsentanz* of the *Vorstellung*. What will become of the *Vorstellung* when, once again, this *Repräsentanz* of the mother—in her outline made up of the brush-strokes and gouaches of desire—will be lacking?

I, too, have seen with my own eyes, opened by maternal divination, the child, traumatized by the fact that I was going away despite the appeal, precociously adumbrated in his voice, and henceforth more renewed for months at a time—long after, having picked up this child—I have seen it let his head fall on my shoulder and drop off to sleep, sleep alone being capable of giving him access to the living signifier that I had become since the date of the trauma.

You will see that this sketch that I have given you today of the function of the *tuché* will be essential for us in rectifying what is the duty of the analyst in the interpretation of the transference.

Let me just stress today that it is not in vain that analysis posits itself as modulating in a more radical way this relation of man to the world that has always been regarded as knowledge.

If knowledge is so often, in theoretical writings, related to something similar to the relation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis—it is as the result of a confusion, and we shall show next time that the very originality of psycho-analysis lies in the fact that it does not centre psychological ontogenesis on supposed *stages*—which have literally no discoverable foundation in development observable in biological terms. If development is entirely animated by accident, by the obstacle of the *tuché*, it is in so far as the *tuché* brings us back to the same point at which pre-Socratic philosophy sought to motivate the world itself.

It required a *clinamen*, an inclination, at some point. When Democritus tried to designate it, presenting himself as already the adversary of a pure function of negativity in order to introduce thought into it, he says, *It is not the μηδέν that is*

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essential, and adds—thus showing you that from what one of my pupils called the archaic stage of philosophy, the manipulation of words was used just as in the time of Heidegger—it is not an *μηδέν*, but a *δεν*, which, in Greek, is a coined word. He did not say *εἶναι*, let alone *ὄν*. What, then, did he say? He said, answering the question I asked today, that of idealism, *Nothing, perhaps?*—not *perhaps nothing*, but *not nothing*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

F. DOLTO: *I don't see how, in describing the formation of intelligence up to the age of three or four, one can do without stages. I think that as far as the defence phantasies and the phantasies of the castration veil are concerned, and also the threats of mutilation, one needs to refer to the stages.*

LAGAN: The description of the stages, *which go to form the libido*, must not be referred to some natural process of pseudo-maturation, which always remains opaque. The stages are organized around the fear of castration. The copulatory fact of the introduction of sexuality is traumatizing—this is a snag of some size—and it has an organizing function for development.

The fear of castration is like a thread that perforates all the stages of development. It orientates the relations that are anterior to its actual appearance—weaning, toilet training, etc. It crystallizes each of these moments in a dialectic that has as its centre a bad encounter. If the stages are consistent, it is in accordance with their possible registration in terms of bad encounters.

The central bad encounter is at the level of the sexual. This does not mean that the stages assume a sexual taint that is diffused on the basis of the fear of castration. On the contrary, it is because this empathy is not produced that one speaks of trauma and primal scene.

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