

THE PASSION OF FREUD

- LOVE AND SEXUALITY AND PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION:

As I will discuss, Freud was, to the end of his life, passionately invested in his ideas about the rôle of sexuality in neurogenesis, character formation and psycho-analysis per se – this was the conceptualization that he believed had, or perhaps would, disturb the sleep of the world (1914, SEXIV, p 21). However these ideas as outlined determinedly by Freud would now seem of limited relevance to psycho-analysis – and even perhaps at times, in fact, a little embarrassing and worthy of a quiet apology.

How do we understand this?

I will begin by proposing a certain perspective on Freud's writings. In this I will begin with a reference to Freud by Lacan. In "Ecrits" Lacan refers to an apparent perception of Freud held by psycho-analysts with respect to his discoveries of the dynamic unconscious and the fundamental rule, as if these were "the result of a lucky accident. In other words, Freud never knew what he was doing" (1977, p163). Lacan continues to state,

"A return to Freud's text shows on the contrary the absolute coherence between the technique and his discovery, and at the same time this coherence allows us to put all his procedures in their proper place" (p163).

Seemingly, according to Lacan at least, Freud knew quite well what he was doing. And, if, as Lacan proposes, we put all his procedures in their proper place, one of his procedures, perhaps the most important for psycho-analysis overall, is that of his direct communications to us re psycho-analysis.

If we accept that Freud was not in a state of "méconnaissance" (Lacan, 1977, p163) concerning the unconscious and its conjoint manifestations as transference and resistance, and that these dynamics afflict all of us – it's only a matter of degree of expression at any point of time – then presumably Freud's procedure with respect to his communications to us will reflect his understanding of this. Like an analyst in the consulting room he will be perpetually mindful of our capacity to hear and our important tendency to mis-hear.

As in the consulting room the contrast between the analyst's communication and the analysand's, our, re-presentation will not just be one of concept but also one of form. The analyst will be intending a communication directed towards increasing complexity, this is the nature of understanding, but the analysand, and us for Freud, will be seeking conceptualizations of decreasing complexity, our minds, generally, demand this. In this it can be noted that knowing always involves a corresponding unknowing, whereas understanding involves an

integration of knowing and its corresponding unknowing. The challenge for the analyst, in their communications to the patient, is not to increase the level of unknowing inadvertently while trying to aid in knowing but to facilitate the integration of the unknowing with, and into, the knowing. However because of our intuitive awareness of the patient's movement to decreasing complexity, we will meet them there - e.g. with a statement of fundamental hypothesis - but then assist in a movement towards the increasing complexity of understanding. The horizontal axis on Bion's grid is a good example of some of the procedures involved in this. I am proposing that much of Freud's communication to us is of this nature.

So if Freud, at least intuitively, was mindful of these issues then, as is being proposed, his communications to us would be carefully put - which they generally are. However there would seem to be one of his papers in which this is not the case. In his 1914 paper, "On the history of the psycho-analytic movement" (SEXIV), Freud attacks the claims of Jung and Adler, and their followers, that their ideas either revise his or displace them re psycho-analysis, in a manner which is, at times, grandiose, passionate and belligerent (Strachey, p4). Although he is reasonably dispassionate with his disputations around the fundamental defining issues of psycho-analysis i.e. transference, resistance, the unconscious and dream-analysis (e.g. p64), the passionate essence of his attacks is around their apparent devaluation of, and possible dismissal of, the central importance of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex in neurogenesis and, by extension, psycho-analysis.

How do we understand this?

It is not only easy, but too easy, to fall back into a position of dismissal. What analyst does not think from time to time that their analyst is the one with the problem? This, of course, may be true. But is it true in this case? Do we follow the path towards greater or lesser complexity? If we follow that to greater complexity then we are drawn to wonder what Freud is trying to tell us in his insistent and passionate manner. Whatever it may be, the message would seem to have been lost. For example, at the last IPA Congress, none of the keynote speakers in their well-rounded and thoughtful papers re psycho-analysis, mentioned sexuality at all and Ferro only made one passing reference to the Oedipus complex (2009, p226).

Following the assumption that Freud was not just having a bad day, but was passionately and determinedly trying to tell us something, the question arises as to what it could be and why it has apparently been lost to us? To do this, I will consider his ideas about sexuality, the Oedipus complex etc. Obviously to do this fully in a brief paper is impossible. However I will instead consider his ideas about these issues as discussed in his last offering to us, his "An outline of psycho-analysis" (1940 (1938), SEXXIII).

FREUD AND SEXUALITY

In his "Outline" Freud discusses in an involved and involving way his ideas re sexuality and its key role in neurogenesis and character formation. This constitutes a chapter (Chapter VII) with a particularly poignant title, "An example of psycho-analytic work" (p183-194). Here he considers issues re sexuality in a step by step manner before putting forward his key points. Within these conceptual steps I will extract two whose importance I trust will become clear. One is that he perceives sexuality as "an alloy" of the erotic and the destructive; he writes of

the fact that most of the urges of sexual life are not of a purely erotic nature but have arisen from alloys of the erotic instinct with portions of the destructive instinct (p186).

Secondly, he also states of the sexual,

"We shall not be wrong.....in saying that the weak point in the ego's organization seems to lie in the attitude to the sexual function, as though the antithesis between self-preservation and the preservation of the species had found a psychological expression at that point" (p186).

In other words, Freud is drawing our attention to the issues of the seeming conflation of the sexual and destructive drives, sexuality is as much an expression of the destructive drives as of the erotic, and secondly to his perception that the ego cannot successfully deal with the antithesis, the conflict at interface, of the self-preservative and sexual instincts.

To consider the essential complexity of these conceptualizations, I will refer to Freud's ideas in "Beyond the pleasure principle" (1920, SEXVIII). Here Freud writes of the instincts of self-preservation, the "ego instincts" (p41),

They are component instincts whose function is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, and to ward off any possible ways of returning to inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself (p39).

Freud proposes that these instincts will come into conflict with the sexual instincts because of the latter's determination to preserve life - but essentially of the species not of the individual, beyond a point. Of the sexual instincts Freud writes that,

They operate against the purpose of the other instincts, ...; and this fact indicates that there is an opposition between them and the other instincts, an opposition whose importance was long ago recognised by the theory of the neuroses" (1920 p40).

Even though this antithesis between instincts would seem straight-forward by Freud's description, it is obviously not that simple. Both the self-preservative and

the sexual instincts will have as their fundamental basic goal the survival of the individual against life's forces that would have it otherwise- but they will, by Freud's description, become opposed.

Of course the questions arise as to how, when and why this opposition occurs, and the answer to these questions would seem to lie in how Freud views the essences of these drives. In other words even though both would seem to be directed towards the survival of the individual, for both this is only a means to an end - and when that end begins to intrude so will the antithesis. The goal of the ego-instincts is the death of the individual, in their own time. The temporary survival of the individual against forces from within and/or without is the goal - it's as if there is something special about life, life of the individual, for its own sake. This is certainly a curious notion but one that seems inherent to psycho-analysis with its determined focus upon the individual.

The goal of the sexual instincts is, of course, the survival of the species, the group of which the individual is a member. This dual status, as individual and member of the group, makes the issue of the drive of the sexual instinct complex for the individual. Certainly instinctually it would seem that, in alliance with the life drives, they have the survival and development of the individual as their goal. This development of the individual is towards becoming a member of groups of increasing number and diversity. The survival of the individual via the sexual drives, which are directed outwardly as will be seen, would seem to have two inherent goals. One would be that they will stay around long enough to reproduce; the second is that they will grow and develop, and come into a situation in which optimal reproduction becomes possible. After this the individual falls away but their life within the group situation, via their children is promoted.

In the referred to comments by Freud about the alloy between the erotic and the destructive within the sexual, the question must arise with respect to the origin and purpose of the destructive. It would seem that the destructive would generally - in Freud's writings - be seen as the outwardly directed death drives, dealing with, or to deal with, threats to the existence of the individual. But if this is the case what are they doing alloyed to the drives to which they are supposedly antithetical? Perhaps it could be hypothesised that, as proposed, the destructive element of the sexual is reflective of a point of common goal - the propagation of the interests/desires of the individual. But, it would certainly not seem to be that simple. Seemingly, if this hypothesis is followed, a part of the destructive drive is alloyed with the erotic to push forward with the drive towards gratification for the individual and for the species. However such activity will almost certainly also transgress the self-preservative drives and these will therefore take up opposition against the sexual. Shame and guilt would seem to be likely manifestations of this, seemingly shame more in women, and guilt more in men. However this situation becomes much more complicated because the sexual drive involves an other either in fantasy or reality, or, more likely, both. And this other will also manifest similar ambiguity, perhaps paradox, around the relationship between the erotic and the destructive. Accordingly, there will be

interface between these issues within and between them. The complexity, which can be seen to unfold, can easily be seen as the source of the struggles with which our egos seem to be confronted. Of course it also represents a rich vein to be mined in contrasting opposites by Shakespeare and pornography.

I must emphasise that this is not intended to be a distracting aside but a preparatory step for what follows in Freud's "Outline" to which I will now return. In this he proceeds to describe - at least how he sees it - the beginning of the interaction between mother and infant and the beginnings of the sexual. I will quote him in full here because there is no other way to do justice to his statement. He writes

A child's first erotic object is the mother's breast that nourishes it; love has its origin in attachment to the satisfied need for nourishment. There is no doubt that to begin with the child does not distinguish between the breast and its own body, when the breast has to be separated from the body and shifted to the "outside", because the child so often finds it absent, it carries with it as an "object" a part of the original narcissistic cathexis. The first object is later completed into the person of the mother, who not only nourishes it but also looks after it and thus arouses in it a number of physical sensations, pleasurable and unpleasurable. By her care of the child's body she becomes its first seducer (p188 (Freud's italics)).

He immediately follows this by stating;

In these two relations lies the root of the mother's importance, unique, without parallel, established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love-object and as the prototype of all later love relations - for both sexes (p188).

This is obviously a complex statement being put forward by Freud as a preface to his following discussions about the structuring conceptualizations of sexuality, the Oedipus complex, castration anxiety and penis envy. I proposed at the beginning of this paper that Freud generally communicated to us as the analytically-aware communicator, in a clear and simple fashion with the hope, and perhaps belief, that the complexity - inevitable and necessary - would build silently from there. However in this case it would seem that Freud was aware that his time had almost run out and we would either get it or not, he had more important things to tell us.

In this, an on example of analytic work, as the chapter title proposes, Freud is taking a lot for granted, I believe too much. I suspect we don't get it and hence his conceptualizations re the Oedipus complex, castration anxiety and penis envy will seem reflective of Freud's méconnaissance.

However I believe there is possibly a further issue involved in this manner of presentation by Freud. As proposed he would seem to be writing under the

heavy shadow of death, not just his own but also the flood of Nazism and its consequences. This subject statement would seem to have a rush towards sexuality about it – or a rush away from issues of death in its various forms. This is an idea I will come back to.

Rather than being correspondingly rushed I wish to take some time to consider what Freud is telling us in this seemingly convoluted communication. Much of what he writes he has outlined before particularly in the second of his three essays on the “Psychology of Love” (1912 SEXI). Accordingly I will briefly refer to this much earlier text. Here he tells us that love originates by, or in, the union of an “affectionate” and a “sensuous current” (p180) of affectivity. Of these he tells us that the “affectionate” is the “older” and is “formed on the basis of the interests of the self-preservative instinct” (p180) and is directed towards those who will best serve these interests. However he then adds that, “From the very beginning it carries along with it contributions from the sexual instincts – components of erotic interest...” (p180).

Freud in this 1912 essay is making several points of which I will focus on two in particular. Here he describes the central role of the self-preservative instincts, the ego-instincts, in the psychological movement to the outside – the world of objects. Secondly he notes and describes the link in this to the sexual instincts. In this the sexual instincts are directed towards the bodily functions and then objects necessary for the preservation of life. In other words, the self-preservation instincts, later seen by Freud as the retroverted drives towards death, are linked to the sexual instincts whose cathexis is directed to functions and objects of the self-preservative instincts. At this point in development, in Freud’s view, the life/death drives, the self-preservative drives, and the sexual drives are alloyed. This of course contrasts with his (quoted) statement that the weak-point of the ego is at the interface of experience of these, purportedly, conflicting drives.

I refer back to this 1912 paper because here Freud expressed his views about the self-preservative and sexual drives at the beginning in a less compact, or perhaps, cryptic way. And in this there is to be noted the concept of the linking of the self-preservative and sexual instincts as described. Now if we consider his later statement and pursue what Freud intends; it will be noted that he begins by again linking the erotic with self-preservation, nourishment, via the object, the mother’s breast and makes a statement in this about love. As discussed, in Freud’s view, at the beginning stage turning outwardly to the object is determined by the self-preservative instinct but is, essentially, carried out by the sexual, erotic, drives. The two drives are interlinked, complementary, and the successful experience achieved through this interlocking has the profound affective experience – called love – about it. In fact Freud indicates that this experience, achieved through the interlocking and mutuality of these drives, directed towards the embodied object of the mother, fixes us for life – all other love relations will be facsimiles.

Freud, proceeding further into these issues notes that initially there is a conflation of perception of the object of desire and satisfaction – the body and the breast. This conceptualization would seem to be reflective of the linking of the two drives as discussed – the self-preservative directed towards the continued existence of the individual – played out in the body – and the sexual directed outwardly to the object which will initially be perceived as part of the body but to be differentiated to the object per se.

Although this would seem as a simple process of progressive differentiation, I believe it indicates a crucial point in development – as has been emphasised in another context by Winnicott (1971, p14). At this point the developing individual proceeds from one mode of existence based upon an essentially silent inner sense of being/not being to an outwardly directed existence in which objects are progressively granted real status and the individual sense of existence becomes defined and determined within interactions with these objects. This would seem to be a crucial point for psycho-analysis.

In another context Freud introduced these issues in his 1911 paper “Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning” (SEXII). Here he points out that when “the state of psychical rest” (p219) is disturbed by what he calls “the peremptory demands of internal needs” (p219), “When this happened, whatever was thought of (wished for) was simply presented in a hallucinatory manner, just as still happens today with our dream-thoughts every night” (219). In a foot-note he comments further about this,

It will rightly be objected that an organism which was slave to the pleasure principle and neglected the reality of the external world could not maintain itself alive for the shortest time.....The employment of a fiction like this is however, justified when one considers that the infant – provided one includes with it the care it receives from the mother – does almost realize a psychical system of the kind” (p220, F.N.).

In these comments Freud is pre-empting the subject issues of his 1938 statement. What he could be seen to be saying is that the internal system of being, played out at a physical/psychological level over life and death, is disrupted when the movement towards death becomes too intrusive. It is in the same physical, becoming psychological, systems that these issues are played out – the very systems that are directed towards life, development and growth are the same systems that are directed towards our death – as Freud tells us in “Beyond the pleasure principle”, “everything living dies for internal reasons”(1920, p38(Freud’s italics)). However what complicates this system is that it is not autonomous. Left to its own procedures and resources death is inevitable sooner rather than later. The so-called life drives therefore have to direct to outside the system but it would seem in Freud’s description this is not possible – so, as he writes, death should occur “in the shortest time”. Survival, both for the individual and the species requires movement to the outside, to the world of objects, and this would seem to be where the sexual drives, object-

directed and pleasure-seeking, enter. However, Freud does propose an intermediary step, that of hallucinatory wish-fulfilment. The individual can stay true to themselves as an individual in their own right by creating their own wish-fulfilling scenarios. It is not clear in Freud's description here or elsewhere how much this involves use of a fantasised object but, it would seem that this is implied. Also, the correlation with dream, which obviously involves objects – the product of construction – would imply that object-relating is involved but whether this is under the influence of the life drives – seeking to undo unpleasure –, or the pleasure-seeking sexual drives is again not clear, but at least it could possibly be the former.

However, as Freud tells us both in 1911 and 1938, when this fails then true object relating, apparently via the sexual drives, becomes inevitable. But in 1911 he also tells us that as long as the mother is adjusted to the child's needs then the period of hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, like the period of dream, can be sustained. As described by Winnicott (1971,pg14) it is the mother's failure that provokes the movement to true object relating, this is what Freud proceeds to tell us in his 1938 statement about the "outside" and the "object".

There are two further points in this that I believe are important. One is the issue of narcissism. However I would like to discuss the other first. An impression – but impression only – one gains from Freud's writings about these issues is one of quiet negativity about the issue of movement to the outside and the object – the inverted commas hint at this – I believe. It is as if Freud feels himself trapped into a theory about a way of being that he wishes to reject but can't. The ideas relate to the individual, their inner world, the dream etc, ideas about existence based upon experience of self – even if the experience directs towards death. The alternative, compelled upon both Freud and the individual, is the movement to the world of objects who and which define who we are, how and what we think, etc. The issue of survival compelling and becoming a member of the group- doing one's bit - would seem to irk Freud. And the central and compelling rôle of the sexual is an integral part of this. In this, his excitement about the role of sexual drives may be because through his insights, he has seemingly mastered these – a movement back to his seemingly desired unique individual status, which was certainly confirmed by others.

As indicated I believe that the issue of narcissism moving to object-relating is also important. Following the ideas outlined the concept of narcissism would seem to be product of both the ego-instincts and the sexual instincts in some form of unity. This would certainly be consistent with what Freud proposed in 1914 ("On narcissism", SEXIV). However here, in 1938, the concept of the ego-instincts, the self-preservative instinct, has been revised. The difference is, of course, the balanced relationship between life and death drives. The life drives carry with them the issue of the inherent movement towards death. Narcissism therefore would be perched on the edge of the movement towards death and in this the sexual drives are important. In other words, within the relationship with the self the drives will play out their issues. The ego instincts will play out issues around the movement from, and to, death, the sexual instincts towards

immediate pleasure and overall survival of the species, that is, a determined movement towards life – for now. This issue of the presence of and dealing with death can be found within narcissistic issues and, I suggest, is central to what Freud writes in “Mourning and melancholia” (1915, SEXIV) in which one could transpose the shadow of death for “the shadow of the object” (p249).

This issue about narcissism is also of importance, I suggest, because if the shadow of death is an inherent part of narcissism and; the movement is from here to object relating, then the shadow of death will be inherent in, or at the basis of, object relations. In other words, if object relating is seen as more than as based upon the sexual drives because the ego-instincts are locked within the individual, then the manifestation of the ego-instincts in object-relating will be the shadow of death. This becomes important when the essence of the mother’s relationship with her child is considered.

Returning again to this subject statement by Freud. He proceeds to indicate that the mother’s physical care of her child will stimulate within the child a sexual response – she is the child’s seducer, arousing in him or her, the sexual. This notion of the movement to the sexual in terms of physical and, particularly, mental response, is put forward by Freud in a number of contexts. In his 1908 paper “On the sexual theories of children” (SEIX) he indicates that it is not the sexual difference and interaction between the parents which stimulates sexual curiosity and enquiry, but the birth of a sibling. Of this Freud writes,

A child’s desire for knowledge on this point does not in fact awaken spontaneously... it is aroused under the goad of self-seeking instincts that dominate him, when – perhaps after the end of his second year – he is confronted with the arrival of a new baby(p212).

A second example of the concept of the move to the sexual is inherent in the subject, 1938, statement as the erotic desire for the breast. A third example follows this statement. As Freud discusses the emotional difficulties for the child at weaning, he describes how, the boy, at least, responds by seeking a sexual solution via exhibition of his phallus to his mother.

Because of the constraints of time I will not follow Freud further although obviously the issue of castration anxiety, penis envy and the Oedipus complex are important and I will discuss these later if desired. Instead I will finish off with reference to three views re sexuality and the infant that contrast with Freud’s.

CONTRASTING VIEWS

I refer to these views as a counterbalance to Freud’s to introduce, by contrast with Freud’s views, further thought and consideration about how life and death and sexuality are played out throughout life from the beginning. However these contrasting views also point towards the beginning issue of this paper, how Freud’s views (re sexuality etc) have been developed – or dismissed by psycho-analysis – did we get it or not? One point about the contrast (as least with Bollas

and Laplanche) is that these authors would seem to move to an intersubjective perspective in contrast with Freud's seemingly determined intrapsychic position.

First I will briefly note the views of Bollas (1992) and Laplanche (1989) who put forward the perspective that the origins of the child's sexuality begin within the mother and her drives as expressed in the care of her infant. In this the conflict described by Freud over sexuality, would have its possible origins within the child between its psycho-somatic state and the imposed sexuality.

Of this Bollas writes;

Maternal erotism would overwhelm the infant were it not for the power of the infant's instinct, as the drive ruthlessly to gratify hunger is...more than a match for the profound effect of maternal presence (1992, p42)

In contrast Laplanche writes of

an encounter between an individual whose psycho-somatic structures are situated predominantly at the level of need, and signifiers emanating from an adult. Those signifiers pertain to the satisfaction of the child's needs but they also convey the purely interrogative potential of other messages - and those other messages are sexual (1989, p121)

Laplanche describes the impossible task for the child to master these sexual communications from the mother not just because of simple difficulties in comprehension but also because these messages are "opaque", in other words the mother does not comprehend her sexuality so how is the infant to do so.

I will finish with a third reference - to Pontalis (1981) who notes that;

to Freud the dream was a displaced maternal body. He committed incest with the body of his dreams, penetrated their secret and wrote the book that made him conqueror and possessor of the terra incognita (1981 p26-27(Pontalis's italics))

What Pontalis would seem to be proposing is that, in his view, the mother's sexual presence is incorporated and becomes the essence of the dream. The child's sexuality is the mother's sexuality, incorporated and structuring. Pontalis goes further to propose that in his book on dream interpretation, Freud triumphed over the silent presence of the mother's sexuality, and, perhaps it can be proposed, this allowed Freud to inform us about the role of sexuality in a way that may be difficult for us to understand because of the continued effective maternal presence in us.

CONCLUSIONS

I will finish with a brief concluding overview of this tumbling succession of ideas.

The beginning issue/question was why was Freud so passionately invested in his ideas about sexuality and why have these seemingly become irrelevant to psycho-analysis. From what has been outlined it would seem in contrast to others that sexuality is seen by Freud as an active drive almost from the start of life. It directs pleasure seeking cathexes towards objects and becomes the major drive, in contrast to the life/death instincts, in the movement towards the object. It would seem further that this movement is compelled on the individual from both the life drives and the sexual drives themselves as discussed. Once these (sexual) drives are alloyed with the destructive then the situation becomes impossibly complex as described. And it may be that this complexity of existence, that Freud tried to shelter us from to the point of being accused of méconnaissance, underlies one reason why the sexual has been pushed to one side in analysis. Further, Freud would seem to be orientated towards a philosophy centred round and in individual existence. The sexual by its insistent movement to the world of objects compromises this and may underlie the ego's difficult reactions with it.

An hypothesis developed through the paper is that the life/death drives are essentially incapable of directing outwardly to the object- they are played out internally and external issues are aggressively opposed - leave me alone. Outward movement is the role of the "sexual" drives, drives which seek the object for gratificatory purposes - to gain pleasure, and to relieve unpleasure. Because the individual cannot survive by being solely inwardly directed (life/death drives) beyond hallucinatory wish-fulfilment, directing outwardly via the "sexual" drives becomes imperative, for life, and accordingly the life/death drives and the sexual drives are complementary - perhaps forming an "alloy" as described by Freud, that equally serves the purposes of the sexual drives (to overcome resistance, to push into).

However this alliance comes apart when the end (for both drives) is approached. However, the hypothesis is that this turning to the "sexual" drives will repeatedly occur at times in life when the individual feels deprived and frustrated - the displacing birth of a sibling, weaning (perhaps even birth), adolescence etc. In this the alliance between the life/death drives and the sexual - to turn outwardly would seem to be re-established.

In contrast to Freud's views, others, as referred to, see that the child purely as a psycho-somatic organism on which sexuality is imposed. If this line of thought is followed the child's sexuality may be the mother's, irresistibly compelled onto and into the infant - the mother is the seducer because she is.

I have included Pontalis's enigmatic statement because it implies that the mother's sexual being intrudes into the infant and becomes manifest in, and as, the dream. Pontalis implies that the conquest of the dream by Freud was the conquest of the mother's sexual being. If this was the case again we could comprehend his passion and possessiveness re sexuality.

I will finish there.

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