

The History of the Libido's Development: evidence from Freud's case studies

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Abstract: Between 1905 and 1911 a perspective slowly appeared in Freud's works - a perspective which he considered "historical" and which he eventually named "history of the libido's development" (*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*) in 1911. By reading again *The Rat Man*, *Schreber* and *The Wolf Man* we can understand how Freud, thanks to the analysis of his case histories, outlined the particularities of this "history of the libido's development" which lies at the core of infantile prehistory. We will also study how this "history of the libido's development" in providing a stereotyped interpretation of psychic material, could lead to a reduction of the very movement of the analysis.

The History of the Libido's Development: Evidence from Freud's Case Studies

Many attempts have been made to outline the links uniting psychoanalysis and history. How did Freud conceive history, and what role did this conception play in his theory of neuroses? This question calls for a preliminary remark. The German word *Geschichte* means “history” in the sense of science and knowledge of the past, but it is also used to refer to all true or false “story”.

If one simply spots the uses Freud made of the word *Geschichte*, it becomes clear that all sorts of histories (case histories, history of the development, of religion, of humanity) are superimposed without cancelling each other out in the course of the texts.

In Freud’s correspondence with Fliess we may discover that “history” is synonymous with theory: “I am rewriting history as a whole for you”, Freud said to his friend, referring to a common project about actual neuroses [1]. Between 1892 and 1897, an evolution in Freud’s vocabulary may be spotted. The *Geschichten* (as simple patients’ stories) became a Freudian specific manner of considering the common medical *Vorgeschichte* [2] (meaning the patient’s previous history) literally as a *Vorgeschichte* (a prehistory.) The latter was called “*Urgeschichte*” (original history) and followed by allusions to prehistory (*Prähistorie*) and to the original time (*Urzeit*) of neurosis and childhood [3]. It was at the same period, that Freud began to organise the elements of the so called archaeological metaphor. Psychoanalysis was an archaeology, Freud dug into the case histories, extracted the pathogen sexual memory and followed its traces, thus revealing the experience of childhood: the seduction scene. In order to be a pre-historian, Freud became an archaeologist. This way of proceeding we may undoubtedly also find in the main five case histories. In time though, far from this prehistorian’s logic another perspective slowly appeared. This perspective Freud himself considered as “historical” and eventually named “history of the libido’s development” (*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*) in 1911 (*GW* 8, pp. 296-7). This history of the libido is not regarded as a Freudian concept [4]. It nonetheless forms

the basis of a great number of theoretical constructions made by Freud since 1905. How did Freud, however, manage to outline the particularities of this history of the libido from the analysis of the case histories? How did he make this history of the sexual drive appear at the core of infantile prehistory? The elements of Freudian thinking we will address here, thus lead to the provocative question – is the history of libido an anti-analysis ? Does it function in the Freudian text as an obstacle to the pursuit of analysis ? This is what we will be trying to understand with the help of the three case histories of *the Rat Man*, *Schreber* and *The Wolf Man*.

1 Archaeological Metaphor Versus Impulsive Logic

In the preamble to his *Notes upon a Case of obsessional Neurosis* Freud (1909) tried to justify the fragmented aspect of his communication. Which history was he to write? Neither the case's complete history nor the treatment's. If exterior contingencies restrained the communication of some elements, Freud emphasized that this analysis was limited because he could not penetrate the "texture" or "structure" of the case history. He was prevented from doing so by the patient's resistance and the way this resistance took shape and was expressed by the latter (*GW* 7, p. 382 ; *SE* 10, pp. 155-6).

Retained by this beautiful image of the superimposed layers through which the treatment went, Freud thought it would be easier to overcome an obsessional neurosis than a hysteria! If he finally had to acknowledge that it was not the case, Freud did not in the slightest put his conception of the analysis into question. The treatment functioned as a progressive descent into the "stratified" soul from which psychical materials emerged in an opposite order to that of the course of events.

Freud seemed well anchored in his archaeologist's role. He talked about "crumbs of knowledge (*Brocken von Erkenntnis*) [...] laboriously enough collected" (*GW* 7, pp. 382-3 ; *SE* 10, p.157). The recovery process itself depended on this clearing operation: as soon as the unconscious was brought back up, it crumbled into dust like the ruins excavated at Pompeii (*GW* 7, p.400; *SE* 10, pp.176-7) . The therapy was thus akin to a theft or a deprivation; Freud collected the pieces of memories – the patient's relics – as he collected statues, taking them away from the Rat Man who saw them vanish... As *The Rat Man*'s first paragraph is entitled "*Aus der Krankengeschichte*", the same formula is used in the title of the text dedicated to the Wolf Man: "*Aus der Geschichte...*" *Aus*, i.e. extracted from the case history – as if the point was to extract something from the patient's story. However, if the concepts of "layer", "structure", "crumbs" and the idea of extraction itself cannot but lead us back to the archaeological metaphor, Freud was about to modify some of its elements. What was supposed to be extracted? Memories, as in the *Studies on Hysteria*? According to Freud the nucleus (*Kern*) and the prototype (*Vorbild*) of the Rat Man's neurosis were constituted by phenomena which, according to the patient, had taken place when he was six and seven years old. Then, what is the structure of this "elementary organism, [...] the study of which could alone enable us to obtain a grasp of the complicated organisation of his subsequent illness"? Here is Freud's answer: "The child, as we have seen, was under the domination of a component of the sexual instinct (*einer sexuellen Triebkomponente*), the desire to look [scopophilia], as a result of which there was a constant recurrence in him of a very intense wish connected with persons of the female sex...." (*GW* 7 , p. 388; *SE* 10, p. 162) .

If Freud mentioned discovering or reconstituting events which had happened before the sixth year, it was on the drive (*Trieb*), which, as we know, Stachey translated as "instinct", that the story now seemed to focus on. The *Trieb* thus became the core of the neurosis, the protagonist of the infantile prehistory. Its articulation with a trace of memory or a reminiscence then seemed to

be pushed into the background (*GW* 7, pp. 388-9; *SE* 10, pp.162-4). Similarly, it is no longer the memories that come back in a reverse order, but the symptomatic process of wishes and remorse (*GW* 7, p. 410; *SE* 10, pp.187-8).

2 A History of the Onanistic Activity

Of course Freud did not overlook the traces of memories and the patient's recent experiences. Thanks to these he easily outlined the Rat Man's inner conflict, between the father's will and the lady's love. However, the patient's childhood was still problematic for Freud, as if, indeed, something could not be brought up. Freud therefore introduced a particular "history". He explained that to the undeniable preceding data (*volkommen gesicherten Anhaltspunkten*) some – contestable? – others had to be added "if we turn to the history of the masturbatory side of our patient's sexual activities (*Geschichte der onanistischen Sexualbetätigung unseres Patient wenden*)" (*GW* 7, p. 423 ; *SE* 10, p. 202).

According to Freud, the patients' intuition about the role of masturbation was fully grounded. Masturbation during puberty could be regarded as nothing but a repetition of the infantile onanism. It was an infantile element, i.e. which would have taken place during this childhood prehistory defined in the *Three Essays* in 1905. But what is the cause of the child's onanism? It is, said Freud, "the clearest expression of the child's sexual constitution in which the aetiology of subsequent neuroses must be sought" (*GW* 7, p. 424 ; *SE* 10, p. 202). And: "The fact that so many people can tolerate masturbation – that is a certain amount of it – without injury merely shows that their sexual constitution and the course of development of their sexual life (*Entwicklungsvorgänge im Sexuellen*) have been such as to follow them to exercise the sexual

function within the limits of what is culturally permissible [(1)] [5]; whereas other people, because their sexual constitution has been less favourable or their development has been disturbed, fall ill as a result of their sexuality – they cannot, that is, achieve the necessary suppression or sublimation of their sexual components without having recourse to inhibitions or substitutes" (*GW* 7, p. 424 ; *SE* 10, p. 203).

The causality linked here to sexual experience is replaced by the idea of constitution and sexual development. The affective and defensive conflict is replaced by the idea of a conflict between culture and sexual drive, a conflict which would lie at the origin of neurosis. This idea was not new and the quotation note "(1)", omitted by Strachey in the preceding quotation from *The Rat Man* undoubtedly referred to this perspective which Freud, had clearly expressed in his *Three Essays*. It was indeed with the introduction of the concept of drive (*Trieb*) in 1905 that these dynamics - according to which culture was built on the repression of sexuality - appeared in Freudian theory [6].

In *The Rat Man* it was only after he had specified the terms of this conflict between sexuality and culture that Freud proposed a "construction" about his patient's childhood: "when he [the Rat Man] was a child under 6 he had been guilty of some sexual misdemeanour connected with masturbation" (*GW* 7, p. 426 ; *SE* 10, p. 205). To this the patient opposed an event which his mother had told him many times. He had bitten someone when he was three years old and had been beaten by his father. But in "her [the mother's] account there was no suggestion of his misdeed having been of a sexual nature". So the Rat Man's supposed infantile masturbatory activity was therefore alleged from other cases ("we frequently come across occurrences of this kind...") (*GW* 7, p. 427 ; *SE* 10, p. 206, foot note). There was no hint that it could have been taken from the mother's recollection of the childhood event, a recollection about which Freud remained very sceptical. According to Freud such memories aim to hide auto-erotic activities by

raising them to the level of object stage. The way patients usually involved an adult in their memory was similar both to the way a nation covers its original history (*Urgeschichte*) with legends, and to the way a historian judges the past from the present... (*GW* 7, pp. 427-8 ; *SE* 10, pp. 206-8, foot note). This suspicion towards historiography and memory served another historical perspective: the history of development (*Entwicklungsgeschichte*). The sexual drive and its auto-erotic beginnings were subsequently bound to this history of the development. Thus, the dynamics of the sexual development competed with the one triggered by the seduction scene, i.e. the child experience and its traces in memory and thoughts reorganised by the deferred logic.

Finally when it came to explaining the Rat Man's rage against his father and the separation of opposites (love/hate) in the prehistoric period of his infancy, Freud sent his reader back to "the discussion on this point during one of the first sessions", i.e. to the hypothetical "history of the onanistic activity" (*GW* 7, p. 455; *SE* 10, p. 239, foot note). Freud thus filled the gaps in memory and overcame the difficulty of discovering more about the patient's psychical structure.

3 Schreber: Detail Versus History of the Libido's Development

The two approaches, the archaeological one based on digging into the patient's history and the other searching into the history of the libido's development, can be found again in the *Schreber* case (Freud 1911). In the first type of approach Freud emphasized that the psychoanalyst, starting from his knowledge of psychoneuroses, supposed that delusions proceeded from the most general and comprehensible motions of the soul's life, and intended to discover "the motives of such a transformation as well as the manner in which it has been accomplished. With this aim in view, he will wish to go more deeply into the details of the delusion and into the history of its

development (*in die Entwicklungsgeschichte wie in die Einzelheiten des Wahnes*)” (GW 8, p. 250; SE 12, p. 18). The expression “history of the development” did nothing but shift the focus of interest on to the succession of the stages of delusion. The details, or more literally the particularities (*Einzelheiten*), referred to the “motives” and made it possible to explain the dynamics of this “history of the delusion’s development”. Freud therefore outlined the “primary nature of the emasculation fantasy”. He showed that “the idea of being transformed into a woman was a salient feature in the earlier germ of this delusional system...” (GW 8, pp. 252-3; SE 12, pp. 20-1). This hypothesis alone could explain “a noteworthy detail of the case history”, Schreber’s nervous collapse. Using Schreber’s autobiography and the elements extracted from his medical file, Freud outlined the President’s love for Flechsig, a love which Schreber covered with delusions of persecution, then with delusions of grandeurs (GW 8, pp. 280-4; SE 12, pp. 45-9). Freud here undeniably worked as an archaeologist and tried to reconstruct a prehistory in which the Other (*das Andere*) played the main role.

However, the third part of the text (“On the mechanism of paranoia”) introduces a very different historical perspective: “I shall now endeavour (and I think the attempt is neither unnecessary nor unjustifiable) to show that the knowledge of psychological processes, which thanks to psychoanalysis, we now possess, already enables us to understand the part played by a homosexual wish in the development of paranoia. Recent investigations have directed our attention to a stage in the development of the libido (*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*) which it passes through on the way from auto-eroticism to object-love. This stage as been described as *Narzissismus*; I prefer to give it the name of *Narzismus*, which may not be so correct, but is shorter and less cacophonous. What happens is this. There comes a time in the development of the individual at which he unifies his sexual instincts (which have hitherto been engaged in auto-erotic activities) in order to obtain a love-object, and only subsequently proceeds from this to the

choice of some person other than himself as his object”(*GW* 8, pp. 296- 7; *SE* 12, pp. 60-1, my emphasis)

The expression “*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*” then appeared for the first time. Further down in the text it may seem that Freud foresaw some antagonism between the case history through which he reconstructed the “history of the delusion’s development” on the one hand, and the “history of the libido’s development” on the other. “The manner in which the process of repression occurs is far more intimately connected with the developmental history of the libido (*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*) and with the disposition to which it gives rise than is the manner in which symptoms are formed” (*GW* 8, p. 303; *SE* 12, p. 66, my emphasis). But this strange theoretical distinction did not resolve the difficulties though, and Freud then had to acknowledge that: “...we may already begin to suspect that it will not be possible to trace back all of this multiplicity [of the mechanisms of repression and of the mechanisms of irruption] to the developmental history of the libido alone.” (*GW* 8, p. 305; *SE* 12, p. 68, my emphasis).

However, still wanting to consider the repression in paranoia as a consequence of the regression/fixation to narcissism, Freud concluded: “it will be remembered that the majority of cases of paranoia exhibit traces of megalomania, and that megalomania can by itself constitute a paranoia...” (*GW* 8, p. 309; *SE* 12, p. 72), which stands in blatant opposition to the hypotheses of his first chapter. Moreover, considering the libido’s future Freud inevitably came across the question of symptoms which revealed the foreseen contradiction: "An equally plausible objection can be based upon Schreber’s case history, as well as upon many others. For it can be urged that the delusions of persecution (which were directed against Flechsig) unquestionably made their appearance at an earlier date than the fantasy of the end of the world; so that what is supposed to have been a return of the repressed actually precedes the repression itself – and this is patent nonsense. In order to meet this objection [...] we must admit the possibility that a detachment of

the libido such as we are discussing might just as easily be a partial one, a drawing back from some single complex, as a general one [...]. Thus the detachment of the libido from the figure of Flechsig may nevertheless have been what was primary in the case of Schreber.”(*GW* 8, p. 310; *SE* 12, pp. 72-3.)

Which story should we trust? That of the “history of the delusions’ development” reconstructed from the patient’s history and which underlines the primary character of the homosexual fantasy and of the delusions of persecution? Or that of the “history of the libido’s development” according to which “megalomania can by itself constitute a paranoia” which corresponds to a fixation about narcissism? On the theoretical level Freud undoubtedly preferred to take into account the history of the libido’s development, in which narcissism was regarded as the first stage:

“Lastly, I cannot conclude the present work which is once again only a fragment of a larger whole, without foreshadowing the two chief theses towards the establishment of which the libido theory of the neuroses and psychoses is advancing: namely that the neuroses arise in the main from of a conflict between the ego and the sexual instinct, and that the forms which the neuroses assume retain the imprint of the development followed by the libido – and by the ego (*der Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido – und des Ichs*)”(*GW* 8, p. 316 ; *SE* 12, p. 79).

Strachey’s translation does not convey the redundancy of the expression “history of the libido’s development” (*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*). This expression remained unnoticed in the French as well as in the English translation, but it does work as a concept and play a subtle role in a whole part of Freud’s works written after 1905 even when not clearly spelled out, and this role, as may be ascertained, grows up to a blatant theoretical feature after 1911. We can also notice that although the expression “history of the delusions’ development” reveals Freud’s attraction to this Haeckelian perspective, it does actually refer to the opposite way of conceiving the access to

the childhood sexual prehistory, the archaeological one. We will see next how this double way of reconstructing the child's history emerges in *The Wolf Man*.

4 *The Wolf Man: Infantile Neurosis Versus Conformity to Development*

Which history should be written? At the beginning of *The Wolf Man* (Freud 1918) Freud once more asked himself the same question and once more mentioned the numerous technical and moral difficulties which he had already evoked in *The Rat Man's* and *Schreber's* first pages (*GW* 12 , p. 30; *SE* 17, pp. 8-9, and *GW* 12, p. 36 ; *SE* 17 , p. 13). However, this classical prologue soon gives way to a specific argumentation on the method and object of the psychoanalytic treatment. Freud explained his preference for “an analysis of childhood disorder through the medium of recollection in an intellectually mature adult” (*GW* 12 , pp. 30-1; *SE* 17, pp. 8-9). He now talked of “child's neurosis” (*kindliche Neurose*) instead of “infantile neurosis” (*infantile Neurose*) before evoking the polemic with Jung (*GW* 12 , pp. 30-31; *SE* 17 , pp. 8-9). Could this “child's neurosis” be what the Jungians can neither grasp nor understand? “The study of children's neuroses (*kindlichen Neurosen*), said Freud, exposes the complete inadequacy of these shallow or high-handed attempts at re-interpretation. It shows the predominant part that is played in the formation of neuroses by those libidinal motive forces which are so eagerly disavowed, and reveals the absence of any aspirations towards remote cultural aims, of which the child still knows nothing, and which cannot therefore be of any significance for him” (*GW* 12, p. 32; *SE* 17, p. 9).

The *-lich* suffix of “*kindliche*” signals that the neurosis is taken from the child's point of view, the child in whom it lives. The word “*kindliche*” also implies that the neurosis is still small,

appropriate to the child's world, and that it is bound to grow with him. Finding the *kindliche Neurose* and reconstituting its prehistory prevent the analyst from introducing in his interpretation any element which would not be part of the child's world. Freud used this adjective again at the end of *The Wolf Man*: "...I cannot see any reason for obstinately disputing the importance of infantile prehistory (*kindheitlichen Vorzeit*) while at the same time freely acknowledging the importance of ancestral prehistory (*Ahnenvorzeit*)" (*GW* 12 , p. 131 ; *SE* 17 , p. 97). This sentence parallels another sentence in the *Three Essays*, in which Freud deplored the lack of interest for infantile prehistory (*Kindheit Vorzeit*) whereas a lot of interest seemed to be taken in the prehistory consisting in the ancestors' life (*jener Vorzeit, welche durch die Lebendauer der Ahnen gegeben ist*) (*GW* 5 , p. 73; *SE* 7, p. 173).

In *The Wolf Man* as in this sentence written in 1905 Freud took the side of the child's sexual experience against that of what is innate and of constitutional, which he theorised elsewhere as a history of the libido's development. In both cases he justified the ideology of a psychoanalysis as an archaeology or prehistory. In these sentences of the *Three Essays* and of *The Wolf Man*, psychoanalysis distinguishes itself from any story and history putting forward a causality – a psycho-logy – which does not correspond to the child's sexual experience.

However, the archaeological metaphor was constraining for Freud's theory because it was linked to a spatial and temporal representation of the psychic material. Consequently in *The Wolf Man*, as before in *The Rat Man*, the deepest layers were supposed to be the most difficult to reach. Moreover the depth record seemed to be sufficient to guarantee a successful analysis, for the more archaic had to correspond to what had to be analysed, the core of the neurosis: "And we feel afterwards that, strictly speaking, only an analysis which has penetrated so far deserves the name" (*GW* 12, p. 32, *SE* 17, p. 10). Freud stigmatized those who, like Jung and Adler, "content themselves with scratching the mental surface [...] and of replacing what is left undone by

speculation – the latter being put under the patronage of some school or other of philosophy.” (GW 12 , p. 140; SE 17, pp. 105-6).

If I emphasize the constraints linked to the archaeological metaphor, my point is not to argue about the more or less satisfactory result of the Wolf Man’s analysis, but to underline the elements and stakes of the method. Freud looked for links – “associative bridges”, “details” as in *Schreber* – which would explain the passage from one piece of memory to another. He wanted to establish a chronology - to which the patient seemed indifferent : "At this point some connection is missing, some associative bridge to lead from the content of the primal scene (*Urgeschichte*) to that of the wolf story. This connection is provided once again by the postures and only by them. In the grandfather’s story the tailless wolf asked the others to climb upon him. It was this detail that called up the recollection of the picture of the primal scene..." (GW 12, pp. 37-40, 69; SE 17, pp. 13-8, 42).

It was thus thanks to “the wolf history” (*Wolfgeschichte*) and implicitly to his taking into account a chronology based on the patient’s sexual experience that Freud refuted Jung’s allegations:

"All this would be very nice, if only the unlucky wretch had not had a dream when he was no more than four years old, which signalled the beginning of his neurosis, which was instigated by his grandfather’s story of the tailor and the wolf, and the interpretation of which necessitates the assumption of this primal scene. All the alleviations which the theories of Jung and Adler seek to afford us come to grief, alas, upon such paltry but unimpeachable facts at these. As things stand, it seems to me more probable that the fantasy of re-birth was a derivative of the primal scene than that, conversely, the primal scene was a reflection of the fantasy of re-birth” (GW 12, p. 137 ; SE 17, pp. 102-3).

After reading this excerpt may be tempted to regret that Freud did not conceive Schreber’s delusions about the end of the world as the cover of some primal scene. Had he not been in too

much of a hurry to consider this symptom solely as the proof of the withdrawal of the libido and of a return to narcissism, he might have done so! However the logic of the libido's development was soon to intervene in *The Wolf Man* itself.

5 *A Sister Without a History*

After putting into doubt the domestic tradition and establishing a chronology which proved the English governess's innocence, Freud used a secret which a cousin told Sergei (GW 12, pp. 43-44; SE 17, pp. 20-21). Sergei's sister was indeed his seducer. The fact that this story was a late second-hand one could have made Freud think that this seduction "story" was a fantasy, be it that of the cousin or that of the Wolf Man himself. The hypothesis of seduction was nonetheless retained, and Freud did not pretend, as he did for the Rat Man, that Sergei unduly drove a mere masturbation story to an object stage. However the course of the analysis was also interrupted with the Wolf Man: Freud did not ask himself who seduced the sister, what she could have experienced. He did not take into account, as he did with the English governess, what was behind the story. Moreover, Freud never used the word "*Geschichte*" (history/story) when talking about Sergei's sister. He merely contented himself with labelling some of the girl's life-episodes with another word, that of "development": "I should like at this point to break off the story of my patient's childhood (*Kindergeschichte*) and say something of her sister, of her development (*ihrer Entwicklung*) and later fortunes, and of the influence she had on him"(GW 12, p. 44; SE 17, p. 21).

Children' history (*Kindergeschichte*) for him, development for her. Freud also alluded to her "brilliant intellectual development" (*glänzende intellektuell Entwicklung*), but what the girl said

was hardly even sketched and quickly put aside. Without disregarding the crucial fact that Sergei's sister was not Freud's patient, that Freud did not suppose she could have been seduced and considered that she merely presented the symptoms of a "conspicuously neuropathic heredity" might seem surprising! And Freud ended by saying: "I now return to the brother's story (*zur Geschichte des Bruders*)...", as if he wanted to underline again the difference between the two after his incursion into the sister's development (*GW* 12, pp. 45-7; *SE* 17, pp. 21-3).

However, it would be wrong to think that Sergei had been spared by the head roller represented by the developmental logic and the hereditary constitution. If Freud did give a scrupulous account of the *kindliche Neurose's* chronology, he simultaneously followed the stages of another chronology, a pre-established chronology of the libido to which the patient had to be "in conformity": "He [Sergei] was no doubt led to this choice by a number of convergent factors, including such fortuitous ones as the recollection of the snake being cut to pieces; but above all he was in this way able to renew his first and most primitive object-choice, which, in conformity (*entsprechend*) with a small child's narcissism, had taken place along the path of identification." (*GW* 12, p. 51; *SE* 17, p. 27) (my emphasis).

Whatever the experience and the memories may be, all little boys seem to have to go through the same stages of development, including those of narcissism and of identification to the father. Similarly, little Sergei's reactions were also interpreted according to the sense of guilt which spares no one: "In accordance (*entsprechend*), moreover, with the motives which underlie masochism, this beating would also have satisfied this sense of guilt." (*GW* 12, p. 52; *SE* 17, p. 28, my emphasis).

We may now wonder how this chronology of the libidinal development interferes with the chronology established after the analysis of the case history. It first of all seems that seduction

could disturb the sexual development and lead to a return to a bygone stage (libidinal regression): “Under the persisting influence of this experience he [...] had, nevertheless, [...] found a link with his earlier and spontaneous phase of development. His father was now his object once more; in conformity with his higher stage of development, identification was replaced by object-choice.” (GW 12, p. 52; SE 17, p. 27, my emphasis).

Freud (1916-17) will theorize this under the name of “complementary series” in *The paths to the formation of symptoms*. However, the two chronologies - the constitutional one and the one determined by the sexual infantile experience – referred to two histories, to the ancestors’ history (phylogenetic history) on the one hand, and to the history of seduction on the other, whose effects can turn out to be contradictory. Which solution must the individual adopt? We may now appreciate Freud’s answer and the resulting consequences on the practice of analysis itself.

6 *Primal Fantasies As Nothing But Scenes of the Species’ Sexual History*

That the patient’s experience did not concord with the supposed stages of the sexual development was precisely what Freud had to face with the threat of castration. Did Freud choose the child’s point of view or that of the history of libido?:

“Although the threats or hints of castration which had come his [the Wolf Man’s] way had emanated from women, this could not hold up the final result for long. In spite of everything it was his father from whom in the end he came to fear castration. In this respect heredity triumphed over accidental experience, in man’s prehistory it was unquestionably the father who practised castration as a punishment and who later softened it down into circumcision”(GW 12, p. 119; SE 17, p. 86).

According to Freud the history of the libidinal development (the inherited history) finally won over the hazards of life and their re-elaboration. To explain that finally the Wolf Man feared castration from his father, although being threatened by Nanya, Freud questioned neither the child's thinking, nor his relation to his father. The father can only be the one who threatened, and as a consequence of this, the one who was feared. Why? It may be noticed that, in Freud's case histories, the schema of the paternal castration threat was first justified by a supposed "history of the onanist activity" as related in *The Rat Man*: the father would have threatened the child experiencing auto-eroticism. In *The Wolf Man*, Freud did not even need to introduce any scene of Sergei's childhood, to justify the emergence of the threatening father. He only stated: "Wherever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodelled in the imagination – a process which might be very profitably followed in detail. It is precisely such cases that are calculated to convince us of the independent existence of the schema. We are often able to see the schema triumphing over the experience of the individual... The contradictions between experience and the schema seem to supply the conflicts of childhood with an abundance of material" (*GW* 12, p. 155; *SE* 17, pp. 119-20).

Here fantasies did not derive from the individual historical truth, which could have been discovered by the archaeological method. On the contrary, primal fantasies are said to be faithful to an "independent" hereditary schema. These fantasies simply testify to the efficiency of humanity's history over the individual. In other words a primal fantasy simply supplies or covers the individual experience, and it does it "in conformity" to the species' original history! What may then be said about Freud's interest in interrogating the links between individual experience and the history of libido? If we took for granted this phylogenetic causality, should then the "schema" be introduced in the course of our analysis? This hereditary Freudian "process" is nothing other than the dogma's shadow invading the analysis. It is blatant that the introduction of

this phylogenetic logic disqualifies the psychoanalytic work. Why did Freud satisfy himself with making up a sexual history of the species to explain the particularities of the individual's psychical life? Why did he finally rally those psychiatrists he was making fun of in 1905 because they preferred the ancestors' prehistory to the individual's childhood forgotten past? We do not intend to give exhaustive answers to these questions. As a conclusion, we merely want to underline that the existence of this dogmatic phylogenetic schema is a consequence of the history of the libido's development.

In the 1915 *Introductory Lectures* Freud emphasized "something surprising and perplexing": "By means of analysis, as you know, starting from the symptoms, we arrive at the knowledge of the infantile experiences to which the libido is fixated. Well, the surprise lies in the fact that these scenes from infancy are not always true. Indeed, they are not true in the majority of cases, in a few of them they are the direct opposite of the historical truth..."(GW 11, p. 382 ; SE 16, p. 367).

These infantile experiences are no more than "invented stories" which hid something "just as every nation disguises the history of its forgotten prehistory by constructing legends." (GW 11, p. 383 ; SE 16, p. 368) [7]. So, how may we explain such primal fantasies or invented stories?

We will especially focus here on Freud's explanations about castration. The threat of castration, said Freud, could have been really made by the parents when the child was playing with his penis. But the child can also put "a threat of this kind together in his imagination on the basis of hints, helped out by the knowledge that auto-erotic satisfaction is forbidden and under the impression of his discovery of the female genitals" (GW 11, p. 384 ; SE 16, p. 369). In all the cases, the threat covered masturbation (auto-eroticism).

According to Freud, primal fantasies constituted a "phylogenetic patrimony" and so he says: "It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us today in analysis as fantasy – the

seduction of children, the inflaming of sexual excitement by observing parental intercourse, the threat of castration (or rather castration itself) – were once real occurrences in the primeval times of the human family, that children in their fantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth.” (GW 11, p. 386; SE 16, p. 371).

Thus, if Freud reduced the part of individual experience in the neuroses’ aetiology it was finally to make room for another experience, another prehistory, the species history which legitimized the stages of the history of the libido’s development. During that same year (1985 [1915]) Freud tried to reconstruct scenes of this sexual prehistory of mankind in which he explained, amongst other developments, the historical origin of auto-eroticism (narcissism) and of the fear of castration . These phylogenetic origins constituted a diversion to leave some details and scenes of infantile prehistory unexplored.

A History edition in usum delphini [8]....

How should we finally consider this developmental logic, which unobtrusively functions in Freud’s texts and does constitute a historical perspective – “the history of the libido’s development”?

Before 1905 the point was to reconstruct the scenes of a personal prehistory (*Vorzeit*, *Vorgeschichte*). Freud dug out the case history (*Krankengeschichte*) in order to find childhood sexual experience. The archaeological metaphor justified both the analytical method and the Freudian theory on neuroses. From 1905 onwards, sexuality was understood according to a drive model. Whatever Freud’s changes to the sexual drive may have been (variation of the object and

of the aim), the point was also to reconstruct the stages, considered as universal, of a history of the sexual drive: the history of the libido's development. The case histories were then useful to specify and illustrate the stages of this peculiar history. Might we even say to discover them? It was the Haeckelian model which eventually won.

The Freudian conception of the history of the libido's development (the development of the sexual drive) turns out to be adequate to the history of the cultural development as psychologists and psychiatrists had already described it. Fritz Schultze, Krafft-Ebing, Baldwin, Féré, Forel and others all refer to this impulsive or instinctive logic which leads from the savage's egoism and insatiable greed to civilised man's modesty and virtues. At the turn of the nineteenth century this Haeckelian perspective allowed the registration of psychoanalysis on the list of the natural sciences and Freud was soon invited to take up this path:

"I still have to find the link between the new discovery and the phylogenetic teleology", Bleuler wrote to Freud on June 9, 1905 [9] after having received the *Three Essays*. For a while, Freud resisted this politically correct vision of sexuality, then he rallied himself to the law of recapitulation which states that the individual history of the libido's development recapitulates the species sexual history (Freud 1913).

Thus, the "history of the libido's development" owes much to evolutionist anthropology. Many works (Suloway 1979; Ritvo 1990; Wallace 1983) have emphasized Freud's debt towards Haeckel but few have insisted on the importance, for Freud, of the historical perspective he vulgarized. If one neglects the expression "history of the development" as did Strachey and most French translators, one cannot understand precisely how Freud took up Haeckel's doctrine, when he did and for what purpose.

I have emphasized how the history of libido's development limits our analytical comprehension of the threat of castration and is opposed to a prehistoric seduction, especially to the hypothesis of

a seductive father. But, beyond these ideas which could not be developed here [10] , I hope this article has showed that the logic of development and its doctrinal perspective - i.e. the libidinal history - provides a stereotyped interpretation of psychical materials (scenes, memories, fantasies) and runs the risk of reducing the very movement of the analysis, an archaeological movement in itself.

Notes

1. See Masson (1986), p. 27 (letter n°22, 8-2-1893): "*Ich schreibe die ganze Geschichte für dich, lieber Freund...*"
2. According to the medical dictionary (Schober 1908), the term "*Vorgeschichte*" was used by Germans at the beginning of the 20th century to designate the patient's anamnesis.
3. See Masson (1986) , and especially p. 237 (letter n°118, 17-1-1897) for the first Freudian use of the term "*Urgeschichte*".
4. The expression "*Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*" (The history of the libido's development) does not appear in the index (Hauptregister) of the *Gesammelte Werke* where we nonetheless find the terms "*Entwicklungsgeschichte*" and "*Libidoentwicklung*". The historical perspective is thus neglected. In France where numerous dictionaries or 'indexes' of psychoanalysis have been published , none referring to the history of the libido's development or explaining its origin may be found.
5. Here Strachey omitted a quotation note which indicates "Vgl. Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie. 1905" („See *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.1905“) (*GW* 7, p. 424).
6. According to Freud the mental forces (e.g. education) act like dams restricting the sexual flow (*GW* 5, pp. 8-9; *SE* 7, pp. 177-8).
7. The same formula has been used already in the *Wolf Man* and the *Rat Man* . Bertrand Vichyn (1988) noticed the occurrences of this strange vision of history in Freud's works and found its origin.
8. "... she [Mrs.Emmy v.M.] had, in all likelihood , given me to hear a history of her life in *usum delphini*" (" ... *es war wahrscheinlich eine edition ad usum delphini ihrer*

Lebensgeschichte , die ich zu hören bekam) (GW 1, p. 160; SE 2, p. 103). Freud repeated these same words in his lectures when he explained that psychoanalysis is not doctrinal knowledge! (GW 11, p. 99; SE 15, p. 101).

9. Letter quoted by Marinelli and Mayer (2002, p. 146).

10. On this subject, see J. Laplanche (1980), who has shown the difficulties Freud encountered in his understanding of both narcissism and castration with Little Hans and the Rat Man.

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