

December 4, 1896

der Weise. Freud uses it again in his letter of April 24, 1899, and in his "Autobiographical Study" (S.E. 20:13). Fliess uses it on p. 59 of his *Vom Leben und Tod*.

3. Freud is thinking of Goethe's "Sprüche in Reimen." The passage is commented on by Schönau (1968, pp. 80-83).

4. This quote from Virgil's *Aeneid* is treated at length in Schönau (1968, pp. 61-73): "If I cannot bend the higher powers, I will move the infernal regions." It was used by Freud on the title page of his book on dreams (cf. S.E. 5:608).

5. The quotation is from Goethe, *Zahmen Xenien*, 9:22:

Cut it short!

On doomsday it won't be worth a ———.

See Schönau (1968, pp. 82-84).

Periodicity and Self-Analysis

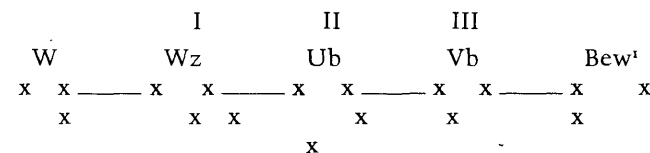


December 6, 1896

Dear Wilhelm,

Today, after having for once enjoyed the full measure of work and earnings that I need for my well-being (ten hours and a hundred florins), I am dead tired and mentally fresh; I shall try to give you a simple report on the latest bit of speculation.

As you know, I am working on the assumption that our psychic mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a *rearrangement* in accordance with fresh circumstances — to a *retranscription*. Thus what is essentially new about my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is laid down in various kinds of indications. I postulated a similar kind of rearrangement some time ago (*Aphasia*) for the paths leading from the periphery [of the body to the cortex]. I do not know how many of these registrations there are — at least three, probably more. This is shown in the following schematic picture, which assumes that the different registrations are also separated (not necessarily topographically) according to the neurones which are their vehicles. This assumption may not be necessary, but it is the simplest and is provisionally admissible.



W [*Wahrnehmungen* (perceptions)] are neurones in which *perceptions* originate, to which consciousness attaches, but which in

themselves retain no trace of what has happened. For *consciousness and memory are mutually exclusive*.

Wz [*Wahrnehmungszeichen* (indication of perception)] is the first registration of the perceptions; it is quite incapable of consciousness and is arranged according to associations by simultaneity.

Ub [*Unbewusstsein* (unconsciousness)] is the second registration, arranged according to other, perhaps causal, relations. Ub traces would perhaps correspond to conceptual memories; equally inaccessible to consciousness.

Vb [*Vorbewusstsein* (preconsciousness)] is the third transcription, attached to word presentation and corresponding to our official ego. The cathexes proceeding from this Vb become conscious according to certain rules; and this secondary *thought consciousness* is subsequent in time and is probably linked to the hallucinatory activation of word presentations, so that the neurones of consciousness would once again be perceptual neurones and in themselves without memory.

If I could give a complete account of the psychological characteristics of perception and of the three registrations, I should have described a new psychology. Some material for this is at hand, but that is not my present intention.

I should like to emphasize the fact that the successive registrations represent the psychic achievement of successive epochs of life. At the boundary between two such epochs a translation of the psychic material must take place. I explain the peculiarities of the psychoneuroses by supposing that this translation has not taken place in the case of some of the material, which has certain consequences. For we hold firmly to a belief in a tendency toward quantitative adjustment. Every later transcript inhibits its predecessor and drains the excitatory process from it. If a later transcript is lacking, the excitation is dealt with in accordance with the psychological laws in force in the earlier psychic period and along the paths open at that time. Thus an anachronism persists: in a particular province, *fueros*² are still in force; we are in the presence of "survivals."

A failure of translation — this is what is known clinically as "repression." The motive for it is always a release of the unpleasure that would be generated by a translation; it is as though this unpleasure provokes a disturbance of thought that does not permit the work of translation.

Within one and the same psychic phase, and among registrations

of the same kind, a *normal* defense makes itself felt owing to a generation of unpleasure. But *pathological* defense occurs only against a memory trace from an earlier phase that has not yet been translated.

It cannot be due to the magnitude of the release of unpleasure if the defense succeeds in bringing about repression. We often struggle in vain precisely against memories involving the severest unpleasure. So we arrive at the following account. If an event A, when it was a current one, aroused a certain amount of unpleasure, then the mnemonic registration of it, A I or A II, has a means of inhibiting the release of unpleasure when the memory is reawakened. The more often the memory recurs, the more inhibited does the release finally become. There is *one* case, however, in which the inhibition is insufficient. If A, when it was current, released a particular unpleasure, and if when it is reawakened it releases fresh unpleasure, then this cannot be inhibited. In this case the memory is behaving as though it were some current event. This case can occur only with sexual events, because the magnitudes of the excitations which these release increase of themselves with time (with sexual development).

Thus a sexual event in one phase acts in the next phase as though it were a current one and is accordingly uninhibitable. What determines pathological defense (repression) is therefore *the sexual nature of the event and its occurrence in an earlier phase*.

Not all sexual experiences release unpleasure; most of them release pleasure. Thus the reproduction of most of them is linked with uninhibitable pleasure. An uninhibitable pleasure of this kind constitutes a *compulsion*. One therefore is led to the following theses. If a sexual experience is remembered in a different phase, a release of pleasure is accompanied by compulsion and a release of unpleasure by repression. In both cases the translation into the indications of the new phase seems to be inhibited (?).

Now, clinical experience acquaints us with three groups of sexual psychoneuroses — hysteria, obsessional neurosis, and paranoia; and it teaches us that the repressed memories relate to what was current —

in the case of hysteria, between the ages of 1½ and 4;
of obsessional neurosis between 4 and 8;
and of paranoia between 8 and 14.

But before the age of 4 there is no repression yet; so the psychic periods of development and the sexual phases do not coincide.

| | | | | |
|--------|----------------|----|----|-------|
| | $1\frac{1}{2}$ | 4 | 8 | 14-15 |
| Psych. | Ia | Ib | II | III |
| Sex. | I | | II | III |

The following small diagram belongs here:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Wz Up to 4 | Wz + Ub Up to 8 | Wz + Ub + Vb Up to 14-15 | Ditto |
| Hysteria current | Compulsion | Repressed in Wz | |
| Obsessional neurosis | Current | Repressed in Ub indications | |
| Paranoia | — | Current | Repressed in Vb indications |
| Perversion current | Current | Compulsion (current) | Repression impossible or not attempted |

For another consequence of premature sexual experiences is perversion, of which the determinant seems to be that defense either does not occur before the psychic apparatus is completed or does not occur at all.

So much for the superstructure. Now for an attempt to set it on its organic foundations. What has to be explained is why sexual experiences, which when they were current generated pleasure, should, when they are remembered from a different phase, generate unpleasure in some people and persist as a compulsion in others. In the former case they must evidently be releasing at a later time an unpleasure that was not released to begin with.

One must also trace the derivation of the different epochs, psychological and sexual. You have taught me to recognize the latter as special multiples of the 28-day female period.³

$$100\pi = 7\frac{3}{4} \text{ years, in addition } 20\pi = 1 \text{ year, } 6\frac{1}{2} \text{ months}$$

$$200\pi = 15 \text{ years} \qquad 50\pi = 3 \text{ years, } 10 \text{ months}$$

If I assume that all observed periods are such multiples, then on the one hand the 23-day period remains unutilized, and on the other hand, it remains unexplained why psychic and sexual phases do not coincide (4 years), and why sometimes perversion and at other times neurosis develops.

So I am trying to introduce the notion that it is a male 23-day substance the release of which produces pleasure in both sexes, and a 28-day substance the release of which is experienced as unpleasure.

I then note that I can account for all psychic periods as multiples of 23-day periods (π) if I include in the calculation the period of gestation (276 days = 12π).

$$3 \times 12\pi = 1\frac{1}{2} \text{ years}$$

$$6 \times 12\pi = 3\frac{3}{4} \text{ years}$$

$$12 \times 12\pi = 8 \text{ years}$$

$$18 \times 12\pi = 12\frac{1}{2} \text{ years}$$

$$21 \times 12\pi = 14\frac{1}{4} \text{ years}$$

$$24 \times 12\pi = 17 \text{ years}$$

This would mean that psychic development occurs according to 23[-day] periods, which would summate to multiples of 3, 6, 12, . . . , 24, in which case the duodecimal system would become effective. The unit would in each case be the *period of gestation*, which equals 10π or 12π (approximately). The only result would be that psychic development would progress in accordance with multiples of 3, 6, 12 of the same, whereas the period of gestation equals 12π ; and sexual development would proceed according to the multiples of 5, 10, 20, whereas this time equals 10π .

Two things are noteworthy: (1) that for psychic development, the intrauterine time must be included in the calculation, otherwise it will not work; whereas for sexual development, the calculation can only start with birth. This is reminiscent of the circumstance that during pregnancy there occurs an accumulation of some 28-day substance that is released only at birth; (2) that the 28-day periods are summated more rarely and more highly than the 23-day ones, as though the higher development of human beings were dependent on this characteristic (shame, morality).

The two types of phases thus would interlock as follows:⁴

| | | | | | | |
|--------|----------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----|
| | $1\frac{1}{2}$ | $3\frac{3}{4}$ | 8 | $12\frac{1}{4}$ | $14\frac{1}{4}$ | 17 |
| Psych. | 3T | 6T | 12T | 18T | 21T | 24T |
| Sex. | 100π 10T | | | 200π 20T | | |

The fact that there are more psychic phases would fit very well with my assumption of still further translations and innovations of

the psychic apparatus. One can also see that the summation in the course of life encompasses ever-greater units of time.

In order to account for why the outcome [of premature sexual experience] is sometimes perversion and sometimes neurosis, I avail myself of the bisexuality of all human beings. In a purely male being there would be a surplus of male release at the two sexual boundaries as well — that is, pleasure would be generated and consequently perversion; in purely female beings there would be a surplus of unpleasurable substance at these times. In the first phases the releases would be parallel: that is, they would produce a normal surplus of pleasure. This would explain the preference of true females for neuroses of defense.

In this way the intellectual nature of males would be confirmed on the basis of your theory.

Finally, I cannot suppress the conjecture that the distinction between neurasthenia and anxiety neurosis, which I detected clinically, is connected with the existence of the two 23-day and 28-day substances.

Besides the two which I postulate here, there might be several of each kind.

It seems to me more and more that the essential point of hysteria is that it results from *perversion* on the part of the seducer, and *more and more* that heredity is seduction by the father. Thus an alternation emerges between generations:

1st generation — perversion

2nd generation — hysteria, and consequent sterility.

Occasionally there is a metamorphosis within the same individual: perverse during the age of vigor and then, after a period of anxiety, hysterical. Accordingly, hysteria is not repudiated sexuality but rather *repudiated perversion*.

Furthermore, behind this lies the idea of abandoned *erotogenic zones*. That is to say, during childhood sexual release would seem to be obtainable from a great many parts of the body, which at a later time are able to release only the 28[-day] anxiety substance and not the others. In this differentiation and limitation [would thus lie] progress in culture, and moral as well as individual development.

A hysterical attack is not a discharge but an *action*; and it retains the original characteristic of every action — of being a means to the reproduction of pleasure. That, at least, is what it is fundamentally; apart from this it puts forward all kinds of other reasons to the preconscious. Thus patients who have had something sexual done to them in *sleep* have attacks of sleep. They go to sleep again in

order to experience the same thing and often provoke a hysterical fainting fit in that way.

Attacks of dizziness and fits of weeping — all these are aimed at *another person* — but mostly at the prehistoric, unforgettable other person who is never equaled by anyone later. Even the chronic symptom of a pathological desire to lie in bed is explained in the same way. One of my patients still whimpers in his sleep as he did long ago (in order to be taken into bed by his mother, who died when he was 22 months old). Attacks never seem to occur as an "intensified expression of emotion."

A fragment from my daily experience: One of my patients, in whose history her highly perverse father plays the principal role, has a younger brother who is looked upon as a common scoundrel. One day the latter appears in my office to declare, with tears in his eyes, that he is not a scoundrel but is ill, with abnormal impulses and inhibition of will. He also complains, entirely as an aside, about what surely are nasal headaches. I direct him to his sister and brother-in-law, whom he indeed visits. That evening the sister calls me because she is in an agitated state. Next day I learn that after her brother had left, she had an attack of the most dreadful headaches — which she otherwise never suffers from. Reason: the brother told her that when he was 12 years old, his sexual activity consisted in kissing (licking) the feet of his sisters when they were undressing at night. In association, she recovered from her unconscious the memory of a scene in which (at the age of 4) she watched her papa, in the throes of sexual excitement, licking the feet of a wet nurse. In this way she surmised that the son's sexual preferences stemmed from the father; that the latter also was the seducer of the former. Now she allowed herself to identify with him and assume his headaches. She could do this, by the way, because during the same scene the raving father hit the child (hidden under the bed) on the head with his boot.

The brother abhors all perversity, whereas he suffers from compulsive impulses. That is to say, he has repressed certain impulses which are replaced by others with compulsions. This is, in general, the secret of compulsive impulses. If he could be perverse, he would be healthy, like the father.⁵

It is interesting that the calculation by successive summation yields *nothing*, regardless of whether or not the intrauterine period is included in the calculations.

- I. $12\pi = T = 276$ days (intrauterine)
 +
 $3 \times 12\pi = 3T = 2$ years + 3 months (extrauterine)
 +
 $6 \times 12\pi = 9T = 6$ years + 9 months
 +
 $12 \times 12\pi = 21T = 15$ years + 9 months
- II. $12\pi = 9$ months
 +
 $3 \times 12\pi = 4T = 3$ years
 +
 $6 \times 12\pi = 10T = 7$ years + 6 months
 +
 $12 \times 12\pi = 22T = 16\frac{1}{2}$ years

It works only if the intrauterine 12π are included in the calculation and in the total summation, as in the last letter.⁶ This must have some significance, don't you think?

I am very glad they did not see more in your lecture. So one can just quietly go on cursing them; they are a rather stupid bunch and should leave us alone.

Now a private matter: Oscar and Melanie visited us and made a good impression. I cannot help but like him again. I do *not* want to ask you explicitly about the truth of a rumor which connects Marie B. with Robert Br., but merely indicate that I know about it. I wish them all the best, only I am quite certain that I do not want to meet the Breuer clan. I am fully occupied, ten to eleven hours a day, and correspondingly well, but almost hoarse. Is that excessive strain on the vocal cords or aneurysm?⁷ *No* reply needed either. The best thing is to take old Candide's advice: *travailler sans raisonner*.

I really know nothing about a spontaneous resolution of pupillary paralysis in tabes and doubt that something can be found. It is of course a priori very improbable. Certainly, phosphorus?

I have now adorned my room with plaster casts of Florentine statues. It was a source of extraordinary invigoration for me; I am thinking of getting rich, in order to be able to repeat these trips. A congress on Italian soil! (Naples, Pompeii.)

Most cordial greetings to you all.

Your
Sigm.

1. *Bewusstsein*, or "consciousness."
2. A *fuero* was an ancient Spanish law still in effect in some particular city or province, guaranteeing that region's immemorial privileges.
3. Freud uses the Greek letter π for "period."
4. In the diagram *T* stands for *Tragzeit*, the period of gestation.
5. See *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*: "Thus symptoms are formed in part at the cost of abnormal sexuality; *neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions*" (S.E. 7:165). See also letters of January 11 and January 24, 1897, and S.E. 7:50.
6. Freud seems to be referring to an earlier portion of *this* letter, perhaps written at a different time, rather than to the preceding letter.
7. *Anfänge* reads *Angstneurose*, but the manuscript clearly has *Aneurysm*, a morbid dilatation of an artery.

Vienna, December 17, 1896

Dear Wilhelm,

I guessed the cause of your delay [in writing] and could still notice from your letter that you had had a bad period, which I hope is now past. I am very satisfied, however, with the reception of my fantasies. I know that you put them in the right place, pursue these viewpoints further, and regard me neither as a fantasist because I report on such unfinished things, nor as a fool who for this reason believes himself to be above scrutiny and correction. These are syntheses and working hypotheses,¹ which I trust we may exchange between the two of us without concern. My inner joy in suddenly being struck by an idea obviously was related not to the latent proofs but to finding a common ground for the work we share. I hope it will go so far that we can jointly build something definitive on it, and thereby blend our contributions to the point where our individual property is no longer recognizable. After all, I can collect facts only in the psychic sphere, you in the organological one; the in-between areas will require a hypothesis.

I cannot refrain from writing down for you, without proper order, some further facts and ideas. With regard to thrusts in psychic development we have the calculation based on 3, 6, 12 multiples of the gestation period; however, it may be possible to try another one that fits better with the characteristics of a process of accumulation. Namely, the summation would be calculated, not from the beginning, but starting with each breakthrough. Thus, 1T; next period from then on, 3T (total 4); next period from then on, 6T (total 10T); and so forth.