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TRAUMA AND THE UNCONSCIOUS: DOUBLE CONSCIENCE, THE UNCANNY AND CRUELTY

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Relatively little has been written on the role of trauma in conceptions of the unconscious. This paper explores Freud's conceptions of the unconscious, comparing his ideas with the original French notion of "double conscience" and exploring their implications for technique. Whereas Freud's concept of the unconscious mainly depends upon a theory of internal drives, Ferenczi's ascribed a central role to trauma, shifting the focus to the individual in the context of relationships. The comparison is illustrated with a case history.

KEY WORDS: double conscience; double consciousness; trauma; attachment; Freud; Ferenczi.

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INTRODUCTION

For years I have been impressed by the very confusing relation between trauma and the unconscious. Although Freud has been widely credited with the invention of the Unconscious (Ellenberger, 1955, and others), he did not invent the word, nor did he invent the concept of what was beyond conscious awareness. In the 4th century St. Augustine noted the existence of what he called the *abyssus humanae conscientiae* and the barrier (*phragmos*) between that and "ordinary" consciousness (Dodds, 1951, p. 19). So the notion of a realm of the consciousness that is deep and apart has a very long history indeed. It is present in the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge at the beginning of the 19th century, when he speaks of the primary imagination as the prime agent of human perception, whereas the secondary imagination co-exists with human will. Freud (1900–1901) emphasizes dreams as the royal road to

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the unconscious, and is explicit in making the unconscious the source of power. For both, emotions are dangerous if not kept in check by a rational, willful agency. For both, what is not conscious can be associated with death.[1]

Many late 18th and early 19th century writers relied upon forces beyond conscious and intentional powers (e.g., Goethe, 1809, in *Elective Affinities*, Chateaubriand, in his *Génie du Christianisme*, 1802 and Coleridge, 1798, in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"). Whether this reliance was caused in part by the French Revolution and its aftermath, the demographic shifts towards the city, the Christian revival or the Industrial Revolution and its dislocations, there was a sense that existing structures could no longer contain the forces of chaos, and some larger power needed to be summoned to restore a sense of order and reliability.

Kerr (1988), Rudnytsky (1991) and others have called attention to the links between German Romanticism and Freud's notion of the unconscious. But I think there is a larger, European/American context that includes German Idealism (e.g., Fichte, Schelling, Hegel), the preoccupation with the concept of will (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche) American transcendentalism and, on both sides of the Atlantic, the fascination with the occult.

Additionally, the larger context includes Christian Science and its influence on notions of will and on mind/body questions, which themselves were profoundly influenced by hypnotism and the kinds of conditions that hypnotism could effect. As Pierre Janet (1923) points out, Mary Baker Eddie was herself profoundly affected by Charcot's Salpetriere tradition of hypnotism and animal magnetism, along with the mind over body assumptions that it encouraged. The notion that "right" thinking can cure (mind cure) influenced into both psychoanalysis and Christian Science. Moreover, "right thinking" assumptions discouraged a recognition of the helplessness and anxiety attendant upon uncertainty, illness and death.

Although Freud appeared to change his mind many times in conceptualizing the unconscious, his genius was to have kept the unconscious as the object of endless fascination, even with all its ambiguities and the impossibility of knowing it directly. It was Freud's (1900–1901) *Interpretation of Dreams* that fired imaginations and set him apart as the most persuasive of writers on what can broadly be construed as the "unconscious."

But while Freud emphasized the individual unconscious and internal dynamics as manifestations of his drive theory and his theory of repression, Ferenczi placed unconscious dynamics squarely in the context of the physical body, relationships and attachment. Accordingly Ferenczi insisted that our weaknesses and mistakes can be invaluable resources for analytic work (see Ferenczi's, 1932 *Clinical Diary*), commenting that when the mind is overwhelmed, the body begins to think. Where Freud stressed *mastery* and aggression, Ferenczi stressed feelings of helplessness; where Freud stressed

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understanding, Ferenczi stressed feelings of confusion, and where Freud stressed the *correctness of theoretical formulations* Ferenczi stressed humility in the face of human suffering.

From these broader considerations a number of questions emerge. What kind of mind/body relation is implicit in Freud's notion of the unconscious?[2] How reliant is Freud on the notions of will (e.g., in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Tuke and Charcot)? How is Freud's emphasis on guilt and the strength of will related to his emphasis on mind over body assumptions? What is the place of morals in Freud's unconscious?

DOUBLE CONSCIENCE

Before Freud, it was the French notion of "double conscience" that prevailed for Charcot, Binet, Janet and others. In English this means literally "double consciousness." Sometimes it is misleadingly translated as "splitting." But in French it means *both* double consciousness and double conscience, knowing and not knowing at the same time, literally having two consciences, splitting the sense of ethics into what is known but not lived and what is lived but not known.

The concept of *double conscience* evolved from hypnosis and a fascination with doubleness in general. In the 19th century, the notion that the self seemed a new frontier was in the air on both sides of the Atlantic. It is echoed by the horrifying story of Robert Louis Stevenson (1886), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (a double personality), and the German notion of the *doppelgänger*, often depicted as an evil double. Such a general fascination with doubleness in its relation to the uncanny and the occult was itself "doubled" by the findings of hypnosis. How was it that patients under hypnosis could remember things inaccessible to the waking mind? The handiest answer was that they knew and did not know these things at the same time, and that, under hypnosis, certain memories became "conscious" even though the patient was under hypnosis and seemingly asleep.

Such cultural fascination with "doppelgängers" contributed to Freud's interest in the work of his contemporary, the Austrian physician and author, Arthur Schnitzler, of whom Ellenberger remarked that Freud's case of Dora could easily have come from Schnitzler's pen rather than Freud's. As Haynal (1993, p. 142ff.) notes, in *Paracelsus*, Schnizler's 1898 play, the hero hypnotizes Justina, who then experiences "the continuity of conscious and unconscious experience." Additionally, in 1901 Schnizler writes the novel *Lieutenant Gustel* in a stream of consciousness style long before Proust and the surrealists. Haynal goes on to observe: "A country as full of contradictions as the Austro-Hungarian empire was sure to create greater sensitivity to the contrasts and multiplicity of forces acting upon the character—the non-unity

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of the subject was to be a theme of Robert Musil's *L'homme sans qualites* (1952)."And after the Treaty of Versailles, at the end of World War I, Freud wrote: "Austria-Hungary is no more. I could not live elsewhere" (quoted by Haynal, p. 148), a comment that implies how very difficult it was for Freud to live with these multiplicities and contradictions, and how very strong were Freud's own fantasies.[3]

Pierre Janet and the *subconscient*

Pierre Janet writes eloquently about the history of healing from religion through animal magnetism (les Fluidists) to hypnosis (les Animists). Decades before Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Janet coined the terms *somnambulisme extralucide* and "*subconscience par desagregation*."[4] What Janet terms "*des idees fixes*" (obsessive thoughts) are dangerous because they lie outside the compass of the will.

Janet's notion of the "*subconscient*" differed from Freud's "unconscious," which Janet thought was limited by Freud's emphasis on sexuality and aggression. Moreover, Janet accused Freud of applying different terms to concepts that he himself had formulated first:

> He called psychoanalysis what I called psychological analysis; he termed "complexes" what I had called a psychological system that designates that group of conscious facts and movements, both of the body and the viscera, that can be associated with traumatic memories; he termed "repression" what I called a narrowing of consciousness (and conscience) and physical movement; he termed "catharsis" what I designated by the term psychological dissociation or moral disinfection. (Janet, 1923, p. 24. my translation)

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The unconscious and double conscience

It is useful for us to pause at this point and to reflect on the differences between the French term *double conscience* and the English *unconscious*. The French double conscience refers to what can be known and not known at the same time, unknown and unthought, unthought and known, unknown and thought.[5] And then there is the difficulty of knowing and understanding how what is known is known and how what is unknown is unknown. The Italians provide a bit of clarification with their term *dimenticatorium*, a place (or room) where one puts what one does not want to know.

Double conscience implies knowing and not knowing at the same time, a sort of Janus-faced approach to epistemology problematic for philosophers and, when looked at closely, filled with contradictions. The concept of double conscience, clearly in the air of the period, was linked to hypnotism and its use on patients deemed to be hysterical; in fact, those susceptible to hypnosis were

by definition hysterical. So hysterical patients were, by definition, those who manifested the reality of double conscience better than others.

But Freud (1893–1895) reframed the importance of hysteria by focusing on repression and by adhering to his theory of drives. Accordingly, he needed to depart from the prevailing notion of "double conscience" in order to present himself as the discoverer of a new world, a world of the inner mind. Moreover, when compared to double conscience, the Freudian concept of the unconscious appears easier to grasp because there is essentially only one person involved and the line between what is known and unknown can be more firmly drawn. Oversimplifying, for Freud the unconscious is what is to be interpreted, and what is to be interpreted includes what Freud could identity in himself (e.g., dreams, parapraxes, jokes, etc.). The unconscious is, by Freud's own admission, unknowable, a little like the navel of the dream which Freud describes as the place where the dream drops off into the unknowable.

What Freud gained by introducing the notion of the unconscious in the world familiar with the idea of the double and of double conscience was (at least in part) the ability to persuade the skeptical that what was outside of logic and beyond access to consciousness could be understood through psychoanalytic theory and technique. But such a definition of the "unconscious" (as distinct from double conscience) pointed Freud towards internal fantasy and away from pain and the body, away from death, away from the outside world.

By focusing on unconscious motivation and conflicts, and by attributing hysteria to sexual repression, Freud made sense of hysterical symptoms in a way nobody else had. However, this emphasis on internal drives and conflicts as opposed to double conscience put Freud on a trajectory that minimized the reality of external trauma in psychoanalysis (e.g., was seduction fantasized or real?).

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FREUD, THE UNCONSCIOUS AND CRUELTY

Note how easily Freud slips into the assumption that knowledge of his own unconscious is equivalent to knowledge of that of another person. Freud comments:

> There is no need to discuss what is to be called conscious: it is removed from all doubt … we call a psychical process unconscious whose existence we are obliged to assume—for some such reason as that we infer it from its effects—, but of which we know nothing. In that case we have the same relation to it as we have to a psychical process in another person, except that it is in fact one of our own. (Freud, 1933, p. 70)

Aware that too great a divide between conscious and unconscious presents serious difficulties, Freud "distinguishes two kinds of unconscious… We call

the unconscious which is only latent, and thus easily becomes conscious, the 'preconscious' and retain the term 'unconscious' for the other" (ibid., p. 71).

Freud even suggests that the term "unconscious" be changed altogether to the "id," "following a verbal usage of Nietzsche's and taking up a suggestion by Georg Groddeck [1923]" (ibid., p. 72) And Freud goes on to explain that "the logical laws of thought do not apply in the id, and this is true above all of the law of contradiction" (ibid., p. 73).

But, Freud realizes, this shift in designation does not address the question of unconscious drives on which so much of his theories of psychic processes depend. Therefore in revising his dream theory, Freud makes explicit his thesis that "the most powerful element [in latent dream thoughts] is the repressed instinctual impulse" (ibid., p. 19). Relating resistance to the "unconscious," Freud comments: "The whole theory of psycho-analysis is, as you know, in fact built up on the perception of the resistance offered to us by the patient when we attempt to make his unconscious conscious to him" (ibid., p. 68).

With reference to a brief discussion of an accident-prone patient, Freud clarifies the motivations for resistance by attributing them to the unconscious wish for punishment and cruelty.

> There is, as we think, no doubt about the origin of this unconscious need for punishment. It behaves like a piece of conscience, like … a piece of aggressiveness that has been internalized and taken over by the super-ego … Theoretically we are in fact in doubt whether we should suppose that all the aggressiveness that has returned from the external world is bound by the super-ego and accordingly turned against the ego, or that a part of it is carrying on its mute and uncanny activity as a free destructive instinct in the ego and the id. (ibid., p. 109)

The existence of the unconscious can be inferred from the existence of resistance, and resistance can be inferred from the expression of aggression and from manifestations of the unconscious need for punishment. But then there is the question of how conscious resistance is and whether it is the province of the ego, the superego or the id.

One example of Freud's handling of resistance is his comment in the case of the Rat Man when the patient breaks off in his account and begs Freud to spare him in recounting the rest. Freud writes:

> I assured him that I myself had no taste whatever for cruelty, and certainly had no desire to torment him, but that naturally I could not grant him something which was beyond my power. He might just as well ask me to give him the moon. The overcoming of resistances was a law of the treatment, and on no consideration could it be dispensed with (Freud, 1909, p. 166). "In an obsessional neurosis," Freud continues, "there are two kinds of knowledge, and it is just as reasonable to hold that the patient 'knows' his traumas as that he does not 'know' them. For he knows them in that he has not forgotten them, and he does not know them in that he is unaware of their significance." (ibid., p. 196, Note)

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In his paper, "The 'Uncanny'" Freud (1919a) refers to the horrifying stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann[6] as an expression of the power of the unconscious. John Kerr in his comments on one of these—"The Devil's Elixir" written in 1816, a story that Freud mentions explicitly (1919a, p. 233) —points out that for Freud "it was Hoffmann who gave the uncanny its quintessentially horrible expression" (Kerr, 1988, p. 8). The story is one of double identities, deception, lust and murder, and was influenced by Hoffmann's stay in the asylums of the day for inspiration.

In "The 'Uncanny,'" Freud discusses the German word *heimlich* in an attempt to explore what makes hidden feelings powerful. The uncanny in general (and heimlich in particular) is that which is "concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others." To do something *heimlich*, Freud explains, is to do it "behind someone's back." One may "look on with *heimlich* pleasure at someone's discomfiture." If one "behave[s] *heimlich*," one does so "as though there was something to conceal, to keep a secret." Then there is a "*heimlich* love-affair," which Freud knew about, since he himself had a secret affair with his sister in law (Rudnytsky, 2011). There are "*heimlich* places" and the "*heimlich* chamber" (i.e., toilet). (Freud, 1919a, p. 223).

Then, in further associations, Freud speaks of Hoffman's thoroughly horrifying children's story "The Sand Man." Here doubleness, sadism, bloody cruelty and blindness (motifs related to shame and destructiveness) figure prominently (see also Kilborne, 2002). The Sand Man is, in Freud's words,

> a wicked man who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that their eyes jump out of their heads all bleeding. Then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children. They sit up there in their nest, and their beaks are hooked like owls' beaks, and they use them to peck up naughty boys' and girl's eyes with. (ibid., p. 228)

Freud then continues with Hoffman's narrative of the traumatized little Nathaniel who, at the end of the story, recognizes the lawyer Coppelius as the Sand Man and in utter horror hurls himself over a parapet. Freud writes: "While he lies on the paving-stones with a shattered skull the Sand Man vanishes in the throng" (ibid., p. 230).

If we treat these references to Hoffman's stories as an association to *heimlich*, it would appear that Freud might be hinting at some hidden and secret cruelty within himself. In speaking of "the dread of the evil eye…" (ibid., p. 240), Freud comments, "what is feared, is thus a secret intention of doing harm, and certain signs are taken to mean that intention has the necessary power at its command" (ibid., p. 240).

Freud then speaks of the omnipotence of thought, linking the fear of a secret intention of doing harm to intention and power. This fits with his

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emphasis on guilt. Freud uses the blood-curdling Hoffman story to demonstrate the power of the unconscious, suggesting that (unconscious) fantasies of secret cruelty bolster notions of innate drives. Associating cruelty with hidden innate drives makes it easier to explain away human destructiveness by placing the fascination with cruelty and sadism beyond the realm of ethics because it is biologically driven. Consequently, Freud's unconscious departs radically from the French notion of "*double conscience*," deleting conscience from what is unconscious.

Significantly, Freud first alludes to his "The Uncanny" in a letter to Sándor Ferenczi on May 12, 1919 (Freud and Ferenczi, 1914–1919, pp. 354–355). But whereas for Ferenczi unconscious conflicts strike root in trauma and shame over vulnerability and helplessness (in destructive relationships and external catastrophes), for Freud they derive from sexual drives and inner, secret and hidden intentions to harm. For Ferenczi, they are implicitly shame driven, for Freud, guilt driven.

Related to the secret intention of doing harm, Freud in this text introduces the concept of the death drive.[7] Additionally he comments on the double, "The 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death'." The death drive is not the fear of losing another person. Rather, it is a fear of *injuring* another person. It is an internal, inborn drive unaffected by terrifying external forces like war and concentration camps. Consequently, Freud implies that the death drive is divorced from relationships, except as a manifestation of the urge to harm others. Guilt over aggression and destruction then becomes the predominant emphasis, rather than the shame of helplessness, rather than the shame of needing human connections and finding them painful.

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FERENCZI AND TRAUMA

Ferenczi emphasizes the reality and anguish of sexual child abuse, and speaks of a confusion of tongues between the language of children and their innate longing for tenderness, on the one hand and the language of adults, the language of sexual passion, on the other (Ferenczi, 1933). The confusion is traumatic precisely because the child needs tenderness but the adult wants sexual satisfaction and the child thus feels that his need for connection is not only misunderstood, but that he or she is inadequate; the child's dependence upon the adult for a sense of connection becomes traumatizing and the child feels unseen and devalued. For Ferenczi, sexuality included sensuality in the broadest sense, an expression of the human longing for connection (in *Thalassa*, 1924, a return to the womb) which could have little or nothing to do with the sexual act and with sexual drives and feelings per se.[8]

Following Rank, by 1926 Ferenczi had formulated the essential importance of the relationship between analyst and patient as the *sine qua non* of analytic technique.[9]

It is "the cardinal point of the analytic material." And he emphasizes his point: "every dream, every gesture, every parapraxis, every aggravation or improvement of the condition of the patient is above all an expression of transference and resistance" (Ferenczi, 1925, p. 225). Significantly, for Ferenczi, both the terms "resistance" and "transference" apply equally to analyst and to patient.

In much of the work of Freud and in that of most psychoanalysts since, the concepts of "transference" and "resistance" refer exclusively to the patient. The term "counter-transference" had to be added almost as an afterthought, and remains to this day confusing and unwieldy. Does the term refer to a reaction to the patient's transference, or is it the expression of the personality of the analyst, or is it co-constructed? Haynal and Falzeder (1991, p. 10) comment that transference love has different meanings for Freud and Ferenczi. For Freud the term refers to the feelings only of the patient for the analyst, and for Ferenczi the mutual feelings of both analysand and analyst in interaction.

Ferenczi emphasizes the relation between analyst and analysand, including all the doubleness of both parties. Ferenczi writes (1931) that a traumatized patient, split between "unconscious feeling and unfelt knowing" "understands everything yet feels little or nothing." Ferenczi explains:

> the patient feels as if he were struck off his balance, produces the most intense degrees of shock and resistance, he feels deceived but inhibited in his aggressiveness, and ends in a kind of paralysed state which he experiences as dying or being dead. If we succeed in directing this state away from us and back to infantile traumatic events, it may happen that the patient seizes the moment in which, at that time knowing and feeling led, under the same symptoms of helpless rage, to self-destruction, to splitting of the mind in unconscious feeling and unfelt knowing, i.e., the same process that Freud assumes to be the basis of repression … The only bridge between the real world and the patient in this state of trance is the person of the analyst …

Ferenczi then continues, relating splitting to narcissism:

> A surprising but apparently generally valid [result] of this process of self-splitting is the sudden change of the object relation that has become intolerable into narcissism. The man abandoned by all gods escapes completely from reality and creates for himself another world in which he, unimpeded by earthly gravity, can achieve everything he wants. … [The] event to which we can point against the suicidal impulse is the fact that in this new traumatic struggle the patient is no longer alone. (Ferenczi, 1931, Notes and Fragments, pp. 237–238)

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ALL IN THE FAMILY: A CLINICAL ILLUSTRATION

Violet always felt herself to be small and, more generally, to be no match for the forces of the world. One of two sisters, she was in treatment for more than four years before she converted to analysis. I supervised the case. Shortly after she agreed to increase the number of sessions to three times weekly, I became conscious of a sort of strain in the analytic relationship, as though something important was being left out. The uneasy feeling did not leave me, and I mentioned it to the analyst. Several months went by. And then there was a sequence of sessions in which the analyst felt unaccountably tired and burdened. Prompted by my intuition, the analyst, who was herself uncommonly sensitive and skillful, picked up on a seemingly off-handed comment about a feeling of darkness. The analyst pressed Violet for details about this persistent feeling of darkness, asking what it might be connected with.

> Violet: I don't know. My mother's fiancée died when my mother was a young woman.
> Analyst: How did he die?
> Violet: I don't know. I never asked. I think her mother (my grandmother) and my uncle were a part of the death, but I don't know.

In the following session the analyst asked what they were speaking about in the previous session. Violet said she did not know, and guessed it might be related to her fear of darkness. The analyst wondered aloud how the mother's fiancée died. Violet said she had no idea. When the analyst pressed for details of the death, she encountered resistance, an implicit "I don't want to go there." Wondering aloud about this "darkness" the analyst asked tentatively, "Might the fiancée have been murdered?"

The following session began abruptly with Violet affirming:

> Violet: You were right. My mother was 14. She was to marry a handsome boy in the village. There was a three-day wedding ceremony. The fiancée, the maternal uncle and maternal cousin went to the forest to get wood for the fire. The fiancée was found dead in a well. My maternal grandmother, my uncle and my cousin were all charged with murder. My mother's cousin was in love with my mother, although he was six years older. My grandfather and uncle were charged because they hid the truth. As for my mother's cousin, he was in prison for more than ten years. My uncle took to drinking, came to our house regularly and died in a car accident. Nobody spoke of the story of the murder or of my uncle's death. I guess the darkness can be connected to the well. My mother's cousin died of cancer; it was like a horror movie. The family was broken, uncles drunk, fighting.

The analyst was astounded. She had worked with Violet for more than four years and had no idea whatsoever that there was such a trauma in the family. In the weeks and months to follow Violet spoke rarely of the

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murder. However, she recited plots of movies and plays all of which were horrifying. For example, one Lebanese play was about a woman with two parts. One was young and one was old and dead.

> Violet (explaining): It reminded me of my mother. Worrying about my mother. The woman gave the baby away. It was wartime. She was at the front, imprisoned and raped by her own son while in prison. She had twins from the son. He did not know she was his mother. Soldiers took all babies but her two, one son and one daughter. When she got out of prison she found her children. The son wore the red plastic nose that she had received from his father (her own son who had impregnated her in prison). She wrote two letters: to the daughter she said, find your brother, and to the son, find your father. Then she died. Looking for brother and father the two children find the same person.

Another story is told, this time the plot of a movie. A young boy comes to Rome from a village. He wants to be a movie star, rents an apartment. But in his apartment are ghosts who were all actors when alive, all murdered in that apartment. They could not die completely because nobody told them what happened to them. What happened? Since they did not know what happened, they could not really die, and were preserved in limbo.

And yet another story, again the plot of a movie based on Dostoyevsky's (1864) *Notes from the Underground*. The director is put in prison where he reads Dostoyevsky. When he gets out his life changes completely. The main character has another person inside. Violet commented that she feels the same thing inside her but she hides it.

Violet knew and did not know the horrifying story of murder in the family. And even when she had told the analyst, she continued to work on the feelings by telling stories that in affective content closely resembled her own situation of confusion, anxiety, horror and solitude, not knowing her family, fears of her own doubleness in knowing and not knowing, fears of incest, rape and the horror of things dimly imagined, things withheld.

We can ask: what kind of concept of the unconscious is most useful in treating a patient like Violet? I would energetically agree with Ferenczi that to use the usual method of free association, and not engage actively with this patient would contribute to her defensive avoidance, and would only thicken the darkness. As Ferenczi notes in his *Clinical Diary*:

> Free association by itself, without these new foundations for an atmosphere of trust, will thus bring no real healing. The doctor must really be involved in the case, heart and soul, or honestly admit it when he is not, in total contrast with the behaviour of adults towards children. (Ferenczi, 1932, p. 169)

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In the case of Violet, the analyst skillfully stayed with the sense of blackness, inquiring as to its meaning. To leave Violet alone to associate would probably never have yielded the traumatic family story, since what kept it from the therapeutic/analytic situation was a veil of family secrecy and shame, as well as the shame of Violet's confusion, horror and solitude, growing up in the midst of a family she could not understand. Here trans-generational trauma comes into the picture in the attitudes and bits and pieces of a story into which Violet could never herself inquire. Inactivity on the part of the analyst would have led Violet to relive the non-response from her family, and to keep the trauma, as it were like the murdered actors in limbo, unable to live and unable to die, unable to change, condemned to haunt the living across the generations. It is a great credit to the analyst's skill that she was herself fully engaged and therefore able to help Violet feel that she was no longer alone with the burden of a family murder and a lifetime of inexplicable anxiety and sorrow.

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DREAMS, THE UNCONSCIOUS AND TRAUMA

Marion Oliner, in her recent paper entitled "Life is Not A Dream: the importance of being real," writes:

> Because in analysis insistence on the reality of an experience is frequently used defensively, analysts run the danger of joining patients in treating external and psychic reality as dichotomous, thereby underestimating the beneficial potential of being real for limiting unconscious omnipotence and thereby restoring from oblivion the past and the wider context of an experience.

Oliner concludes:

> under optimal conditions it establishes a sense of history and thereby limits unconscious omnipotence. (Oliner, 2010, p. 1139)

Freud's most famous visions of the "unconscious" come from his monumental *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900–1901), a primary source of which was the death of Freud's father in 1896. Needing to make allowances for the fact that he was his own analyst, and that the dreamer and the interpreter were, for him, one and the same, Freud presented a dream theory that allowed the interpretation to be authoritative, like the deciphering of Linear B or of Egyptian hieroglyphics.[10] However, we can wonder whether in dealing with his father's death Freud was not also dealing with his own fears of dying. Freud's interest in the "unconscious," in making the unconscious conscious through the interpretation of dreams, combined with his view of himself as having discovered the secret of dream interpretation might possibly be interpreted to suggest that because dreams provide reassurance that the sleeping will

awaken, they can be used to defend against death anxiety. Through his vision of himself as the interpreter of dreams, might Freud not have felt that he held the key to life, as might be implied through his implicit identification with the god of healing, Asklepios?[11] Even the very concept of the death drive can be part and parcel of denial. No current psychoanalytic theory has squarely addressed this problem, and, indeed, it may be impossible for any theory to do so. Hence the need to follow Ferenczi in relating trauma to the "unconscious," and thus to re-introduce, albeit implicitly, the notion of double conscience.

Freud left the unconscious conspicuously blank. But holding that the "unconscious" is unknowable directly carries with it risks. As Paul Roazen remarked, "When dealing with the unknown, one must reckon with the danger of magical thinking. The inevitable interplay between external and internal forces must always be remembered" (Roazen, 1968, p. 63).

Freud knew how provocatively to evoke associations to what cannot be understood, just as in his *Interpretation of Dreams* he knew how implicitly to evoke the tradition of Asklepios while claiming that his approach was scientific. However, the very power of Freud's evocations of unconscious forces and conflicts minimizes relationships, cultural values, history, trans-generational trauma, and whatever can be viewed as "external reality." By emphasizing the horrifying emotions associated with the unconscious, he too readily assumes that these were the very essence of the reality principle as manifested by drives. Death becomes an internal matter. Freud comments: "I believe that the fear of death is something that occurs between the ego and the superego" (Freud, 1923a, b, p. 58).

It would appear then that for Freud and the tradition of psychoanalysis in general, there are implicit assumptions about the relation of the "unconscious" to what is assumed to be "reality" through reliance on morbidity, sadism, aggression and guilt. In "A Child is Being Beaten," for example, Freud (1919b) insists that the beating fantasy has nothing whatsoever to do with child abuse, just as castration anxiety has nothing whatsoever to do with circumcision, and Dora's sexual fantasies have nothing to do with the conduct of Herr K (Freud, 1905), that seduction is a fantasy in which the seducer, the other person, is conveniently missing. Freud and those who follow him in their defensive reliance on the aggressive, sadistic, sexual and destructive content of the "unconscious," run the risk of minimizing human tragedy. Like many others of his generation, Freud needed to shield himself from the implausibility and unimaginable horror of the outside, which is understandable given the unimaginable destruction and traumas of the 20th century. In this he was not unlike Franz Kafka, who commented "My penchant for portraying my dreamlike inner life has rendered everything else inconsequential" (quoted in Banville, 2013).[12]

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I would even suggest that unless we as analysts help our patients use their connections with others (and with ourselves) to recognize whatever might be construed as the real world outside, we cannot help them struggle for their identity. What is often diagnosed as paranoia can also be seen as shame-ridden avoidance of the dependency on others that challenges the sense of self. However, it is precisely in such challenges that identity can be forged; without them the result is narcissistic omnipotence and a rationalized mistrust of the world.

For Ferenczi (and he is virtually alone in this), the unconscious is the repository of suffering, tragedy and helplessness, and it is the trauma of mortality that rings human lives. After Ferenczi's death, he was "unconscionably" forgotten—along with his inconvenient emphasis on human suffering and the impingement of external reality—for reasons that are of fundamental importance to us today. One might even make the argument that Ferenczi attempted to save psychoanalysis from being a delusional system,[13] and for that he was castigated. Because he emphasized the external reality of trauma that splinters identity and creates suffering, he was seen as having betrayed psychoanalysis.

Ferenczi drew upon Freud's genius in imagining the unconscious as an interplay of dynamic and conflictual forces, wishes and fears. Because of shame dynamics, it can be difficult to recognize how essential our own experience of trauma can be in allowing us to work with the trauma of our patients. Ferenczi knew the value of unimaginable, inexplicable trauma as a resource for identity, history and, indeed, for human connection. For Ferenczi, the "real" world is as much a part of our psychic reality as are our fantasies. And the real world is often incomprehensibly implausible. We are called upon continually to re-imagine the central concepts of psychoanalysis in the Ferenczian tradition. Only by so doing can we enlarge the scope of our work, relating it to moral and ethical responsibilities and conflicts ("*double conscience*") as well as to human suffering, helplessness, tragedy and death.

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NOTES

1. Alan Gregory (2003, p. 57) notes that in Coleridge, "The fancy is essential to the mind's experience of itself as a subject within the subject-object relation…Like Medusa, it looks

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'death into everything' so that the subject has experience of objects, distinct and at a distance, as it were, from its own subjectivity…Without the fancy "there would be no fixation, consequently, no distinct perception of conception": consciousness would be a delirium… The fancy, then, corresponds to a preliminary stage of human cognition, that of the subject, whereas the imagination further constitutes the knower as "soul"…The soul perceives the "living being…thro the Body which is its Symbol and outward and visible sign" (p. 57).

2. The fascination with what lay beyond reason and logic in the world of Freud entailed also a fascination with power, as is clear, for example in the film "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (used in the well-known book of Siegfried Kracauer, 1947, *From Caligari to Hitler*).
3. It is a tragic fact that four of Freud's five sisters died in concentration camps, and that Freud himself required the adamant assistance of a number of friends to leave Austria and escape to London.
4. The rough English translation would be "a coming apart subconscious," something that is incoherent, something that does not hold together.
5. The well-known concept of the "unthought known," of Christopher Bollas (1989), derives from these more complex ideas. Like Freud, Bollas omits "conscience" from his "unthought known."
6. E.T.A. Hoffmann was an influential German Romantic author at the beginning of the XIX.c., with a taste for horror and the macabre. He influenced many, including Poe, Dickens, Kafka, Baudelaire, Dostoyevsky and more, including Hitchcock.
7. In his discussion of the Schreber case, Freud notes, "The end of the world is the projection of this internal catastrophe" (1911, p. 70). This is the withdrawal of investment in others and in the outside world. But such a withdrawal is distinct for Freud from the death instinct, although one wonders why that should be.
8. In this sense, Ferenczi echoed Janet's critique of Freud: that Freud unnecessarily limited his interpretation of traumatic memories to a search for primarily sexual events and sexual causes (Janet, 1923, p. 25).
9. This theme was picked up, by Hitchcock (1945) in his film "Spellbound," in which recovering the lost memory of the traumatic event is explicitly tied to a love relationship.
10. Compare Ferenczi's text "To whom does one relate one's dreams" (1912) to Freud's emphasis on dreams as text.
11. See Kilborne (1978, 2013) for a discussion of the function of dreams and interpretation from Asklepios to Descartes to Freud.
12. Quoted by John Banville in "A Different Kafka," *New York Review of Books*, October 23, 2013. He also quotes Kafka's diary entry for August 2, 1914: "Germany has declared war on Russia—Swimming in the afternoon." Like Freud, Kafka sought refuge from the traumas of the external world in his own inner world. Although Kafka did not live to witness it, because he died at age 40, years before the Holocaust in 1924, his three sisters were killed in concentration camps as were Freud's sisters.
13. Delusions are by definition believed in. But if the matter in question is implausible or viewed with disbelief, it is no longer a delusion. Freud was a genius in invention, but not all his inventions are to be believed.

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