

II

After severe shock of a mechanical nature, railway collision or other accident in which danger to life is involved, a condition may arise which has long been recognised and to which the name 'traumatic neurosis' is attached. The terrible war that is just over has been responsible for an immense number of such maladies and at least has put an end to the inclination to explain them on the basis of organic injury to the nervous system due to the operation of mechanical force.¹ The clinical picture of traumatic neurosis approaches that of hysteria in its wealth of similar motor symptoms, but usually surpasses it in its strongly marked signs of subjective suffering—in this resembling rather hypochondria or melancholia—and in the evidences of a far more comprehensive general weakening and shattering of the mental functions. Neither the war neuroses nor the traumatic neuroses of peace are as yet fully understood. With the war neuroses

¹ Cp. *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses*, by Ferenczi, Abraham, Simmel and Ernest Jones; No. 2 of the International Psycho-Analytical Library, 1921.

some light was contributed, but also on the other hand a certain confusion introduced, by the fact that the same type of malady could occasionally occur without the interposition of gross mechanical force. In the traumatic neuroses there are two outstanding features which might serve as clues for further reflection: first that the chief causal factor seemed to lie in the element of surprise, in the fright; and secondly that an injury or wound sustained at the same time generally tended to prevent the occurrence of the neurosis. Fright, fear, apprehension are incorrectly used as synonymous expressions: in their relation to danger they admit of quite clear distinction. Apprehension (*Angst*) denotes a certain condition as of expectation of danger and preparation for it, even though it be an unknown one; fear (*Furcht*) requires a definite object of which one is afraid; fright (*Schreck*) is the name of the condition to which one is reduced if one encounters a danger without being prepared for it; it lays stress on the element of surprise. In my opinion apprehension cannot produce a traumatic neurosis; in apprehension there is something which protects against fright and therefore against the fright-neurosis. We shall return later to this dictum.

The study of dreams may be regarded as the most trustworthy approach to the exploration of the deeper psychic processes. Now in the traumatic neuroses the dream life has this peculiarity: it continually takes the patient back to the situation of his disaster, from which he awakens in renewed terror. This fact has caused less surprise than it merits. The

obtrusion on the patient over and again, even in sleep, of the impression made by the traumatic experience is taken as being merely a proof of its strength. The patient has so to speak undergone a psychical fixation as to the trauma. Fixations of this kind on the experience which has brought about the malady have long been known to us in connection with hysteria. Breuer and Freud stated in 1893 that hysterics suffer for the most part from reminiscences. In the war neuroses, observers, such as Ferenczi and Simmel, have been able to explain a number of motor symptoms as fixation on the factor of the trauma.

But I am not aware that the patients suffering from traumatic neuroses are much occupied in waking life with the recollection of what happened to them. They perhaps strive rather not to think of it. To regard it as self-evident that the dream at night takes them back to the situation which has caused the trouble is to misunderstand the nature of dreams. It would be more in correspondence with that nature if the patient were presented (in sleep) with images from the time of his normal health or of his hoped-for recovery. If we are not to go thoroughly astray as to the wish-fulfilment tendency of the dream in consequence of these dreams of the shock neuroses, perhaps the expedient is left us of supposing that in this condition the dream function suffers dislocation along with the others and is diverted from its usual ends, or else we should have to think of the enigmatic masochistic tendencies of the ego.

I propose now to leave the obscure and gloomy theme of the traumatic neuroses and to study the way in which the psychic apparatus works in one of its earliest normal activities. I refer to the play of children.

The different theories of child-play have recently been collated by S. Pfeifer in *Imago*¹ and their analytical value estimated; I may here refer the reader to this work. These theories endeavour to conjecture the motives of children's play, though without placing any special stress on the 'economic' point of view, i. e. consideration of the attainment of pleasure. Without the intention of making a comprehensive study of these phenomena I availed myself of an opportunity which offered of elucidating the first game invented by himself of a boy eighteen months old. It was more than a casual observation, for I lived for some weeks under the same roof as the child and his parents, and it was a considerable time before the meaning of his puzzling and continually repeated performance became clear to me.

The child was in no respect forward in his intellectual development; at eighteen months he spoke only a few intelligible words, making besides sundry significant sounds which were understood by those about him. But he made himself understood by his parents and the maid-servant, and had a good reputation for behaving 'properly'. He did not disturb his parents at night; he scrupulously obeyed orders about not touching various objects and not going into certain

¹ 1919, Bd. V, S. 243.

rooms; and above all he never cried when his mother went out and left him for hours together, although the tie to his mother was a very close one: she had not only nourished him herself, but had cared for him and brought him up without any outside help. Occasionally, however, this well-behaved child evinced the troublesome habit of flinging into the corner of the room or under the bed all the little things he could lay his hands on, so that to gather up his toys was often no light task. He accompanied this by an expression of interest and gratification, emitting a loud long-drawn-out 'o-o-o-oh' which in the judgement of the mother (one that coincided with my own) was not an interjection but meant 'go away' (*fort*). I saw at last that this was a game, and that the child used all his toys only to play 'being gone' (*fortsein*) with them. One day I made an observation that confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string¹ wound round it. It never occurred to him, for example, to drag this after him on the floor and so play horse and cart with it, but he kept throwing it with considerable skill, held by the string, over the [side of his little draped cot, so that the reel disappeared into it, then said his significant 'o-o-o-oh' and drew the reel by the string out of the cot again, greeting its reappearance with a joyful 'Da' (there). This was therefore the complete game, disappearance and return, the first act being the only one generally observed by the onlookers, and the one untingingly repeated by the child as a

game for its own sake, although the greater pleasure unquestionably attached to the second act.¹

The meaning of the game was then not far to seek. It was connected with the child's remarkable cultural achievement—the foregoing of the satisfaction of an instinct—as the result of which he could let his mother go away without making any fuss. He made it right with himself, so to speak, by dramatising the same disappearance and return with the objects he had at hand. It is of course of no importance for the affective value of this game whether the child invented it himself or adopted it from a suggestion from outside. Our interest will attach itself to another point. The departure of the mother cannot possibly have been pleasant for the child, nor merely a matter of indifference. How then does it accord with the pleasure-principle that he repeats this painful experience as a game? The answer will perhaps be forthcoming that the departure must be played as the necessary prelude to the joyful return, and that in this latter lay the true purpose of the game. As against this, however, there is the observation that the first act, the going away, was played by itself as a game and far more

¹ This interpretation was fully established by a further observation. One day when the mother had been out for some hours she was greeted on her return by the information 'Baby o-o-o-o' which at first remained unintelligible. It soon proved that during his long lonely hours he had found a method of bringing about his own disappearance. He had discovered his reflection in the long mirror which nearly reached to the ground and had then crouched down in front of it, so that the reflection was '*fort*'.

frequently than the whole drama with its joyful conclusion.

The analysis of a single case of this kind yields no sure conclusion: on impartial consideration one gains the impression that it is from another motive that the child has turned the experience into a game. He was in the first place passive, was overtaken by the experience, but now brings himself in as playing an active part, by repeating the experience as a game in spite of its unpleasing nature. This effort might be ascribed to the impulse to obtain the mastery of a situation (the 'power' instinct), which remains independent of any question of whether the recollection was a pleasant one or not. But another interpretation may be attempted. The flinging away of the object so that it is gone might be the gratification of an impulse of revenge suppressed in real life but directed against the mother for going away, and would then have the defiant meaning: 'Yes, you can go, I don't want you, I am sending you away myself.' The same child a year later than my observations used to throw on the floor a toy which displeased him, and to say 'Go to the war!'. He had been told that his absent father was at the war, and he did not miss him at all, giving the clearest indications that he did not wish to be disturbed in the sole possession of his mother.¹

¹ When the child was five and three-quarter years old his mother died. Now, when she was really 'gone' (0-0-0), the boy showed no grief for her. A second child had, it is true, been born in the meantime and had aroused his strongest jealousy.

It is known of other children also that they can give vent to similar hostile feelings by throwing objects away in place of people.¹ Thus one is left in doubt whether the compulsion to work over in psychic life what has made a deep impression, to make oneself fully master of it, can express itself primarily and independently of the pleasure-principle. In the case discussed here, however, the child might have repeated a disagreeable impression in play only because with the repetition was bound up a pleasure gain of a different kind but more direct.

Nor does the further pursuit of the question of play resolve our hesitations between two conceptions. We see that children repeat in their play everything that has made a great impression on them in actual life, that they thereby abreact the strength of the impression and so to speak make themselves masters of the situation. But on the other hand it is clear enough that all their play is influenced by the dominant wish of their time of life: viz. to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do. It is also observable that the unpleasing character of the experience does not always prevent its being utilised as a game. If a doctor examines a child's throat, or performs a small operation on him, the alarming experience will quite certainly be made the subject of the next game, but in this the pleasure gain from another source is not to be overlooked. In passing from the passivity of experience to the activity of

¹ Cp. 'Eine Kindheits Erinnerung aus "Dichtung und Wahrheit"', *Imago*, 1917, Bd. V, S. 49.

play the child applies to his playfellow the unpleasant occurrence that befell himself and so avenges himself on the person of this proxy.

From this discussion it is at all events evident that it is unnecessary to assume a particular imitation impulse as the motive of play. We may add the reminder that the dramatic and imitative art of adults, which differs from the behaviour of children in being directed towards the spectator, does not however spare the latter the most painful impressions, e. g. in tragedy, and yet can be felt by him as highly enjoyable. This convinces us that even under the domination of the pleasure-principle there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself disagreeable the object of memory and of psychic pre-occupation. A theory of aesthetics with an economic point of view should deal with these cases and situations ending in final pleasure gain: for our purposes they are of no help, since they presuppose the existence and supremacy of the pleasure-principle and bear no witness to the operation of tendencies beyond the pleasure-principle, that is to say, tendencies which might be of earlier origin and independent of this.

III

Five-and-twenty years of intensive work have brought about a complete change in the more immediate aims of psycho-analytic technique. At first the endeavours of the analytic physician were confined to divining the unconscious of which his patient was unaware, effecting a synthesis of its various components and communicating it at the right time. Psycho-analysis was above all an art of interpretation. Since the therapeutic task was not thereby accomplished, the next aim was to compel the patient to confirm the reconstruction through his own memory. In this endeavour the chief emphasis was on the resistances of the patient; the art now lay in unveiling these as soon as possible, in calling the patient's attention to them, and by human influence—here came in suggestion acting' as 'transference'—teaching him to abandon the resistances.

It then became increasingly clear, however, that the aim in view, the bringing into consciousness of the unconscious, was not fully attainable by this method either. The patient cannot recall all of what lies