Making Our Ideas Clear

Pragmatism in Psychoanalysis

edited by

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CHAPTER 1

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN EARLY PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PRAGMATISM

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INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychoanalysis. His proposition was to create a psychology—a science of human psyche—which would account for the mysteries of mind by addressing specifically psychological processes and not physiological ones. In parallel, some types of psychological troubles could be cured by a psychological technique developed on such understanding. In some basic sense, then, psychoanalysis was to be considered a serious theory because it could actually be used to understand and ameliorate people's lives—that is, "freeing someone from his neurotic symptoms, inhibitions and abnormalities of character" (Freud, 1937/2001, p. 216). That a person would be relieved from such symptoms was thus one marker of the end of the analysis (Freud, 1937/2001)—and in that respect, the disappearance of the symptoms represents a pragmatic way of assessing the value of psychoanalysis. However, and although the theory was contemporary to his work, Freud apparently never explicitly mentions pragmatism as

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it has been defined by Charles S. Peirce, John Dewey and William James. Nevertheless, tracing back Freud's educational background, I will show that his intellectual journey has deep similarities to James's—which might have brought the two men to a comparable epistemological stance. Hence, I will suggest that Freud's intellectual work can be said to reflect a basic pragmatist stance, very close to that formulated by James, and visible through the psychoanalyst's constant effort to maintain a generative dialogue between a general theory and the diversity of always new empirical facts.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Trained as a medical doctor who first specialized in physiological troubles (aphasias, etc.), Freud was soon to be confronted by the hysteric patient. After trying different curing techniques developed in his time—suggestion, hypnosis—Freud came to realize the importance of discourse for understanding and taming the causes of the patient's sufferance. Most psychic pain and hysteric symptoms thus appeared to not have physiological causes, but psychological ones. Freud hence developed his *psychoanalysis*, designating by the same term three aspects of his work (Freud, 1922/2001): a theory of the psychic apparatus, a method for investigating the mind and developing such theories, and a setting and a technique to cure specific types of patient—at that time, mainly neurotic ones.

Freud's ambition was to develop a general psychological theory, the study of pathological cases being a way to contribute to the understanding of healthy functioning, with an emphasis on the "weak points" of mind (Freud, 1939). The core aspects of this theory, as they are presented in Freud's final theoretical contribution, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1938/2001) can be summarized:

First, from a topological perspective, Freud's model of the "psychic apparatus" consists of the *ego*, in which is localized our experience of ourselves, and which maintains itself "between" the demands of the drives issued from the body (constituting the *id*) and the demands of reality. In addition, it has to act under the guidance of the *superego*—resulting from internalized social and cultural norms and rules. The ego, like a chevalier on an untamed horse—the id—has to stay on the road of reality, while dealing with clouds of disturbing birds—suggestions of others, social demands and obstacles, and of the superego.

Second, from a more economical perspective, the drives, which represent in the mind the demand of the organism, are of two main types: the libido, or *Eros*, and a destructive drive, the *death drive*. The first one aims at more psychic linking, complexity, and stability; the other tends toward the destruction of such links and thus to inertia and immobility. In most human

action these two drives are combined: eating demands the decomposition of food and its recombination within the body; sexuality demands some aggressive moves aiming at physical reunion. Yet one can dominate the other, or be overly repressed or bent out of its normal course.

Third, Freud's theory includes recognition of the importance of sexuality in a broad sense, from infancy and early childhood on, leaving durable traces in the stabilization of one's later inclinations: Sexuality here includes the pleasure taken from early food intake, excretive functions, or the explorations of one's own body. In this broad sense, the strong attachment the child has for his or her mother or mothering figure and the frustration of sharing it with another all-powerful person—the father figure—can also be considered of a sexual nature. With its very elementary psychical capacities, the child is very sensitive to these needs, but especially to how the others—parents, caregivers—repeatedly react to them (with anger, fear or punishment), in such a way that it might durably shape the person's relationship to his needs or the objects of his liking. Note that Freud insists on this sexual aspect of his theory first because it was the only way to account for the symptoms of most of his patients in an extremely Victorian environment, and second, because sexuality was absolutely absent of the pathology and psychology of his time.

Fourth, from a dynamic perspective, Freud's investigations led him to distinguish three main modalities of representations or ideas: representations that are conscious, those that are preconscious—that are at the periphery of our consciousness or that can easily become conscious, for example, when they are put into words—and representations that remain unconscious. Conscious and preconscious ideas take place in the *ego*; the *id* gives rise to unconscious representations. Unconscious representations are associated through processes that Freud called *primary*—an extremely rapid way of chaining ideas and representations, contrasting with *secondary processes*—the laborious way of elaborating ideas and representation in conscious thought and mainly language, accordingly to the demand of reality and culture. Through his study of people's remembrance of dreams, Freud could identify some of the processes by which such unconscious dynamics take place (see also Freud, 1900/2001). These could then be used to analyze how more generally unpleasant or culturally unacceptable ideas can be transposed or transformed in people discourse and actions. Such a conception of the psychic apparatus accounts for many of people's unhappy dealing with life events. Too-strongly internalized parental or social and cultural rules (a severe superego) might prevent a person's many desires or appetites to come to consciousness. These repressed desires, now unconscious, might remain active, however, and find substitutive forms at a conscious level—through dreams, symptoms, or obscure anxieties. Yet the person who

can acknowledge these desires and conflicts expands his consciousness and might use this energy in work or in contributions to the culture.

Freud's psychology is thus located above its organic basis. It is an attempt to account for the psychological dynamics by which people handle the demands of their needs and of interpersonal situations in a given social and cultural environment. Freud's personal psychology also gave him a basis to venture in a more social psychology, accounting for group and cultural phenomena of his time (see, for instance, Freud, 1921/2001, 1927/2001). Altogether, he proposed a conceptual system to represent psychic invisible processes out of which one could only see the outcomes—discourse, symptoms, or actions. He also tried to account for the social and cultural nature of human psyche—as the organization of minds, the conflicting forces that people deal with, internalized rules and obligation, symbols through which one can express oneself or represent one's inner life, come from the culture (see also Salvatore & Zittoun, 2011).

But how did Freud develop such a model, and with what precautions against pure speculation? In what sense is his work, as he claims, science, and not poetry? In other words, what is his epistemological stance, and out of which roots did it grow?

PHILOSOPHY IN MIND: FREUD'S FORMATIVE YEARS

In order to capture Freud's epistemological stance, it might be useful to go back to his formative years. His meeting with the work of two philosophers might have played a significant role in his thinking: Franz Brentano and John Stuart Mill.

A talented and well-read pupil, driven by an intense need to know and some personal ambition, young Freud decided to study medicine at the University of Vienna. This choice was partly made against his own interest for philosophy and taste for speculation—which he forbid himself out of fear of losing himself in imagination (Gay, 1988). Having read Goethe and Darwin, his curiosity seems to have had human mind and culture as an object, rather than the body, and many of his autobiographical comments underlie his wish to understand mind and culture and his ambivalence towards medicine as such (Gay, 1988).

Freud started his medical studies at the University of Vienna in 1873, yet he also kept reading philosophy. A long-time admirer of Ludwig Feuerbach—atheist, against philosophy as speculative enquiry (Gay, 1988)—Freud eventually attended the lectures given by Franz Brentano. In effect, Brentano was teaching as a full professor in Vienna from 1874 to 1880, after which he resigned, before working again as associate professor (*Privatdozent*)

(Merlan, 1945, p. 375, note 4). Freud, who received his MD degree in 1881, thus followed Brentano's classes from 1874 to 1976:

> The results [of an in investigation] show that Freud was enrolled in the following courses given by Brentano: in Freud's third, fourth, and fifth semesters (Winter 1874/75, Summer 1875, and Winter 1875/76 respectively), "Readings of philosophic writings"; in addition, in his fourth semester (Summer 1875), "Logic"; in his sixth semester (Summer 1876), "The philosophy of Aristotle." (Merlan, 1949, p. 451)

In addition, Freud might have developed some more personal relationship with Brentano. Commentators and biographers have emphasized the durable impact Brentano's education might have had on Freud. First, Freud might have had heard for the first time about the idea of the unconscious in *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* (Brentano, 1874/1995), where the idea is discussed twice and retraced to Thomas Aquinas (Merlan, 1945). Second, Freud's life-long strong separation between a psychological explanation and a physiological one might have found its root in Brentano's work (Fancher, 1977; Merlan, 1945). In addition:

> In psychological theory, both men stressed the motivated nature of thought and a conception of a "psychological reality" that is superior to "material reality." Both saw consciousness of one's own mental activity as arising retrospectively and having a calming effect on emotions. Both emphasized a process of "judgment" or "reality testing," made possible only by the presence of a strong unity of consciousness or ego. (Fancher, 1977, p. 207)

Finally, Freud seems to have agreed with Brentano's methodological proposal, according to which "the retrospective analysis of subjective experience is the principal tool of psychology" (Fancher, 1977, p. 207).

After his studies, Freud had to do his military service in 1879–1880. During this time, through the recommendation of Brentano, he was asked by Theodor Gomperz to translate four essays by John Stuart Mill for the German translation of the complete works (Gay, 1988): *Enfranchisement of Woman* (*Uber Frauenemancipation*), *Plato* (*Plato*), *Thornton: Labour and its pain* (*Arbeitfrage*), *Socialismus* (*On socialism*) (Merlan, 1945, p. 375, note 3).[1] Freud seems to have appreciated this work to escape the dullness of his military assignment, and he might have read more of it. In any case, Mill was part of his internal dialogue. Some mentions of it can be found in his letters to his fiancée (Adams, 1992, pp. 451–452) and deeper influences in various aspects of his work (Govrin, 2004; Molnar, 1999).

Engaging in his medical work, Freud clearly decided to leave the shore of purely speculative philosophy and metaphysics. However, in the background of his work (Gay, 1988), and coming to the fore at the end of his

life (Freud, 1938/2001), Freud might have seen his work as a contribution to philosophy—yet a contribution based in the empirical world of facts, human thinking, and activity. However, it is hard to know how much philosophy Freud actually read after his formative year—in 1920, when a colleague pointed his attention to a text by Schopenhauer, Freud declares he has "read very little" (Gay, 1988).

In the frame of his scientific work, Freud was very well informed of current debates—his major books are always based on exhaustive and up-to-date bibliographies, in fields as diverse as neurological disorders (Freud, 1891/1953), dream processes (Freud, 1900/2001), or anthropological facts (*Totem and Taboo*, Freud, 1913/2001). It is thus while preparing some of his contributions on sexuality that he came across some of William James' writings.

THE MEETING THAT ONLY HALF HAPPENED: FREUD AND JAMES

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was a bit younger than William James (1842–1910), yet they were active in parallel for some years of their working life. Both marked the history of psychology in their respective continents, and far beyond. Although their sociocultural origins differ, and although they only had a couple of brief encounters, their core theoretical and epistemological stances have deep similarities. The two men share a deep interest for psychological processes (and not outcomes), a methodology based on introspection, the assumption of a constant flow of consciousness of which some aspects might become unconscious, the idea that thinking is posterior to embodied emotional experience, and so on. Mainly, I will argue, Freud's implicit empiricism is extremely close to James' declared pragmatism. Is such similarity just a historical coincidence, or the result of some shared *Zeitgeist*?

A person's ideas and knowledge are the product of ongoing dialogues and personal creation. A person becomes who she is not only through her family and immediate social and cultural environment, but also, as she dialogues with specific, significant others, whether these are present, remembered, or only imagined (Marková, 2005; Perret-Clermont, 2008; Zittoun, Perret-Clermont, & Barrelet, 2008). In what follows, I argue that James and Freud shared two similar significant "others": the admired ones (Brentano and Mill) and the ones against which they positioned their work (the partisans of a physiological, experimental psychology, loosing the specificity of mind). The fact that the two men were dialoguing with such common friends and enemies might thus explain some commonalities of their intellectual journeys.

On the one hand, everything seemed to oppose Freud and James's journey. Their national, sociocultural, and family backgrounds were highly contrasting. Freud's father was a relatively modest wool merchant in Moravia (at that time in the Austro-Hungarian empire), and he grew up in blended Jewish family. On the other side, James's father was a wealthy intellectual American theologian, acquainted with writers and artists. The two men's educational trajectories also differed: Freud studied medicine, while James was educated as a humanist (partly in Europe and Berlin in particular; Goodman, 2009), then as physician before working as a naturalist. Both eventually became interested in the secrets of the human mind, so what is there in common in their intellectual trajectories?

On the other hand, a striking aspect of comparison between the two thinkers' trajectory is the fact that the "others" with whom they entered into dialogue as they developed their own theories were at least partly the same. If Freud studied with Brentano, James' work closely engages with the same philosopher's ideas. Hence for instance, in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), the classification of psychic phenomena is directly inspired by Brentano's (Kersten, 1969). Also, if Freud developed a close knowledge of John Mill through his work as a translator, James obviously was very familiar with John Mill (as an author if not as a person[2]) to whom he dedicated his studies on *Pragmatism. A new name for some old way of thinking* (1907) with the words "To the memory of John Stuart Mill, from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day." The fact that James found an inspiration in Mill did not prevent him from questioning some of his propositions (Throntveit, 2011)—yet this suggests that, as was the case for Freud, Mill was one of the real and internalized "others" with or against whom some of his ideas were developed.

Then, regarding the development of their psychologies, both James and Freud spent some times in Paris where they visited Jean-Martin Charcot—James in 1882 (Goodman, 2009) and Freud in 1885 (Gay, 1988)—who was working at that time with hysteric patients and developing his hypnotic method. They also both were acquainted with the work of Pierre Janet, learned a lot from him, and then took some distance from him (for instance, Freud, 1894/2001).

These parallel formative years were probably playing a very important role in each of these men's thinking, and more than the actual knowledge that each had from the other. There is no trace of a real correspondence between the two men; they scarcely quote each other, and traces of their meetings cannot be interpreted unequivocally. Chronologically, according to Taylor (1999), James read Freud's publication, from the early 1880s in the *American Journal of Insanity*. The two men then met at the First International Congress of Experimental Psychology, held in Paris in 1889. James

read Breuer and Freud on hysteria in 1894 (Gay, 1988). On his side Freud "was also familiar with what James had written on the perversion of the instincts in *Principles of Psychology*" (Taylor, 1999, p. 466) and on sexual pathology in the 1890s, either firsthand or through the accounts of other authors (for a detailed account, see Sulloway, 1998). It is quite likely that Freud read more than these chapters of James's work—although supporting information is missing.

What is also known is that the two men met during Freud's visit at Clark University in 1909, a trip organized by Brill, an American psychoanalyst who spent some time in Europe with Freud, during which Freud received a doctorate *honoris causa* – a first international public acknowledgement of his work (see Figure 1.1). This is were the relation between the two men becomes difficult to interpret: biographers report that Freud was impressed by James as a man (Dadoun, 1992), who brought him back to the train station, partly because of his stoicism in front of his approaching death (Gay, 1988). At this moment James is reported to have said, "The future of psychology belongs to your work" (Jones, 1955, quoted in Taylor, 1999, p. 469). This might be heard as supporting the empirical, yet not experimental, (see next paragraph) psychological investigation of what is beyond consciousness. Contrasting with this apparent positive attitude, James also expressed more negative judgments toward Freud's analysis of dreams and symbolism in letters sent in 1909 (Evans & Koelsh, 1985, p. 947; Gay, 1988). Finally, there are some indications that James went to Vienna to consult

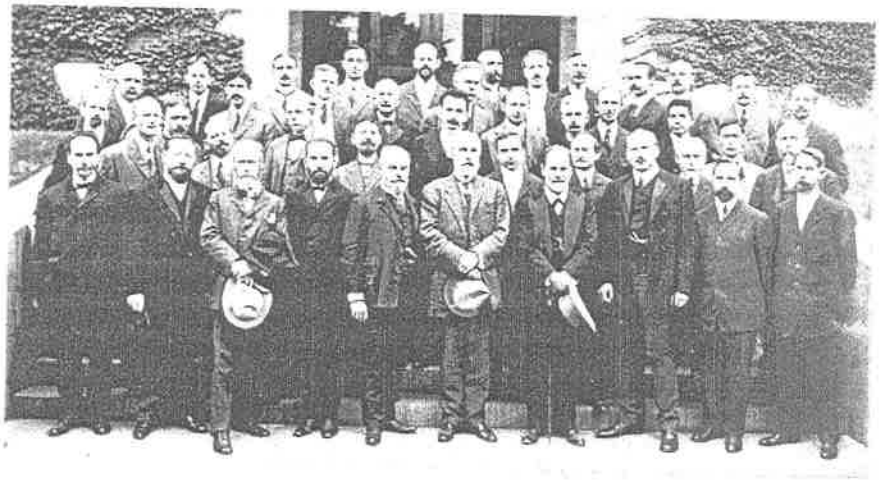

Figure 1.1 A conference at Clark University in 1909. Included, in the first row, William James, third from left; Sigmund Freud, fourth from right; and Carl G. Jung, third from right. *Source:* http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/books/review/Prochnik-t.html, Courtesy of Clark University.

Freud in March 1910, shortly before his death (Taylor, 1999, p. 466)—a fact that rather supports the idea of a reciprocal admiration.

To sum up, then, there has been no similar background in the life of the two men, and if they knew each other, it seemed to have been in a relatively limited way. However, their intellectual journeys share much more in common. In the first place, Freud and James's thinking were developing with the same philosophical roots, encouraging them to develop an authentic psychology of human intentionality. Through their medical and naturalist studies and especially through their visit to Charcot, they were taught to exercise a close observation of empirical case studies. Later in their life, they both developed their theories on the basis of a clinical practice, first as hypnotists and then as psychotherapists (Taylor, 1999). Finally, and more important for our matter here, they both in parallel took a strong stance against a reductionist, positivistic, physiological, experimental psychology as was emerging during their lifetime (Taylor, 1999). Rather,

> Both James and Freud, however, saw psychology as a form of phenomenology—thinking that no objective science could exist without factoring into the equation the scientist's state of consciousness that defines science in the first place. For James, the basic datum of psychology was pure experience in the immediate moment, before the differentiation of subject and object. For Freud, it was the content of consciousness that was determined in large part by the dynamic processes of the unconscious. We may think of psychology in this sense as *Erkenntnistheorie*—that is, as epistemology, or as the way by which all knowledge comes to us as immediate experience. The reality of an object is always dependent on someone's consciousness somewhere. (Taylor, 1999, p. 468)

Beyond their many differences and their contrasting psychologies, James and Freud thus carried their work through dialogues with the same positive others, and against comparable enemies. They developed a very similar basic philosophical framework, a comparable thirst for an understanding of complex psychological phenomena seen as located in their world of culture, and both were ready to develop a patient empiricism of which they were also part.

This leads to another question: If they refused the positivistic and experimental paradigms developing in their times, how could the two men hope to achieve some type of scientific knowledge? James devoted an important part of his work to defining a new epistemology—pragmatism—likely to bring about such knowledge, and without being so articulate about his epistemological stance, Freud actually applied such pragmatism.

WILLIAM JAMES' PRAGMATISM

Following his psychological work, and contemporary to the developments of psychoanalysis, James was also very much engaged in philosophical debates of his time. In 1907, that is, almost 20 years after the *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and little after his work on religion (1902), James published his book *Pragmatism* that presents and summarizes his positions on pragmatism, an idea introduced by Peirce in 1878 and developed by him, James and others (John Dewey, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller) during the following years (Madelrieux, 2007). In this book, James presents and clarifies the different views on the term "pragmatism"—as a method, as an epistemological principle, as a modality of conferring some space to metaphysics.

These three modalities are presented in the paper called "What Pragmatism Means" (James, 1904). James first presents the "pragmatic method" as a way to settle metaphysic disputes, which is actually a criterion to evaluate the relevance of notions: "What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle" (James, 1904, p. 2). In his discussion, James moves from examples in which the pragmatic method consists in observing the real, actual consequence of ideas in the world, to examples in which notions are useful if they add something to or modify our relationship to reality. The first variation of "practical differences" concerns actual action or utility upon the world. James here reports, as a counter example, that there is no difference in the fact that yeast enables the dough to grow, whether it is due to a brownie or an elf—in any case, the dough grows with yeast. Also, the pragmatist "turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power" (James, 1904, p. 3): The pragmatist method invites one to work with notions that extend one's activities and power, in the real world, thus distancing him from idealist metaphysician who developed arguments that only mattered in the pure world of thoughts. The second variation concerns our ideas—here the pragmatist method invites us to retain ideas that expand our understanding of the world and to keep the movement of thinking and searching alive. In that sense, continues James, "*Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest.* We don't lie back upon them, we move forward, and, on occasion, make nature over again by their aid" (James, 1904, p. 4, original emphasis).

From this point naturally follows a second acceptation of pragmatism as epistemology, as a "genetic theory of what is meant by truth" (James, 1904, p. 8). Here, James explains how knowledge grows: If new facts are presented to the observer, the notions have to be adjusted so as to account both to the older state of knowledge and for these new observations.

> The process here is always the same. The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. *The result is an inward trouble* to which his mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape *by modifying his previous mass of opinions.* (James, 1904, p. 6, emphasis added)

A *truer* notion or theory is, in that sense, a theory that results from the dynamic movement of resolving an "inward trouble," and as a consequence, adjusting to a new diversity of facts. It participates in the developmental process of knowledge building—personal or shared.

> That new idea is truest which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classed as true, by the way it works; grafting itself then upon the ancient body of truth, which thus grows much as a tree grows by the activity of a new layer of cambium. (James, 1904, p. 7)

In contrast, a false theory is in that sense one that would neglect new facts in order to preserve an old theory.

The truth of a scientific enquiry is thus to be found in a dynamic of abduction (Valsiner, 2000): a systematic dialogic process between initial ideas and notions that might bring the person to observe facts or reflect on existing knowledge, which might lead to new observations and realization, which will eventually demand a revision of these initial ideas. In addition, these ideas might themselves demand new organizations into new hierarchies—pragmatism wishes to develop general ideas on the basis of a multiplicity of cases. "The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases, and generalizes" (James, 1904, p. 8)—until new facts create some trouble again. Knowledge development is in that sense a never-ending story.

Finally, the third acceptation of James' pragmatism is that of conciliating his radical empiricism with the possibility of metaphysical beliefs. Here, referring to his work on the psychology of religion, James pushes pragmatism to some limit:

> *If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be acknowledged.* (James, 1904, p. 10, original emphasis)

James here is exposed to the problem that these ideas—such as believing in God or afterlife—are true if they make a person's life easier; yet in that sense they are *good*. So is any idea which is "good" true? This is where James

brings back the principle of inner consistency of beliefs—an idea is true as long as it is also compatible with other ideas held as true, or as formulated in a less radical way, "what is better for us to believe is good is true *unless the belief incidentally clashes with some other vital benefit*" (James, 1904, p. 12, original emphasis). With this nuance James can allow people to believe whatever they want as long as their beliefs neither harm themselves nor others.

PRAGMATIST GESTURES IN FREUD'S WORK

Freud had chosen to leave the shores of philosophy to avoid the swamps of speculation. However, his initial training, as well as his hunger for the recognition of psychoanalysis as a science, brought him to adopt a certain number of epistemological choices. Although Freud does not present them explicitly and systematically, his extremely reflective way of writing frequently contains commentaries about the movement of his thinking and truth-building. In what follows, I suggest that Freud can be said to work as a pragmatist, in the triple acceptation of the term (for a review of all occurrences of empiricist/pragmatist statements, see Delrieu, 2008, pp. 333–347). In order to do so, I will quickly present one of Freud's early and seminal papers.

In his early paper, "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence (An Attempt at a Psychological Theory of Acquired Hysteria, of Many Phobias and Obsessions and of Certain Hallucinatory Psychosis" (1894/2001), Freud starts by recalling the currently admitted explanation for hysteria, proposed by Pierre Janet, and recalls a first objection made by himself and Breuer. But then Freud brings about a series of other clinical cases that cannot be explained with such hypothesis and that call for a wider, more powerful explanation. Here, rather than ignoring these cases or considering as untreatable (as was the dominant tendency, which for example led scientists to deny the existence of male hysteria, which simply did not fit in the definition of the time; Mitchell, 2000), Freud decides to question and expand his theories. This is how he moves from the idea of hysteria explained by physiological factors to an explanation of neurotic phenomena due to psychological dynamics, as the subtitle of his communication suggests. Freud finishes his paper with the hypothesis itself:

> The hypothesis, which, incidentally already underlies our theory of "abreaction" in our "Preliminary communication" ([Breuer & Freud,]1893), can be applied in the same sense as physicists apply the hypothesis of electric fluid. It is provisionally justified by its utility in coordinating and explaining a great variety of psychical states. (Freud, 1894/2001, p. 61)

The new explanation of these various pathological states is that some idea in the mind, or some affects attached to ideas, are not acceptable for

the person; and in some cases, the affect becomes detached from the idea and turned into a somatic expression (what Freud will call "conversion"), while in other cases, the affects will be attached to other ideas, eventually charging them with such intensity that they will become obsessions. The idea itself to which the affects was attached then becomes "repressed."

How Can We Read This as Illustrating a Pragmatist Stance?

First, we can apply the pragmatic method to the new notion of "repression." What can it enable one to understand or to do, that could not have been done without? First, the idea of repression opens the door for a systematic exploration of processes that before were unexplainable. Slips of the tongue, dreams, and symptoms can be accounted for without having to postulate witches or demons. It then invites further explorations of the dynamics of the mind. And in effect, repression became one of the cornerstones of the whole psychoanalytical theory. *Second*, on the empirical side, the notion of repression offers a way for action. For, if some ideas are repressed after affects have been detached, these initial ideas can be unlocked—at that time, through hypnosis, but later on through what will become the analytical treatment. Psychoanalysis as a therapy uses the technique of "free association": The patient is asked to say everything that comes to mind. Listening with "floating attention" to the flow of discourse, with its recurrent themes, avoided points, changes in tone, contradictions, and so on, the analyst can then make hypotheses about possible underpinnings and active "repressed" ideas. Identifying these repressed ideas and bringing the patient to understand them consciously has a major impact on the disappearance of the patient's symptoms.

More systematically, from a pragmatic stance, psychoanalysis is relevant because it deeply changed not only Freud and his disciples, but also, shortly thereafter, the general public's representations of what is mind and how much of our life is unconscious. Freud's awareness of the ways analysis was changing people's relationship to reality appears perhaps too proudly, in the statement he reportedly made to Carl G. Jung as they were approaching America in 1909: "They don't realize that we are bringing them the plague."[3] And in effect, psychoanalysis deeply changed the way in which people understand themselves and others, in many parts of the world. Psychoanalytical ideas penetrated all spheres of society—doctors', psychologists', educationalists', and social workers' practices were shaped by psychoanalytical ideas—but also cinema and arts, and lay people. Hence Moscovici (2008) showed how terms from Freud's work became part of daily discussions in France in the 1960s—as when people speak of someone's "inferiority complex" or "denial"

or "repressed anger." Artists and film directors have often deliberately used psychoanalytical ideas to touch their audience, or have represented people dealing with violent drives and their repressions, or psychoanalysts and their patients (e.g., Kaplan, 1990; Lebeau, 2001)—without speaking of commercials, literature, and so on, targeted to touch upon audiences' basic drives. Occidental societies have been shown to be deeply shaken in their basic beliefs that people might be self-determined and have free will; Freud's work, together with Marx and Nietzsche, has indeed brought a deep suspicion—people appear greatly determined by forces far beyond control, be they unconscious or social, in a godless world. Such analysis, identified as "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Ricoeur, 1965), has deeply transformed social sciences and humanities (bringing postmodernism, etc.).

Third, Freud saw the pragmatic effect of psychoanalysis in its power to heal patients, or more modestly, to bring them to more self-knowledge and inner freedom (for instance, Freud, 1938/2001). One might still question the outdated nature of the "hydraulic" nature of Freud's economic model, but if the model is actionable enough to guide the therapist's interventions and durably change people's lives, is it such a problem? Yet Freud himself suggested that his models were open to revision and some more efficient and economic way to better patients' lives was still to come—perhaps even medication (Freud, 1938/2001).

This leads me to pragmatism as a "genetic theory of truth" based on a dynamic movement of abduction. Although Freud does not use the term, the movement by which his theories develop corresponds to the characteristics highlighted by James: he develops new notions or generalization every time new facts contradict the existing state of knowledge. The example above perfectly illustrates that principle—in Freud's words, the new explanation "is provisionally justified by its utility in coordinating and explaining a great variety of psychical states" (1894/2001, p. 61). More generally, on the one hand, Freud works by assembling, over years, large numbers of examples and occurrences of a phenomenon—his own, friends', and family's dreams for his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2001), thousands of jokes for his *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905/2001)—and clinical cases in his other books. Thus, his main theoretical contributions are based on case studies then considered as exemplum—*Studies on Hysteria* (with Breuer, 1895/2001), *Two Case Studies:* 'Little Hans' *and* 'the Rat Man' (1905/2001), etc. On the other hand, each of Freud's major theoretical revisions is, on the contrary, triggered by confrontation to cases or an accumulation of facts that could not be accounted for with the previous state of his theory. This is what let him expand his first model of the mind by a second one (Freud, 1923/2001), or to make the hypothesis of a death instinct (Freud, 1920/2001)—still controversial ideas among analysts—to account for some of his patients' tendencies to systematically repeat past mistakes, refuse any

health progress, or more generally, systematically put themselves in harmful and dangerous situations, and perhaps also to account for Europe's two major self-destructive attempts in less than forty years.

The third acceptation of James' pragmatism might appear less relevant here. However, although Freud was a self-declared atheist who even analyzed religion as a collective illusion (*The Future of an Illusion*, 1927/2001), his position seems precisely to consist in identifying what good such metaphysic ideas have for people—similarly as he would tolerate his patients maintaining their beliefs or idiosyncrasies as long as they do not suffer from them, and that these enable them to attain a certain health, that is, not preventing them from being able to love and to work.

...AND LATER ON

During Freud's life and after his death, psychoanalysis evolved into an institution. Doing so, it activated concurrences, fights for power, dissensions, and many unhappy scissions and creations of parallel or concurrent schools. If institutions were necessary to maintain the experience accumulated by analysts and develop a training curriculum to protect patients from self-declared therapists, they also had the negative effect of rigidifying psychoanalysis as theory, research method, and practice. However, it is also comforting to see that, thanks to these institutions, a few generations after Freud, the theory continued to develop very pragmatically in Europe and Britain. Theoretical innovations were made to account for pathologies that escaped Freud or that are due to the evolution of society (such as psychosis border-lines, or new forms of addictions; see for instance Anzieu, 1995; Bion, 1977; Green, 1999, 2005; Tisseron, 2005). Clinical techniques were also diversified for curing these new complaints—adjusting the psychoanalytical setting, including play, psychodrama, tales reading, "packing," and so on (Anzieu, 1995; Winnicott, 2001), or to deal with cultural diversities and migration, sometimes resulting in therapeutic bricolage—expanded setting with translators, delegates from various ethnic groups, quasi-magical injunctions and rituals—mainly acceptable because "they work" (Nathan, 1991, 2001). Analysts also remained in principle nonjudgmental regarding their patients' religious beliefs as long as they were nondetrimental "for other vital benefits" (such as for instance Masud Khan's therapy of a young person then going to an ashram, Khan, 1983). Finally, psychoanalysis was expanded and integrated in other fields of social practice: it changed the understanding of the dynamics of teaching-learning and is at times still used to overcome learning difficulties (Alvarez, 1992; Boimare, 2004; Hatchuel, 2007; Pontecorvo & Pontecorvo, 1986; Rochex, 1998); it is used to analyze group and institutional functioning (Anzieu, 1999; Bion, 1968; Kaës, 2012); it was actualized to account for political violence (Puget, 1989) and developed to reflect on the role

of cinema, videogames, and new media in people's thinking and maturation (Tisseron, 2005), and so on. It is also still developing to maintain a dialogue with advances in neurosciences (Ansermet & Magistretti, 2004; Solms, 1997), cultural psychology (Salvatore & Zittoun, 2011), or early developmental psychology (Fonagy, Target, Gergely, & Jurist, 2002).

Freud's psychoanalysis remains controversial—yet seen as a pragmatist endeavor, it sets very clear methodological and epistemological standards for the assessment of its validity—namely, an ideographic science with a focus on psychological processes, with the requirement of a strong consistency between generalized theory and observations through abduction, and with actual clinical care for the efficiency of the hypotheses as therapeutic means. During Freud's lifetime, psychoanalysis as a theory, a practice, and a method was constantly updated and a few times deeply revised. Freud wished to see his work pursued, revised, and expanded after his death—with basic assumptions about unconscious dynamics being respected. Psychoanalysis actually had in some institutional and national contexts the vitality to develop and adjust to new historical and social challenges, advances in sciences, and new needs. In other situations, psychoanalysis has been regularly and strongly opposed by science and laypeople, and psychology professionals have been deeply divided internally. Unfortunately, most of the controversies have been ideological—refusing this or that aspect because it hurts people's common sense or positivist credo, and thus too-often cutting short the otherwise endless innovation and courage that pragmatism entails.

NOTES

1. John Stuart Mill's Gesammelte Werke. Autorisierte Uebersetzung unter der Redaction von Professor Dr. Theodor Gomperz. Zwelfter Band. Vermischte Schriften III. Plato. Arbeiterfrage. Socialismus. Uebersetzt von Siegmund Freud (Leipzig).
2. Unverified source: apparently his family is friend with family Mill. http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/phil/philo/phils/wjames.html
3. Lacan apparently reported that Jung told him this anecdote in 1954 (Stadlen, 2009).

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CHAPTER 2

SELF AS A SIGN

Locating Peirce's Semiotics in Sullivan's Self-System

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INTRODUCTION

The theory of interpersonal psychoanalysis as developed by Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) (1950, 1953a, 1953b, 1953c, 1938/1995) has profoundly shaped the contours of contemporary psychoanalysis. Specifically, his focus on understanding how real interpersonal events generate "difficulties in living" is a cornerstone of both interpersonal and relational theories (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Harris, 2011; Mitchell, 1986, 1988; Ortmeyer, 1995). Influenced by the intellectual climate of his time, Sullivan added insights from pragmatism, anthropology, and linguistic theory to his own training in psychiatry to explain how interpersonal relationships shape the development of individual personality and pathology (Green, 1962; Lincourt & Olczak, 1974, 1979; Mitchell & Harris, 2004; Ortmeyer, 1995; Percy, 1972; Perry, 1987). His ideas laid the foundation for and anticipated many recent developments in psychoanalysis, such as the consideration of language as a form

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