

## Condensation

especially when it is negative, has an essentially defensive role to play: . . . negation is the successor to expulsion' (4c).

\* \* \*

According to Daniel Lagache, we may use the idea of the condemning judgement in order to solve the intrinsic difficulty of the Freudian conception of defence, and to clarify the distinction between defensive compulsions and working-off mechanisms\* in which the judgement of condemnation can play a part. In the case of Little Hans, the hope of growing bigger, which he expresses from the start with the idea that his penis, which is 'fixed in', will get bigger, should be seen as a concrete example of one of the mechanisms whereby the ego works off the Oedipal conflict and the fear of castration. More generally, Lagache sees this kind of process as part of the outcome of the psycho-analytic cure, bringing about the postponement of satisfaction, the modification of aims and objects, the consideration of the possibilities which reality offers the subject, the taking into account of the different priorities which have been put into play, and the assessment of the compatibility of these with the subject's overall requirements.

(1) FREUD, S. 'Repression' (1915d): a) Cf. G.W., X, 248; S.E., XIV, 146. b) Cf. G.W., X, 248; S.E., XIV, 146. c) G.W., X, 248; S.E., XIV, 146.

(2) FREUD, S. 'Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis' (1909j): G.W., VIII, 58; S.E., XI, 53.

(3) FREUD, S., G.W., VII, 375; S.E., X, 145.

(4) FREUD, S. 'Negation' (1925b): a) G.W., XIV, 12; S.E., XIX, 236. b) G.W., XIV, 15; S.E., XIX, 239. c) G.W., XIV, 15; S.E., XIX, 239.

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- D.: Verdrängung. - E.: condensación. - F.: condensation. - I.: condensazione.

P.: condensação.

One of the essential modes of the functioning of the unconscious processes: a sole idea represents several associative chains at whose point of intersection it is located. From the economic point of view, what happens is that this idea is cathected by the sum of those energies which are concentrated upon it by virtue of the fact that they are attached to these different chains.

Condensation can be seen at work in the symptom and, generally speaking, in the various formations of the unconscious. But it is in dreams that its action has been most clearly brought out.

It is shown up here by the fact that the manifest account is laconic in comparison with the latent content of the dream: it constitutes an abridged translation of the dream. Condensation should not, however, be looked upon as a summary: although each manifest element is determined by several latent meanings, each one of these, inversely, may be identified in several elements; what is more, manifest elements do not stand in the same relationship to each of the meanings from which they derive, and so they do not subsume them after the fashion of a concept.

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Condensation was first described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a) as one of the fundamental mechanisms by means of which the 'dream-work' \* is carried out. It may operate in various different ways: sometimes one element (theme, person, etc.) is alone preserved because it occurs several times in different dream-thoughts ('nodal point'); alternatively, various elements may be combined into a disparate unity (as in the case of a composite figure); or again, the condensation of several images may result in the blurring of those traits which do not coincide so as to maintain and reinforce only those which are common (1).

Though analysed on the basis of dreams, the condensation mechanism is not exclusive to them. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901b) and *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905c), Freud demonstrates that condensation is one of the essential factors in the technique of joking, in *faux pas*, in the forgetting of words, etc.; in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he notes that the process is particularly striking when it affects words (neologisms).

How is condensation to be explained? It can be seen as a consequence of the censorship and as a means of avoiding it. As Freud pointed out himself, if one inclines towards the view that it is not an effect of the censorship\*, the fact remains that 'in any case the censorship profits from it' (2); and indeed condensation makes interpretation of the manifest account more complicated.

At all events, if dreams operate by condensation, it is not *only* in order to outwit the censorship, for condensation is a propensity of unconscious thought. The primary process enshrines those preconditions (free, unbound energy\*; the tendency towards perceptual identity\*) which permit and facilitate condensation. Unconscious wishes are thus subjected to it from the start, while preconscious thoughts—which are 'drawn into the unconscious'—are liable to condensation subsequent to the action of the censorship. Is it possible to determine at what stage condensation occurs? It 'must probably be pictured as a process stretching over the whole course of events till the perceptual region is reached. But in general we must be content to assume that all the forces which take part in the formation of dreams operate simultaneously' (3).

Like displacement, condensation is a process which Freud accounts for by means of the economic hypothesis: the energies which have been displaced along different associative chains accumulate upon the idea which stands at their point of intersection. If certain images—especially in dreams—acquire a truly exceptional intensity, this is by virtue of the fact that, being products of condensation, they are highly cathected.

(1) Cf. FREUD, S., G.W., V, 299; 300; S.E., IV, 293-95.

(2) FREUD, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916-17), G.W., XI, 176; S.E., XV, 191.

(3) FREUD, S. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905c), G.W., V, 187-88; S.E., VIII, 164.