

Free Association (Method or Rule of)

Free Energy/Bound Energy

In 'On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement' (1914d), Freud acknowledges the usefulness of these experiments which had made it 'possible to arrive at rapid experimental confirmation of psycho-analytic observations and to demonstrate directly to students certain connections which an analyst would only have been able to tell them about' (3).

d. Perhaps a further source should also be borne in mind - one to which Freud himself drew attention in 'A Note on the Prehistory of the Technique of Analysis' (1920b): the writer Ludwig Börne, whom Freud read in his youth, recommended writing down everything which came to mind as a way of 'becoming an original writer in three days' and criticised the effects of self-censorship upon intellectual production (4).

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The 'free' in 'free association' calls for the following remarks:

a. Even where a starting-point is provided by a word serving as a stimulus (Zurich experiments) or by a dream element (Freud's method in *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900a]), it is still possible to look upon the unfolding of associations as 'free' so long as it is not steered and controlled by any considerations of selection.

b. This 'freedom' is greater, nevertheless, when no point of departure is stipulated. In that event, the rule of free association is identical with the fundamental rule*.

c. Freedom is not to be understood here, in fact, as implying any absence of determination: the first goal of the rule of free association is the elimination of the voluntary selection of thoughts - or, in the terminology of Freud's first topography, the incapsulation of the *second censorship* (between the conscious and the preconscious). In this way the unconscious defences are revealed - that is, the operation of the *first censorship* (between the preconscious and the unconscious).

Lastly, the free-association method is meant to bring out a determinate order of the unconscious: '... when conscious purposive ideas* (*Zielvorstellungen*) are abandoned, concealed purposive ideas assume control of the current of ideas' (5).

(*) Cf. particularly what Freud tells us of his patient Frau Emmy von N.: in answer to Freud's insistent inquiry about the origin of a symptom, she replied that he 'was not to keep on asking her where this and that came from, but to let her tell him what she had to say' (6a). Of this same patient Freud remarks that 'it is as though she had adopted my procedure'. 'Nor is her conversation [...] so aimless as would appear. On the contrary, it contains a fairly complete reproduction of the memories and new impressions which have affected her since our last talk, and it often leads on, in a quite unexpected way, to pathogenic reminiscences of which she unburdens herself without being asked to' (6b).

(1) Cf. JUNG, C. G. *Diagnostische Assoziationsstudien* (1906).

(2) JUNG, C. G. and RICKLIN, F. *Diagnostische Assoziationsstudien, I Beitrag: Experimentelle Untersuchungen über Assoziationen Gesunder* (1904), 57a.

(3) FREUD, S., G.W., X, 67; S.E., XIV, 28.

(4) FREUD, S., G.W., XII, 311; S.E., XVIII, 265.

(5) FREUD, S., G.W., II III, 536; S.E., V, 531.

(6) FREUD, S. *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d): a) G.W., I, 116; S.E., II, 63. b) G.W., I, 108; S.E., II, 56.

Free Energy/Bound Energy

= D.: freie Energie/gebundene Energie. A.: energia libre/energia ligada.

Fr.: énergie libre/énergie liée. L.: energia libera/energia legata.

P.: energia livre/energia ligada.

Terms connoting the Freudian distinction between the primary and secondary processes when viewed from the economic standpoint. In the primary process, the energy is said to be free or mobile inasmuch as it flows towards discharge in the speediest and most direct fashion possible; in the secondary process, on the other hand, it is bound in that its movement towards discharge is checked and controlled. Genetically speaking, the free state of energy is seen by Freud as prior to the bound one, and the latter is said to be characteristic of a more advanced stage in the structuring of the psychical apparatus.

Freud explicitly attributes the distinction between free and bound energy to Breuer (1, 2). In fact, however, it should be noted that the terms used are not Breuer's, and furthermore that the distinction which Breuer introduced does not have the same meaning as Freud's.

Breuer's antithesis is grounded on the distinction established by physics between two kinds of mechanical energy, whose sum, in an isolated system, remains constant. Helmholtz, for example, whose influence on Breuer's and Freud's thinking is well known, sets up an opposition between 'living forces' (*lebendige Kräfte*) - a term borrowed from Leibniz) and 'tensile forces' (*Spannkräfte*), that is, 'forces which tend to set a point M in motion for as long as they have as yet failed to cause any movement' (3). This opposition parallels the one introduced by other authors during the nineteenth century between actual and potential energy (Rankine), or between kinetic and static energy (Thomson): Breuer refers explicitly to this distinction, and to the terms used by these physicists.

Breuer is mainly concerned to define a kind of potential energy, present in the nervous system, which he calls 'intracerebral tonic excitation', 'nervous tension' or 'quiescent' energy. Just as a reservoir contains a certain quantity of potential energy by virtue of the fact that it holds back the water, so 'the whole immense network [of nerve-fibres] forms a single reservoir of "nervous tension"' (4a). This tonic excitation is derived from a variety of sources: the nerve-cells themselves, external excitation, excitations originating within the body (physiological needs), and 'psychical affects'. It is put to use or discharged through the various sorts of activity (motor, intellectual, etc.).

Breuer holds that there exists an optimum level of this quiescent energy which permits a good reception of external excitations, the association of ideas and a free circulation of the energy within the whole network of pathways in the nervous system. This is the level that the organism endeavours to keep constant or to re-establish (see 'Principle of Constancy'). There are in fact two sets of circumstances in which it fails to achieve this end: either the nervous energy is exhausted, in which case the organism enters the state of sleep, which permits a recharge of energy, or else the level is too high. Such a rise above the