

Resistance

in the first theory of the psychical apparatus as exclusion from consciousness, Freud does not identify consciousness and the repressing agency*; it is, rather, the *censorship** which provides a model here. In the second topography repression is held to be a defensive operation of the ego (partially unconscious).

Secondly, from the *economic** point of view, repression implies a complex interplay of decathexes*, recathexes and anticathexes affecting the instinctual representatives.

Lastly, from the *dynamic** standpoint, the main question is that of the *motives* for repression: how does it come about that an instinct—whose satisfaction must by definition engender pleasure—occasions instead such unpleasant that the repressive operation is triggered off? (On this point, see 'Defence'.)

- (1) FREUD, S. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926d), G.W., XIV, 195; S.E., XX, 163.
- (2) Cf., for example, FREUD, S. 'The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence' (1894a), G.W., I, 68-69; S.F., III, 54-55.
- (3) FREUD, S.: a) *Inf.*, 157; S.E., I, 221. b) *Inf.*, 431-32; S.L., I, 409-10.
- (4) FREUD, S. 'My Views on the Part Played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neuroses' (1906b [1905]), G.W., V, 156; S.E., VII, 276.
- (5) Cf. FREUD, S. 'Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis' (1909d), G.W., VII, 441-42; S.E., X, 224-25.
- (6) FREUD, S. 'Repression' (1915d): a) G.W., X, 250; S.F., XIV, 147. b) G.W., X, 259-61; S.E., XIV, 156-58.
- (7) Cf. S.E., XIV, 144.
- (8) FREUD, S. 'Analysis Terminable and Intermittible' (1937c), G.W., XVI, 81; S.E., XXIII, 236.
- (9) FREUD, S. 'On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement' (1914d), G.W., X, 54; S.E., XIV, 16.
- (10) Cf. HERBART, J. F. *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* (1824), 341; and *Lehrbuch zur Psychologie* (1806), in *Sämtliche Werke*, V, 19.
- (11) Cf. JONES, E. *Sigmund Freud*, I, 309, and ANDERSSON, O. *Studies in the Prehistory of Psycho-analysis* (Norstedts: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1962), 116-17. Another edn.: New York: Humanities Press, 1962.
- (12) BREUER, J. and FREUD, S. 'On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication' (1893a), in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d), G.W., I, 89; S.E., II, 10.
- (13) Cf. FREUD, S. *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d), G.W., I, 182; S.E., II, 123.
- (14) Cf. FREUD, S. 'The Unconscious' (1915e): a) G.W., X, 275-76; S.E., XIV, 177. b) G.W., X, 276-77; S.E., XIV, 177-78.

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D.: Widerstand—*Es*: resistencia—*Fr.*: résistance—*It.*: resistenza—*P.*: resistencia.

In psycho-analytic treatment the name 'resistance' is given to everything in the words and actions of the analysand that obstructs his gaining access to his unconscious. By extension, Freud spoke of *resistance to psycho-analysis* when referring to a hostile attitude towards his discoveries in so far as they exposed unconscious desires and inflicted a 'psychological blow' upon man (2).

The concept of resistance was introduced by Freud very early on: it may be said to have played a decisive part in the foundation of psycho-analysis. In fact

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hypnosis and suggestion were rejected essentially because the passive resistance that certain patients set up against them seemed to Freud at once legitimate (ff) and impossible to overcome or to interpret (?) by such methods. Psycho-analysis, by contrast, made it possible to achieve these aims in that it permitted the gradual bringing to light of the resistances, which are expressed particularly by the different ways in which the patient breaks the fundamental rule*. A first inventory of the various forms of resistance—some manifest, some concealed—is to be found in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d) (1a).

Resistance was first discovered as an obstacle to the elucidation of the symptoms and to the progress of the treatment: it is the resistance that 'finally brings work to a halt' (2a, b). To start with, Freud tried to overcome this obstacle by insistence (application of a countervailing force to the resistance) and persuasion, but then he realised that resistance was itself a means of reaching and persuing, and unveiling the secret of neurosis: in fact the forces to be seen at work in resistance and in repression were one and the same. In this sense—as Freud stresses in his technical writings—all progress made in analytic technique may be summed up as the increasingly accurate evaluation of the resistance—that is, of the clinical fact that conveying the meaning of his symptoms to the patient does not suffice to eliminate the repression. As we know, Freud held steadfastly to the view that the interpretation of resistance, along with that of the transference, constituted the specific characteristics of his technique. What is more, he considers that the transference is to be looked upon as in part a resistance itself, in that it substitutes acted-out repetition for verbalised recollection: it must be borne in mind, however, that although resistance may make use of the transference it does not constitute it.

Freud's views regarding the explanation of the resistance phenomenon are harder to ascertain. In the *Studies on Hysteria* he forms the following hypothesis: memories may be considered as grouped, according to their degree of resistance, in concentric layers around a central pathogenic nucleus; in the course of treatment, therefore, each time the frontier is crossed between one circle and the next nearest the nucleus, the resistance increases correspondingly (1b). From this period on, Freud treats resistance as a manifestation, specific to the treatment and to the recollection this requires, of that same force which the ego directs against unpleasurable ideas. He seems, however, to see the ultimate source of resistance in a repelling force derived from the repressed itself—an expression of the difficulty the repressed has in becoming conscious, and particularly in gaining the subject's full acceptance. We are here faced therefore with two kinds of explanation: according to one, the resistance is governed by its distance from the repressed; according to the other, it is equivalent to a defensive function. This ambiguity subsists in Freud's writings on technique. With the advent of the second topography, however, the emphasis shifts to the defensive aspect of the resistance; such defence, as several texts make clear, is carried out by the ego. 'The unconscious—that is to say, the "repressed"—offers no resistance whatever to the efforts of the treatment. Indeed, it itself has no other endeavour than to break through the pressure weighing down on it and force its way either to consciousness or to a discharge through some real action. Resistance during treatment arises from the same higher strata and systems of the mind which originally carried out repression' (3).