

Working-Through

- (2) Cf. LAGACHE, D. 'Fascination de la Conscience par le Moi', *La Psychanalyse*, 1937, III, 33-46.
(3) LAGACHE, D. 'La Psychanalyse et la structure de la personnalité', *La Psychanalyse*, 1958, VI: a) 34, b) Cf. 34.

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D.: Durcharbeitung or Durcharbeiten. - Es.: trabajo elaborativo. -
Fr.: perlaboration. /: elaborazione. - P.: perlaboração.

Process by means of which analysis implants an interpretation and overcomes the resistances to which it has given rise. Working-through is taken to be a sort of psychological work which allows the subject to accept certain repressed elements and to free himself from the grip of mechanisms of repetition. It is a constant factor in treatment, but it operates more especially during certain phases where progress seems to have come to a halt and where a resistance persists despite its having been interpreted.

From the technical point of view, by the same token, working-through is expedited by interpretations from the analyst which consist chiefly in showing how the meanings in question may be recognised in different contexts.

The idea that the analysand carries out certain work during the treatment is met with as early as the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d): Freud even uses the words 'durcharbeiten' and 'Durcharbeitung' in this work, though not in any strictly defined sense (1).

They were assigned such a strict sense only in the article on 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through' (1914g), the title of which seems to suggest that working-through constitutes as fundamental an aspect of the treatment as do the recollection of repressed memories and the repetition that occurs in the transference*. In point of fact the article in question leaves us in considerable doubt as to what Freud means exactly by working-through. Some points, however, are made clear:

- a. Working-through applies to resistances.
- b. It generally follows the interpretation* of a resistance that has apparently had no effect: in this sense a period of relative stagnation may in fact conceal that eminently positive work which Freud looks upon as the principal factor in therapeutic efficacy.
- c. Working-through permits the subject to pass from rejection or merely intellectual acceptance to a conviction based on lived experience (*Erleben*) of the repressed instincts which 'are feeding the resistance' (2a). In this sense, it is by 'becoming more conversant with this resistance' (2b) that the patient is enabled to carry out the working-through.

Freud makes scarcely any attempt to correlate the concept of working-through with those of remembering and repeating. All the same, it would seem that in his opinion working-through is a third term in which the other two are combined. And it is true that working-through is undoubtedly a repetition,

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albeit one modified by interpretation and - for this reason - liable to facilitate the subject's freeing himself from repetition mechanisms. It is no doubt because Freud has in mind its character as lived experience and its importance for resolution that he considers working-through to play a role analogous to that of abreaction* in hypnotic therapy.

The topographical distinction that Freud introduces in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926d) between the id's resistance and the ego's, allows him to get rid of a number of the ambiguities of the earlier text: repression is not removed once the resistance of the ego has been overcome, for 'the power of the compulsion to repeat - the attraction exerted by the unconscious prototypus upon the repressed instinctual process - has still to be overcome' (3). Here is upon the repressed necessity for working-through. Seen in this light, working-through might be defined as that process which is liable to halt the repetitive insistence characteristic of unconscious formations by bringing these into relation with the subject's personality as a whole.

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In the Freudian texts considered above, working-through is unquestionably treated as a form of work accomplished by the *analysand*. Those authors since Freud who have insisted on the necessity for working-through have also emphasised the part invariably played in this process by the *analyst*. Witness, for example, this passage from Melanie Klein: 'The necessity to work through is again and again proved in our day-to-day experience: for instance, we see that patients, who at some time have gained insight, repudiate this very insight in the following sessions and sometimes even seem to have forgotten that they had ever accepted it. It is only by drawing our conclusions from the material as it reappears in different contexts, and is interpreted accordingly, that we gradually help the patient to acquire insight in a more lasting way' (4).

(1) Cf. FREUD, S., G.W., I, 292, 295; S.E., II, 288, 291.

(2) FREUD, S.: a) G.W., X, 136; S.E., XII, 135. b) G.W., X, 135; S.E., XII, 155.

(3) FREUD, S., G.W., XIV, 192; S.E., XX, 159.

(4) KLEIN, M., *Narrative of a Child Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961; New York: Basic Books, 1961), 12.