

“We’ve always been this way” . . . or have we? The child’s *causa sui* of primal interpretive responses

This first period of childhood ... is submerged like a buried city, and when we come back to these times with our children we are strangers and we cannot easily find our way. (Selma Fraiberg, quoted by Joel Kantor, 1978, p. 1290).

Introduction:

Sometimes, psychoanalysis can contribute a new dimension to contemporary debates about specific moral values and social tensions. The search for causal explications is often central to these debates and attributions of causality, real or imagined, can become tactical weaponry as has been the case in public discussions of racial differences in intelligence or in the possibility of recovered memories of child sexual abuse. Beyond the disputes about the relative contribution of innate versus social, or genetic versus environmental factors, there is a passion for causality which transcends these legitimate scientific concerns, one to whose attention we owe Freud’s study of infantile sexual curiosity. Aulagnier (1979) calls it the double principle of causality inherent in human development: the “demonstrated” causality shared by a particular culture or collectivity and the “interpreted” causality of the individual subject. The latter concerns “our” reality, where we come from, why things happen to us, what shakes up our existence, all different facets of a fundamental question: what is the meaning of our life?

In this paper, the idea will be introduced of the causality of precocious unconscious psychic responses in the matter of our becoming who are we and why it could be helpful to tease out their existence in our individual histories. An illustration of the pertinence this idea might have to current social controversies can be found in a close look at one of the arguments used by the LGBTQ movement in its quest for social justice. A central tenet of this movement has been that non-normative sexual orientation is not a “choice” or “preference”. The matter came up once again on the American political scene last year during the confirmation hearings of a new Supreme Court justice who claimed not to discriminate on the basis of “sexual preference”. According to an article in *USA Today* (Petrow, 2020), the internet immediately “erupted in flames”. In its coverage of this kerfuffle, the report reminded readers that the terms “sexual preference” and “sexual choice” in reference to homosexuality have been verboten for many years. Sexual orientation is an immutable part of our identity, the author went on to say, and “that’s true whether a person is straight or gay”. To buttress this position, he evoked an exchange with his parents who were puzzled about the vehemence directed against these linguistic terms. To the question: When did you know that you were heterosexual?, they had apparently answered simultaneously: “We’ve always been this way”. “Exactly”, the author replied triumphantly, “you did not choose to be straight and I did not choose to be gay”.

Certainly, psychoanalysts agree that sexual desire - regardless of object or aim – never feels like a choice, as countless novels, songs, and historical vignettes attest. When it arrives, sexual drive erupts as a foreign disturbance into the ego. Psychoanalysts also have no difficulty accepting the heuristic political usefulness of an argument which helps dissolve old prejudices. Yet basing the defence of the right to follow the love that one feels upon conscious memory is a rhetorical slight-of-hand. It forgets that there is a prehistory in every human life, a period one does not

remember but which was foundational, nevertheless. The mystery of infantile amnesia intrigued learned men and women well before Freud came along with his own understanding of it. If we really want a *full* scientific explanation of the origins of sexual orientation, gay or straight, we are obliged to *include* an examination of this very early period which we can neither directly study nor remember. Without making this effort, sexual orientation disappears from the purview of individual history-making and the adventure of reconstructing how one came to be the way one is loses all personal, theoretical, or therapeutic interest. We cannot just claim that “credible scientific research” (Petrow, *op. cit*) whisks away this piece of the puzzle of human sexuality. In this and other articles like it, the assumed “research” is never very clear in any case. What is clear, however, is the attempt to make *any* sexual orientation seem completely pre-determined. This tactic has had traction in attacking the lamentable conversion therapies practiced by some psychotherapists in the past, and now roundly denounced as unethical and harmful. But psychoanalysts cannot accept sexual orientation as a given that somehow emerges by itself in childhood. Like Freud, the more we learn about the vagaries of early childhood development, the more curious we can become to understand why heterosexuals became the way they are, as well.

I imagine researchers in fields other than psychoanalysis having little resistance to Piera Aulagnier’s viewpoint that the *fatum* of being human is to be overwhelmed by life. And in our field as for most people, there is still a compulsion to make meaning from the infinitesimal swatch of life’s experience as we know it. And so it is, I will endeavour to show, with the baby and toddler of our prehistories. Beneath and behind the question of sexual orientation in the future adolescent and adult, there is a perplexed child intensely preoccupied with the causality of existence, of his/her existence. This forgotten search for knowledge is itself a huge influence on our future identity and sexuality. If we include this prehistory, it can be seen that not only have we not “always been this way”, but that a precocious, unconscious, *response*¹ to the child’s early caretaking environment has created a sexual drive that did not pre-exist its emergence. Though this “response” (mainly corporeal) may not have been within the ego’s purview to begin with, it, nevertheless, has emerged from libidinal and narcissistic needs, already part of us, and seeds future unconscious fantasy. Instead of stumbling over the question of choice in adult sexual life, the what-we-do, our lens in this paper will be turned towards the unconscious *responses* of the tiny child towards his human environment, filled as the latter is with drive-imbued enigmatic messages from the adults around him. Impossible to avoid a response, impossible to avoid wanting to understand, even if overwhelmed and equipped with inadequate and primitive psychic tools. In a circular movement of response that is simultaneously *auto-theorizing*, we see a paradox which cannot be overcome. In this primal identificatory positioning, something has responded in us which has become us, the whom-we-have-unconsciously-desired-to-be. *We are therefore, at this level, both effect and cause, choosing and chosen, determined and determining.* This way of looking at unconscious fantasy follows traditional psychoanalytic thinking while bringing out a new implication. Before justifying this perspective further, let us go back to the beginning.

The matter of choice for Freud: its relation to psychic determinism

¹ By encouraging psychoanalysts to think in terms of “response” rather than of “responsibility”, Laplanche (1994) indicates a fresh vantage point with respect to causality.

Freud was deeply committed to the scientific model, which meant, as he moved from his neurological studies to the treatment of hysterics, believing that codable « laws » of nature could be applied to the mental sphere as well. As he put it in:

“psycho-analysts are marked by a particularly strict belief in the determination of mental life. For them there is nothing trivial, nothing arbitrary or haphazard.” (1910 [1909], p 38)

Freud’s belief in psychic determinism was not a belief in pre-determination. *The “psychic” component meant that humans are often determined by their own thoughts.* It is crucial to remember, as earlier authors have remarked (Basch, 1978; Krystal, 1978; Friedman, 1965; Smith, 1978; Wallace, 1986), that the determinism targeted in Freud’s early work was always one of meaning. The instances are so numerous, it would be fastidious to refer to them all. In the *Introductory Lectures* (1916-17) for instance, he states over and over again that symptoms are not absurd or unintelligible, that they have an intimate connection with the patient’s history and emotional life, and that something in them is not only purposeful but actually desired (see lectures XVII and XXIII). In its classical formulation (cf 1910, Third Lecture pg 39, SE XI), the meaning determines us from within *because we know nothing about it.* In each case, unconscious thinking had resulted in an “incompatible idea” coming to mind which was unacceptable. In some cases, this incompatible idea had to be ejected out of consciousness because offensive to the individual’s moral standards. In other cases, unconscious thinking, in the form of an après-coup reframing of an earlier interaction with other people, resulted in incompatibility. In either case, we were dealing with intrapsychic events and not preexisting material causes. There are many examples of both kinds of incompatible idea in Freud’s publications in the 1890s. One example of each from the Freud-Breuer collaboration of *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-1895) will suffice as illustration. In the case of Fraulein Elisabeth Von R., it was an attraction to her brother-in-law which was totally unacceptable to her. As Fraulein Elisabeth Von R. arrived late at the bedside of her beloved but now dead sister, at “that very moment another thought had shot through (her) mind . . . like a flash of lightning in the dark : ‘Now he is free again and I can be his wife’” (p 156). An example of the second kind of incompatible idea is found in the story of Miss Lucy R., a governess, who was secretly in love with her employer, a widower. She had entertained hope that her feelings might have been reciprocated until the day he flew into a violent temper concerning her care of his children. Miss Lucy had said to herself and then repressed it: ‘I must have made a mistake. He can never have had any warm feelings for me, or they would have taught him to treat me with more consideration’ (p 120-121). In both instances, the unconscious thinking had to be eliminated which led to a such a shock to the mind.

In the psychoanalytic theorem of causation, the immediately proximate cause of behaviour is always “immanent to the actor himself” (Wallace, 1986, p 937). Krystal (1978) refers to the “indirect sequelae of trauma”, that is, the fantasies to which trauma becomes attached in terms of an attributed meaning (footnote, p. 90). By introducing an intrapsychic dimension to trauma (and it is this intrapsychic dimension for which he has been severely criticized by some), Freud’s therapeutic endeavour moved to an inter-unconscious-subject plane where the displeasure of the patient’s *internal reactions* to events in his life – visibly traumatic or not – and *in the main, events with other people*, became part of the story to be worked through by – as Freud put it – “thought-activity” (1894, p 47, SE III). The notion of incompatible idea and the hidden unconscious thinking behind it are thus the larger conceptual categories which subsume those of

memories of childhood fright and/or seduction. Once the unacceptable thought has occurred, or is defended against, it becomes a determinant in the subject's future emotional life. The "stranger" within for the early Freud was a thought one cannot live with.

The cause or causes that psychoanalysis searches for or uncovers are of the order of certain distinct *representations*. What is at stake is not – or at least not only - a factual past but the representation of an internal conflict. The psychic phenomenon involved is at once a cataclysm and a burial which determines obsessional acts, debilitating hysterical symptoms, and repetitive, doomed, love-affairs. If I bring up this ancient history, it is because I want to stress an aspect of the Freudian oeuvre which I think is essential to the question of "preference". In revealing the existence of unconscious thought, Freud cast light on a hidden register of causality, one created by the human being's capacity, indeed his compulsion, for representations of a special nature, representations related to his identity and to his sexuality. Fully appreciating that doing what we do is because of the way we are is incomplete without grasping the participation of unconscious thinking and unconscious representations in psychic life. Unconscious fantasy, a mental production which to the best of our current knowledge is an exclusive capacity of the human species, constitutes an additional highly personalized cog in the chain of causality for each subject. Laplanche & Pontalis (1973) provide the classical definition:

Imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes (p 314).

They go on to say: "It is not an *object* that the subject imagines and aims at, so to speak, but rather a *sequence* in which the subject has his own part to play and in which permutations of roles and attributions are possible". How do we view causality when it concerns a generation of meaning on the part of the subject, not just in the usage of signs or signifiers to designate and communicate with others about objects but as an emanation of the desire to be desired, a fundamental of human motivation? The specific meaning one person attributes to an interpersonal interaction will change the way she views herself, the way she assesses her psychological and social position, with an ultimate impact on her behaviour. *Is it not then possible to affirm that by the creation of meaning implicit in unconscious fantasy one has caused oneself, at least in a limited but essential way?*²

I propose that we deepen our look at unconscious fantasy by tracing it back to its beginnings in the prehistory of our lives with the notion of *primal interpretative responses*.

Post-freudian reflections on psychic causality

One might summarize the post-Freudian literature as a vast exploration of two fields opened by Freud: a more intense study of innate psychic capacities in their developmental sequencing and a detailed attention to the influence of the *nebenmensch*, the early caretaker and environment. In

² It is beyond the scope of this paper, and of my competence, to compare the notion of *causa sui*, of causing oneself, as it appears elsewhere inside and outside analysis, such as in the work of Ernest Becker, Norman O. Brown, Ernst Cassirer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Robert Kane, or Jean-Paul Sartre.

the inexhaustible *self-theorising impulse* behind growth into adulthood, the reality met by the child is one already predigested and preformed by her caretakers. The inclusion of the human other in development offers a critical adjunct and complexification to psychoanalytic approaches to causality. The infant human being is a meaning-making machine, always and ultimately self-referential but equally always and ultimately swallowing the discourse of the other/Other about herself. Moreover, it is part of our infantile dependency and helplessness, as Aulagnier (1975) has pointed out, that before our own representational capacities are fully in place, we have no choice but to rely on the discourse of our early caregivers for details about our first chapter. In this inevitable period of prehistory, someone, some nearby adult, has and must project meaning onto us in our open, infantile, state for us to have an inscription with which to start. Aulagnier referred to this as a necessary “violence of interpretation” on the part of parents which inscribes an inevitable foreign origin and core to all identity. It is in parental discourse that the I’s first identificatory markers are found or imposed. It is only after an initial stamping of its psyche, and after it has developed enough symbol-making tools of its own, that the child can take over the process of auto-historisation and modify it (ideally) to its liking. Reality for the child is an experience which has first been interpreted by the discourse of local culture and of adjacent others (93-94); *reality for the child is already an inter-subjective construction.*

Being human entails being subject to an early ontological gap: we are what we are because of what our parents transmitted to us but this transmission does not come in the form of a communicating vase; we “theorize” (I will come back to the overly cognitive implication of this term a little further on) what we receive from them. *We make something of it.* Yet, Freud was the first to postulate that the child’s first quest for knowledge is about origins, his origin in particular. So it is essential that we keep in mind that the earliest meaning making and the earliest trigger for unconscious fantasy is related to the wish to be caused. In the beginning, we do not long to be free, we do not seek choice; rather we wish to be the object of the desire of our parents, our family, and our community. This particular meaning-making is scarcely a choice; it is a fundamental necessity³. The functioning of the future *I* requires it.

Jean Laplanche (1999) has added another register to our self-historisation, in postulating that we cannot understand our own libidinal impulses without taking account of the unconscious sexuality coming from our parents in the form of enigmatic messages. These messages are garbled: the baby must try to make sense of them. Laplanche calls this the infant and child’s work of “translation”, always destined to be both incomplete and distorted given the inadequate cognitive and linguistic tools at his or her disposal, as well as the fact that the unconscious fantasies of the adult are also unknown to them. We are far from understanding why an individual child comes up with a particular interpretation at this early period in his life. All that we can know is that part of the story comes from the parents and part from the child but that the precise sequence and specific contribution of each is not only lost in the mists of time but was at that time fundamentally ambiguous and can only be guessed at by constructions created by patient and analyst in their work together. It is by working backwards from current, conscious and guessed-at-unconscious phantasy that patient and analyst piece together a construction of the unconscious *thinking* of the small child, that is, her archaic translations of her parents’ enigmatic messages, and her ongoing struggle to integrate their un-translated remainders. This formative

³ Joel Kantor (2020, p 130) quotes Selma Fraiberg as saying “To be perfectly frank, I think any child under adolescence who fully acknowledged the fact that he was rejected by his parents would have no incentive to live”.

psychic work is a self-and-other theorization on the part of the child of her primal inter-subjective experiences. The beating fantasies analysed by Freud are prototypical in that they can never be remembered *per se*: They are “a construction of analysis but it is no less a necessity on that account” (1919, p. 185). Thus, the deepest versions of fantasy are not capable of being *subjectively* experienced; they cannot be summoned to awareness without an act of construction, itself an act of theorizing. We owe to Freud the realization that where *it* appears through symptoms to be thinking, is not where *I* am.

Laplanche takes this displacement even further in asserting that psychic reality is not even created by us, that it comes to the infant and little child from the other and is thus implanted or “invasive”. Nevertheless, my emphasis on primal interpretive responses is completely consistent with the equal weight he accords the child’s “translations” though the latter feels subjected to these thought-processes rather than being their agent. “Who is the person who is speaking me?” (Laplanche (1994, p 163, author’s translation). At this germinal stage, there is an ambiguity between inside and outside, agency and subjection, the position of spectator and the position of actor, as in Freud’s finding that “all the signs on which we are accustomed to base our distinctions tend to lose their clarity as we come nearer to the source” (1919, p. 206). We are thus, *at least partially*, the unconscious authors of the very phantasy which determines us, which has become our fate. An earlier version of this idea was expressed in Wallace’s 1986 article where he pointed to meaning and “affect-laden phantasy” (p. 935) as “efficient causes” of human behaviour. In proposing the concept of *interpretative response*, I am trying to circumscribe the paradoxical circularity of external cause/internal effect, interpretative response/core identity. In reacting, Laplanche writes “the individual synthesizes *his* existence *for* himself” (p 161).

The perspective of *interpretative response* revitalizes Freud’s references to causality. Take for instance, the following comment made in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*: “If we give way to the view that a part of our psychological functioning cannot be explained by purposive ideas, we are failing to appreciate the extent of determination in mental life” (2004, p 240). The reference to *purposive ideas* or to “highly composite thought-processes, which are yet quite unknown to consciousness” (p. 247) as he puts it a few pages later, is consistent with viewing the formation of the unconscious as an internally generated *response*.

Whereas we clarified earlier the representational (as opposed to factually archival) characteristic of the Freudian unconscious, it is true that Freud’s meaning-making seems to have been understood by him in an auto-centred way. Meaning was ipso-centred (Laplanche, 1999) or phylogenetically imported: the context of primal intersubjectivity and communication was not fully elaborated by Freud. Two pages after the above citation, nevertheless, he tantalizingly mentions “In so doing, [the child] *usually follows some indication from its parents, whose affection bears the clearest characteristics of a sexual activity*, even though of one that is inhibited in its aims” (added emphasis, *op cit*, p 44). It was probably only in his Leonardo study, according to Laplanche, that Freud alluded more explicitly to the impact of primary caretakers upon the child’s drive organization. There are two movements, one transferring enigmatic messages from the adult to the child, and the other the child’s responses to this exciting but incomprehensible stimulation. The emergent subject is at first the target of the unconscious sexuality of the adult and yet also seeks recognition from the adult. Being able to discover his

own causality in the desire of others is, as mentioned previously, obligatory to continue wishing to live.

Laplanche favours the term of “translation” to describe the psychic work of the child decoding the enigmatic messages of his parents. I am not entirely comfortable with the notion of translation though I appreciate how it dovetails with Laplanche’s intellectual trajectory on multiple levels. The term of translation implies an already existent meaning which needs conversion into another linguistic code. The terms of auto-theorisation or interpretation are preferable, in my estimation, because closer to the psychic leap involved in representing very primitive sensations and ambiguous perceptions in the immature mind. In fact, Laplanche does not insist that we follow him in using the term “translation”. He was quite ready to allow “some equivalents to be added to it: construction (or self-construction), ideologization, or self-theorization (theory here being used in the sense of ‘infantile sexual theories’” (*op cit*, p 161). Moreover, he has often stressed that what is being translated or interpreted is not usually a linguistic code or an organized message. The compromised nature of the adult message comes across in ambiguous verbal and non-verbal fragments, rather than in clear signifiers. They are loaded with affect and accompany the corporeal transactions between adult and child. They leave deep impressions on the body. An appealing alternative term of “transduction” has been proposed by Scarfone (2015, 2019). Transduction is evocative in both of its usual definitions. The first is that of the transformation from one physical state to another, such as a solid to a liquid, which overcomes the objection of a purely linguistic translation. Though Scarfone does not refer to it himself in either of the two papers referred to, the second definition refers to the transfer of DNA from one bacterium to another by means of a bacteria-infecting virus called a bacteriophage. This latter meaning beautifully conveys the contagion of the unconscious from adult to child, from patient to analyst and back again. Nevertheless, the notion of primal interpretative responses has the advantage of shadowing the unconscious subject’s *creative participation in her coming into being with a specific perspective*.

All the terms I have been favouring, such as theorisation, translation, thinking, decision, and interpretation, are misleading if we take them to be conscious, verbalized, cognitive undertakings. André Green’s (1999) criticism is highly pertinent here in pointing out that in Freud’s post-1920 description of psychic structure, the id is not made up of repressed representations as was the first model of the unconscious. Rather the Id is filled with undifferentiated instinctual energy. We owe to Winnicott and other so-called “third model” authors (Brusset, 2006), such as Loewald and Roussillon, the realisation that it is the quality of interventions by early caretakers which gradually infuse psychical representatives of the drive with shareable meaning. In the first meaning-making of the infant and young child, before he or she has acquired an adequate storehouse of symbolic thought, we are dealing with archaic scarcely mentalized motions in which the character of “representation” or “ideation” is slender and the quantity of affect and drive predominant. At this level of psychical activity, movement is stronger than content. Green’s (1999) description of the affective process “*as the anticipation of a meeting between the subject’s body and another body (imaginary or present)*” (p. 289, original emphasis) is closer to the proto-meaning generated at the level of these primitive emotional events than the terms “theorization”, “translation”, “interpretation”, “self-historicisation” and the like. They can only become true translations or theories in an afterwardness of self-reflection. Therefore, any translation or theory is really a verbal approximation or (to use another Freudian

term) “psychical coating” (1905, p. 83-4) of what Green refers to as the “magnetic field” of the unconscious (p 289). Or we could add, of the magnetic field of the enigmatic aspects of the adult’s interaction. The image of magnetic field gives one a sense of some directionality but sheer force is more or less paramount depending on the psychical qualities of early caretakers which can facilitate or undermine the child’s capacity to graft appropriate, useable, meaning onto states of arousal.

The reference to the body’s upheaval in a state of arousal, anguish, and loss with consequent fixation is critical as a common denominator of several writers’ studies. Lacan wrote of elementary unconscious signifiers associated with a moment of strong childhood arousal, a moment associated with both pleasure and loss of closeness with the primal maternal body. As Anika Lemaire puts it: “All the objects of the subject’s desire will always be a reminder of some primal experience of pleasure, of a scene which was lived passively and will always refer back through associative links, which become more complex and more subtle with the passage of time, to that lived experience. Connected with any phantasy-scenario there is a choice imposed by the ineffability of certain marks inscribed in the unconscious signifiers of desire.” (1977, p. 164). Notice that Lemaire uses the word ‘choice’ despite referring to signifiers connected with a passive experience. Though she does not make it explicit, I surmise that in mentioning choice, she is evoking the proto-ego’s compulsion to make sense of, and unify, the confusing disparate psychical marks left on the body, a sense therefore which is unique to that subject and which can only be assumed as a choice in afterwardness. Certainly, this seems to be the position Raymond Cahn takes: “The ego must discover or elaborate the fact of enduring (in French ‘éprouver’) – in the sense of submitting itself to, of accepting as a fact that which it cannot change – the marks imprinted upon it by the object” (2002, p. 98).

Aulagnier makes a similar observation linking the response of arousal to the wish to master by knowing: “What has been perceived as source of affect sets off a work of investigation, a need to know which . . . presses for an answer to a causal question: why this seen, why has it been imposed or refused, what is it revealing or concealing, etc? From the pleasure of seeing, one moves to the pleasure of elucidation, of finding the causes and consequences of that seeing (original emphasis?, p. 334).

Foundational emotional *impressions* (excitement which has *impressed a stamp* upon the vulnerable child’s mind) impel unconscious proto-thinking, or proto-translation, only accessible to construction and-or deconstruction later in development. These primal emotional impressions and associated drive impulses have become the invisible essence of unconscious phantasy. There is always a triangle in unconscious phantasy which engages and organizes a very intimate portion of the subject's early libidinal life, at a time in which the environment was overwhelming rather than protectively filtering. This phantasy lays out the subject's position in the triangle. Something in us has responded: it has secreted a phantasy which is exciting even when it seems self-destructive. In this response, we have found a unique place in the universe, where our identity and our desire are two sides of the same unconscious position. Its agency can only emerge in an afterwardness where it is meaningful to ponder what has been and remains self-serving in the interpretation/translation/meaning-making of self-and-other and what has thereby been avoided/or embraced in life's developmental challenges. It is easy to follow Roussillon

(2010) in his conviction that drives are not mere discharges but carry a message addressed to the object, a message that is also waiting for some kind of response.

I would not want to conclude without mentioning the many contributions of Leo Rangell (1971, 1986, 2009) to the concept of unconscious volition, which he viewed as an addition to the inventory of ego functions: the unconscious decision-making function of the ego. While sharing our interest in unconscious mentation, his scrutiny of its secondary process disguises places Rangell's examination at a distance from the primal auto-theorizing little child. With this significant proviso, his thoughts can be quite close to our own:

While with the first incursion of unconscious determinism man became less responsible than he thought, with the present extension into unconscious action he is also more responsible for his acts than he knows (2009, p 1162).

Many psychoanalysts would agree that what analysis permits (when it works) is a re-opening of the frozen meaning of unconscious thinking and unconscious phantasy. Analysis can be viewed as operating in the mantle of meaning-making, of incessant auto-theorizing, that is part of the self's interaction with others. The consistency of this zone of transference and interpretation varies from one person to another: molten in some, pliable or quite stiff in others but potentially active, potentially transforming the meaning of one's relationships. It is here that eruptions or slow leaks from the unconscious are in contact with the messages of others, as well as with what we have made of their ancient bombardments upon us. It is this psychic area of more or less silent transcription and containment (technically known among psychoanalysts as the preconscious) which is the site of a potential degree of freedom in the psychoanalytic sense, that is, in the après-coup of grasping some of the unconscious determinism, internal and external, at stake. The work of interpretive response is ongoing, and it belongs to us, even if it has been forgotten, and even if it seems beyond our conscious control.

The theoretical isolation of a buried moment, or more likely, moments of primal interpretive response is both familiar and fresh in reorganizing clinical apprehension. New light is shed on the limitations of a therapeutic model basely exclusively on interpretation. We might say that it is rarely interpretation in and of itself which is transformative. It is the modification of the ancient response, entailing an alteration in the drive contained in that response, which brings about psychic shifting, when it does occur. Perhaps this is another way of framing the conundrum of double inscription. Interpretation of a representation in one part of the mind (the ego) does not necessarily change its inscription in another part of the mind (the id) because what is present in the latter is not an idea or a word but the emotional charge of a thing-like presentation. Thus, it is not a question of cognitive choice but of a complex psychic causality. There is little that feels free about the infantile components of adult sexual passion but they do have an intimate history.

Conclusion

I have been revisiting psychic determinism as a layer of self-determining causality as the little human theorizes her origins in the desire of the other. On a first level, I pointed out that Freud's psychic determinism is related to thoughts, to representations. At a second level, equally Freudian, psychic determinism is related to unconscious fantasy in which we can view the precipitation of desire as a self-forming psychic act. At a third level, post-Freudian, psychic determinism is related to unconscious responses to the discourse and enigmatic messages of early

caretakers. Our meaning-making is a primal interpretative response to the conscious and unconscious meanings we sense we have for them. Our theorization springs from a wish to be the object of their desire and it begins spinning long before the emergence of a conscious, language-empowered, ego or I. It is nevertheless doubly ours: made by us and making us.

Because the child's unconscious fantasies/responses weld to the armature proposed to him in the representations/metabolizations proffered by his human environment, the result is a composite: half auto-determined, half other-determined. It is in the small addition of auto-generated theory to all the sources of determinism which precede it that the individual *subject* comes into being. In this slim layer of our souls, our primal interpretative response has generated *something specifically and intimately us*. The inflation of this sliver of constructed meaning into sentiments of personal identity, sexual orientation, and responsibility may seem preposterous to some but it is precisely what others value most about themselves and others. That such a tiny part of the whole natural field should be so significant should perhaps not surprise us having learned the slight difference between our genome and that of the chimpanzee or between our brief existence as a species and the total timeline of life on this planet. I like Wallmark's (1997) invention of the phrase of "nonnessitating causality" (p. 309) because it implies a pause between meaning and action, a moment when we can question what we do with the meanings we have already made. The meanings we make *about each other and for each other* may be the most important freedom we have.

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