

Memories -- and the Creation of 'Oedipal-Lifestyle-Transference' Theory

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Good day again!

I want to start this essay with a series of quotes from early Freud (1893-1896) relative to the subject of memories, and then I will add an Adlerian quote regarding the latter's concept of conscious early childhood memories as 'lifestyle memories' (same Oedipal Period of 3 years old to 7 years old).

The biggest conflicts here that we need to somehow reconcile between Freud and Adler are 1. the etiological or causal significance of conscious vs. unconscious/repressed memories; and 2. a conflict vs. unity model or paradigm of the human personality. I tend to side more with Adler on the first issue (I work with conscious early memories, not unconscious or repressed ones --although I work with unconscious -- as in out of, or beneath conscious awareness -- psychodynamics within the parameters of a conscious memory -- and/or fantasy); and Freud on the latter issue (conflict vs. unity -- although I am comfortable using the dialectical idea of 'conflicted unity' or 'unified conflict').

For those of you who haven't read, or seen me write before, this 'fundamental Freudian working hypothesis on the neuroses of defense', here it is again from 1894, 'The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence': '...in mental functions something is to be distinguished -- a quota of affect or sum of excitation -- which possesses all the characteristics of a quantity (though we have no means of measuring it), which is capable of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge, and which is spread over the memory-traces of ideas somewhat as an electric charge is spread over the surface of a body'. (Standard Edition, V. 3, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, p. 60, edited by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Allan Tyson).

Moving on to 1896 and Freud's still neglected and maligned, partly over-stated, masterpiece of this time period -- which I rate as just below the above mentioned 1894 paper and Freud's two 1895 papers, 'The Project' and 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' -- we come to Freud's infamous 1896 paper, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', one of three papers Freud wrote that year on childhood sexual abuse before he recanted almost everything he wrote, at least as pertained to fathers molesting daughters. Here the study of memories becomes -- or became -- paramount.

First, there is the idea of 'chains of memories' having 'connective associations' with each other and 'converging on the hysterical/neurotic symptom' which thus makes the symptom 'over-determined' by the converging intersection of these chains of memories. In 1899 -- once Freud was deep in the process of building his 'Classical, Wish-Fulfillment, Fantasy, Impulse-Drive-Biological Instinct' theory -- Freud labeled the conscious memories that were associated with each other -- 'screen memories' -- that funneled down into a 'repressed, unconscious memory and/or fantasy and/or fantasy-memory'.

In contrast, I call these conscious memories 'transference-lifestyle memories' -- and the Oedipal Period memories, I call 'OLTMs' -- Oedipal-Lifestyle-Transference Memories. All of these interconnected memories are part of what I am calling our 'Oedipal-Lifestyle-Transference Complex'. Freud never used the term 'transference memories' which seems to me to have been such an obvious Freudian

concept -- but the timing didn't work -- because by the time Freud started seriously thinking and writing about transference his theory of 'traumatic memories' was 'one too many mornings and a thousand miles behind'.

However, even as Freud never created the concept -- or at least the term -- of 'transference memories' -- the concept was firmly in place for the period of one monumentally important paragraph in 1896 which I quote from *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (Standard Edition).

Before I cite it, understand that by this essay Freud was firmly entrenched in the 'repressed, traumatic sexual memory' hypothesis and theory even though at an earlier point in the essay Freud wrote that neurotic (hysterical) symptoms could only come about through 'the co-operation of memories' (p. 202) which 'over-determined' (p. 216) the particular symptom (if not the whole neurosis). And on page 212, Freud wrote that 'hysterical symptoms are derivatives of memories which are operating unconsciously'.

Now, that set of words 'operating unconsciously' can mean either of two things: 1. either the memory itself is unconscious/i.e., repressed; and/or 'the psycho-dynamics of the memory' is what is 'operating unconsciously' even if the memory itself is conscious (or 'pre-conscious' meaning it might take a few minutes to remember).

Freud obviously meant the former -- i.e., 'a repressed memory'; I mean the latter (meaning a 'conscious' or 'pre-conscious' memory with 'unconscious internal psychodynamics').

There is a definitive passage on p. 211 that is -- so Freudian -- that it absolutely distinguishes himself from later Adler (and Adlerian theory). The passage reads: 'According to our understanding of the neurosis, people of this kind ought not to be hysterical at all, or at any rate, not hysterical as a result of the scenes which they consciously remember. With our patients, those memories are never conscious; but we cure them of their hysteria by transforming their unconscious memories of the infantile scenes into conscious ones.' I believe that Freud was 'overly reductionistic' in the passage above and did not allow for the idea of conscious memories containing underlying or internal, unconscious, psychodynamic, neurotic material. This is a distinguishing point between my Neo-Freudian theory and early Freudian theory.

However, here is the passage referred to above of monumental importance that brings us -- so close -- to Adlerian 'lifestyle theory' and 'lifestyle memory' theory about 30 years later.

From Freud in 1896 (p. 205, S.E.): 'It is exactly like putting together a child's picture puzzle: after many attempts, we become absolutely certain in the end which piece belongs in the empty gap; for only that one piece fills out the picture and at the same time allows for its irregular edges to be fitted into the edges of the other pieces in such a manner as to leave no free space and to entail no overlapping'.

(Strachey note: This analogy was used by Freud again over 25 years later in a period when 'jig-saw' puzzles had become an adult pastime. See 'Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream Interpretation, 1923, S.E., V. 19, p. 116.)

Continuing with the end of the passage above, quoting Freud again: 'In the same way, the contents of the infantile scenes turn out to be indispensable supplements to the associative and logical framework of the neurosis, whose insertion makes its course of development for the first time evident, or even, as we might often say, self-evident' (my italics). An added Freudian footnote 'undoes' part -- or much -- of what Freud wrote in this 1896 essay when he wrote in 1924: 'All this is true; but it must be remembered that at the time I wrote it I had not yet freed myself from my overvaluation of reality and my low valuation of phantasy' (Freud's italics).

We come now to the work of Alfred Adler between 1929 and 1931 (*Significance of Early Recollections* (1929); *Science of Living* (1929); *What Life Should Mean To You* (1931) as can also be collectively found in different Adlerian quoted or interpreted passages by Ansbacher and Ansbacher's in their definitive book, *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (1956) which I will now be citing from the section on *Early Recollections and Dreams* (Chapter 14). Write Ansbacher and Ansbacher (p. 350):

'Recollections can be classified as productions of the individual because according to Adler they are selections, distortions, or inventions of past events by the individual to fit his underlying mood, purpose, and interests, and would change accordingly, if not in respect to

content, at any rate in respect to feeling tone. It is immaterial whether an earliest recollection would actually remain the earliest under all conditions of recall; and furthermore, it is of no importance whether a recollection corresponds to objective events, or is an alteration of them, or is altogether a matter of fancy. In any case, it reflects the individual's inner world, his style of life; and the stated earliest recollection, in particular, reflects the prototype of his style of life. If dreams have recently been called natural 'projective' material, and justly so, this is equally true of recollections. The projective character of both rests in the fact that the subject believes he is reporting on an objective event without being aware that his report is largely his own doing and therefore open to interpretation regarding his unconscious tendencies.'

As a side note here, I, DGB, will say that when a therapist feels the need to make a 'decision' as to what parts of a client's reports are 'objectively real' vs. 'subjectively distorted or biased' -- this can become an 'epistemological can of worms' which certainly Freud was sometimes guilty of making 'messy' by the injection of his own 'projections and subjectively biased theories' into his case material -- i.e., his stringent definition and application in so-called 'Oedipal fantasy' cases of what may very well have been actual cases of 'childhood sexual abuse' as he interpreted what might have been a client's 'real, objective memories' earlier in his career. The whole issue can become an 'epistemological nightmare'.

Ansbacher and Ansbacher continue in their introductory comments in Chapter 14, p. 350, 'Thus recollections and dreams, like any behavior, serve the therapist the dual purpose of affording him a more complete understanding of the case and a means of explaining the patient to himself.' I would add a final note of caution here: generally speaking, a recollection contains significantly 'more reality' than a dream does.

Citing Adler on page 351 in the Ansbacher book, we have a quote from Adler from 1931 (*What Life Should Mean To You*). (For my regular readers, I have cited this Adlerian quote in one or more previous essays):

Among all psychological expressions, some of the most revealing are the individual's memories. His memories are the reminders he carries about with him of his own limits and of the meaning of circumstances. There are no 'chance memories': out of the incalculable number of impressions which meet an individual, he chooses to remember only those which he feels, however darkly, to have a bearing on his situation. Thus his memories represent his 'Story of My Life'; a story he repeats to himself to warn him or comfort him, to keep him concentrated on his goal, and to prepare him by means of past experiences, so that he will meet the future with an already tested style of action'.

If you take a dialectical approach like I do, it is here that Adler's work of 1929-1931 definitively collapses or conflates into Freud's work of 1896 -- with a significant difference of opinion on the matter of the etiological and/or teleological and/or projective importance of conscious vs. unconscious and/or repressed memories.

I largely take Adler's side on this matter although it seems to be a matter of general agreement that the 'psychodynamic material' contained in even a conscious memory is largely unconscious or perhaps semi-conscious to the client. And regardless -- it remains etiologically, projectively, teleologically, and/or interpretively important.

It is within this conflation of early Freudian and later Adlerian theory -- a dialectical integration between id-driven impulses and ego-planned goals -- that DGB Neo-Freudian, Neo-Psychoanalysis 'swoops in to fill the dialectical gap'.

That is what I do.

And that is how I came to create the concept of 'The Oedipal-Lifestyle Transference Complex'.

Have a great evening!

-- David Gordon Bain

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