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REPETITION: BETWEEN PRESENCE AND MEANING

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The notion of "repetition" is explored from a metapsychological point of view in relation with the specific meaning of "remembering" in psychoanalysis and with other major dimensions of psychic life, such as binding, transference and time. Drawing from Freud and post-Freudian authors, the author revisits the analytic process, suggesting that whereas a preliminary stratum of analysis deals with meaning, the analytic method is eventually conducive beyond meaning, to presence.

Keywords: repetition, action, transference, memory, symbolization, psychoanalytic process

La notion de répétition est ici explorée d'un point de vue métapsychologique dans son rapport avec le sens spécifique que prend en psychanalyse la remémoration, ainsi qu'avec d'autres dimensions centrales de la vie psychique tells que la liaison, le transfert et le temps. S'appuyant sur Freud et certains auteurs post-freudiens, l'auteur réexamine le processus analytique et propose que, alors même que la méthode analytique s'occupe à un premier niveau du sens, elle conduit à terme au-delà du sens, vers la présence.

Mots-clés: répétition, action, transfert, mémoire, symbolisation, processus psychanalytique

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Repetition usually implies comparison. Something is said to repeat itself whenever we can apprehend it from a reference point, a comparable thing of which it is the reiteration. In the psychoanalytic field, however, this is not exactly so. Freud's exploration of the relationships between remembering, repeating, and working-through introduces important features of human affairs that usually go unseen in too general a view of repetition. If we consider the operational definition of *remembering* (*Erinnern*) formulated in the 1914 paper as "reproduction in the psychical field,"[1] repetition itself takes a very specific meaning. *Repetition* is indeed the term for what Freud (1914) would call *Agieren* ("action") as opposed to *Erinnern*. If we also put in the equation the well-known toggle switch between thinking and action, it follows that whatever stands outside of psychic elaboration should be deemed a repetition. This has important consequences in both practice and theory. Under this definition, indeed, repetition yields a specific understanding of what is repeated in the transference, which in turn may influence our analytical conduct.

Regarding theory, one could say that when Freud turned his attention to repetition, he was already engaging, perhaps unknowingly, in what was to become his major theoretical turn in the 1920s. Among its many features, the incipient revolution in Freud's thinking involved delving always deeper into metapsychology, relying less on the sensual-empirical point of view and thinking ever more in terms of principles—fundamental principles that ended up including the drives as well. While the analytical encounter with a fellow human continued providing the clinical experience, the conceptualization of such experience was less and less a replica of what was observed. It ensues from Freud's metapsychological views of 1914 that a single *Agieren* is always already a repetition, for the simple reason that it rests outside the psychical field. This should not come as a surprise. Psychoanalysis, after all, is a discipline concerned with living systems and these are always highly redundant, tending towards reproducing themselves indefinitely. Freud's ideas about repetition are therefore not as much a discovery as the consistent result of the study of psychic life. He actually wrote that by highlighting the repetition compulsion he did not obtain any new fact, but rather "gained a more unified view" (Freud, 1914).

But to state that a single "act" (*Agieren*) is a repetition may seem a bit preposterous, so I will try to make the argument clear. We saw that, as opposed

1. Except for Freud (1895): when I quote from Freud I use the newer French translation of the *Complete Works* (*Oeuvres complètes de Freud: Psychanalyse*. Paris: PUF) and translate from the French. Their equivalents in the *Standard Edition* are in the References.

to remembering, repetition is whatever lies outside the psychical domain. We should not indeed lose sight of the fact that Freud assigns to analysis the aim of "remembering." From the outset in his paper Freud mentioned that while, descriptively, *remembering* is "filling in the lacunæ of memory," from a dynamic standpoint it means "overcoming the resistance of repression." So if we now take into account what Freud put under the heading of *repression*—a concept he was elaborating in that same period (Freud, 1915)—then *remembering* in psychoanalysis cannot be the banal act of "recalling" or "evoking." It rather implies the transmutation of some material into a new form and a change in its economic status. We will get back to this later.

For now, let us notice that if remembering means "reproduction in the psychical field," it ensues that, as Loewald had clearly seen, remembering is itself a form of repetition (Loewald, 1965). We then have repetition at every level of the experience of psychoanalysis. Repetition, therefore, really *does* provide a unitary view of what goes on in the body-mind systems as they are summoned up by the analytic method. What we should ask then is *under what form* we encounter repetition. We obviously welcome repetition in the form of "remembering," because it is something that can be *contained* in the psychical domain and therefore undergo a number of psychic transformations through the thinking processes. *Contained* here means both "delimited" and, to some extent, "restrained" or "controlled." This by no means implies a complete mastery of psychical processes. It means, however, that some *delay* has been introduced where once there reigned a mechanism of automatic and immediate response. In other words, *language* and *time* have entered the scene heretofore dominated by repetition. And if in the *Agieren* language and time—two of the most significant features of consciousness—were absent, there was no real consciousness at work, even though there could be awareness of something taking place.

Here again we see what difference runs between a purely empirical take on repetition and the metapsychological conception. Thus, when acting (*Agieren*) occurs, it is by definition always too late for any form of control. The act has already been perpetrated and the conscious ego cannot but rationalize its occurrence. Hence, it matters little if the acting does not readily appear as a repetition in the empirical sense. It is repetition all the same in the metapsychological sense, inasmuch as the subject was not in the position of *deliberately* planning the event *or* of *speaking* (at least to himself or herself) with sufficient insight about its *meaning*. This is important, since if we require "sufficient insight" about the meaning of our actions, it ensues that *there is always a measure of repetition* in whatever we do or say. But not surprisingly so. What indeed is a person's character,

or, at a larger level, what is a given culture if not a set of repetitive features? But if we are always repeating to a certain extent, it follows that, in turn, *remembering* takes on an even more specific meaning.

While repetition constitutes the basic level of mental functioning, remembering must be located at the apex of mental activity as a fragile, pulsating, discontinuous, almost evanescent feature. It consists in the momentary possession or repossession of one's thoughts and feelings. Remembering is recomposing one's whole mind. It is not just adding some new item to one's mental scrapbook, since such a scrapbook is nowhere to be found in the mind. Gaining some significant new memory is not simply adding to what was already there; it requires a complete reshuffling of one's psyche; it involves a specific temporal mechanismm which Freud sometimes referred to as *Nachträglichkeit*, translated and widely used as *après-coup* in the French psychoanalytic tradition; a notion that Arnold Modell (1990) also recaptured to a certain extent with the concept of *recontextualization*. The idea is also supported by contemporary neuroscience. Think, for instance, of Edelman's work on the "remembered present" (Edelman, 1989). To be sure, *to remember* is etymologically different from *to dismember*, but one is tempted to bring the two together in opposition. This works in English as well as in French and in Italian, and even with the Spanish substantive *remembranza*, which appears to be the opposite of *desmembramiento*. But whereas from a purely linguistic point of view these words are unrelated, the antinomy between dismembering and remembering can be sustained if we think of remembering as a constant recomposing of the whole mindset, as a restoration, while repetition in action can be seen as reflecting disorganization. Interestingly enough, a similar idea is mentioned in the *Confessions* by Augustine, who wrote that concupiscence disperses the soul while the work of memory reassembles it.

The more specific meaning of *remembering* implies "reassembling the mind" in yet another way. We already saw that the aim that Freud assigned to psychoanalysis should not be reductively misunderstood as simply meaning to recall. If remembering implied the mere filling in of the blanks, we could hardly explain its mutative value, and, from a theoretical point of view, we would be prey of the "homunculus fallacy." Indeed, a "filling of the blanks" concept of remembering supposes a reader of the now more complete text—a reader external to the text itself. We should then imagine this reader *interpreting* the newly established script, and we would have to explain what makes him or her opt for one interpretation rather than another. This would introduce another level of functioning, which in turn would require some filling in followed by interpretation, and so on into

infinite regress. On the contrary, remembering in the specific Freudian sense suggests that the subject is, so to speak, the remembered itself. By recomposing itself the soul also transforms itself. Remembering does not require an additional act of interpretation. Remembrance proper carries its own meaning, its own mutative force of conviction. To remember is to be able to say "I" again. "Wo Es war soll Ich werden. Es ist Kulturarbeit . . ." (Where id was, there ego shall be. A work of civilization . . .), Freud said (1932/1999, p. 86). This is not merely a technical observation, then; it carries some ethical issues in its wake, as we shall see.

REPETITION AND BINDING

By providing a unified view in psychoanalysis, repetition can itself be seen as a principle, and in contrast with remembering, it is a principle operating "beyond the pleasure principle." I now wish to remind that this "beyond" is where the analytic work will usually take us, for better or for worse. *For better*, that is, if the compulsive mechanisms lying at the foundations of mental processes can, through analytic work, be put in a psychical form and thereby be processed according to the pleasure principle. A rewarding outcome, for certain, since, as we just saw, through remembering we obtain meaning, we insert delay and speech and therefore conscious thinking, in what tended to repeat itself compulsively. Although meaning can be painful at times, it is always preferable to meaningless repetition, as it opens the road to the highly desirable processes of mourning and symbolization, by which thinking is freer and more creative. This, I believe, is in line with Freud's discovery of 1919, that the most vital role of the psyche is to bind the quantity of excitation. Whenever such binding fails, mental functioning falls back on the stratum of repetition and *Agieren*, as these constitute the baseline or background functioning brought to the fore by the failure of symbolization. But while bringing repetition to the fore may seem the *for worse* outcome of the analytic endeavour, we know that it is often a road that the analysand must travel, as Freud's paper also indicates. One thing Freud does not indicate, however, is that repetition—or, if one prefers, unbinding—is provoked by the work of analysis itself. By dissolving the ready-made psychic constructions that the analysand brings to analysis, we open the way to unbinding, although within the relatively secure framework of the analytic setting. Repetition eventually steps in as the "lower" and semi-failed form of the attempt at binding back or mastering the economic turmoil that such unbinding has caused. In this regard, repetition appears as the lower limit at which the unbinding resulting from analytic work can be contained without yielding to complete disor-

ganization. Laplanche (1987) compares the analytic situation to that of a particle accelerator, where high energies are developed without risking a chain reaction, as with a nuclear bomb.

Once again, the practical and theoretical consequences are quite important and carry in their wake major potential divergence from what we consider the proper work of psychoanalysis. When repetition steps in during psychoanalytic work, if one is not ready to consider it an intrinsic feature of the analysis, one can be drawn towards either despair or activism. I would go as far as to say that major revisions of the analytic stance that emerged in recent years are related to some form of activism occurring when we analysts are challenged by the outburst of non-psychical repetitive forms. Apparently, one is thereby simply struggling to keep the analytic work at the level of meaning, but we could contend that the activism in question results from our being ourselves subjected to the repetition principle in the counter-transference. In those instances, as the word *activism* itself suggests, remembering is bypassed in favour of action in both patient *and* analyst. This by no means implies that the analyst should never resort to any form of "enactment"; the unwarranted result I am pointing at is rather the systematic abandonment of the analytic method.

THE SAME AND THE IDENTICAL

I think it is useful at this point to bring in the important distinction Michel de M'Uzan once made between *repetition of the same* and *repetition of the identical* (de M'Uzan, 1970, 2007). Let's not be misled by the similarity of the terms. Repetition of the identical implies "true," or what I would call "radical" repetition, a repetition where no displacement or condensation, no primary process thinking occurs. It is doubtful that, except in fictional works, any human being could ever witness a true repetition of the identical. Even from a purely conceptual point of view, the philosophy of logic considers the notion of "identical" as a fundamental concept of thinking that cannot be itself defined (Lalande, 1988, p. 454). At the empirical level, if we think of any situation in its entirety, the mere presence of the observer already inserts a major difference in any repeated event, no matter how close to the identical this may seem. Besides, the time frame of two separate observations of "identical" phenomena has necessarily changed the second time around. Thus, the notion of the identical is essentially a conceptual tool that helps us in thinking about the degrees of resemblance. At the level of experience, we are always left with *repetition of the same.*

For all the redundancy it carries in its wake, repetition of the same implies some form of novelty. Something is repeated, but a slight displacement,

an almost unnoticeable nuance will in the long run significantly deviate the trajectory of what at first appeared to be perfect circularity. This aspect of repetition is what we may more promptly recognize in our clinical practice. Although for some time things seem to go desperately in circles, a small change in the tone of voice or a tiny detail in the narration becomes noticeable, and if we are sufficiently receptive to these events we may find that we are, so to speak, entering a different orbit, which reminds us that, dealing with the hyper-complex systems of the human body-mind, we cannot help but observe the kind of phenomena described in terms of non-linear dynamics. And although there is no need, nor for that matter the possibility, of doing any quantitative study of what matters in the analytic session, there is no doubt that small deviations in the trajectory of the analysis at any given point may take us a long way.

As for repetition of the identical, it is not very distant from what Lacan called "the Real," in his theoretical trilogy (Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real). The Real was deemed by Lacan as that which, evading symbolization, always falls back in its place. Considering that displacement is, along with condensation, one of the primary thinking processes, the Real is what has not been or cannot be processed psychically, just like repetition of the identical. But despite its apparent distance from experience, we cannot avoid referring to repetition of the identical. We have already mentioned that the observable phenomena that in our field point to repetition are the *Agieren*—repetitions in action, outside of psychic elaboration. While repetition of the identical proper escapes empirical observation, it nevertheless introduces another clinically useful tool. Whereas a single *Agieren*, by standing outside of the psychical field, sufficed to identify repetition even in the absence of two comparable phenomena, the idea of repetition of the identical brings us one step further, since, in its wake, we need not even observe empirical action. Other clinical facts, indeed, hint at this sort of repetition. One classical example is the clinical syndrome Marty and de M'Uzan have called "operative thinking" (*pensée opératoire*), a condition that exposes the subject to serious psychic and/or somatic disorganization. In operative thinking, language is devoid of metaphors and slips of the tongue, sleep seems devoid of genuine dreaming, and the waking life of the patient is stuck in concreteness, lacking fantasy and daydreaming. One can assert that the thinking process is seriously hampered, although the concreteness may give the impression of strict realism. Repetition of the identical transpires here through the absence of displacement and the lack of imagination, which, if they existed, would launch the mind in creative mutations of forms and meanings.

But for all its peculiar aspects, this impoverished state of the mind should not, I believe, be restricted to psychopathological considerations. As with all pathology, in psychoanalysis we are called to look for its nonclinical form in the society as a whole. Thus, we may find a striking resemblance between the clinical picture I was just alluding to and what Hannah Arendt (1971/1996) captured of the thinking processes in the criminal mind of Adolf Eichmann: "not stupidity, but a peculiar and genuine inaptitude for thinking. He functioned in his role of war criminal just in the same way he did under the Nazi regime: he had no problem whatsoever accepting a completely different set of rules" (pp. 25–26). These remarks seem to point, although from a different perspective, toward the notion of the identical. Indeed, in another part of her lecture, Arendt addresses precisely this point in remarking that as soon as one says "I," one is introducing a difference in oneself.[2] Saying "I" is precisely what Eichmann avoided doing, for it would have meant that instead of being the "law-abiding citizen" who carried out his duties and obeyed orders without ever questioning them, he would have been exerting his own thinking. He would, in other words, have been "remembering" instead of uncritically repeating in action; he would have "reassembled" his soul instead of having it complacently dispersed in the repetitive patterns of mass psychology. Mass psychology, indeed, is one form that the "legalized" psyche espouses when turning away from remembrance. I cannot go into more detail about this, but hope to have sufficiently underscored the moral and ethical aspects of what may seem a purely theoretical matter.

REPETITION AND TRANSFERENCE

Going back to clinical considerations, the metapsychological approach of repetition requires that we pay tribute to the identical (or the Real) *as the frontier at which genuine psychoanalytic work really happens.* The field of psychoanalysis is one where the territory is extended by the analytic work itself. One could almost speak of "psychoanalytic bootstrapping," were it not that it actually takes two to analyze, and therefore no "bootstrapping" is really happening. As a whole, however, the analytic situation can be compared to the building of a railway in some uncharted land, where it is the train itself that brings forth the workers and the material that will in turn bring the railway beyond the limits it had reached. J.-B. Pontalis (1974) writes that psychoanalysis does not simply dwell inside a ready-made psychic

2. Arendt discusses the issue of identity and resemblance elsewhere in the same lecture I quote from, but I can't go into the details of her work here.

space but rather works towards *instituting* the psychic space itself. "The *reality* of psychoanalysis can reside only *at* the limits of the analyzable" (p. 15; my translation, emphasis in the original).

Ordinarily, transference is deemed the prototypical form of repetition in analysis. As it is one of the shibboleths of psychoanalysis, it may seem, well . . . redundant to speak of transference in this context, but, in spite of the vast literature on this topic, I can't possibly avoid saying a few things here. In the paper I just quoted, Pontalis warns against constantly interpreting "transference" when what is actually happening is a repetition in act ("*une répétition agie*"). This may seem surprising at first: isn't transference a clear instance of repetition, as suggested by Freud when he writes, "We soon notice that transference is in itself nothing else than a fragment of repetition and that repetition is the transference of the forgotten past not only on the physician but also on every other domain of the present situation" (1914, p. 190; my translation)? What I find remarkable here is that when Freud defines transference as a fragment of repetition, he clearly implies that not all repetition is transference. Conversely, when he adds that repetition is the transference of the forgotten past, he gives transference a much larger extension than is usually the case today. This extension is also noticeable in other papers from the same period, such as "The Dynamics of Transference" (Freud, 1912), where he mentions transference on the health care institution as a whole. To be sure, we would impoverish the notion of transference if we did not listen to its literal meaning, which implies displacement or transport. This immediately suggests that what we usually refer to as transference in the analytic setting is but a subset of the general phenomenon of displacement. Displacement, then, is the wider, more encompassing category we are called upon to include in our study of repetition and transference. We have already touched upon displacement when we mentioned that repetition of the identical is equivalent to Lacan's Real, something that falls back in its place, that was not displaced. On the other hand, we saw that some displacement is necessarily at work in repetition of the same.

Let us now go back to the apparent discrepancy between Freud's views and those of Pontalis when he states that the analyst should not insist on interpreting as transference what is really a repetition in action. We can understand better what Pontalis had in mind if we posit that interpretable transference usually relates to repetition of the same, while repetition in action is closer to repetition of the identical. This is tantamount to saying that usually transference interpretations regard what is already in the domain of meaning, albeit in a preconscious state, while what is

repeated in action does not yield immediate meaning and therefore should not, as Pontalis points out, be "filled in with interpretations that are only a response to the vacuum, the hollowing out felt [by the analyst]" (1974, p. 13; my translation).

Jean Laplanche has also formulated, although from a different perspective, a clear-cut difference between what he calls "filled-in" and "hollowed-out" transference (Laplanche, 1987). While making no manifest reference to repetition itself, I believe that what Laplanche has in mind revolves around this very issue. "Filled-in transference" refers to phenomena in the analysis (words, dreams, memories, feelings, etc.) that can be traced back to situations in the analysand's accessible, represented past. When, for instance, the analysand brings a dream that clearly connects something the analyst said to words spoken by the patient's father or mother during his childhood, even though we can't always immediately grasp the meaning of this connection, we know and feel that we are dwelling in an area where meaning is within reach. The elements at hand share among them the same psychic status. Repetition in such an instance means resemblance, and the link between present and past exists also on the basis of a common temporal background. The past is already there *as past*, and while the present shares with such a past a number of connecting points that can be uncovered by the analysis, it will often result in this being only a preliminary work, setting the stage for more impervious material to come. Regarding this other kind of material, what is particular is that it could not be elicited by previous knowledge, neither by the patient nor the analyst. This is where Laplanche speaks of "hollowed-out" transference, a form of transference by which the analysand unknowingly deposits not some "positive" content, but rather his actualized relationship to the enigma of his infancy. The hollowed-out form of the transference is itself deposited in another hollow, the one the analyst provides by firmly holding to her "refusal to know"—refusal to "bind" the analysand in the chains of the analyst's preconceptions (Laplanche, 1993). Such refusal is both technically required and ethically mandatory for the analyst, insofar as analysis is aimed at opening new mental spaces for the analysand rather than yielding yet another interpretation of what was more readily reachable.[3] The unforeseen is, so to speak, what the analytic dyad was struggling to reach by operating within a thoroughly analytic framework. As we saw earlier, it is the very work of analysis that is responsible for the unbinding

3. In this respect, we would need to discuss in depth the difference between repetition in Freud (1914) and repetition in Freud (1919), but time and space do not allow.

conducive to repetition of the identical, from where the work of binding/remembering may resume.

REPETITION AND TIME

From still another perspective, we are reminded of Winnicott's "Fear of Breakdown" (1963/1981). In this case the repetition in the transference concerns something that was not experienced because "the ego [was] too immature to gather all the phenomena into the area of personal omnipotence" (p. 91). The clinical situation Winnicott has in mind is one where, "if the patient is ready for some kind of acceptance of this queer kind of truth, that what is not yet experienced did nevertheless happen in the past, then the way is open for the agony to be experienced in the transference, in reaction to the analyst's failures" (p. 91). When Winnicott speaks of something that was never experienced, I hear "not reproduced in the psychical field," and therefore belonging to repetition. This implies that the repetition in question is happening to the analytic couple for the first time. This "first time" must be taken literally, meaning that *time itself* is entering the scene "for the first time." Time is catching hold of something that, as Winnicott himself writes, "cannot get into the past tense unless the ego can first gather it into its own present time experience and into omnipotent control now" (p. 91). This is most interesting: Winnicott is writing of something that must have happened but was never registered within the time dimension: it is therefore not present or past, since it can be put "into the past tense" only if some conditions are realized.

Thus, we now have one more way of defining repetition in analysis, especially the kind of repetition closer to the identical: a repetition is what has not yet been given a "time tag," so to speak, what has not yet been inserted into chronology or belongs to the category sometimes referred to as "actual time" (Scarfone, 2006). What is "actual" in "actual time" gets into the "present tense" by being experienced "now," and only then can it be "put into the past tense." Therefore we can assert that while repetition, when looked at from a third-person point of view, seems to bring back something "from the past," this is not accurate. From the point of view of both analyst and analysand, repetition is actually bringing in something *not yet belonging to the past*, because it was *not yet marked by time*.

This is in line with an important technical guideline in *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*. Freud writes that "we must treat the illness not as something related to history but as a presently active force," but he immediately adds that "while the patient experiences [the morbid state] as something real and present, we must carry out the therapeutic work,

a good part of which consists in driving matters back to the past" (1914, p. 191). One way of understanding these precepts is that, according to what we have just seen in Winnicott, important things repeat themselves in analysis that are *not yet part of the patient's history.* Here again, the peculiar nature of repetition in analysis makes it something different from what common sense would suggest. Moreover, Freud's definition of remembering as "reproduction in the psychical field" and his dynamic point of view by which remembering corresponds to "lifting the resistance of repression" must be once more taken into account. Since the repressed unconscious is deemed by Freud as *"Zeitlos"*—lacking the dimension of time—then his precept of "driving matters back to the past" entails actually *instituting the category of the past.* It is, again, a matter of inserting chronological time into the "actuality" of repetition. While the past to which present matters must be driven back could be plainly (and erroneously) conceived of as the series of events bygone, it must be thought of as the *psychic category* towards which our work must drive the *actual*—or, in Freud's words "timeless"—unconscious facts. Those facts, as we saw, take place in analysis "for the first time," hence, they do not "emerge" from the past; they were *brought into presence* and out of their "actuality" (timelessness) by their repetition in the transference (Scarfone, 2006).

BETWEEN MEANING AND PRESENCE

The phrase I just used, "brought into presence," requires some clarification. By "presence" I am not referring to some "here-and-now" technique in analysis.[4] I hope everything I said up until now was able to convey that the "presence" in question has little to do with the ahistorical, or even anti-historical stance implied in the "here-and-now" technique. For one thing, the "here-and-now" attitude rests on the assumption that the past does not really matter, that what counts is the interaction between patient and analyst as "real persons" evolving in the present tense of a "real" relationship.[5] Regarding the question of the past, not only is it important, from my perspective, but I actually uphold the idea that one major aim of psychoanalysis is to institute the psychic category of the past. Obviously this implies that the past is not some passive repository of static recordings,

4. For an inspiring reflection about presence vs. meaning, see Gumbricht (2004).

5. A thorough treatment of this topic would require a specific discussion of difficult issues regarding time, the notions of "present" and "past," as well as the idea of the "flow of time." I obviously cannot delve into these difficult matters here. For a partial discussion of this, see Scarfone (2006).

but a living psychic domain where *Nachträglichkeit* is at work, where psychic elaboration has retroactive effects on what the past will bear, and, in turn, the creation and nurturing of the past has a stabilizing effect on the functioning of the psyche as a whole. Therefore, "bringing into presence" through repetition in the transference is in no way a repudiation of the past. Quite the contrary.

As for the possible conflation of the idea of "presence" with that of the analyst and analysand as "real persons" engaging in a "real relationship," one must first consider what lies underneath the word *real*. Obviously, when there is talk of "real persons" in analysis today, one does not mean to suggest that there would otherwise be phantoms or zombies in the analytic room. What the advocates of "getting real" do is overtly trade the analytic method of free association and evenly suspended attention for a more "ordinary dialogue," even containing a measure of self-disclosure on the part of the analyst (Renik, 1999). It would take too much of the allotted space here to indicate the extent of my disagreement with these views. Here I simply want to be more explicit about the status of the "presence" I am referring to, and its relationship with repetition.

Many say that psychoanalysis was really born when Freud abandoned the theory of seduction in 1897 and instead gave priority to unconscious fantasy as the main object of psychoanalytic inquiry. The story is of course debatable, but the fact remains that the prototypical work of analysis puts the absent or lost object at its core, the vicissitudes of affect and representation being what the analytic work is supposed to deal with primarily. This is certainly correct in describing where we start from in our analytic endeavour, but it is insufficient if it implies that all of psychoanalysis is concerned with meaning, a concealed meaning that is there for us to discover in a permutation of representations. One could argue, indeed, that from 1914 on, turning his attention to repetition and the repetition compulsion, Freud began dealing with a region of the mind where representation is not the crux of the matter anymore. This culminates, as is well known, in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1919) and "The Ego and the Id" (1923), where a new model of the mind is proposed, with a non-representational id making for the bulk of the mind, while ego and superego stand as differentiated subsets thereof. We need not, however, take sides for or against this new model in order to see that this is not so much a departure from previous views as a new way of presenting some ideas that may have been lost sight of.[6] What looks at first like a discovery is actually, well . . . a

6. I here stand on the shoulders of Laplanche (1987) who expounded this idea in

repetition in a new guise of something that came from Freud's pen at different periods of his creative path. I am alluding to the many faces of what lies "beyond"—or, if one prefers, this side of—representation, beyond one of the three elements that Freud's teacher in philosophy, Franz Brentano, had probably taught him to look for. In line with the philosophical tradition of Thomas Aquinas, Brentano thought that three things populate the mind: affects, representations, and judgments. Not surprisingly, then, we can retrieve these elements embedded in some of the major tenets of Freud's theory, where affects and representations are the two psychic delegates (or representatives) of the drives, while repression is described as a preliminary form of judgment, halfway between the impossible flight from the drives' pressure and the as yet-unattainable full judgment of condemnation (Freud, 1915).

Freud was never merely a psychologist, and one reason why he coined the term *metapsychology* is that he hoped that his theory would provide a biological as much as a psychological explanation of mental phenomena (Freud to Fliess, 1898/1985). Representations must then have smacked too much of psychologism to someone who wished to develop a scientific psychology. And so it is that, throughout Freud's works, we find reference to what lies beyond representation, beyond the strictly psychological grasp of the life of the mind. In the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, for instance, just when he is dealing with the highly psychological themes of cognition, reproductive thought, remembering, and judging (chapters 16 and 17 of part 1), Freud speaks in some detail of one major "perceptual complex" he calls "the complex of the fellow human being." He writes that this complex "falls apart into two components, of which one makes an impression by its constant structure and stays together as a *thing* [*Ding*], while the other can be *understood* by the activity of memory—that is can be traced back to information from [the subject's] own body" (p. 331). By calling upon the work of memory and one's own bodily experience, the "understanding" clearly implies a *transformation* occurring in the representation of the other through the experience of self. Such a processing of perception that travels through the filters of memory and is modified accordingly, while preserving something of the perceived other, amounts to a reproduction of *the same* or instates *the remembered other*, as I would have it. By contrast, what strikes us in the "thing"—in what eludes judgment or understanding—is that it "makes an impression by its constant

relation to the death drive as a rediscovery of "demonic" sexuality after the introduction of narcissism and eros.

structure." So here we are in 1895, looking at the roots of what Freud was to explore in more detail in 1914: a "reproduction in the psychical field," which is *Erinnerung* or remembering, as opposed to something that makes an impression by way of its constant structure, belonging to the realm of repetition, actually quite close to de M'Uzan's "repetition of the identical." In other words, what "makes an impression" or "imposes itself" unchanged, and escapes understanding, is what cannot be processed by the work of remembering nor filtered by the experience of self. It is what cannot be put inside (*er-innern*) when the soul reassembles itself. The *thing* is not represented but rather *imposes* itself, *presents* itself, outside of reproductive thinking.

Other instances of the same idea can be found in areas as diverse as dream theory and the psychopathology of the neuroses. I am referring here, for example, to what Freud mentions twice in his dream book of 1900, that every dream contains an umbilicus, something by which it is "connected to what is not known." Here then, at the core of the most appropriate material for analysis—the dream—Freud remarks that some hard kernel stands in the way of our hope to fully analyze it. This limitation, it must be noted, is not due to some relativistic point of view regarding the many possible interpretations of a dream. Freud is clearly speaking of—and our clinical experience confirms—the existence of something in the dream that is utterly non-interpretable, something that, in the terms of our present discussion, can be said to stand outside of remembering. A nucleus of repetition lies at the core of the most elaborate dream. Yet another instance of "presence" at the centre of the representational world is the kernel of "actual neurosis" that Freud posited as lying within many if not all "psychoneuroses" (Freud, 1915–1917, p. 404).

In conclusion, I wish to underscore one important aspect of the relationship between remembering and repeating that I have left aside. I said at the beginning that repetition appears wherever there is a failure in remembering. But, for all its usefulness at the clinical level, this is a rather judgmental view of repetition. From a strictly metapsychological point of view, repetition clearly stands not simply as a degraded form of remembering but also as an important source of novelty for the mind. This sounds at first like a blatant contradiction! How could repetition, and even more so, repetition of the identical, be a source of novelty? I would be taxing your attention too much if I now went into the details of this final aspect. Let me just go back briefly to the presence of repetition that is felt—and often can only be suspected—*in the midst of remembering*, as a kernel of material that was

not yet, or could not, be processed by the work of memory. This is not very distant conceptually from the notion of *resistance*, which, over more than a century of psychoanalytic work and reflection, we have learned to consider as both the major hindrance in the work of analysis and yet the most necessary ingredient for analysis to happen. While resistance is, still today, all too often negatively connoted, it nevertheless provides the only solid foundation for analytic work, if by this we mean not merely translating from one set of representations to another, but the actual creation of meaning out of what was not yet amenable to representing, understanding, or genuine thinking. As Freud's paper of 1914 clearly shows, a conceptual circle formed by repetition, transference, and resistance stands out at the level of clinical experience. But we need only dig a bit deeper towards the metapsychological layer, to see that "repetition of the identical," the "umbilicus of the dream," the "kernel of actual neurosis," and the "thing" give us a more detailed idea of what psychoanalytic work is about. As Pontalis said, analysis happens only at the limits of the analyzable, that is, where resistance is the greatest. The work of analysis is therefore not so much a work of *uncovering* as a work of *extracting* thinking out of repetition—a work that requires remembering, understood as the reassembling of the mind. It is a genuine production of meaning out of what our fiercest foe and most secret ally, repetition, brings into presence in the analytic situation.

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