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SIGMUND FREUD

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PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND TELEPATHY
(1941 [1921])

EDITOR'S NOTE

PSYCHOANALYSE UND TELEPATHIE

(a) GERMAN EDITION:
(1921 August. Date of MS.)
1941 *G.W.*, 17, 27-44.

(b) ENGLISH TRANSLATION:
 'Psychoanalysis and Telepathy'
1953 In *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*, New York, International
 Universities Press, 56-68. (Tr. George Devereux.)

The present translation is a new one by James Strachey.

The MS. bears at its beginning the date '2 Aug. 21' and at its end 'Gastein, 6 Aug. 21'. The original bears no title, and the one here adopted is that selected by the editors of the *Gesammelte Werke*.

A prefatory note to the German edition states that the paper 'was written for the meeting of the Central Executive of the International Psycho-Analytical Association held in the Harz mountains at the beginning of September, 1921'. Dr. Ernest Jones, who was at that time President of the Central Executive, tells us, however, that no meeting of that body took place in the Harz mountains at the date in question, though there was a gathering of Freud's closest followers: Abraham, Eitingon, Ferenczi, Rank and Sachs, besides Dr. Jones himself. It was to this unofficial group that the paper seems to have been read.

Freud had intended the paper to give reports of three cases, but when he came to prepare the MS. at Gastein he found that he had left the material for the third case behind in Vienna, and he was obliged to replace it by some material of a rather different character. The original 'third case' has, however, survived as a separate MS. This is headed: '*Postscript*. Here is the report, omitted owing to resistance, on a case of thought-transference during analytic practice.' The case is in fact that relating to Dr. Forsyth and the Forsythe Saga, which is the last of those recorded in Lecture XXX of the *New Introductory*

Lectures. The two versions of the case agree very closely, with scarcely more than verbal differences; and it has therefore not seemed necessary to include it here. Any substantial points of difference will be found recorded in *Standard Ed.*, 22.

This was the first of Freud's papers on telepathy, and it was never published in his lifetime, though the greater part of the material in it was included in various forms in his later published papers on the subject. His next paper to be written, and the first to be published, is the one immediately following this in the present volume, on the somewhat different topic of 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922*a*). Soon after this he wrote a short note on 'The Occult Significance of Dreams' (1925*i*). This was apparently designed for inclusion in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and it was actually first printed as part of an appendix in Volume III of the *Gesammelte Schriften* edition of that work, but was not included in any of its later editions. Finally, there was the lecture already referred to on 'Dreams and Occultism' in the *New Introductory Lectures* (1933*a*). It is worth remarking that in this last of his writings on the subject he no longer felt the doubts about the propriety of discussing it which are so evident in the present paper; and, indeed, towards the end of the lecture, he specifically withdraws the fears here expressed that the scientific outlook of psycho-analysts might possibly be endangered if the truth of thought-transference were to be established.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND TELEPATHY

INTRODUCTORY

WE are not destined, so it seems, to devote ourselves quietly to the extension of our science. Scarcely have we triumphantly repulsed two attacks—one of which sought to deny once more what we had brought to light and only offered us in exchange the theme of disavowal, while the other tried to persuade us that we had mistaken the nature of what we had found and might with advantage take something else in its place¹—scarcely, then, do we feel ourselves safe from these enemies, when another peril has arisen. And this time it is something tremendous, something elemental, which threatens not us alone but our enemies, perhaps, still more.

It no longer seems possible to keep away from the study of what are known as 'occult' phenomena—of facts, that is, that profess to speak in favour of the real existence of psychical forces other than the human and animal minds with which we are familiar, or that seem to reveal the possession by those minds of faculties hitherto unrecognized. The impetus towards such an investigation seems irresistibly strong. During this last brief vacation I have three times had occasion to refuse to associate myself with newly founded periodicals concerned with these studies. Nor is there much doubt as to the origin of this trend. It is a part expression of the loss of value by which everything has been affected since the world catastrophe of the Great War, a part of the tentative approach to the great revolution towards which we are heading and of whose extent we can form no estimate; but no doubt it is also an attempt at compensation, at making up in another, a supermundane, sphere for the attractions which have been lost by life on this earth. Some, indeed, of the proceedings of the exact sciences themselves may have contributed to this development. The discovery of radium has confused no less than it has advanced the possibilities of explaining the physical world; and the knowledge

¹ [The references are to Adler and Jung.]

that has been so very recently acquired of what is called the theory of relativity has had the effect upon many of those who admire without comprehending it of diminishing their belief in the objective trustworthiness of science. You will remember that not long ago Einstein himself took occasion to protest against such misunderstanding.

It does not follow as a matter of course that an intensified interest in occultism must involve a danger to psycho-analysis. We should, on the contrary, be prepared to find reciprocal sympathy between them. They have both experienced the same contemptuous and arrogant treatment by official science. To this day psycho-analysis is regarded as savouring of mysticism, and its unconscious is looked upon as one of the things between heaven and earth which philosophy refuses to dream of. The numerous suggestions made to us by occultists that we should co-operate with them show that they would like to treat us as half belonging to them and that they count on our support against the pressure of exact authority. Nor, on the other hand, has psycho-analysis any interest in going out of its way to defend that authority, for it itself stands in opposition to everything that is conventionally restricted, well-established and generally accepted. Not for the first time would it be offering its help to the obscure but indestructible surmises of the common people against the obscurantism of educated opinion. Alliance and co-operation between analysts and occultists might thus appear both plausible and promising.

But if we look closer, difficulties begin to emerge. The immense majority of occultists are not driven by a desire for knowledge or by a sense of shame that science has so long refused to take cognizance of what are indisputable problems or by a desire to conquer this new sphere of phenomena. They are, on the contrary, convinced believers who are looking for confirmation and for something that will justify them in openly confessing their faith. But the faith which they first adopt themselves and then seek to impose on other people is either the old religious faith which has been pushed into the background by science in the course of human development, or another one even closer to the superseded convictions of primitive peoples. Analysts, on the other hand, cannot repudiate their descent from exact science and their community with its representatives. Moved by an extreme distrust of the

power of human wishes and of the temptations of the pleasure principle, they are ready, for the sake of attaining some fragment of objective certainty, to sacrifice everything—the dazzling brilliance of a flawless theory, the exalted consciousness of having achieved a comprehensive view of the universe, and the mental calm brought about by the possession of extensive grounds for expedient and ethical action. In place of all these, they are content with fragmentary pieces of knowledge and with basic hypotheses lacking preciseness and ever open to revision. Instead of waiting for the moment when they will be able to escape from the constraint of the familiar laws of physics and chemistry, they hope for the emergence of more extensive and deeper-reaching natural laws, to which they are ready to submit. Analysts are at bottom incorrigible mechanists and materialists, even though they seek to avoid robbing the mind and spirit of their still unrecognized characteristics. So, too, they embark on the investigation of occult phenomena only because they expect in that way finally to exclude the wishes of mankind from material reality.

In view of this difference between their mental attitudes co-operation between analysts and occultists offers small prospect of gain. The analyst has his own province of work, which he must not abandon: the unconscious element of mental life. If in the course of his work he were to be on the watch for occult phenomena, he would be in danger of overlooking everything that more nearly concerned him. He would be surrendering the impartiality, the lack of prejudices and prepossessions, which have formed an essential part of his analytic armour and equipment. If occult phenomena force themselves on him in the same way in which others do, he will evade them no more than he evades the others. This would appear to be the only plan of behaviour consistent with the activity of an analyst.

By self-discipline the analyst can defend himself against one danger—the subjective one of allowing his interest to be drawn away on to occult phenomena. As regards the *objective* danger, the situation is different. There is little doubt that if attention is directed to occult phenomena the outcome will very soon be that the occurrence of a number of them will be confirmed; and it will probably be a very long time before an acceptable theory covering these new facts can be arrived at. But the eagerly attentive onlookers will not wait so long. At the very

first confirmation the occultists will proclaim the triumph of their views. They will carry over an acceptance of one phenomenon on to all the rest and will extend belief in the phenomena to belief in whatever explanations are easiest and most to their taste. They will be ready to employ the methods of scientific enquiry only as a ladder to raise them over the head of science. Heaven help us if they climb to such a height! There will be no scepticism from the surrounding spectators to make them hesitate, there will be no popular outcry to bring them to a halt. They will be hailed as liberators from the burden of intellectual bondage, they will be joyfully acclaimed by all the credulity lying ready to hand since the infancy of the human race and the childhood of the individual. There may follow a fearful collapse of critical thought, of determinist standards and of mechanistic science. Will it be possible for scientific method, by a ruthless insistence on the magnitude of the forces, the masses and qualities of the material concerned, to prevent this collapse?

It is a vain hope to suppose that analytic work, precisely because it relates to the mysterious unconscious, will be able to escape such a collapse in values as this. If spiritual beings who are the intimate friends of human enquirers can supply ultimate explanations of everything, no interest can be left over for the laborious approaches to unknown mental forces made by analytic research. So, too, the methods of analytic technique will be abandoned if there is a hope of getting into direct touch with the operative spirits by means of occult procedures, just as habits of patient humdrum work are abandoned if there is a hope of growing rich at a single blow by means of a successful speculation. We have heard during the war of people who stood half-way between two hostile nations, belonging to one by birth and to the other by choice and domicile; it was their fate to be treated as enemies first by one side and then, if they were lucky enough to escape, by the other. Such might equally be the fate of psycho-analysis. However, one must put up with one's fate whatever it may be; and psycho-analysis will somehow or other come to terms with hers.

Let us return to the present situation, to our immediate task. In the course of the last few years I have made a few observations which I shall not hold back—at all events from the circle that is closest to me. A dislike of falling in with what is to-day

a prevailing current, a dread of distracting interest from psycho-analysis and the total absence of any veil of discretion over what I have to say—all these combine as motives for withholding my remarks from a wider public. My material can lay claim to two advantages which are rarely present. In the first place it is exempt from the uncertainties and doubts to which most of the observations of the occultists are prone; and in the second place it only develops its convincing force after it has been worked over analytically. It consists, I should mention, of only two cases of a similar character; a third case, of another kind and open to a different assessment, is only added by way of appendix. The first two cases, which I shall now report at length, are concerned with events of the same sort—namely, with prophecies made by professional fortune-tellers which did *not* come true. In spite of this, these prophecies made an extraordinary impression on the people to whom they were announced, so that their relation to the future cannot be their essential point. Anything that may contribute to their explanation, as well as anything that throws doubt on their evidential force, will be extremely welcome to me. My personal attitude to the material remains unenthusiastic and ambivalent.

I

A few years before the war, a young man from Germany came to me to be analysed.¹ He complained of being unable to work, of having forgotten his past life and of having lost all interest. He was a student of philosophy at Munich and was preparing for his final examination. Incidentally, he was a highly educated, rather sly young man, rascally in a childish way, and the son of a financier, who, as emerged later, had successfully remoulded a colossal amount of anal erotism. When I asked him whether there was really nothing he could remember about his life or his sphere of interest, he recalled the plot of a novel he had sketched out, which was laid in Egypt during the reign of Amenophis IV and in which an important part was played by a particular ring. We took this novel as a starting-point; the ring turned out to be a symbol of marriage, and from there we succeeded in reviving all his

¹ [This case is reported rather more briefly in Lecture XXX of Freud's *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a).]

memories and interests. We found that his break-down had been the result of a great act of mental self-discipline on his part. He had an only sister a few years his junior, to whom he was wholeheartedly and quite undisguisedly devoted. 'Why is it we can't get married?' they had often asked each other. But their affection had never gone beyond the point permissible between brothers and sisters.

A young engineer had fallen in love with the sister. His love was reciprocated by her but did not meet with the approval of her strict parents. In their trouble the two young lovers turned to the brother for help. He gave their cause his support, made it possible for them to correspond, arranged for them to meet while he was at home on vacation, and eventually persuaded the parents to give their consent to an engagement and marriage. During the time of the engagement there was a highly suspicious occurrence. The brother took his future brother-in-law to climb the Zugspitze¹ and himself acted as guide. They lost their way on the mountain, ran into trouble and only with difficulty avoided a fall. The patient offered little objection to my interpretation of this adventure as an attempted murder and suicide. It was a few months after his sister's marriage that the young man started analysis.

After some six or nine months he had completely regained his ability to work, and broke off the analysis in order to take his examination and write his dissertation. A year or more later he returned—now a Ph.D.—to resume his analysis, because, as he said, psycho-analysis had an interest for him as a philosopher which extended beyond therapeutic success. I know it was in October that he started again, and it was a few weeks later that, in some connection or other, he told me the following story.

There lived in Munich a fortune-teller who enjoyed a great reputation. The Bavarian princes used to visit her when they had any undertaking in mind. All that she required was to be supplied with a date. (I omitted to enquire whether this had to include the date of the *year*.) It was understood that the date was that of the birth of some particular person, but she did not ask whose. Having been given this date, she would consult her astrological books, make long calculations and finally utter a prophecy about the person concerned. In the previous March

¹ [The highest peak in the Bavarian Alps.]

my patient resolved to visit the fortune-teller. He presented her with the date of his brother-in-law's birth, without, of course, mentioning his name or betraying the fact that he had him in mind. The oracle pronounced as follows: 'The person in question will die next July or August of crayfish- or oyster-poisoning.' After telling me this, my patient exclaimed: 'It was marvellous!'

I could not understand this and contradicted him vigorously: 'What do you see in it that's marvellous? You've been working with me now for several weeks, and if your brother-in-law had really died you would have told me long ago. So he must be alive. The prophecy was made in March and was to be fulfilled during the height of the summer. It's November now, so it has *not* been fulfilled. What do you find so wonderful in that?'

'No doubt it has not come true,' he replied. 'But the remarkable thing about it is this. My brother-in-law is passionately fond of crayfish and oysters and so on, and *last* August he really did have an attack of crayfish-poisoning¹ and almost died of it.' The matter was not further discussed.

Let us now consider this case.

I believe in the narrator's truthfulness. He is entirely trustworthy and is at present lecturer in philosophy at K—. I can think of no motive which could have induced him to bamboozle me. The story was an incidental one and served no ulterior purpose; nothing further emerged from it and no conclusions were drawn from it. He had no intention of persuading me of the existence of occult mental phenomena; and indeed I had an impression that he was not at all clear about the significance of his experience. I myself was so much struck—to tell the truth, so disagreeably affected—that I omitted to make any analytic use of his tale.

And the observation seems to me equally unobjectionable from another point of view. It is certain that the fortune-teller was not acquainted with the man who put the question. But consider what a degree of intimacy with an acquaintance would be necessary before one could recognize the date of his brother-in-law's birthday. On the other hand, you will no doubt all agree with me in offering the most obstinate resistance to the possibility that so detailed an event as falling ill of crayfish-poisoning could be inferred from the date of the subject's birth by the help of any tables or formulae whatever. Do not

¹ ['Oyster-poisoning' in Freud, 1933a.]

forget how many people are born on the same day. Is it credible that the similarity of the futures of people born on the same day can be carried down to such details as this? I therefore venture to exclude the astrological calculations entirely from the discussion; I believe the fortune-teller might have adopted some other procedure without affecting the outcome of the interrogation. Accordingly, we can also, so it seems to me, leave the fortune-teller (or, as we may say straight out, the 'medium') quite out of account as a possible source of deception.

If you grant the genuineness and truth of this observation, its explanation will be near. And we at once find—and this is the case with the majority of these phenomena—that its explanation on an occult basis is remarkably adequate and covers what has to be explained completely, except that it is so unsatisfying in itself. It is impossible that the knowledge that this man—born on the day in question—had had an attack of crayfish-poisoning could have been present in the fortune-teller's mind; nor can she have arrived at that knowledge from her tables and calculations. It was, however, present in the mind of her questioner. The event becomes completely explicable if we are ready to assume that the knowledge was transferred from him to the supposed prophetess—by some unknown method which excluded the means of communication familiar to us. That is to say, we must draw the inference that there is such a thing as thought-transference. The fortune-teller's astrological activities would in that case have performed the function of diverting her own psychical forces and occupying them in a harmless way, so that she could become receptive and accessible to the effects upon her of her client's thoughts—so that she could become a true 'medium'. We have found similar distracting contrivances employed (for instance, in the case of jokes) where there is a question of securing a more automatic discharge for some mental process.¹

The application of analysis to this case does more than this, however; it further increases its significance. It teaches us that what has been communicated by this means of induction from one person to another is not merely a chance piece of indifferent knowledge. It shows that an extraordinarily powerful wish harboured by one person and standing in a special relation to his consciousness has succeeded, with the help of a second per-

¹ [See the first footnote on p. 126 above.]

son, in finding conscious expression in a slightly disguised form—just as the invisible end of the spectrum reveals itself to the senses on a light-sensitive plate as a coloured extension. It seems possible to reconstruct the young man's train of thought after the illness and recovery of the brother-in-law who was his hated rival: 'Well, he's got over it this time; but he won't give up his dangerous taste on that account, and let's hope that next time it will be the end of him.' It was this 'let's hope' that was changed into the prophecy. I could quote a parallel to this from a dream (dreamt by another person), in which a prophecy was part of the subject-matter. The analysis of the dream showed that the content of the prophecy coincided with the fulfilment of a wish.¹

I cannot simplify my statement by describing my patient's death-wish against his brother-in-law as an unconscious, repressed one. For it had been made conscious during the treatment the year before and the consequences which had followed from its repression had yielded to the treatment. But it still persisted, and, though it was no longer pathogenic, it was sufficiently intense. It might be described as a 'suppressed' wish.

II

In the city of F—— a child grew up who was the eldest of a family of five, all girls.² The youngest was ten years younger than herself; she once dropped this child out of her arms when it was a baby; later she called it 'her child'. Her mother was older than her father and not an agreeable person. Her father—and it was not in years only that he was the younger—saw a lot of the little girls and impressed them by his many dexterities. Unfortunately he was not impressive in any other way: he was incompetent at business and was unable to support the family without help from relatives. The eldest girl became at an early age the repository of all the worries that arose from his lack of earning power.

¹ [This may possibly refer to the 'premonitory dream' noted by Freud in 1899 but only published after his death (1941c). This dream did not, however, contain a specific prophecy.]

² [This case is reported in less detail in Lecture XXX of Freud's *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a), and more briefly still in the third section of Freud, 1925i.]

Once she had left behind the rigid and passionate character of her childhood, she grew up into a regular mirror of all the virtues. Her high moral feelings were accompanied by a narrowly limited intelligence. She became a teacher in an elementary school and was much respected. The timid homage paid to her by a young relation who was a music teacher left her unmoved. No other man had hitherto attracted her notice.

One day a relative of her mother's appeared on the scene, considerably older than she was, but still (for she was only nineteen) a youngish man. He was a foreigner who lived in Russia as the head of a large commercial undertaking and had grown very rich. It took nothing less than a world war and the overthrow of a great despotism to impoverish him. He fell in love with his young and severe cousin and asked her to be his wife. Her parents put no pressure on her, but she understood their wishes. Behind all her moral ideals she felt the attraction of the fulfilment of a wishful phantasy of helping her father and rescuing him from his necessitous state. She calculated that her cousin would give her father financial support so long as he carried on his business and pension him when he finally gave it up, and that he would provide her sisters with dowries and *trousseaux* so that they could get married. And she fell in love with him, married him soon afterwards and followed him to Russia.

Except for a few occurrences which were not entirely understandable at first sight and whose significance only became evident in retrospect, everything went very well in the marriage. She grew into an affectionate wife, sexually satisfied, and a providential support to her family. Only one thing was wanting: she was childless. She was now 27 years old and in the eighth year of her marriage. She lived in Germany, and after overcoming every kind of hesitation she went for a consultation to a German gynaecologist. With the usual thoughtlessness of a specialist, he assured her of recovery if she underwent a small operation. She agreed, and on the eve of the operation discussed the matter with her husband. It was the hour of twilight and she was about to turn on the lights when her husband asked her not to: he had something to say to her and he would prefer to be in darkness. He told her to countermand the operation, as the blame for their childlessness was his. During a medical congress two years earlier he had learnt that certain illnesses

can deprive a man of the capacity to procreate children. An examination had shown that such was the case with him. After this revelation the operation was abandoned. She herself suffered from a temporary collapse, which she vainly sought to disguise. She had only been able to love him as a substitute father, and she had now learnt that he never could be a father. Three paths were open to her, all equally impassable: unfaithfulness, renunciation of her wish for a child, or separation from her husband. The last of them was excluded for the best practical reasons and the middle one for the strongest unconscious ones, which you can easily guess: her whole childhood had been dominated by the thrice disappointed wish to get a child from her father. There remained one other way out, which is what interests us in her case. She fell seriously ill of a neurosis. For a time she put up a defence against various temptations with the help of an anxiety neurosis, but later her symptoms changed into severe obsessional acts. She spent some time in institutions and eventually, after her illness had lasted for ten years, came to me. Her most striking symptom was that when she was in bed she used to fasten [*anstecken* = bring into contact] her sheets to the blankets with safety-pins. In this way she was revealing the secret of her husband's contagion [*Ansteckung*], to which her childlessness was due.

On one occasion, when she was perhaps 40 years old,¹ the patient told me an episode dating back to the time when her depression was beginning, before the outbreak of her obsessional neurosis. To divert her mind, her husband had taken her with him on a business trip to Paris. The couple were sitting with a business friend of her husband's in the hall of their hotel when they became aware of some kind of stir and movement. She asked one of the hotel servants what was happening and was told that Monsieur le Professeur had arrived for consultations in his little room near the hotel entrance. Monsieur le Professeur, it appeared, was a famous fortune-teller; he asked no questions, but got his clients to press down a hand into a dish full of sand and foretold the future by studying the imprint. My patient declared that she would go in and have her fortune told. Her husband dissuaded her, saying it was nonsense. But after he had gone off with his business friend she took off her wedding-ring and slipped into the fortune-teller's cabinet. He

¹ [Forty-three, according to the other two accounts.]

made a long study of the imprint of her hand and then spoke as follows: 'In the near future you will have to go through some severe struggles, but all will turn out well. You will get married and have two children by the time you are 32.' In telling this story she gave every sign of being greatly impressed by it without understanding it. My comment that it was nevertheless unfortunate that the date laid down by the prophecy had already gone by some eight years made no impression on her. I reflected that perhaps she was admiring the confident boldness of the prophecy—like the faithful disciple of the long-sighted Rabbi.¹

Unluckily my memory, which is usually so trustworthy, is not certain whether the first part of the prophecy ran: 'All will turn out well. You will get married.' Or whether it was: 'You will become happy.' My attention was focused too completely on my sharp impression of the final phrase with its striking details. But actually the first remarks, about struggles that will have a happy ending, are among the vague expressions that figure in all prophecies—even in those that can be purchased ready-made. The contrast afforded by the two numbers specified in the final phrase is all the more remarkable. Nevertheless, it would certainly have been of interest to know whether the Professor really spoke of her *marriage*. It is true that she had taken off her wedding-ring and, at the age of 27, had looked very youthful and might easily have been taken for an unmarried girl. But, on the other hand, it would not have needed any great refinement of observation to discover the trace of the ring on her finger.

Let us restrict ourselves to the problem contained in the last phrase, which promised her two children at the age of 32. These details seem quite arbitrary and inexplicable. Even the most credulous person would scarcely undertake to deduce them from an interpretation of the lines on a hand. They would have received an indisputable justification if the future had confirmed them. But this was not the case. She was now forty years old and had no children. What, then, were the source and meaning of these numbers? The patient herself had no notion. The obvious thing would be to dismiss the question entirely and to consign it to the rubbish heap among so many other

¹ [The story of the long-sighted Rabbi is told by Freud in the eighth section of Chapter II of his book on jokes (1905c).]

meaningless and ostensibly occult messages. That would be delightful: the simplest solution and a greatly desirable relief. But unluckily I must add that it was possible—and precisely by the help of analysis—to find an explanation of the two numbers and one which, once again, was completely satisfactory and arose, almost as a matter of course, out of the actual situation.

For the two numbers fitted in perfectly with the life-story of—our patient's *mother*. She had not married till she was thirty and it was in her thirty-second year that (unlike most women and to make up, as it were, for her dilatoriness) she gave birth to two children. So it is easy to translate the prophecy: 'There's no need to worry about your present childlessness. There's nothing in that. You can still follow the example of your mother, who was not even married at your age and nevertheless had two children by the time she was thirty-two.' The prophecy promised her the fulfilment of the identification with her mother which had been the secret of her childhood, and it was spoken through the mouth of a fortune-teller who was in ignorance of all her personal affairs and was busy examining an imprint in the sand. And we may add, as the precondition of this wish-fulfilment (unconscious as it was in every sense): 'You will be set free from your useless husband by his death, or you will find strength to separate from him.' The first alternative would fit in better with the nature of an obsessional neurosis, while the second is suggested by the struggles which, according to the prophecy, she was successfully to overcome.

As you will observe, the part played by analytic interpretation is even more important in this example than in the last one. Analysis may actually be said to have created the occult fact. Accordingly, this example, too, would seem to offer positively conclusive evidence of its being possible to transfer an unconscious wish and the thoughts and knowledge relating to it. I can see only one way of evading the conclusiveness of this last case and you may be sure that I shall not conceal it. It is possible that in the course of the twelve or thirteen years¹ that elapsed between the prophecy and the account of it given during the treatment the patient may have formed a paramnesia: the Professor may have uttered some general and colourless consolation—which would be nothing to wonder at—and the patient may have gradually inserted the significant numbers

¹ [This number is given as 'sixteen' in the other accounts.]

out of her unconscious. If so, we should have avoided the fact which threatened us with such momentous consequences. We will gladly identify ourselves with the sceptics who will only attach value to a report of this kind if it is made immediately after the event—and even then, perhaps, not without hesitation. I remember that after I was appointed to a professorship I had an audience with the Minister [of Education] to express my thanks. As I was on my way home from this audience I caught myself in the act of trying to falsify the words that had passed between us and I was never able to recapture correctly the actual conversation. I must leave it to you to decide whether the explanation I have suggested is tenable. I can neither prove nor disprove it. Thus, this second observation, though in itself more impressive than the first, is not equally free from doubt.

The two cases that I have reported to you are both concerned with unfulfilled prophecies. Observations of this kind, in my opinion, can provide the best material on the question of thought-transference, and I should like to encourage you to collect similar ones. I had also intended to bring you an example based on material of another kind—a case in which a patient of a special sort talked during one session of things which touched in the most remarkable way on an experience which I had had myself immediately before.¹ But I can now give you visible proof of the fact that I discuss the subject of occultism under the pressure of the greatest resistance. When, while I was at Gastein, I looked out the notes which I had put together and brought with me [from Vienna] for the purpose of this paper, the sheet on which I had noted down this last observation was not there, but in its place I found another sheet of indifferent memoranda on quite another topic, which I had brought with me by mistake. Nothing can be done against such a clear resistance. I must ask you to excuse me for omitting this case, for I cannot make the loss good from memory.

I will instead add a few remarks about someone who is very well known in Vienna, a graphologist, Rafael Schermann, who has a reputation for the most astonishing performances. He is said to be able not merely to read a person's character from a

¹ [See Editor's Note, p. 176.]

specimen of his handwriting, but also to describe his appearance and to add predictions about him which later come true. Incidentally, many of these remarkable achievements are based on his own stories. A friend of mine once, without my previous knowledge, made the experiment of getting him to allow his imagination to play over a specimen of my writing. All that he produced was that the writing was that of an old gentleman (which it was easy to guess), with whom it was hard to live since he was an intolerable tyrant in his home. Those who share my house would hardly confirm this. But, as we know, the field of the occult is subject to the convenient principle that negative cases prove nothing. I have made no direct observations on Schermann, but through a patient of mine I have been in contact with him without his knowing it. I will tell you about it.¹

A few years ago a young man came to me who made a particularly sympathetic impression on me, so that I gave him preference over a number of others. It appeared that he was involved with one of the best known *demi-mondaines* and that he wanted to get free from her, because the relationship deprived him of all independence of action, but was unable to do so. I succeeded in setting him free and at the same time I obtained full insight into his compulsion. Not many months ago he contracted a normal and respectable marriage. The analysis soon showed that the compulsion against which he was struggling was not a tie with the *demi-mondaine* but with a married lady in his own circle with whom he had had a *liaison* from his earliest youth. The *demi-mondaine* served merely as a whipping-boy on whom he could satisfy all the feelings of revenge and jealousy which really applied to the other lady. On a model that is familiar to us, he had made use of displacement on to a fresh object in order to escape the inhibition brought about by his ambivalence.

It was his habit to inflict the most refined torment on the *demi-mondaine*, who had fallen in love with him in an almost unselfish fashion. But when she could no longer conceal her sufferings, he in turn passed over on to her the affection he had felt for the woman he had loved since his youth; he made her

¹ [The case which follows is reported also in Lecture XXX of Freud's *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a). One part of the story is given there in greater detail, but others more briefly.]

presents and propitiated her, and the cycle started on its course once more. When finally, under the influence of the treatment, he broke with her, it became clear what it was that he was trying to achieve by his behaviour to this substitute for his early love: revenge for an attempt at suicide of his own when his love had rejected his advances. After the attempted suicide he had at last succeeded in overcoming her reluctance. During this period of the treatment he used to visit the celebrated Schermann. And the latter, on the basis of specimens of the *demi-mondaine's* handwriting, repeatedly told him by way of interpretation that she was at her last gasp, was at the point of suicide and would quite certainly kill herself. This, however, she did not do, but shook off her human weakness, and recalled the principles of her profession and her duties to her official friend. I saw clearly that the miracle-man had merely revealed to my patient his own intimate wish.

After disposing of this spurious figure, my patient set about seriously the task of freeing himself from his real bond. I detected from his dreams a plan that he was forming by means of which he would be able to escape from his relation with his early love without causing her too much mortification or material damage. She had a daughter, who was very fond of the young friend of the family and ostensibly knew nothing of the secret part he played. He now proposed to marry this girl. Soon afterwards the scheme became conscious, and the man took the first steps towards putting it into effect. I supported his intentions, since it offered what was a possible way out of his difficult situation even though an irregular one. But presently there came a dream which showed hostility to the girl; and now once more he consulted Schermann, who reported that the girl was childish and neurotic and should not be married. This time the great observer of human nature was right. The girl, who was by now regarded as the man's *fiancée*, behaved in a more and more contradictory manner, and it was decided that she should be analysed. As a result of the analysis the scheme for the marriage was abandoned. The girl had a complete unconscious knowledge of the relations between her mother and her *fiancé*, and was only attached to him on account of her Oedipus complex.

At about this time our analysis broke off. The patient was free and capable of going his own way in the future. He chose

as his wife a respectable girl outside his family circle—a girl on whom Schermann has passed a favourable judgement. Let us hope that this time he will be right once more.

You will have grasped the sense in which I am inclined to interpret these experiences of mine with Schermann. You will see that all my material touches only on the single point of thought-transference. I have nothing to say about all the other miracles that are claimed by occultism. My own life, as I have already openly admitted, has been particularly poor in an occult sense.¹ Perhaps the problem of thought-transference may seem very trivial to you in comparison with the great magical world of the occult. But consider what a momentous step beyond what we have hitherto believed would be involved in this hypothesis alone. What the custodian of [the basilica of] Saint-Denis used to add to his account of the saint's martyrdom remains true. Saint-Denis is said, after his head was cut off, to have picked it up and to have walked quite a distance with it under his arm. But the custodian used to remark: '*Dans des cas pareils, ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.*' The rest is easy.²

¹ [See a passage introduced in 1907 into *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901*b*), Chapter XII (D).]

² [The *mot* was Madame du Deffand's. See her letter to Walpole of June 6, 1767.]