of very early feelings of guilt and of early reparation mechanisms led her to think of an early super-ego. This primitive super-ego was a much earlier structure than it had been for Freud, and was not necessarily the heir of the Oedipus Complex, as early introjections of pre-genital forms entered into its development.

This first period in the development of her psychoanalytic theories formed the basis of Klein's future explorations. Even though many of her initial propositions were later modified, they provided the bedrock from which she could move forward, developing and expanding her theories of the mind.

CHAPTER 2

Freud and Klein on the concept of phantasy

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One of Freud’s earliest discoveries was that in the Unconscious, memories and phantasies are not distinguished – hence his abandonment of his earliest theory of neurosis, the ‘seduction’ or ‘affect trauma’ theory. From that time onwards phantasies have been of central interest. In this chapter I will discuss the ideas of Freud and Klein on this most interesting and complex concept; then I will discuss my own use of it in two psychoanalytic sessions.

Considering its importance, it is perhaps surprising that Freud did not devote even a paper to the concept of phantasy, let alone a book. His ideas on it are scattered about in the first twenty years of his psychoanalytic writings. His most explicit theoretical statements about it are to be found in his paper ‘Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning’ in 1911 and in Lecture 23 of the Introductory Lectures in Psycho-Analysis (1916). In her work with children Klein gradually developed a rather different view from that of Freud. Klein’s view was explicitly stated by Susan Isaacs (1948) and was the central theoretical issue of the Controversial Discussions in the British Psycho-Analytical Society in 1943 (King and Steiner, 1991). The various views on phantasy voiced at the Discussions are clearly described and discussed by Anne Hayman (1989).

One of the difficulties in expounding the differences between Freud’s and Klein’s views on phantasy is that Freud uses the term rather differently in different places. In ‘Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning’, which is the place where he comes closest to making a formal definition, he speaks of phantasy as a wish-fulfilling activity which can arise when an instinctual wish is frustrated. Phantasies derive ultimately from unconscious impulses, the basic instincts of sex and aggression. I shall call this Freud’s ‘central usage’. (It is well expounded by Sandler and Nagera,
In understanding Freud's central usage it is important to remember that his idea of phantasy, like his work on dreams, is closely bound up with the development of his topographical model of the mind (see Chapter 7 of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, SE 5; his papers 'Repression', 1915d; and 'The unconscious', 1915e; Sandler et al., 1997). In the topographical model of the mind, conceptualized as the System Unconscious, the System Preconscious, and the System Conscious, there is a double focus, first on the attributes of consciousness and unconsciousness, and secondly on primary and secondary process. The 'secondary process' Freud defined as the rational thinking of ordinary logic; the 'primary process' he thought of as a much more peculiar system of logic, characteristic of the System Unconscious, in which opposites are equated, there is no sense of time, no negation, no conflict.

Although Freud thought that some unconscious phantasies might be 'unconscious all along', he thought that most phantasies originated as conscious or preconscious daydreams and might subsequently be repressed. As he puts it in 'Hysterical phantasies and their relation to bisexuality' (1908), the unconscious phantasies of hysterics 'have either been unconscious all along and have been formed in the unconscious; or - as is more often the case - they were once conscious phantasies, day-dreams, and have since been purposely forgotten and have become unconscious through repression' (1908, p. 161). In Freud's view the basic motive force for making phantasies is an unconscious wish that is blocked from fulfillment, and the phantasy is a disguised expression and partial fulfillment of this unconscious wish. If phantasies are formed in the System Conscious or if they are allowed into it, that is, if they are daydreams, they are known not to be true. If they are formed in the System Preconscious or if they are repressed into it, they will be descriptively unconscious but formed according to the everyday logic of the secondary process. If phantasies are further repressed into the System Unconscious, they become subject to the peculiar logic of the primary process; they 'proliferate in the dark', as Freud put it, and from their position in the System Unconscious they may become indistinguishable from memories and may also find their way into dreams, symptoms, symptomatic acts, further preconscious and conscious phantasies, and other drive derivatives.

Freud's 'central usage', with its emphasis on phantasies being formed according to the logical thinking of the secondary process, is the usage that was adopted by Anna Freud, by the Viennese analysts during the Controversial Discussions, and by several British analysts, notably Marjorie Bricley (King and Steiner, 1991). This is the usage that has been adopted by ego psychologists, the Contemporary Freudian group of analysts in Britain, and also by many independent analysts (see Hayman, 1989).

In Freud's view, although there are phantasies in the System Unconscious, the basic unit of the System Unconscious is not phantasy but the unconscious instinctual wish. The making of dreams and the making of phantasies are parallel processes; one might speak of 'phantasy work' as comparable to the 'dream work'; both involve transformation of primary unconscious content into a disguised form. For Klein, on the contrary, unconscious phantasies are the primary unconscious content, and dreams are a transformation of it. For Freud, the prime mover, so to speak, is the unconscious wish; dreams and phantasies are both disguised derivatives of it. For Klein the prime mover is unconscious phantasy.

I think that Freud and Klein emphasized contrasting aspects of the everyday usage of the word 'phantasy'. The word contains an inherent contradiction both in English and I believe also in German. It has a connotation of the imagination and creativity that underlie all thought and feeling, but it also has a connotation of make believe, a daydream, something that is untrue by the standards of material reality (see Rycroft, 1968; Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973; Steiner, 1988; Britton, 1995). Freud's central usage emphasizes the fictitious, wish-fulfilling aspect of the everyday usage whereas Klein's usage tends to focus on the imaginative aspect.

But this relatively clear-cut contrast between Freud and Klein is complicated by the fact that Freud's 'central usage' is not by any means his only usage. Further, he moves easily from one implied definition to another without being finicky about his formulations. In some of his early work he seems at times almost to equate unconscious phantasy with unconscious wish (1900, p. 574); at others he speaks of phantasies largely as conscious or preconscious daydreams (1900, pp. 491–8). In his clinical work he deduces phantasies of quite surprising content, phantasies of which the patient was presumably unaware. He assumes, for example, that the Wolf Man when he was one and a half years old had a phantasy of being inside his mother's womb so as to intercept his father's penis (1920b, pp. 101–3). It is not clear whether Freud thought the Wolf Man was consciously aware of this phantasy at the time and repressed it later, or whether it never became conscious at all. Freud deduces similarly striking phantasies in the case of Dora (1905a), though he does not discuss their precise topographical status. Some of Dora's phantasies were presumably conscious, such as her phantasy of revenge on her father. Some were probably at least descriptively unconscious, such as her phantasy of fellatio, of the female genital (the 'nymphae in the 'thick wood'), that is, the labia minora in the public hair), her phantasy of defloration, of bearing Herr K's child, and her homosexual love for Frau K.

It seems likely that Freud always tacitly assumed that at least some phantasies may originate directly in the System Unconscious without being...
originally preconscious or conscious derivatives of unconscious wishes. Indeed in 1916 he speaks of 'primal phantasies' which he thinks are inherited; these are the phantasies of the primal scene, of castration, of seduction by an adult. He does not mean, he makes clear, that parental intercourse is never seen, that threats of castration do not occur, or that seduction does not happen in reality. But he thinks that these phantasies will occur even if external reality does not support them because they are once, to quote him, 'real occurrences in the primitive times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth' (Lecture 23 of the Introductory Lectures, 1916, p. 371). Most of Freud's followers have not adopted this view, thinking of it as too Lamarckian. But with some alteration I think it is not far away from Klein's notion of inherent knowledge of bodily organs or from Bion's idea of 'preconceptions' waiting to mate with experience to form conceptions (see Chapter 12).

In summary, Freud is not punctilious in his definition of phantasy. He uses the term in several senses and, as Laplanche and Pontalis point out, he is more concerned with the transformation of one sort of phantasy into one another than with any static definition (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, pp. 314–19). What I have called his 'central usage', however, is that one that has been adopted by most of his immediate followers.

What, then, is Klein's view of unconscious phantasy and why did it arouse so much controversy?

Basically Klein focuses on the 'unconscious all along' aspect of phantasy. She regards phantasy as a basic mental activity present in rudimentary form from birth onwards and essential for mental growth, though it can also be used defensively. Klein developed this view of phantasy through her work with children, especially through discovering that children accompanied all their activities by a constant stream of phantasy even when they were not being frustrated by external reality. As for example Fritz and the letters of the alphabet, one of many examples:

For in his phantasies the lines in his exercise book were roads, the book itself was the whole world and the letters rode into it on motor bicycles, i.e. on the pen. Again, the pen was a boat and the exercise book a lake. ... In general he regarded the small letters as the children of the capital letters. The capital S he looked upon as the emperor of the long German s's; it had two hooks at the end of it to distinguish it from the empress, the terminal s, which had only one hook. (Klein, 1923a, p. 100)

Klein developed her idea of phantasy gradually from 1919 onwards, stressing particularly the damaging effect of inhibition of phantasy in the development of the child, the ubiquity of phantasies about the mother's body and its contents, the variety of phantasies about the primal scene and the Oedipus Complex, the intensity of both aggressive and loving phantasies, the combination of several phantasies to form what she called the depressive position - the paranoid-schizoid position was to come later, in 1946 - the development of phantasies of internal objects, and, of course, the expression of all these phantasies in the play of children and the thinking and behaviour of adults. Essentially I think that Klein viewed unconscious phantasy as synonymous with unconscious thought, and that she perhaps used the term 'phantasy' rather than 'thought' because the thoughts of her child patients were more imaginative and less rational than ordinary adult thought is supposed to be. Further, Klein thought that it was possible to deduce the phantasies of infants from her analyses of small children, assuming that she was discovering the infant in the child much as Freud had discovered the child in the adult (Britton, 1995).

So important was the concept of phantasy in Klein's thinking that the British Society made it the central scientific topic of the Controversial Discussions of the 1940s (King and Steiner, 1991), the aim of the discussions being to see whether Klein's ideas were to be regarded as heresy or development. It was Susan Isaacs, however, who gave the definitive paper, 'The nature and function of phantasy' (1948). In it Isaacs stressed the link between Klein's concept of phantasy and Freud's concept of drive. She defined phantasy as 'the primary content of unconscious mental processes, 'the mental corollary, the psychic representative, of instinct' (Isaacs, 1948). Phantasies are the equivalent of what Freud meant by the 'instinctual representative' or the 'psychic representative of an instinctual drive'.

Isaacs, like Klein, particularly emphasizes the idea that everyone has a continual stream of unconscious phantasy, and, further, that abnormality or normality rest not on the presence or absence of unconscious phantasy but on how it is expressed, modified, and related to external reality. She distinguishes between conscious and unconscious phantasy and suggests the 'ph' spelling to distinguish the latter. (Nowadays most British analysts use the 'ph' spelling for all phantasies, I believe because it is sometimes difficult to be sure whether phantasies are conscious or unconscious.)

Isaacs' and Klein's definition of phantasy is thus much wider than Freud's central usage. In the Kleinian view, unconscious phantasy is the mainspring, the original and essential content of the unconscious mind. It includes very early forms of infantile thought, but it also includes other forms that emerge later on in development. Freud's central usage, the wish-fulfilling definition of phantasy, is a specific and more limited form, a particular type of phantasy within Klein's more inclusive definition. In the Controversial Discussions Klein and Isaacs did not stress this relationship between their all-inclusive definition and the wish-fulfilling definition of phantasy as a particular type within
it. Certainly the argument in the Discussions was made more difficult by the fact that each faction was using the same word for a different concept; much of the time the two factions talked past each other. Sometimes the Viennese seemed to assume that Klein’s definition of phantasy was the same as their own, so that they could not understand how Klein could possibly say that phantasies occurred in very early infantile life, since this would have meant that very small infants were capable of secondary process thinking. At other times Glover and Anna Freud specifically criticized Klein for broadening the concept of phantasy so much that it included everything and hence had become meaningless. Ronald Britton has suggested that Isaacs probably did not fully clarify the difference in definitions because she did not want to emphasize Klein’s difference from Freud, for Klein and her colleagues were worried that Glover might succeed in banishing them from the Society on the grounds that they differed from Freud and were therefore not ‘legitimate’ (Britton, 1998b).

Freud is not very specific in making conjectures about the nature of early infantile thought. Klein called such thought phantasy and assumed that it was closely linked to bodily experience. She assumes that fantasizing starts very early, in some primitive form ‘from the beginning’ as she was fond of saying. She did not bother much about Freud’s distinction between the System Unconscious and the System Preconscious, between primary and secondary process thinking (see Chapter 11). Klein and Isaacs assumed that phantasies could be formed according to primary process thinking — indeed that primary and secondary process thinking were very much intertwined.

Isaacs assumes that the earliest phantasies are experienced mainly as visceral sensations and urges, the other senses of touch, smell, sound, taste, and sight being added later and gradually. Such unconscious phantasies can perhaps be regarded as similar to the ‘thing presentations’ that Freud describes in ‘The Unconscious’ (1915e). Isaacs makes much use of the principle of genetic continuity to link these very early phantasies with the more structured verbal phantasies of the older child and the adult. She assumes that what is experienced is a sensation and an impulse, together with a feeling of something happening that is involved with the sensation and may have an effect on it; looked at from the perspective of an outside observer, the ‘something’ is some aspect of external reality. From the perspective of the infant, things are assumed to be inside him. Hinshelwood describes it as follows:

An unconscious phantasy is a belief in the activity of concretely felt ‘internal’ objects. This is a difficult concept to grasp. A somatic sensation tugs along with it a mental experience that is interpreted as a relationship with an object that wishes to cause that sensation, and is loved or hated by the subject according to whether the object is well-meaning or has evil intentions (i.e. a pleasant or unpleasant sensation). Thus an unpleasant sensation is mentally represented as a relationship with a ‘bad’ object that intends to hurt and damage the subject ... Conversely, when he is fed, the infant’s experience is of an object, which we can identify as mother, or her milk, but which the infant identifies as an object in his tummy, benevolently motivated to cause pleasant sensations there. (Hinshelwood, 1989, pp. 34–5; emphasis in original)

Slowly through introjection and projection a complex phantasy world of self and internal objects is built up, some of it conscious, but reaching to the unconscious depths. This notion of internal objects and the internal world was and has continued to be central in Kleinian thought (see Chapter 8). This internal world is imaginary by the standards of material reality, but possesses what Freud calls ‘psychic’ reality, that is, to the individual concerned it feels real at some level, conscious or unconscious, and it is also real in the sense that it affects his behaviour. It is noteworthy too that in the unconscious aspects of the internal world Klein and Isaacs think of phantasies as combining both ideas and feeling, another difference from Freud, who spoke of the system Unconscious as the realm of ideas and memory traces and was never entirely resolved about the status of unconscious feelings.

Early phantasies are omnipotent: ‘I want it, I’ve got it’; ‘I don’t want it, it’s gone!’ They are stated by Isaacs to have many attributes Freud thought to be characteristic of the primary process — no coordination of impulses, no sense of time, no contradiction, no negation. But Klein also thought of unconscious impulses and phantasies being in conflict with each other in the Unconscious; unconscious conflict between love and hate, between a good self and a bad self, between a good mother and a bad mother were conceptions she found appropriate and useful, though in Freud’s topographical conceptualization wishes (and wishful phantasies) in the System Unconscious are in conflict not directly with each other but indirectly through their contact with the regulating ego.

Klein and Isaacs assume that the expression of unconscious phantasy in words comes very much later than their original sensory formulation. Indeed, some unconscious phantasies about infantile experience are never formally articulated in words, though words may be the means unconsciously used to communicate them by evoking them in an external person. To give an example: in a stormy session a young woman abused me in a most persecuting manner for being profoundly boring. This was shortly before a holiday break which she was extending by leaving early. She was consciously aware of having a long-standing grudge against her parents for leaving her when she was very young, but what she was not aware of was that she (and probably her parents as well) had a profound sense of unworthiness and inadequacy over their leaving. She assumed that if she had been loveable and interesting her parents would not have left her. In this session she became the parents.
leaving me as the boring, stupid, miserable child, and her anger both expressed and disguised the guilt and self-justification that she unconsciously assumed her parents had felt, that she unconsciously thought I was feeling about my holiday, and that she was feeling about leaving me first. At this point in her analysis she could not talk about or even know about these feelings; she could express them only by enacting the experience and its associated phantasies. My task as analyst was to realize that my emotions were to some extent her emotions, and to find words for the phantasies the emotions embodied.

Klein and Isaacs assume that phantasies affect the perception of external reality, but, equally, that external reality affects phantasies, that there is a continual interplay between them. This assumption, namely, that actual external events are interpreted and understood, experienced in other words, in terms of pre-existing phantasies and that phantasies may be modified to take experience of events into account, is a basic premise in Kleinian thought. The first part of this assumption caused considerable argument during the Controversial Discussions and subsequently as well, for many analysts disputed Klein's assertion that an infant or child could have, say, attacking and destructive phantasies without having been destructively attacked. In the Kleinian view such phantasies of attack may conceivably be a realization of a hereditary disposition, though they may also arise from earlier experiences of bodily sensations of discomfort, as described above in the quotation from Hinselwood. The argument about which is primary, pre-existing phantasies or external events is an expression of a more general and in my opinion unproductive psychoanalytic argument about the relative priority of heredity and environment - unproductive because psychoanalytic evidence for deciding the issue in particular cases is usually not available.

Phantasies are now viewed by Kleinians as crucially important in the development of logical thought, as they are used as hypotheses to be confirmed or disproved by experiences of external reality, an idea explicitly added to the Kleinian conception of phantasy by Hanna Segal (1964), (see also Segal, 1997b). External reality thus often operates not only as a stimulus or cause of phantasies but as a confirmation or disproof of them. One does not have to see a breast being cut to pieces to have a phantasy of it, but for one's mother's breast to ooze blood and pus is likely to be felt as an alarming confirmation of a phantasy of attack, or a disturbing disproof of a phantasy of a loving and well-cared-for breast able to stand up to attack. The testing of phantasies against reality does not mean that earlier more omnipotent phantasies are necessarily abandoned; they remain but are added to by more sophisticated versions in keeping with experiences of external reality. And often the more sophisticated versions are used to deny the psychic reality of the cruder and perhaps earlier phantasies (Britton, 1995).

Klein and Isaacs assume that phantasies are not used solely to express unconscious impulses and wishes. Mechanisms of defence too are expressed through phantasy. Projection, introjection, splitting, idealization, denial, repression are abstract terms that describe general psychic processes but a given individual's use of them is expressed through a particular phantasy. Phantasies expressing particular impulses and defences do not operate in isolation. Gradually they are built up into a complex system which is the individual's own unique way of being, of relating to the world, of maintaining his balance. The concept of phantasy is thus central to the idea of the organization of the personality as a whole.

It is hardly surprising that in the Controversial Discussions of the 1940s Anna Freud, Glover and their associates were not convinced by Isaacs' arguments nor she by theirs. As I have said, they meant such different things by the same term, phantasy, that they were talking past each other. I think it is worth asking, however, what is the effect on our clinical approach of these differing conceptions of phantasy. The effects should not be exaggerated. All analysts, regardless of school of thought, and regardless of their definition of the concept of phantasy, use the idea of unconscious thoughts and feelings. In Kleinian analysis such thoughts and feelings are called unconscious phantasy; in classical analysis they are called drive derivatives, and the term phantasy is used only for one particular form of drive derivative. But the conception of unconscious thoughts and feelings is of crucial importance to all analysts.

In the case of classical analysis, though I cannot speak with certainty, it seems to me that the concept of phantasy is used relatively rarely and more usually in its conscious than its unconscious form; further, only a few papers have been written about it, and they are mainly clarifications of Freud's views and further examinations of them in terms of the structural model (see Frees, 1962; Sandler and Nagera, 1963; Arlow, 1969a, 1969b; Sandler and Sandler, 1986, though in this paper the Sandlers go beyond Freud's formulations to link the concept of unconscious phantasy with their later formulations of the past and present unconscious). As I have described above, Freud himself made daring leaps in deducing the content of phantasies. Nowadays such imaginative interpretation of phantasies and dreams is more rare; clinical work is more focused on ego defences. There is perhaps an exception in the case of J. and A. M. Sandler, with their reintroduction of the topographical model and their use of the term 'fantasy' instead of 'impulse' because 'in all these impulses relations between self and object representations are involved and... the defensive transformations that occur in the present unconscious involve to a substantial degree, modifications of fantasy interaction between self and object' (Sandler and Sandler, 1984, 373n; see also Sandler and Sandler, 1983, 1986 and 1987).
Klein's discoveries about the phantasies of small children led her to be very aware of their intense bodily concreteness, their concern with birth, death, the primal scene, babies, faeces, urine, murderous hatred and equally violent love. Her descriptions of phantasies are as graphic and surprising as those of Freud. For example:

One day while Ruth was once again devoting her attention exclusively to her sister, she drew a picture of a tumbler with some small round balls inside and a kind of lid on top. I asked her what the lid was for, but she would not answer me. On her sister repeating the question, she said it was to prevent the balls from rolling out'. Before this, she had gone through her sister's bag and then shut it tightly 'so that nothing should fall out of it'. She had done the same with the purse inside the bag so as to keep the coins safely shut up ... I now made a venture and told Ruth that the balls in the tumbler, the coins in the purse and the contents of the bag all meant children in her Mummy's inside, and that she wanted to keep them safely shut up so as not to have any more brothers and sisters. The effect of my interpretation was astonishing. For the first time Ruth turned her attention to me and began to play in a different, less constrained way. (Klein, 1932, pp. 26-7)

Or again:

As I was putting a wet sponge beside one of them [a doll] as she had done, she burst out crying again and screamed, 'No, she musn't have the big sponge, that's not for children, that's for grown ups!' I may remark that in her two previous sessions she had brought up a lot of material concerning her envy of her mother. I now interpreted this material in connection with her protest against the big sponge which represented her father's penis. I showed her in every detail how she envied and hated her mother because the latter had incorporated her father's penis during coitus, and how she wanted to steal his penis and the children out of her mother's inside and kill her mother. I explained to her that this was why she was frightened and believed that she had killed her mother or would be deserted by her. ... Gradually she sat up and watched the course of the play with growing interest and even began to take an active part in it herself. ... [When] the nurse came ... she was surprised to find her happy and cheerful and to see her say goodbye to me in a friendly and even affectionate way. (Klein, 1932, p. 28)

Nowadays, like our classical colleagues, many Kleinian analysts have become more cautious about interpreting phantasies so boldly and so concretely (I have discussed this in Spillius, 1988b, pp. 8-9). In spite of this change, I think there has been a change in the analysis of phantasies, it is perhaps that there is an increasing tendency to see how they are lived out in the analytic session as well as how they are expressed in symbolic content.

Considering that Kleinians regard unconscious phantasy as such an important concept, it is perhaps surprising that little has been written about it since Isaacs, even less than in the case of classical analysts (but see Segal, 1964, 1997b; Joseph, 1981; Hinselwood, 1989; Britton, 1995). I think little has been written because the concept is now taken for granted. Much of the work on the development of thinking, for example, relies on Klein's theory of phantasy and changes in the content and functions of phantasy in the movement from the paranoid schizoid to the depressive position. Similarly much of the work on psychic equilibrium and pathological organizations uses the concept of phantasy. In fact I find it difficult to illustrate the way I use the concept clinically because it is so ubiquitous that it comes into everything. That, of course, was one of the objections that Glover, Anna Freud, and others made to Klein's usage: all mental functions were encapsulated into this one concept.

But having said that, let me describe some clinical material which illustrates a phantasy that was of central importance in the life of one of my patients; in this session it was expressed not only in dreams but also in the relationship between patient and analyst.

Mr II suffered from what Klein calls persecutory depression (Klein, 1957; Riesenberg-Malcolm, 1981). He reproached himself endlessly for being useless, a failure, damaging to everyone. In spite of his self-reproaches, however, he was not really curious about the harm he was actually doing and might have done in the past, and he seemed more interested in berating himself than in putting the damage right. The phantasies underlying his destructiveness and self-destructiveness emerged in these two sessions partly in dreams and partly through our mutual acting out in the session.

_Tuesday's session_

He woke very anxious having had a _dream_.

There was an open flat space covered about two inches deep in some sort of white stuff. He doesn't know what it was - chalk? cheese? breadcrumbs? He was condemned to eat this stuff forever. Other people didn't seem to be under the same pressure.

He had no ideas about the dream, was too anxious even to tackle it. He was very stuck, hopeless, despairing. He was failing me, failing his wife, failing himself, and it was all his fault. I made several interpretations to the effect that he wanted me to feel what it was like to be helpless - I couldn't help him...
even to think why he was so anxious and frantic, just as he hadn't been able to help his frantic, anxious mother.

Wednesday
He had lost his cheque card and then forgot he had lost it. It was like his homework when he was a child - he used to forget to do it and then forgot he had forgotten it. There was always a vague area of persecution. (Pause) 'Why didn't my mother see to it that I did it?'

He had lost his cheque card and then forgot he had lost it. It was like his voice.) 'I didn't want to let go,' he went on, 'I wanted to preserve the persecution. It would have been infinitely simpler to have done the homework.'

I agreed with this and added that perhaps he expected me to get tangled up in forgetting and ignoring whatever the homework might be now.

His reply to that was that he had had another dream.

There was a plaque. It was my job to discover what it was. It took hours to work it out. Once I had done so, I could forget it.

He paused, then said he thought it had something to do with the area covered with crumbs in the dream of yesterday, but said he couldn't get much further.

I drew his attention to the contrast between the two dreams. In the crumbs dream he has to eat the stuff forever; in the plaque dream he has to discover what it was and then he could leave it. I said I thought perhaps both represented his analysis, about which he had such mixed feelings. Perhaps the crumbs were a way of saying that was all he got from me...

'No!' he suddenly said. 'They weren't crumbs. It was bread, I can see it now. It was as if it had been gouged out, torn apart.'

After a pause I drew his attention to the violence of that image, as if he couldn't bear what he had done so that he made it bland and flat.

'And white!' he added, 'Very white. You're right, it's a massacre, it's white so as not to be bloody.' Pause. In this pause I was remembering material that was well-known to both of us, namely, that when he was a baby his mother had had a breast abscess so that her breast had bled when she fed him. Meanwhile Mr H went on to a new and different thought. 'I don't know why I should think of that baby who drowned,' he said. (This was a case reported in the newspaper of a baby drowning; the mother tried to rescue the baby, jumped in after him, and drowned as well.)

I said that death by drowning was the revenge he expected to be taken on him for having made so violent an attack. I thought it was an idea he had of getting inside me, inside my breast as he perhaps once felt he had got inside his mother's, tearing it apart, gouging it out, so that when it tried to feed him it would drown him in blood as well as milk. And I would drown with him because I could not feed him or save him, and this painful situation would be endlessly perpetuated.

'Christ,' he said. 'And all this is going on without a person knowing anything about it.'

It is very difficult to describe what he conveyed by the way he said this. On the one hand he seemed to be laughing at me, as if saying 'What utter nonsense my analyst talks!' On the other hand he seemed to be saying that what I had said was absolutely right, and it horrified him to think of the things he was feeling and thinking without his being aware of them. It was an odd combination of triumph and compliance. I was not quick enough to get hold of this contradiction at the time. Instead I said: 'A "person" is an odd way of putting it. Clearly you mean yourself, but I think you also mean me and your mother. I think you feel I ought to know just as your mother should have known how dreadful you felt about what was happening when you were a baby and later about your homework, and now I should realise how hopeless you feel.'

He said: 'So my punishment is to have to eat the stuff forever and ever.'

By this time I think I had lost him. He had had a moment of truth earlier in the session, but now he was slipping back into his usual melancholic rumination in which he was bad and I could not help him. If I were doing this session again, I think that is what I would say. But at the time I was optimistically trying to save him; just like the mother who tried to save her baby by jumping in after him.

In fact what I said was that I thought he had a theory that he was saving his mother and saving me by punishing himself forever. But actually what seemed gradually to be becoming clearer was that punishing himself was a way of not knowing about his own destructiveness and neglect. I said I thought his plaque dream seemed to be saying that if he could find out what it was, which I thought meant whatever he'd really done and whatever I'd really done and his mother had really done, then he could be allowed to forget. That was the end of the session.

As I have indicated, I think Mr H had an unconscious phantasy of a crime that he could not face and know and that could not be forgotten unless it was known. In the first dream it was expressed as white stuff he had to eat...
forever; in the second he could be allowed to forget something if he could discover what it was. His phantasy of a bloodthirsty attack disguised as bland white stuff was thus expressed in the visual symbols of the dreams, further clarified by his associations. But my patient’s phantasy of attack was also unconsciously lived out in the session, and in a more subtle form than his expression of it in the dreams. It began with his realization that the bread-crumbs were white so as not to be bloody. I think he knew, given the work we had done in the past, that I would be likely to interpret this as his attack on his mother’s breast and on me. Then came his sudden switch to the image of the mother jumping in after the baby and drowning too. I failed to realize at the time that I was about to jump in after my patient by making a premature and overly symbolic interpretation about his attack on the breast. To this he responded by his peculiar mixture of triumph and compliance and then by relapsing into his familiar masochistic defence of punishing himself (and me, and his parents) forever.

An additional element in this interaction, which was repeated in many other sessions, was that Mr H was behaving towards me as he felt his mother had behaved towards him. She was (and is, by his account) self-centred, extremely anxious, and constantly makes my patient feel that there is nothing he can do to help her, which of course makes him angry as well as guilty. My patient punishes himself endlessly for this anger and his phantasies of attack on her, but the exquisite irony of his self-punishment is that it is based on an identification with his mother. He is as neglectful and self-indulgent as she is; he fails to thrive in his life and his work, is a constant source of worry to his parents, and thus punishes them even more than himself. And this, as you may imagine, is what he attempts to live out in his analysis over and over again.

**Conclusion**

In summary, I think Freud’s idea is that the prime mover of psychic life is the unconscious wish, not phantasy. The ‘work’ of making phantasies and the ‘work’ of making dreams are parallel processes in which forbidden unconscious wishes achieve disguised expression and partial fulfilment. For Freud himself, especially in his central usage, and even more for his immediate followers, phantasies are conceived as imagined fulfilsments of frustrated wishes. Whether they originate in the System Conscious or the System Preconscious, they are an activity of the ego and are formed according to the principles of the secondary process. That is not the whole story, however, because phantasies may get repressed into the System Unconscious where they become associated with the instinctual wishes, become subject to the laws of the primary process, and may find their way into dreams and many other derivatives. And there are the primal, phylogenetic phantasies, also capable of being directly incorporated into dreams.

For Klein unconscious phantasies play the part that Freud assigned to the unconscious wish. They underlie dreams rather than being parallel to them - a much more inclusive definition of phantasy than Freud’s. The earliest and most deeply unconscious phantasies are bodily, and only gradually, with maturation and developing experience through introjection and projection do some of them come to take a verbal form. Freud’s central usage, the wish-fulfilling definition of phantasy, is a particular type of phantasy within Klein’s more inclusive definition. In Klein’s usage, unconscious phantasies underlie not only dreams but all thought and activity, both creative and destructive, including the expression of internal object relations in the analytic situation.

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