

THE FATHER IN PHOBIA

ADDRESS TO THE CHILD ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP FREUD MUSEUM

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In this short reading of the case of Little Hans, I start, and end, as always, but in this case more aptly, with that figure whose name still designates, after Freud in 1938 made it the most important acquisition of psychoanalysis, the kind of irreducible figuration which cannot be grasped without mediation, and one which has perhaps never constituted the final answer to the riddle it still poses: the riddle of existence itself.

There are at least two sides to Oedipus. There is Oedipus as myth, which, in Levi-Strauss' definition means the (narrative) reworking of logical attempts to solve a contradiction or an impossibility; attempt which, like the fundamental fantasy, is ultimately untranslatable, not subject to condensation and displacement, though it can be (re)constructed. Whereupon it appears as another myth, like Darwin's and Freud's deduction of the primal father of the horde. It invariably deals with the problem of origins and invariably inserts a structure into the real retroactively, so that the problem can shift from the first appearance of a structure to the problem of the subject's first appearance in a structure. This is the second aspect or Oedipus complex, or again, the individual myth (of the neurotic), which Lacan called the dream of Freud, with a variable, manifest content, something that is subject to condensation and displacement and has to be interpreted. It is the place from which the question "what is a father?" can be asked.

Here we have moved from Oedipus as guarantor of the formal structure of kinship relations, which is already a solution to it, to the kind of fairytale format in which Freud attempts to convey to Hans what he has let himself in for in being born, the place assigned to him. And if it ends by Hans coming to regard his father as rival as preordained by Freud, it starts first of all as the place from which an Oedipus can become himself by braving the test of the sphinx, by answering the question of what he wants to be for this image of the seductive, devouring mother with a lion's body who confronts him with her enigmatic desire: "a man", certainly, but, ultimately, a proper name, "Hans".

The rock barring this passage is that there is already a man on the scene, the father. Oedipus could well ask "who is this insolent stooge barring my way?" just as Hans thought his father was too proud and should fall like Fritzl. The question, however, is not just: "Why is he there when I am happy with mother?", or, at the opposite extreme: "Why is he not there when I am afraid of Mother?", but where does he fit in? Hans phrases this as "In which way do I belong to Daddy?". The question of what a father might be, and so too what a mother is, is not initially the same question as "What makes a man?" (and so what does a woman want?). The ideal function of Oedipus has always been seen as bringing these two questions together in the idea of a "genital love" in the service of reproduction.

Without answering these questions the subject cannot find his way about in a structure which has the effect of law, in which only a grasp of the laws of meaning

give access to the meaning of the Law. We know that for Lacan it is the agency of the Name-of-the-Father which makes of desire the reverse side of the law in the prohibition of incest, but it is easily forgotten that this does not happen without the preservation of a supposition: that there is somewhere a father of *jouissance*; a supposition which is easily unmasked as the core of the Ideal father of the obsessional, for example.

Hence, in charting Hans' struggle to make sense of distinctions like man/ woman and daddy/mummy, we have to remember that anatomy is not destiny from the outset¹, that there is consequently a difference between person and function, between real and symbolic father for example. Secondly, we must distinguish Hans' experience of his struggle from the "oedipal" interpretations his father and Freud impose on it. To rephrase, one must not confuse the Oedipus complex, seen for the male as a passage from the love of mother to the love of another woman, with the "libidinal organisation" of the subject it comes to shape, even though the resolution of the complex coincides with the final "genital" stage in Freud's *Infantile Organisation* of 1924.

Yet one can try and evaluate the course Hans has to run, the changes in his questions, in his positioning of the phallus, or himself in relation to it, in his infantile beliefs and theories, in his relations with his objects (stages), in his guilty wishes, in relation to the changes in his perception of his father and of the necessity of his function. A broad summary will have to suffice for the purposes of this paper. There are at least three:

1. The father who may not have a widdler and is superfluous;
2. The father who is loved and is a companion in his transgressive fantasies;
3. The father as someone who knows and has attributes Hans covets, like the hairs on his chest for example, which is the oedipal father he can come to hate as rival.

How do the various threats of castration Hans encounters fit in with his phobia? Why does a certain logic of the "white horse" replace that of having or not having widdlers? To attempt to answer these questions we have to evaluate the mass of detail Hans' case provides in relation to our views of what the oedipal passage requires ideally, which is the way Freud proceeded. Here too, I will isolate three moments:

1. Mother's no;
2. Fear of a biting horse;
3. Fear of a falling horse and cart and entry into Oedipus.

which make it apparent that, as various commentators have pointed out, the phobia is only a way into the Oedipus, not a solution to it.

Repression

Freud maintains in *Symptoms, Inhibition and Anxiety* that the threat of castration is at the source of the anxiety which produces repression, which in turn plays a role in the

¹ Lacan only takes seriously Freud's dictum that anatomy is destiny by returning to the etymology of anatomy, —where *τομιοσ* is cut, and even, as *εντομια*, the parts of a sacrifice used for solemn oaths,— referring specifically to the forms taken by anatomical cuts in the organism which determine the function of certain objects, objects of the drive, one vicissitude or destiny of which is to fixate desire as repressed. (Cf *Subversion of the subject...*, in *Écrits*)

change of pleasure into unpleasure, or the separation of pleasure from *jouissance*. Freud notes one precise moment when repression sets in with the first distorted dream (at 4 and a half) in which “somebody had to be made to widdle”. At the same time he asks his father to take him out of sight when he has to be helped to widdle. There is little doubt that what provoked this change with respect to the instrument of desire was his mother’s refusal the day before to accept his invitation, in the bath, to enjoy his widdler by touching it. More than a threat of castration, it confronts Hans with a law, that of propriety, and a limit, limit on his ability to satisfy his mother and so on his own *jouissance*, which must remain masturbatory. Most importantly, it opens the question of mother’s desire, for here is a part of him which she doesn’t want. In other words, here is a *jouissance* which escapes the pleasure of being mother’s phallus, *jouissance* which is forbidden and to which no meaning has yet been assigned by anyone. For insofar as he himself remains the phallus in his whole being he cannot inscribe its particular *jouissance* in what he has.

There can be no primal repression without this “no”. First of all it confronts Hans with his own lack, at the phallic stage, meaning that the phallus appears as lacking in the desired image, it appears as $-\varphi$, and thereby operates a disjunction between desire and *jouissance* (*Seminar of 1962/63 on Anxiety*). There is a very clear indication of this in the way the demon of shame appears. We know from *Signification of the Phallus* that it does so at the moment of unveiling of the phallus, of Φ , in the very moment, that is, when Φ is formed as signifier of what is unveiled as lacking in the way of a signified, and, thereafter, whenever a signifier covers a lack. Hans can devise no greater punishment for the maid than the shame if people were to see her widdler. Secondly, as implied in the foregoing, this lack, $-\varphi$, also constitutes Φ as signifier of what is lacking, “impossible to negativise”. That is where we re-find the supposition of *jouissance*. For mother’s “no” applies to the real of phallic *jouissance*, to Hans’ pleasure in his penis, and this symbolic “no” bearing on something real has an imaginary effect precisely insofar as this “no” is not immediately taken on board (*nachtraglichkeit*): it creates the image of something obscene and ferocious, of something that says “no” to the “no” of prohibition, something that is logically an exception to the law of castration. It is only in a second moment, when this exception is confirmed as exception, when “no” is said to this “no” as something inhuman that one speaks of assumption of castration, of founding the class of Φx as a universal, for all $x \in \Phi x$. This last is what Hans cannot yet do.

Phobia

If there is no *Nom* without a *non* (*Non-dupes Errent*, 1973/74), is the *non* enough? It is the paternal metaphor which provokes the dissociation between being it and having it (*Desire and its Interpretation*, 1958/59), their dialectic, but Hans, following the “no” produces a phobia. This is where we have to situate Lacan’s remark in the Seminar of the *Names of the Father* (1963), that phobia is not a metaphor of the father but a return and that a phobic signifier is an all-purpose signifier. It is not a metaphor, and does not produce the phallic signification with which the subject can place himself as having or not having it (that is, Hans has not yet lost or “ceded” his phallus at this point, there is a gap between $-\varphi$ as imaginary castration and acknowledgement of loss in the expectation of gain), but at the same time it is a signifier which localises or binds *jouissance*. It is a return of the totemic animal, meaning the primal father, the real father, the first ancestor (*Names of the Father*). This ancestor is always an animal and hence only placed by myth, in the sense of the first definition given above, rather than found in or given by the Other as symbolic

place. It is not the symbolic father named in genealogy. Rather than facilitating desire, this peculiar name-of-the-father acts as a bulwark against it, —the desire of the Other naturally,— insofar as it makes castration manifest. For there can be no phobia, says Lacan, nor disavowal and displacement of the penis into a fetish, without perception of the mother's real castration (*Signification of the Phallus*), which is the very *Ichspaltung* Freud came back to at the end of his life.

What does Freud tell us about phobia? Firstly, that it is in all respects like an anxiety hysteria, except that no conversion of libido takes place. Instead of somatic symptoms there is a kind of projection.

Secondly, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud says that the “anxiety pertaining to animal phobias is an untransformed fear of castration” and then goes on to reverse his former theory by saying that anxiety produces repression rather than vice versa². A phobia, then, is “a substitute formation born from the pressure of anxiety and having two advantages: it avoids a conflict due to ambivalence (the feared father is also loved) and it enables the ego to cease generating anxiety”.

We could add that it fails with respect to transforming anxiety into desire by means of a fantasy. The object (a) has not been ceded³ in the encounter with the desire of the Other, and the subject, rather than operating with his loss in the double movement of alienation and separation, has a singular relation with his S1 instead. That is also why phobia is not a structure corresponding to a subjective position, but rather a “revolving plate” (*d'Un autre a L'Autre*, 1968-69) which can lead on to either neurosis or perversion. The phobic organises his world by means of an S1, which, not being a metaphor, is, when it returns in the failure of repression, projected into reality. The phobic subject remains alienated from his desire, from Φ , in fear, since this desire only meets the castration of the Other, in anxiety. Hence Lacan's comment that he forewarns himself of it (*désir averti*).

One could further say that it is the most rudimentary attempt of a subject to face the emergence of the real in its triple determination as *jouissance*, the body and death (*Les Non-dupes Errent*). It separates off *jouissance*, both his own and the Other's, in the supposition of an exception to the law of castration and thereby saves the subject from both this latter and his own annihilation. The horse has a relation to a body and its sex insofar as Hans insists on both its “whiteness”, a property of both his mother and his father's body, and on its having a black thing round the mouth, and, not least, insofar as he feels compelled to look at it, once Freud has given him a signifier, “nonsense”, to contain his anxiety somewhat. Indeed, Hans' horse does function on one level as that particular signifier which in hysteria is an attempt to cover the impossible to say of mother's body, that for which no signifier exists in the

² It is interesting that Lacan links his idea of anxiety as the affect which does not deceive to this first theory of direct transformation of libido (*Names of the Father*).

³ As much as the subject needs to cede a part of himself (castration) in the trial of desire, so ought he not to cede his desire itself as caused by this lost part (Seminar on *Ethics*). Lacan grounds this ethic of lack and desire on a legal term, “cession”, one of whose meanings, besides surrender, is to transfer (property): there can be no transference without this loss of an (a). (Seminars: *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 1964 and *Anxiety*, 1962-63). Cession further connotes the most important characteristic of these objects or parts, that they are detachable. Since Lacan claimed in *Non-Dupes Errent* that the object (a) is the most important, if not the only thing he ever invented, it is surprising that, unlike another legal term, foreclosure, cession has not been more widely used.

unconscious, an attempt to represent the female sex, as Dora does in her second dream with *Bahnhof, Friedhof, Vorhof*.

Between the no and the outbreak of the phobia lie almost six months of which we know no more than the second visit to Gmunden. We can only suppose that at some point evidence of his mother's castration came to the fore, though we can also infer that he did not attribute this to the agency of his father. This evidence gives a new dimension to the threats of castration.

What precedes his fear that a white horse will bite him?

1. An anxiety dream that mummy will go away—fear of loss of coaxing;
2. A similar episode in the street;
3. His mother asking him if he put his hand on his widdler.

In other words, he faces the impossibility of leaving mother (with his father) as well as the riddle of her desire following the prohibition of his *jouissance*. This overt fear of her going away, whatever covert wish it masks, is still related to her rejection of his penis, for he makes a strange protest that his aunt does love his “thingigummy”.

Nachtraglichkeit or deferred action is the logical time it takes for an Oedipus to discover he is guilty. Hans too, has plenty to feel guilty about: his playing with his widdler, wishing to beat mummy, to look at her widdler, wishing Hanna dead, defying his father. Just as it is a shepherd who precipitates Oedipus' realisation of his guilt, so it is perhaps a chance encounter with a threat which may have done the same for Hans. At Gmunden, Lizzie's father's warning “don't put your finger to the white horse, or it'll bite you” has the same imperative format as the earlier threat: “don't put your finger to your widdler or Dr A. will cut it off”.

This repetition of the threat might have been enough to convert *τυχη* into *αυτοματων* (*Four Fundamental Concepts*) and precipitate the Oedipus had the father been in a position of real agent, but no guilt can be addressed to a father who does not seem to have it either, let alone deprives others of it. Instead, the phobic response indicates that Hans experiences the extreme necessity⁴ to contain a desire for *jouissance*, his mother's, which no longer mirrors his own, which his puny widdler cannot answer to, something which threatens to overwhelm him. This is the moment when the paternal metaphor is called upon to function. Lacan explains the biting: “Since I can no longer satisfy my mother in anything, she is going to satisfy herself as I satisfy myself when she doesn't satisfy me at all, that is, to bite me as I bite her since this is my last recourse when I am not sure about her love.” (*La Relation d'Objet*, seminar of 56/57). Isolating this in a totemic horse means, as Freud says, that the ego can cease generating anxiety, localising an object of fear instead, as well as, Freud's first point, avoiding ambivalence, though the wish to beat both mummy and horses reappears later.

Perversion

Where is Hans' father in this moment when mother's castration makes itself felt? The

⁴ Beautiful paradox in which, not unlike the join between *τυχη* and *αυτοματων*, it falls to the symptom,—*συμπτωμαίς* what befalls one by chance,— to vehicle the *αναγκη* which the Greeks logically opposed to it, and which it is one task of analysis to bring together.

question is important because it is on the “law introduced by the father” that the outcome of this passage depends, that is, after the production of a phobia as symptom of castration anxiety (*Signification of Phallus*). He does his best to persuade Hans:

- a) that horses don’t bite (he even thinks “finger” is significant because Hans ought to have said “hand” when talking about his Gmunden experience, whereas horses do in fact bite fingers rather than hands);
- b) that he is himself the horse, that he has something to say concerning this unbridled *jouissance*.

The work of analysis is precisely this persistent and laborious hammering away at Oedipal interpretations. Hans responds by progressively diminishing his fear, that is, lessening the threat of castration, perhaps seen as a conflict between separation from his mother and keeping the enjoyment of his widdler —or giving up this latter and vying with Hanna for mother’s love.

His logical solutions to the problem parallel his preoccupations with the attribution of widdlers. He asserts at first that only some, specifically “white” horses bite, then that “not all” white horses bite: a logic of the not-all in a different sense from Lacan’s formula of sexuation for the woman, here the non-universality of castration. This sequence will end with the assertion that “all” bus horses will fall, point in which he re-finds the universal in the form of an obstacle or law. But in this moment of the not-all, the exception, his mother takes him back into bed despite the earlier no, and nothing is resolved.

Why does Hans now alternate his fear with periods of high spirits during which he defies his father and reverses roles, playing at being a horse and biting his father, even “coaxing” with him, while beginning to find his father’s white body lovely, as if this latter were in the position of mummy? Perhaps because the possibility of a perverse solution sketches itself, in this moment in which Hans has “turned to” [*père vers*] the father.

For the enlightenment as to sexual difference which follows has no effect. His first question to his father is again “Have you got one?” which shows what he thinks of his father’s manhood. His second question is “How do little girls widdle then?” as if to indicate that his mother is exempt from this category, and the next day he fantasises about his mother’s widdler. Finally he says “Everyone has got one, it’s fixed in”.

At this point, the father, who is never angry with him except, rarely, when provoked, as he is by Hans butting into him, the father who always directs his anger at mother, far from supporting the law, is the one who helps Hans in transgressing it, like smashing a window, but only so that the policeman can take them away. He no longer fears mother leaving, but wishes he could leave with his father, or failing that, with another agent of the law.

Neurosis

Hans’ later dream where the plumber takes his widdler away shows that he finally accepts it as something that can be lost or exchanged. Similarly, as Lacan has discussed at length, the giraffe episode shows that the phallic trait he himself has drawn can be given to another giraffe. And when he takes the crumpled giraffe away from mother, the big giraffe, and sits down on it, he is taking possession of her

phallus. But this phallus has little to do with the father, —in Hans' mind, this phallus for which he wants to substitute himself is little Hanna. Hans did not opt for the fetish; instead, the “phallogocentric” problematic of neurosis is staged.

As daddy has failed to catch up with him, —for example in Hans' dream, he is in the train behind— it is still up to the horse to make some sense of mother's desire, and there is little doubt that this latter is now located in the idea of birth. The signifier of the horse, as well as the presence of Hanna, has allowed him to address the central question of Oedipus: how does man reproduce himself.

Hans is afraid that a horse with a heavily loaded cart will fall and make a loud row with its feet. Several associations support this phobic idea, the most accentuated being the similarity between babies and *lumfen* both giving the loaded stomach. “Falling down” and “making a row” usually appear together. Hans did both when he refused to be put on the chamber, that is, in the language of libidinal stages (set out in the Seminar *Names of the Father*), when he refused the desire of the Other when it dominated this latter's Demand for the first time, thereby, by means of what is thus retained, desiring to re-evoke what remains of demand in the Other. So now Hans falls down and spits when he sees his mother's drawers which immediately arouse his desire to do *lumf* or widdle. Repression seems to operate, probably due once more to the fact that at some point his mother refused him access when she was on the toilet, a pleasure she had formerly allowed, and which would have provided the occasion for him to see her drawers as well as the absence of the widdler he had so much wanted to look at. But a plethora of undressing fantasies still remain, and the disgust he transfers from *lumf* to babies is not strong enough to suppress his desire to see (he corrects his own slip: hear) this “loud row” made on the toilet, just as he would not have minded seeing rather than just hearing the birth of Hanna. Mother fell down and delivered Hanna with loud “coughing”, and Hanna too, makes a loud row and he wishes she were dropped.

At this point we have:

1. Falling down when refusing the desire of the Other;
2. Falling down when confronted with his own desire for what is forbidden;
3. Falling down as hurting oneself or being lost, and dropped (Fritzl, Hanna).

With this new phobic signification, he can also begin to integrate the “stages” or drives. For this mixture of desire and disgust at the “anal stage”, enjoying to be made to do *lumf* and widdle, desiring to see and hear the Other do so, cannot lead him on and out of his phobia without the intervention of the next, phallic stage, in which the effects of $-\varphi$ are elaborated, locating the desire of Mother in the desire for children. This will occupy him till the end of the analysis.

If his response to mother's desire is either to produce one himself or to provide one for mother, he still stumbles on the real as impossible. The first position implies real castration in taking the feminine position; the second implies the castration encountered earlier for not having adequate equipment. Perhaps Hans fears the loud row as the anger he'll incur for not wanting to separate from mother, as he once refused to separate from his *lumf*, or conversely, that mother stamps her feet because she does not want to give up her *lumfy*, Hans, where he demands that she free him, that she fall down. As Lacan put it, Hans is afraid that, as young horse, he will fall down and make a row for refusing to drag the maternal cart any longer. This goes together with an overt wish to “tease” horses, to beat them and make them

cross. For somebody has to get cross, to give him his limits. As he will say to daddy later: "It must be true that you are cross". There is a clear appeal on his part not to be saddled with this burden of Mother's desire as well as his own. He says: "with two horses and a loaded cart I'm not afraid. With one I am". This shows the way metaphor has failed: instead the phobic is dependent at all times on a counterpart, an i(a), here the father, to model himself on and learn the rules of the game⁵.

His perception of his father at this point is not surprisingly muddled. He thinks, or wishes perhaps, that the stork had put the baby in his father's bed. First his father, then he too, lay eggs and grow chickens, which they can then take to Gmunden in a box, the way his parents took Hanna. Mother is not needed this time. Even after he is enlightened as to birth, he'll still ask "How can one be a daddy and not have babies?" There is some identification with the role of father when he thinks that he helped mummy get Hanna out of the box. But there is no clear idea as to how she got there.

Oedipus

The Oedipus is functioning and Hans does feel guilty because he has a rival. This is not only because the phobic signifier, rather than being a solution, has moved him into it, but because the birth of Hanna has threatened his imaginary solution of being mother's phallus. It is Hanna rather than his father who takes mother away from him and provokes the questions about her desire, who makes Hans run through the various logical positions the real impossibility of Oedipus engenders. The Oedipus crystallises around this "third". He wanted to be her mummy instead of mummy, and so himself possess this new phallus which he himself can no longer be for mummy, a mother who for a space becomes a rival in turn, at the time of the phobia. He wants to own her and even have made her, to look after her the way he was looked after by mother. This leaves him with a final contradiction: "I want to have children. No, I don't want to have children." It is at this level that he wrestles with the dialectic of (not) being and (not) (without) having Lacan describes in *Desire and its Interpretation*.

He does not receive much help to solve it. The pieces of enlightenment he has been given were negative: women do not have widdlers, or incomplete: only mothers have babies. In neither case is he supplied with information that women have vaginas and that men take an active role in making babies. There is no clear differentiation of mother and father. That is why he can imagine himself as both in one, the begetter of his own children.

When he gives up the idea of being mummy and becomes daddy instead there is a recognition of father's phallic value for mother but only in the form of a bigger child, somebody who fills mother's lack. That is why Lacan says Hans as daddy, displacing his father by a generation, remains in fantasy the phallus of mother, or rather, as we have seen, he and mummy together own and enjoy the child phallus Hanna. This is called identification with the maternal phallus, the child. Hans takes Hanna as his ego-ideal and will protect her for the rest of his life. One thing this fantasy of being married to mother allows is control of her desire for children. He decides the number, not by chance only one, one Hanna, one phallus.

It is Freud who must be given credit for unchaining Hans's obsession with the question of whether parents "like" having children. For he told him how somebody

⁵ It is a form of access to the Symbolic via the Imaginary.

knew of his coming long before he was born, that is, how he existed in the desire of his parents, as well as in the desire of God. This facilitates his final solution of having children of pure desire, imaginary children like Lodi, and is reflected in his insistence that Hanna was with them in the stork box cart long before she was born. Being "liked" by parents is the only way of belonging to them. Any naughtiness and they may leave.

Though the Name-of-the-Father has functioned, the paternal metaphor is not one which inscribes phallic *jouissance* in relation to reproduction in the ideal manner by separating being the phallus for mother and having the phallus for another woman. Finally, the phallus remains with mother, Freud's symbolic intervention is deflected into the imaginary, because God, contrary to what father said, follows the desire of mother. "If mother doesn't want them, then God doesn't want them either". Not surprisingly this leaves him wondering in which way he belongs to daddy. His last word on the subject is "I'd so much like to have children". He solves the problem by taking on mother's desire to look after children and the bus, the stork box cart can thereafter be greeted with recognition. But we know he will never be a real father, never have any children other than his operatic productions, creations of the imaginary.