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The European Journal of Psychoanalysis

Feb 9, 2023

<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/the-pleasure-principle-the-epistemological-symptom-of-psychoanalysis/>

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The Pleasure Principle: The Epistemological Symptom of Psychoanalysis

Summary:

The epistemology of psychoanalysis suffers from an irreconcilability between the formulations of the functioning of the psyche in terms of the courses of the excitation and of subjective wishes and sensations. Freud postulates a pseudo-linear correlation between these levels, stating that qualitative sensations are simultaneously effects of the courses of the quantity and irreducible to them. The unspecified nature of this covariation opens up an epistemological no man's land between them, accompanied by a conflict over which perspective will occupy it. Freud effectuated a metonymical substitution of "wish" for "accretions of excitations", displacing the status of cause from the quantitative to the qualitative, resulting in the latter's occupation of the in-between zone. It is argued that this enables the pleasure principle to act as a compromise formation serving to keep the fundament together, hence functioning as an "epistemological symptom". It is also argued that this symptom is linked to a constitutive "primal repression" of the principle of constancy, and that "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" might be grasped as the lifting of this repression and the partial dissolution of its symptom.

Before "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", the economic point of view of Freud's psychoanalysis proceeded from the presumption that the pleasure principle governed the functioning of the psychic apparatus as a whole (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 598; 1913/1957a; 1915/1957b, pp. 120-121; 1920/1955).^[1] This principle may be conceived as being dependent on four conjectures:

- 1) the *assumption of separation* between the system of the courses of the excitation and the system of the subjective sensations of pleasure-unpleasure;
- 2) the *assumption of causation* stating that sensations of pleasure-unpleasure are effects of the courses of the excitation;
- 3) the *assumption of correlation* between sensations of pleasure-unpleasure and fluctuations in the quantity of excitation; more precisely, that accretions of excitation correspond to sensations of unpleasure and the lowering of these tensions to sensations of pleasure;
- 4) the *assumption of regulation* declaring that sensations of pleasure-unpleasure automatically regulate the courses of the excitation effectuating a tendency to reduce tension coinciding with an increase in feelings of pleasure or a decrease in feelings of unpleasure.

Let us say that X and Y signify the courses of events of the systems of excitation and sensation respectively. We could then algebraically represent the fundamental conjectures of the pleasure principle as follows: 1) X

and Y are separated; 2) X causes Y; 3) X correlates with Y; 4) Y regulates X.

The assumption of separation should be thought of as *epistemological* in nature (Bachelard, 1938/2002; Althusser, 1965/2005, 1965/2015), marking the rupture with the energetic “absolutism” of the psychophysical paradigm that predates the constitution of psychoanalysis (Assoun, 1981; Ellenberger, 1970; Kris, 1954, pp. 14-27). This assumption transforms *the* economical point of view into *an* economical point of view; following Paul Ricœur (1965/1970, p. 88), we could argue that it marks the definitive differentiation between the economic and the hermeneutic – or, restricting ourselves to Freud’s terminology, between the “quantitative” and the “qualitative” – formulations of the mental courses of events, hence introducing a radical heterogeneity into the very heart of the epistemology of psychoanalysis.

In the assumption of causation, however, Freud remains loyal to his psychophysical prehistory: although a separation between the quantitative and qualitative levels is at hand, changes in sensations of pleasure-unpleasure are effects of alterations in the courses of the excitation. Yet the assumption of correlation specifies this seemingly linear causation as being unspecified (Freud, 1915/1957b, pp. 120-121; 1920/1955, pp. 30-31); more specifically, it is not *monotonic* in the mathematical sense of the word, i.e. increments or decrements in X do not necessarily lead to increments or decrements in Y. Instead, fluctuations in X *tend* to covary with fluctuations in Y. This should be differentiated from the psychophysical law of Gustav Theodor Fechner (or Weber’s law), which establishes a mathematically fixed and monotonic relation between X and Y and results in an ontological parallelism, in that different levels are understood as expressions of the very same thing (Spinoza, 1677/1985). If a monotonic parallelism between real excitations and subjective sensations is truly at hand, then any attempt to formulate a theory that diverges at all from the results of the energetic point of view is bound to result in an unresolvable contradiction, since it would violate the fundamental ontological axiom of substantial equivalence.

In Freud’s psychoanalysis, the assumption of correlation transforms a psychophysical *law* into a psychological *tendency*, and the apparent linearity of the assumption of causation is replaced by a kind of pseudo-linearity: although Y is an effect of X, Y is not reducible to X. This gap creates the conditions in which it is possible to lend the qualitative epistemological formulations an *effective autonomy* from the quantitative realm: the unspecified nature of this correspondence opens up an epistemological “no man’s land” between the different points of view. In turn, the qualitative conceptualization can, to a greater or lesser extent, “annex” this terrain without manifestly contradicting the pseudo-linearity of the assumption of causation. In other words, the logical contradiction that arises *within* an ontological parallelism when partial autonomy is lent to heterogeneous epistemological positions that diverge as to their views on phenomena that are *a priori* conjectured to be substantially equivalent, is replaced by a *real opposition* (Kant, 1763), or an *external* conflict of force, in the rift between them. Instead of a logical contradiction between different perspectives, there emerges a conflict (in the analytical sense of the word) between the incompatible epistemological “dueling brothers” (Assoun, 1981, p. 29) of psychoanalysis: a conflict over which of them will occupy the evacuated space between them.

As for the assumption of regulation, this expresses the immediate effects of the system of perception of psychic qualities on the courses of the excitation. Instead of a psychophysical, “autoerotic” self-regulation, we find a division within the psychic apparatus where effect regulates cause. This would, once again, manifestly contradict the pseudo-linearity of the assumption of causation were it not for the unspecified nature of the correlation, which enables the qualitative level to occupy the space that separates it from the quantitative one.

This is precisely what can be discerned in Freud’s formulation of the pleasure principle. In the first detailed account of this principle in the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud begins by stating the assumptions of causation and correlation, “to the effect that the accumulation of excitation (brought about in various ways that need not concern us) is felt as unpleasure and that it sets the apparatus in action” (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 598). One cannot fail to notice the vagueness about the assumption of causation which, as has been argued above, is of significant importance for the possibility of lending the qualitative level a causal

autonomy in relation to its economic ground. Freud continues: “A current of this kind in the apparatus, starting from unpleasure and aiming at pleasure, we have termed a ‘wish’” (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 598). The assumption of correlation, together with the indeterminateness of the assumption of causation, enables Freud to jump from one level to the other by realizing a *metonymic substitution* of “wish” in the place of “accumulations of excitation”. Lastly, Freud states: “We have asserted that only a wish is able to set the apparatus in motion and that the course of the excitation in it is automatically regulated by feelings of pleasure and unpleasure” (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 598). The metonymy has made it possible for the qualitative level (more specifically, the wish) to *appropriate* the status of cause of the motion of the psychic apparatus from the quantitative one, and by extension it enables the assumption of regulation to be formulated in a manner that proceeds from its own terminology.

It is worth noting that the object upon which the effects of the sensations of pleasure-unpleasure act is nothing but the quantitative level *as a whole*. It would be striking were we to read that the qualitative level is self-regulatory, that Y acts on Y only, that wishes or sensations of pleasure-unpleasure automatically regulate wishes or sensations of pleasure-unpleasure, that the quasi-circular dynamics of the psychic apparatus are a function of only Y. Strictly speaking, there is no element on the qualitative level that can serve as the object for the immediate action of the regulative moment of the pleasure principle. And had Freud, inversely, identified the object upon which the sensations of pleasure-unpleasure operated as the very tension which gives rise to them, then the assumption of regulation would approximate psychophysical reductionism: the sensations would be but an insignificant detour of the excitation. It could be argued that Freud truly makes an effort not to conform to Fechner’s principles of stability and pleasure (which are only superficially similar to Freud’s principles of constancy and pleasure). In his principle of stability, Fechner declares that the psyche is governed by a tendency to return to a state of equilibrium, while his principle of pleasure refers to the decreases and increases in the deviations from the state of equilibrium which are perceived as pleasure and unpleasure, respectively. Fechner’s principle of stability is one of self-sufficient auto-regulation, which follows from the presumption that deviations automatically tend to cancel themselves out, while the pleasure principle is simply a declaration that implies that the system of subjective sensations have no real effect on the courses of the excitation. Thus, Freud, suffering from the self-imposed (and, for the theory of psychoanalysis, constitutive) inability to specify the function relating quantity to quality, and endeavoring to avoid every possible psychophysical short-circuit whilst at the same time protecting its pseudo-linear causality, is driven to conceptualize the pleasure principle on the qualitative level using the economic domain as merely a global, empty abstraction. What is crucial to notice in Freud’s assumption of regulation is that the theoretical validity of the fact that Y regulates its own cause presupposes that under no circumstances can it be specified exactly what Y regulates. Thus, Freud is pushed toward articulating the regulatory assumption of the pleasure principle as follows, formulated as prosaically as possible: Y regulates “that” of which it is an effect, which enables “that” to slide away; in its place, we find “everything”, that is to say *nothing*. The assumption of regulation within the confines of the split epistemological foundation of Freud’s psychoanalysis results in the simultaneous abandoning and retaining of the quantity as the only cause-effect of the psychic apparatus; the ambiguous expression “middle ground” takes on its full value, as the qualitative formulation lends the quantitative level a primacy while simultaneously subtracting it in the zone between them. In line with Ricœur’s (1965/1970, p. 88) argumentation, we could claim that this metonymical trade-off serves the purposes of the *ars interpretandi*: it no doubt facilitates the leap from the scientific explanation of the quantitative epistemology to the psychoanalytical interpretation of its qualitative counterpart. The theoretical validity of uttering the signifying element “wish” in the clinical setting presupposes this causal displacement and its preceding cut, separation, and correlation.

We could condense the argument above as follows: Freud’s epistemological rupture with psychophysics consisted in a leap from linearity-monotony to separation-correlation, while the pragmatic adequacy of the theory of psychoanalysis in the clinical setting required a metonymic substitution of cause for effect, conditioned by the pseudo-linearity of the assumption of causation, which realized an effective appropriation-abstraction resulting in the abandonment-retainment of quantity at the cost of a concealed incompleteness of the formulation of the mental courses of events at the qualitative level, since no object for the effects of the

regulation can be found at this level.

Hence, the qualitative level has annexed the epistemological no man's land separating it from its quantitative counterpart, which by no means implies the resolution of the conflict between them. On the contrary, we could regard the metonymically constituted law-like pleasure principle as an inherently contradictory static compromise formation serving to keep together an unstable construction erected on a foundation that covers up a "weak spot" functioning as the battleground for an underlying epistemological conflict. In other words, in the pleasure principle we can discern many of the characteristics which psychoanalysis usually ascribes to the ego syntonic obsessional symptom.

It is quite easy to overlook the repression corresponding to this symptom. In the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes: "We are thus driven to conclude that *these releases of pleasure and unpleasure automatically regulate the course of cathectic processes*" (1900/1953, p. 574). This remarkable statement, which one can find in various parts of Freud's writings, is doubtless incompatible with his theory as a whole. Pleasure and unpleasure are but conscious sensations of the course of the excitation; pleasure-unpleasure cannot be released. There are no unconscious affects, nor are there sensations inherent in the libido, as Freud (1915/1957c, p. 178) himself clearly and repeatedly states. This "return of the repressed" shows itself openly, again and again, in the pseudo-pleonastic formulation *unlustvolle Spannung*, the translation of which – "unpleasurable tension" – betrays the plain signification of the German formulation, "unpleasurable tension" (as if the tension were full of unpleasure). We could interpret Freud's frequent rejections of that which is openly expressed in his own lapsus as a negation of a "wish" to fetishize the excitation, to short-circuit X and Y, and to realize an Aristophanic return to the undifferentiated state given up by the founding epistemological split of psychoanalysis. Thus, the repressed wish associated with the epistemological symptom of psychoanalysis can be interpreted as follows: "energy wishes"; $Y=X$.

The introduction of the concept "epistemological symptom" brings about a transformation of Bachelard's and Althusser's perspectives on what they refer to as an epistemological rupture, break or obstacle (or Kuhn's "paradigm shift"): rather than viewing the constitution of a new theoretical structure as a revolutionary breach, I propose that it should be grasped as an effect of a repression that truly deserves to be called *primal*. Thus, it would be possible to at least partially, by contrapuntally interpreting the prehistory of and symptomatic formation in the new theoretical structure, recreate a metaphoric-metonymic complex operating in what I choose to call its *epistemological (dynamic) unconscious* which, without exceptions, produces symptomatic effects in the theory thus constituted. In the case of psychoanalysis, what seems to be but a declaration about the dominant tendency in the psychical apparatus would, according to this perspective, and in the sense that "the ego is structured exactly like a symptom" (Lacan, 1975/1991, p. 16), be an obsessively repeated "peace treaty" serving to stabilize the relegation of a set of psychophysical identities to the dynamic unconscious of psychoanalysis.

This view on the symptomatic status of the pleasure principle sheds some new light on the dynamics culminating in the radical revision of the theory of the drives carried out in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle". More specifically, this perspective would suggest that the introduction of the death drive in fact has little to do with the relative impotence of the pleasure principle itself, or that it should be seen as but an addition to or extension of the theory. Instead, this step beyond should be understood, on the one hand and on a more manifest level, as a partial breakdown (or dissolution) of the symptom,^[2] and, on the other hand and much more importantly, as secondary to an ongoing conflict taking place in a *beyond* that *still is before* the constitution of the theory of psychoanalysis; the introduction of the new drive theory could thus be grasped, to a significant degree, as a *return* – or, depending on how one wishes to view it, as a *repetition* – which *Nachträglich* contributes to the overdetermination of its own signification. In fact, the "economic crisis" staged in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" may indeed serve as *the* paradigmatic example of the importance of the introduction of the concepts "epistemological symptom", "epistemological primal repression" and "epistemological unconscious", since far from every theory reaches the point where its principal symptom dissolves and repressed material surges and shows itself openly.

It would be outside the scope of this article to dwell upon the “microphysics” of this constitutive primal repression and its return in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. I have argued elsewhere (Lerner, 2021), however, that this repression involves a theoretical complex revolving around the “principle of constancy” as formulated in pre-psychoanalytical letters and drafts (Freud, 1892/1966a; 1894/1966b; 1896/1966d; Freud & Breuer 1892/1966) and, especially, in *Entwurf* (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 297); more radically, that this concept, which is not mentioned by Freud in any published text before “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, functions as *the* repressed (and repressing) epistemological fundament of psychoanalysis as a whole – it is the Oedipus complex of psychoanalysis. I cannot do this in-depth analysis justice here; I will nevertheless briefly summarize some of my central arguments and conclusions.

The principle of constancy, as late as 1896 regarded as “the most fundamental [condition] of the psychical mechanism” (Freud, 1896/1966d, p. 221), should, unlike Fechner’s principle of stability and Breuer’s formulation of it in *Studies in hysteria* (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1955, pp. 197-202), *not* be understood as a principle of stability or equilibrium, or a return to a constant level of tonic energy. Instead, it should primarily be viewed as a conjecture enabling Freud to take a metonymical jump between two sets of dualisms. Freud’s point of departure in *Entwurf* is the elementary functions operating on a hypostasized kinetic biophysical excitation (Q?) moving along the bifurcations of the nervous system. He introduces a *functional* dualism between the “principle of inertia” and the “exigencies of life”, where “discharge represents the primary function” while “the secondary function”, which is “imposed by the exigencies of life”, “calls for the accumulation of Q?” (Freud, 1895/1966c, pp. 296-298), thus constituting a fundamental conflict between total discharge to “level zero”, implying the death of the organism, and accumulation of the excitation serving to reproduce life. It is convenient to refer to these functions as “the primary processes”; more specifically, we may refer to the principle of inertia as the “primary primary process” and the non-specified (there is a lacuna on this point) function imposed by the exigencies of life as the “primary secondary process”. The principle of constancy is thereafter defined as a compromise formation established in the struggle between the primary processes, resulting in “the constancy of the sum of excitation” (*Der Satz von der Konstanz der Erregungssumme*) (Freud, 1892/1966a, p. 147), i.e. the conservation of a constant amount of mobile biophysical excitation within the nervous system, implying equilibrium between in- and outflux of endogenous and exogenous excitations. The preservation of kinetic energy in the nervous system is effectuated by the constitution of “resistances which oppose discharge” (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 298), meaning that the excitation below a certain threshold value will get stuck in the neuron thus becoming permanently charged, resulting in an *energetic* dualism where mobile, kinetic energy is differentiated from bound, accumulated, tonic, or *potential* energy. Furthermore, Freud argues that this energetic dualism corresponds to a *systemic* dualism, reflecting a differentiation between permeable and impermeable organizations of neurons, where the latter, unlike the former (which from *The Interpretation of Dreams* onwards are equated with the unconscious), are “loaded with resistance” (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 300), and he goes on to equate the latter system with ego, which functions as the “*vehicle of the store* [of Q?] required by the secondary function” (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 323). Lastly, Freud differentiates between excitatory processes that function with and without the inhibiting functions of the ego (and in accordance with the system of perception of external and psychical qualities), and calls the courses of events conditioned by a “complete expenditure of defence” of the ego facilitating the uninhibited mobility of the accumulated excitations “*psychical primary process*”, which is contrasted to “*psychical secondary processes* [...] which are only made possible by a good cathexis of the ego, and which represent a moderation of the foregoing” (Freud, 1895/1966c, pp. 326-327). Hence, Freud arrives at a *processual* dualism depending on the secondary moderation of the kinetic energy by the tonic energy of the ego. It is also convenient to name these principles “the secondary processes”, and view them as precursors to the principles of pleasure and reality, respectively, and refer to the pleasure principle as the “secondary primary process”, and the principle of reality as the “secondary secondary process”.^[3] Thus Freud went from primary functional dualism (discharge/inertia and accumulation/exigencies), to the principle of constancy, to energetic dualism (kinetic and potential), to systemic dualism (permeable/unconscious and impermeable/ego), to secondary processual dualism (primary/pleasure and secondary/reality).

Looking at the end result, we may argue that *the principle of constancy is a principle of consolidated imbalance*: it is but an assumption about the preservation of mobile biophysical excitation within the nervous system giving rise to a set of dualisms – energetic, systemic and processual – thereby functioning as a *logical* bridge associating *and* dissociating the primary and the secondary processes, enabling the actual courses of events of the psychic apparatus to no longer be understood proceeding from the material functions which gave rise to them, but from the processes which they tend to follow. Consequently, the implications of the principle of constancy make its preconditions superfluous; at the very moment when the principle and its implications are formulated, both it and the primary processes that gave rise to it are no longer needed: they have served their purpose (to make themselves redundant) and do not need to be mentioned again. We may remind ourselves that the principle of constancy is mentioned only once in *Entwurf*, and that the principle of inertia and the exigencies of life are practically absent after its formulation.

Hence, it could be argued that the “potential auto-subtraction”, as it were, of the principle of constancy makes it peculiarly prone to function as the object of repression, which would liberate the theory from the set of enormously difficult problems of relating the materiality of the nervous system to the psychological courses of events, that is, from the problems accompanying psychophysical ontology. The repression of the principle of constancy along with its logical precursors – the psychophysical identities inferred by the interpretation of the pleasure principle understood as epistemological symptom – would no doubt facilitate and enable the leap from the *functions* determining the dynamics of Q? of the nervous system to the *principles* governing the motion of an unspecified excitation corresponding to an unspecified particle in a closed self-regulating non-biophysical apparatus.

It would also be outside the scope of this article to dwell on the importance of this epistemological primal repression in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. I have, however, conjectured that it should be understood as a result of the lifting of the repression of the principle of constancy and the accompanying partial breakdown of its principal symptom (Lerner, 2021). More specifically, the principle of constancy makes its return as invalid – that is, as subtracted^[4] – thus creating a rift between the primary and the secondary processes, forcing Freud to “make a sharper distinction [...] between function and tendency [i.e. secondary processes]” (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 62). I have argued that this is the case for the following reasons. First, the possibility of the general overflow of excitations (as in the traumatic neuroses and the compulsion to repeat), as well as the reduction of the total level of energy to zero, clearly breaks with the assumption of a constant sum of excitations in the psychical apparatus. Second, the death drive is defined economically as the push toward complete discharge (the complete transformation of tonic energy to kinetic energy), toward a return to level zero. It thus *simultaneously* empties and submerges the psychical apparatus – there is no contradiction in these opposing effects – and consequently operates in accordance with the principle of inertia and the primary function. Third, the secondary function, which transforms kinetic energy to potential energy, is now replaced by the life drive, the binding function that gives rise to “fresh ‘vital differences’ [i.e. potential energy]” (Freud, 1920/1955, p. 55), which occupies the aforementioned lacuna in *Entwurf* of the process that realizes the call for accumulation of the exigencies of life. In other words, the primary primary process is replaced by the death drive, and the primary secondary process is replaced by the life drive – the latter being the only real revolutionary novelty in the theory of psychoanalysis, given that we choose to include its epistemological dynamic unconscious. Fourth, the absence of the principle of constancy and the possibility of general overflow and draining implies that there is no longer any stabilizing mediating link between the primary and the secondary processes. This means that the death drive is given the power to destroy the regulative workings of the secondary processes, thus enabling the excitation to flow along the original path which the pleasure principle forced it to give up – this would be the basis of the compulsion to repeat. The different aspects of the death drive – overflowing, repetition, return to level zero, self-destruction – would not be distinct, as Daniel Lagache (1960/1993, pp. 227-232) and Jean Laplanche (1970/1985, pp. 108-109) would have it, but *identical*. Fifth, the lack of automatic stabilization and survival provided by the principle of constancy resuscitates the question about the constitution and consolidation of the relative stability of the psychical apparatus, and with this question arises one of its biophysical basis and prehistory. This is clearly identifiable in Freud’s speculative construction of the psychic apparatus proceeding from the origin of life, the biophysical nature that is attributed to the drives, as well as the question of life as *causa sui* in its

struggle against death. Perhaps it would have been more adequate to name the most radically revisionary document of the history of psychoanalysis after a concept that it does not mention even once: “Beyond the Principle of Constancy”.

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Notes:

[1] Although this article covers topics and dwells upon important questions in the fields of philosophy of mind, history of psychoanalysis, the understanding of the economical point of view of Freudian psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytical metapsychology in general, I will limit myself to an in-depth discussion of the epistemological status of the pleasure principle, its importance for the development of Freud's psychoanalysis, and draw some conclusions of significance for epistemology in general.

[2] In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud finally acknowledges the huge problems to do with the riddle of the economic determinations of the pleasure principle: "The indefiniteness of all our discussions on what we describe as metapsychology is of course due to the fact that we know nothing of the nature of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of the psychical systems, and that we do not feel justified in framing any hypothesis on the subject. We are consequently operating all the time with a large unknown factor, which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula" (Freud, 1920/1955, pp. 30-31). Yet again, the translation of the Standard Edition fails to fully do justice to the much more suggestive formulation of the original version where, fittingly enough, instead of "large unknown factor", we read "*einem großen X*" – "a large X".

[3] Although the principle of reality seems to be more or less fully formulated in *Entwurf*, this is not the case for the pleasure principle; it is a theoretical error to equate the secondary primary process of *Entwurf* with the pleasure principle as formulated in terms of X and Y. Prior to the derivation of the processual dualism of the nervous system in *Entwurf*, Freud writes: “Since we have a certain knowledge of a trend in psychical life towards *avoiding unpleasure*, we are tempted to identify that trend with the primary trend towards inertia. In that case *unpleasure* would have to be regarded as coinciding with a raising of the level of Q? [...] Pleasure would be the sensation of discharge” (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 312). Contrary to Ricœur’s (1965/1970, p. 76) interpretation, we must note that Freud does not equate changes in Q? with changes in Y. Freud clearly vacillates on this point, and this should most likely be understood as a reflection of either his difficulty in specifying the relation between them or his hesitation about relating Y to the primary (psychophysical) or the secondary (quasi-psychological) processes. In *Entwurf*, Freud separates the system of perception of psychical qualities from the system corresponding to *Vorstellungen*, viewing them as “intercommunicating vessels”, where only a small fraction of the discharge of the latter system reaches the former, and where “pleasure and unpleasure would be the sensations in [the system of perception] of its own cathexis, of its own level” (Freud, 1895/1966c, p. 312), thus giving rise to a sort of “pseudo-parallelism” internal *only* to the perceptual system, which in turn stands in a (presumably) non-monotonic relation to the Q? discharged by the mnemonic neuron.

[4] It is highly surprising (and clearly symptomatic) that Freud, who regarded the principle of constancy as his own invention (Freud, 1954, pp. 135-137; Jones, 1956, p. 434) and understood it as the fundamental law of the psyche and the very precondition for the survival of the organism, from “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” onwards ascribed it to Fechner, equated “constancy” with “stability” and thus also with death. I suggest that Freud’s references to the principle of constancy or stability from “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” onwards should not be taken at face value.

Bio:

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Publication Date:

November 30, 2021