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# A History of Child Psychoanalysis

CLAUDINE AND PIERRE GEISSMANN

Forewords by

Serge Lebovici, Anne-Marie Sandler and Hanna Segal

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE  
INSTITUTE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS, LONDON

**Also available as a printed book  
see title verso for ISBN details**

# A History of Child Psychoanalysis

Child analysis has occupied a special place in the history of psychoanalysis because of the challenges it poses to practitioners and the clashes it has provoked among its advocates. Since the early days in Vienna under Sigmund Freud, child psychoanalysts have tried to comprehend and make comprehensible to others the psychosomatic troubles of childhood and to adapt clinical and therapeutic approaches to all the stages of development of the baby, the child, the adolescent and the young adult.

Claudine and Pierre Geissmann trace the history and development of child analysis over the last century and assess the contributions made by pioneers of the discipline, whose efforts to expand its theoretical foundations led to conflict between different schools of thought, most notably to the rift between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein.

Now taught and practised widely in Europe, the USA and South America, child and adolescent psychoanalysis is unique in the insight it gives into the psychological aspects of child development, and in the therapeutic benefits it can bring to both the child and its family

**Claudine Geissmann** is a psychoanalyst (IPA) and a lecturer in child psychiatry and Director of the Children's Mental Health Centre at the University of Bordeaux. The late **Pierre Geissmann** was a psychoanalyst (IPA) and Professor of Child Psychiatry at the University of Bordeaux.

## THE NEW LIBRARY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

The New Library of Psychoanalysis was launched in 1987 in association with the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London. Its purpose is to facilitate a greater and more widespread appreciation of what psychoanalysis is really about and to provide a forum for increasing mutual understanding between psychoanalysts and those working in other disciplines such as history, linguistics, literature, medicine, philosophy, psychology and the social sciences. It is intended that the titles selected for publication in the series should deepen and develop psychoanalytic thinking and technique, contribute to psychoanalysis from outside, or contribute to other disciplines from a psychoanalytical perspective.

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*CLAUDINE AND PIERRE GEISSMANN*

Preface by Anne-Marie Sandler and Hanna Segal

Foreword by Serge Lebovici

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French Ministry of Culture



London and New York

First published as *Histoire de la Psychanalyse de l'Enfant* by Bayard Presse, Paris, in 1992  
This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis  
or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to  
<http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>.”

English language edition first published 1998 by Routledge 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P  
4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 29 West 35th Street, New York,  
NY 10001

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Translation © the Melanie Klein Trust

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by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including  
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in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data* A catalogue record for this book is available from  
the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data* Geissmann-Chambon, Claudine. [Histoire de  
la psychanalyse de l'enfant. English] A history of child psychoanalysis/Claudine and Pierre  
Geissmann. p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index. 1. Child analysis-History. I.  
Geissmann, Pierre. II. Title. RJ504.2.G4513 1998 618.92'8917'09-dc21 97-12477 CIP

ISBN 0-203-01370-0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-11020-3 (Print Edition)  
ISBN 0-415-11296-6 (pbk)



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## Preface

We are very happy to have the opportunity to introduce Pierre and Claudine Geissmann's *History of Child Psychoanalysis* to an English-speaking audience. This remarkable work is of the greatest importance because it is the first detailed study of the development of child psychoanalysis. It is quite surprising that there are so few studies of the way child analysis has developed, as the basic tenet of psychoanalysis is that our adult development has its foundations in the inner life of the child within us. In this excellent volume the authors follow the history of child analysis from its beginnings, starting with the analysis of Little Hans, through to its contemporary developments. The Geissmanns give the background against which these developments have occurred and need to be assessed, and explain in detail and in depth the differences in technique and theory between the pioneers and the different schools which have subsequently developed.

The authors emphasize the rich contributions that the psychoanalysis of children has brought to psychoanalytic theory and practice, in regard to work with adults as well as children. They study the various schools of thought in the child psychoanalytic world, and elicit the unique contribution of each. They discuss what these schools have in common, and in what ways they differ.

The major sponsors of this translation, in addition to the French Ministry of Culture, have been the Melanie Klein Trust and the Anna Freud Centre (formerly the Hampstead Clinic, founded by Anna Freud). This collaboration is in itself a tribute to the authors' scientific objectivity and integrity.

Anne-Marie Sandler and Hanna Segal

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost we would like to thank those who opened up the world of child psychoanalysis to us: Serge Lebovici, René Diatkine, James Gammill and Hanna Segal. Their clinical and theoretical experience and the diversity of their respective viewpoints have been very precious indeed.

We would also like to thank those who were kind enough to let us visit them, and to share their experience and reminiscences: Simone Decobert, Yolanda Gampel, Ilse Hellmann, Betty Joseph, Serge Lebovici, Sidonia Mehler, David and Estela Rosenfeld, Anne-Marie Sandler, Hanna Segal, Frances Tustin and Rodolfo Urribarri.

We were much stimulated and helped in our research by the group of child psychoanalysts who meet regularly at Françoise Caille's house, some of whom make up the Editorial Committee of the *Journal de la psychanalyse de l'enfant*. The seminar on the history of child psychoanalysis that we held in Bordeaux was also very useful. Pascale Duhamel, Mireille Fleury, Dominique Dujols and Marcel Boix were particularly helpful in assisting us to collect a large number of documents.

We are indebted to the young child psychiatrists and psychoanalysts and the members of the psychiatric teams who work with us for their questions, their curiosity and their remarks, which led us to get involved in this history in the first place. This history is also theirs in part.

Danièle Guilbert of Bayard Editions was of constant and warm assistance with her careful reading of our text and her criticisms, which were helpful and to the point.

We are very grateful to Dr Hanna Segal, to Mrs Elizabeth B.Spillius, to Professor J.Sandler and to Mrs Anne-Marie Sandler for having made this publication possible and for having efficaciously helped us with the difficult task of translating this book into English. Thanks are owed especially to Mrs E.B.Spillius who has read our manuscript carefully, and patiently revised our English.

We should like to acknowledge the financial help of the Melanie Klein Trust, the Anna Freud Centre and the French Ministry of Culture; their grants allowed us to overcome the difficulties we have encountered in the translation.

Finally, we must say a very big thank you to Claude Dugrava, who carried out the difficult job of the transcription of our manuscript in his usual very competent fashion.

# Foreword

SERGE LEBOVICI

We should not delude ourselves about the current success of a number of works on various aspects of psychoanalysis, different periods in its history and the movements which have left their mark. What a large proportion of the reading public is looking for is a whiff of scandal. The work of Claudine and Pierre Geissmann offers something quite different: it is the fruit of a tremendous amount of work, reading and classifying a great number of unpublished works, or works which are rarely consulted or referred to. The authors have no hesitation in telling us about the interpersonal conflicts which illustrated some of the relationships between the pioneers of this relatively new field. But they know full well that a simple reminder of everyday life in a new field of science does not enable one to reconstruct the history of that science, all the more so when its roots need to be laid bare by the methodical work of a true archaeologist.

Throughout this book, Claudine and Pierre Geissmann show that the application of psychoanalysis to children has always been a challenge for psychoanalysts. Witness the clashes which are still going on today in psychoanalytical construction and reconstruction. The prototypical model of mental functioning can be found in the paradigm of infantile neurosis, which, it must be admitted, is no longer a universal model because of the interest currently shown in psychoses and borderline states. Contemporary child psychoanalysts have also shown the importance of a second paradigm: child autism.

We will therefore follow the authors as they discreetly enter the 'parents room', and rediscover in the nursery the 'ghosts' of those who are no longer with us, to use the classic metaphor of Selma Fraiberg.

From the onset of the Wednesday sessions held in Freud's apartment in Vienna, the first disciples of this small circle amassed observations which could be classified as protops psychoanalysis of the child. It is difficult to know whether these observations were just accumulated in order to give a basis to Freud's theories. If this were so, one could compare these psychoanalysts to the surrealists, who recommended relating their dreams to their children. In similar fashion, but reversed, as it were, these psychoanalysts were relating the dreams of their children to their colleagues.

However, it is difficult to know whether these protops psychoanalysts also interpreted these dreams to their children. There is no doubt, however, that Freud and his first

disciples, closer or more distant, did undertake the psychoanalysis of at least one of their own children.

In Vienna, and then in Berlin and Budapest, the psychoanalytical world was very small, and analysis of the children of the members of this circle was no secret: this was the case for Anna Freud, Hilda Abraham, Melanie Klein's son, Eric, and perhaps one of Jung's children.

Circumstances brought Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham into close contact and they stayed close: Dorothy's two sons were analysed by Anna. She was also able to undertake analysis of one of their friends, who had been abandoned by his mother, and she contributed to his upbringing. She had news of him when, grown up and holding a university position in the United States of America, he wrote to her asking if she would let him have the notes she had made during his treatment and the drawings he had left with her. In his book, *A Child Analysis with Anna Freud*, the adult Peter Heller (1990) relates the history of his childhood in Vienna, his memories of his analysis with Anna Freud and the comments that he thinks are justified on the subject.

Claudine and Pierre Geissmann pose a number of questions which remain valid, about which we shall make some brief comments:

- 1 Do observations of the child, and the very young child in particular, reveal the nature of the workings of the unconscious?
- 2 Does child psychoanalysis enable infantile amnesia to be removed more easily and does it permit better reconstruction of the past because of its chronological proximity?
- 3 Does child psychoanalysis exist or is it just a form of psychotherapy derived from psychoanalysis?

## ***1 The psychoanalytical observation of the child***

For many modern psychoanalysts, the child observed is the real child, not the model child of psychoanalysis. However, present-day work on the attachment of the child to its parents and on the early interactions that can be observed would tend to invalidate the Freudian theory of the genesis of the representation of the object: the process of subjectivation starts with the nucleus of the Self and perceptions of maternal care. One then goes from the interpersonal process of interaction to intersubjectivity, which shows that the young infant becomes aware of the existence of thought in its partners. To use a personal formula, I still believe that the child invests in its mother before it perceives her but I also believe that its action—its perceived action—on her contributes to registering her as the 'maternal gender'. For her part, the mother acts by introducing into the care and attention she gives the child her own imaginary and phantasy life. At this point one can speak of phantasy interaction, enriched by the various episodes which take place, the scenarios by which the interaction is organized, and the possibility of their enriched narration afterwards. Thus the psychopathology of development not only conforms to the metapsychological profile of Anna Freud's Hampstead Clinic, it also introduces the inter- and intra-subjective relation enriched by the intergenerational transmission of conflicts,

i.e. by the history of the conflicts of the parents with the grandparents of the child. Education and culture enable the filiation and affiliation processes to be combined.

## ***2 Psychoanalytical (re)construction through psychoanalyses of children***

In general, treatment of children should enable infantile amnesia to be removed more easily. However, experience shows that reaction formation and traits of character which shape the transference neurosis in the adult are extremely well established in the latency stage, when the child has no wish to confide in anyone. No doubt the therapeutic alliance advocated by Anna Freud and the softening up of the defences that it offers on the one hand, and the processes of the child's play which the Kleinian school assimilates with associations of ideas, enable the interpretative process to be pursued, which is most certainly considerably facilitated by the fact that there are several sessions a week. The fact nevertheless remains that this easing of the system of social censorship, and therefore of some of the strata of the superego, does not facilitate work on the derivatives of the unconscious. It is probable that the interpretation of the child psychoanalyst can hardly relate to the latent material, that concerning the preconscious. In adult psychoanalysis, the situation is often quite similar and enables a reconstruction of the causes and effects of the repetitions of the past. But the construction itself arises from fertile periods, those where the mature narcissism of the two protagonists provides a wealth of identifications through generative and metaphorically creating empathy. From this point of view the authors emphasize the contribution made by Melanie Klein and post-Kleinian psychoanalysts: projective identification is a normal stage of development where the capacity of the mother (and of the child psychoanalyst) for reverie 'detoxifies' the devastating effects. In these circumstances, the child psychoanalyst is in a position to contain the identificatory projections and to offer their construction. The child of psychoanalytical theory is thus a child reconstructed through its own development and constructed via the interpretations of its psychoanalyst.

## ***3 Does child psychoanalysis exist?***

The preceding considerations would seem to prove that it does, but the difficulty in ensuring perfect constancy and neutrality of the psychoanalytical framework makes a real course of treatment somewhat difficult. Claudine and Pierre Geissmann show the importance of a solid psychoanalytical background for those who wish to become child psychotherapists. However, this is unfortunately not always the case, if only because many future analysts begin their careers working in centres restricted to children.

Claudine and Pierre Geissmann's book is not just a history of child psychoanalysis. It gives an outline of the field as a whole, which, one can see, did not just flower in Vienna, Berlin or London, but has also blossomed in South America and throughout Europe. The authors show in detail the influence of psychoanalysis on the development of child and adolescent psychiatry in France, and describe the work of its forerunners: Eugenie Sokolnicka and Sophie Morgenstern. They mention Françoise Dolto and are kind enough to speak very highly (too highly, some would say) of the influence I and my friend and colleague René Diatkine have had on the field in France. At a time when neuro-biological psychiatry and neuro-psychology claim to exercise a dominant influence on the work of child psychiatry, in particular by their so-called 'objective' assessments, Claudine and Pierre Geissmann's book shows the importance of the psychopathological approach that psychoanalysis alone can offer, both to the child who is sent to the psychiatrist and to his or her family.

This book should be read thoroughly—it validates over a century of clinical work and research. Throughout that time child psychoanalysts have been the pioneers of the development of psychoanalysis; they have tried to understand and make understandable to others the mental and psychosomatic troubles of childhood and adopt a clinical and therapeutic approach to all stages of development: that of the baby, the child, the pre-adolescent, the adolescent and the young adult.



# Introduction

What? You have had small children in analysis? Children of less than six years? *Can* that be done? And is it not most risky for the children?

(S.Freud, 1926:214)

It can be done very well. It is hardly to be believed, what goes on in a child of four or five years old. Children are very active-minded at that age; their early sexual period is also a period of intellectual flowering. I have an impression that with the onset of the latency period they become mentally inhibited as well, stupider. From that time, on, too, many children lose their physical charm. And, as regards the damage done by early analysis, I may inform you that the first child on whom the experiment was ventured, nearly twenty years ago, has since then grown into a healthy and capable young man, who has passed through his puberty irreproachably, in spite of some severe psychical traumas. It may be hoped that things will turn out no worse for the other 'victims' of early analysis. Much that is of interest attaches to these child analyses; it is possible that in the future they will become still more important. From the point of view of theory, their value is beyond question.

(S.Freud, 1926:215)

As we can see, child psychoanalysis has been practised since the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been very successful therapeutically, and has made an incomparable contribution to psychoanalytical theory both in the wealth of material supplied and in the therapeutic potential that it offers. In our practice of psychoanalysis, we have been able to observe daily the reality of the findings of our predecessors, Sigmund Freud first and foremost. We saw the possibility that we ourselves might be able to contribute something to the theorization of child psychoanalysis in particular and to psychoanalytical theory in general.

Yet at the same time we felt that we were practising an art in which no apparent training was given and which seemed to be considered by adult psychoanalysts as a sort of sub-specialization, practised by women or psychologists. In the press, anything to do with child psychoanalysis tended to be found in the 'agony column'; there was rarely any mention of the unconscious or of child sexuality.

For all these reasons we became interested in the nature of child psychoanalysis and the identity of the child psychoanalyst. Our participation in conferences and working groups outside France, particularly in Britain, rapidly led us to the conclusion that a study

of the subject in a single country—ours—would lead to a totally inadequate and partial view of the situation. There were difficulties elsewhere, of course, but they appeared to us to be quite different from our own. We were, for example, greatly impressed by the considerable progress that seemed to have been made in our field in Britain.

While working on the history of the child psychoanalysis movement, we initially found only individual ‘histories’; but the real subject of our research was a collective history. Reading the texts in this field was not easy, since few have been translated into French. We therefore undertook the translation of texts from English, Spanish, German, etc. We also wanted to meet the eyewitnesses to this history, and that took us from London to Buenos Aires, and from New York to Vienna.

Our research produced a wealth of documents from which it became apparent we would have to make a selection and decide on a general theme. We decided not to retain too much of the anecdotal material. The reader is drawn to the anecdote because of what it might reveal of forbidden secrets, but is prevented from considering the fundamental problems because their interest is diverted by these same anecdotes. So we turned our interest to the development of the vocation of this or that pioneer of psychoanalysis and to their social and cultural background, and decided to put aside the scandals and personal conflicts unless they were of psychoanalytical interest. Where a conflict of ideas ostensibly arose out of a personal conflict, it seemed more interesting to us to look into the conflict of ideas underlying the personal arguments.

In search of this collective memory, we went to the cradle of child psychoanalysis, to Vienna, where psychoanalysis itself had its infancy. But which Vienna?

Was it the Vienna we visited, where number 19 Berggasse (Freud’s consulting rooms) has been turned into a small and rather unimposing museum, the Vienna from which, one needs little reminding, Freud was expelled in 1938?

Was it that of the screen-memory, recast by our culture, a Vienna which was both gay and inhibited, carefree and yet neurotic, the breeding ground in which a more or less depraved sexuality was simmering?

Was it that of Sigmund Freud, whose family had come to live there when he was a little boy, the Vienna that he dreamt of conquering later on, in spite of all the difficulties he could expect?

Was it that of Bruno Bettelheim, the town in which he and his parents had always lived, which had been at the heart of the most powerful empire in the world, the second most important city in Europe (after Paris), the town which went on disintegrating like its rulers, who persisted in self-destruction and committing suicide and whose preoccupation with madness led them to build the most beautiful mental hospital in the world (the Steinhof)? The city where Sigmund Freud invented psychoanalysis but also where Wagner von Jauregg won the Nobel Prize for having discovered the malarial treatment for paralytic dementia or where Sakel had devised the insulin cure for schizophrenia? The city whose art and culture were so prodigious (Herzl, Brahms, Mahler, Kokoschka, Strauss, Schnitzler, Krafft-Ebing, Klimt, Martin Buber, Rainer Maria Rilke, to mention but a few)? (See Bettelheim, 1990 [1986].) The city of Anna Freud’s cosseted childhood, where she witnessed the misery of its children at the end of the 1914–18 war, which was to lead her and her socialist and Zionist friends to try to find psychoanalytical means to help them?

Or is it that of Melanie Klein, the city of her happy childhood, where she studied art history and that she had to leave to follow her husband?

While taking into account the cultural foundations on which psychoanalysis was built, it did not seem to us that psychoanalysis was specifically Viennese, as is generally accepted, which is evidence of resistance to admitting the universality of its discoveries. Besides, as we shall see, psychoanalysis in general, and child psychoanalysis in particular, was to become tinged with British imperturbability, American pragmatism or Argentinian enthusiasm, but its foundations would remain the same from one country to another, perhaps because of emigration. In short, the unconscious is not Viennese, even in children.

We are going to try to show how child psychoanalysis has been built up, from its beginnings in Vienna and throughout the world. We shall see that the problems undergone during its development were to become confused with other issues, such as that of the place of women in society (which is, of course...to look after children), or that of psychoanalysis being practised by those who were not also qualified medical practitioners and who were also asked to treat children medically (passed off as an 'educational' activity!). More importantly, factors internal to the practice of psychoanalysis, in particular the development of a number of many-sided theories could be observed. We have therefore gone into the history of those who practised child psychoanalysis and have investigated the ideas which enabled it to make progress.

But we have also followed a phantasized course. We will see how, with the geographical spread of ideas and human emigration, psychoanalytical thought was to lead to a lack of understanding between psychoanalysts: Americans were not to know Kleinian concepts; Anna Freud's ideas would not reach South America; American and British thinking would become a dead letter to the French. It was the myth of the tower of Babel all over again:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar;... And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel.

(Genesis 11, vv. 1–9, King James version; *Bab el akka* means the Gate of God, a play on words with the Hebrew *balal*, meaning 'to mix')

In 1961, Wilfred R. Bion interpreted this myth as being the history of the development of language in a group dominated by the assumption of dependence. The tower is a threat to divine supremacy and carries a messianic hope (pairing group). If this hope is fulfilled

the unity of the group is broken. In simpler terms, any group which threatens to appropriate truth for itself runs the risk of being more powerful than the appointed or symbolic leader. The internal laws of the group cause it to break up into splinter groups so that it will not be exposed to truth, which is always unbearable. The schisms or splinter groups are the various languages: people no longer understand each other; they no longer speak the same language.

All psychoanalytical groups are exposed to this evolution, reflecting group resistance to the acquisition of new ideas which seem to go beyond the word of the founding father. This is very true in the case of child psychoanalysis. In 1963 Bion (1963:64–6) stressed that it is the increase in knowledge as such that is punished, as the representative of the drive (the drive for knowledge=K).

We came across this Babel-like scattering in our peregrinations through various societies and countries and we did indeed get the feeling of a group resistance to knowing what the ‘true essence’ of a child was.

We therefore did not think it necessary to mention *every* important figure in *every* country. Rather, we chose to write about those individuals who seemed to us to be the most representative in the field we have chosen, that of the history of child psychoanalysis. Others were not retained. We could have mentioned Ferenczi and his little man-rooster, Arpad (1933), or Adler. We could also have mentioned the Dutch or Italian schools of child psychoanalysis, for example. Our choices may be arbitrary, but they have nevertheless enabled us to focus on individuals and countries.

This history has been divided into three parts, covering the chronological element, a geographical element showing how ideas have spread around the world, and an element of phantasy: a phantasized geography. There are therefore three sections: ‘The day before yesterday’, the origins, in Vienna; ‘Yesterday’, in Vienna, Berlin and London; ‘Today’, in London, the United States, Argentina and France. A final short section deals with the outlook for the future: ‘And tomorrow?’



## PART I

The day before yesterday:  
beginnings in Vienna (1905–  
20)

## Introduction

This period, the building up of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud, would also see the outlines of what was to become child psychoanalysis. Well before 1900, Freud had already worked in paediatric departments. Following the publication of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905, the Psychoanalytical Society of Vienna started to become interested in the sexuality of young children. The Society's Wednesday evening discussions became very heated, all the more so since those present were using examples taken from their own families, mentioning the 'exploits' of their own young children. Carl Jung in Zurich and Karl Abraham in Berlin also took part enthusiastically, and corresponded with Freud on the subject. His correspondence with Jung, through which permeates the unease which would lead to their separation, sometimes takes an amusing turn; for instance, when Freud writes to Jung: 'I hope Agathli [Jung's daughter] is original and hadn't heard the story of Little Hans?' At other times it is moving, such as when Mrs Jung tries to get the dual message across to Freud that it is not easy to be the father of his children, nor that of...Jung. 'I wanted to ask...if you were sure that your children could not be helped by analysis. One is not to the son of a great man without impunity if one has such difficulty in casting off ordinary fathers...wasn't your son's broken leg in the same vein?' (Freud and Jung, 1974).

The publication of the analysis of little Hans in this climate was a significant event, because it confirmed Freud's theoretical views and also because it demonstrated that it was possible to carry out analytic treatment on a young child under certain conditions.

It was difficult at that time to know where this interest in child psychoanalysis would lead. Should the number of observations of the child be multiplied in order to confirm psychoanalytical theory? Should the dream of a psychoanalytical education to ensure the prevention of neuroses be pursued? Sándor Ferenczi's communication at the Salzburg conference in 1908 entitled: 'What practical guidance does the Freudian experience provide for the education of the child?' was a step in this direction. Should there be more analytical treatment for children? How should this be carried out?

The group was teeming with ideas. Hermine Hug-Hellmuth was the most persistent in her research and was the first to carry out analytical treatment on children. A teacher by training, she held bold views on child sexuality and education, for which many would never forgive her. Her murder and the particular circumstances surrounding it provided the opportunity for hateful attacks on Freudian theories.

## Sigmund Freud

In the beginning, my statements about infantile sexuality were founded almost exclusively on the findings of analysis in adults which led back into the past. I had no opportunity of direct observations on children. It was therefore a very great triumph when it became possible years later to confirm almost all my inferences by direct observation and the analysis of very young children—a triumph that lost some of its magnitude as one gradually realized that the nature of the discovery was such that one should really be ashamed of having had to make it. The further one carried these observations on children, the more self-evident the facts became; but more astonishing, too, did it become that one had taken so much trouble to overlook them.

(Freud, 1914a:18)

Sigmund Freud's discovery and elaboration of psychoanalysis was something which took much longer than is generally recognized.

When, with the help of a bursary, the young Sigmund Freud went to attend Charcot's courses in Paris in 1885, he was 29. He had already done considerable work in the field of neuro-pathology, histology in particular, but, as he himself said: 'I understood nothing about neuroses at that time' (1925a). However, he did become interested to some extent in young children early on and published a number of works on both unilateral and bilateral cerebral paralysis in children (Freud and Rie, 1891; Freud, 1893). In 1886, he spent several weeks in Adolf Baginski's paediatric department in Berlin. He was then appointed head of the new neurological unit at the public Institute of Paediatrics in Vienna run by the paediatrician Kassowitz. 'Freud held this position for many years, working there for several hours three times a week and he made there some valuable contributions to neurology' (Jones, 1953, Vol. I:233). At the same time he set up in private practice as a 'specialist in nervous disorders'. His patients became less and less 'neurological' and more and more 'nervous'. For the former there was no effective treatment anyway. With the latter he mainly used suggestion and hypnosis, and this led him to the theoretical and clinical field where he was to come into his own. Freud had said: 'from the very first I made use of hypnosis in *another* manner, apart from hypnotic suggestion. I used it for questioning the patient upon the origin of his symptom' (Freud, 1925a:19).

To develop his technique, Freud had based himself on an observation by his friend Josef Breuer dating back to 1880–2. Hypnosis had enabled Breuer to find in Anna O.



links between symptoms of severe hysteria and reminiscences of 'traumatic' experiences going back in particular to a period when she was looking after her sick father. The therapy used abreactions:<sup>1</sup> it was a cathartic treatment. It was while trying for many years to understand this case in the light of experience with other patients that Freud was able to make progress. In particular the question was to elucidate the erotic transference that the patient had made to Breuer and his positive counter-transference. Breuer was not able (or unconsciously did not want) to see the phenomenon, in spite of the phantom pregnancy of his patient during the treatment and the jealousy of his wife. He even went as far as saying that Anna O.'s sexual side was surprisingly underdeveloped. To get beyond this stage, Freud had to discover the mechanism of repression, the existence of the unconscious, the role of transference and the major role played by sexuality.

But in 1895 Freud had not yet reached that point. His reflections led him to write *Studies on Hysteria*. He himself said on the subject (Freud, 1925a): 'In the case histories which I contributed to the *Studies* sexual factors played a certain part, but scarcely more attention was paid to them than to other emotional excitations.... It would have been difficult to guess from the *Studies on Hysteria* what an importance sexuality has in the aetiology of the neuroses' (p. 22).

The progress from catharsis to psychoanalysis was not easy: it can be dated to the period 1895 to 1900–2. These dates correspond to Freud's self-analysis, which indicates the energy he must have expended, the resistance he must have had to overcome and the inward searching he would have had to perform. Didier Anzieu's excellent book *L'auto-analyse de Freud* (1986) is proof of this.

Having discovered the role of 'trauma' in the genesis of hysteria, Freud was obliged to admit that there was a still earlier trauma to which the present trauma referred. The earlier trauma was a seduction, a sexual transgression, generally paternal in origin. The notion that the trauma itself was of an essentially sexual nature was not easily admitted, and Breuer had fled from this. But the truly agonizing reappraisal was the discovery of the active role played by the child in sexual seduction, and even more so, the discovery of the imaginary role of the adult in the seduction scene. It was at this point that Freud pronounced his celebrated renunciation of his 'neurotica'.

A century later, the active sexual role of the infant is not always acknowledged, not only by opponents of psychoanalysis, which is after all only quite natural, but even by a large number of psychoanalysts themselves, whose theories show that these factors have not been taken into consideration, even if they consciously and officially admit their existence.

Freud resisted as long as he could. His first thesis was that sexual advances by adults led to early stimulation of the child. 'He did not at first believe that such events could arouse immediate sexual excitement in the child. It was only later, nearing puberty that the memory of the incidents in question would have an effect' (Jones, 1953:353).

In 1895 Freud had written that reminiscences only become traumatic *years after* the events themselves have taken place. In 1896 it was a question of 'slight sexual excitement' in the early infantile period but purely autoerotic, there being no relation between the excitement and another person. In 1897, after having intuitively discovered erotogenic zones, he made a fundamental discovery: more than simply responding to a perverse act by the parents or to the simple sexual desires of its parents towards it, a child

has incestuous desires towards its parents, generally the one of the opposite sex. Ernest Jones describes this research in detail:

Even then Freud had not really arrived at the conception of infantile sexuality as it was later to be understood. The incest wishes and phantasies were later products, probably between the ages of 8 and 12, which were thrown back on to the screen of early childhood. They did not originate there. The most that he would admit was that young children, even infants of six to seven months old [(?!)], had the capacity to register and in some imperfect way to apprehend the meaning of sexual acts between the parents that had been seen or overheard (May 2, 1897). Such experiences would become significant only when the memory of them was re-animated by several phantasies, desires or acts...

The first forms of sexual excitation in early childhood that Freud recognized were what are now called pre-genital ones and concerned the two alimentary orifices, mouth and anus. These could still be regarded as auto-erotic. It was much harder to admit that the young child might have genital wishes concerning a parent which could in many respects be comparable with adult ones. And to recognize the full richness of the child's sexual life in terms of active impulses was a still further step that Freud took only later with his usual caution....

Even in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) in which the Oedipus complex is described, one finds what might be called an encapsuled fossil from earlier times in which it is assumed that children are free from sexual desires; the footnote correcting it was only added in the third edition of the book (1911).

There is therefore no doubt that over a period of some five years Freud regarded children as innocent objects of incestuous desires, and only very slowly—no doubt against considerable inner resistance—came to recognize what ever since has been known as infantile sexuality. As long as possible, he restricted it to a later age, the phantasies being believed to be projected backwards on to the earlier one, and to the end of his life, he chose to regard the first year of infancy as a dark mystery enshrouding dimly apprehensible excitations rather than active impulses and phantasies.

(Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I, 1953:355–6)

In 1914, Freud stated this discovery of infantile sexuality with the utmost caution. It is true that the uncovering of the infantile libido had already won him some most violent attacks, but Freud's own mental resistance had also to be reckoned with its repression ever active, as is normal:

Enquirers often find more than they bargain for. One was drawn further and further back into the past; one hoped at last to be able to stop at puberty, the period in which the sexual impulses are traditionally

supposed to awake. But in vain; the tracks led still further back into childhood and into its earlier years.

(Freud, 1914a:17)

And, further on, he notes:

If hysterical subjects trace back their symptoms to traumas that are fictitious, then the new fact which emerges is precisely that they create such scenes in *phantasy*, and this psychical reality requires to be taken into account alongside practical reality. This reflection was soon followed by the discovery that these phantasies were intended to cover up the auto-erotic activity of the first years of childhood, to embellish it and raise it to a higher plane. And now, from behind the phantasies, the whole range of a child's sexual life came to light.

(Freud, 1914a:17–18)

Freud thus made this discovery against his will. In 1925 he noted: 'I was not prepared for this conclusion and my expectations played no part in it, for I had begun my investigation of neurotics quite unsuspectingly' (Freud, 1925a:24).

One could still protect oneself with the 'medical' aspect of sexuality: its chemistry was as yet unknown, but it governed sexual excitation and meant that neuroses resembled endocrine disorders such as Basedow's disease (hyperthyroidosis) (Freud, 1925a:25).

Because infantile sexuality was a novelty in those days, Freud's discovery was

a contradiction of one of the strongest human prejudices. Childhood was looked upon as innocent and free from the lusts of sex, and the fight with the demon of 'sensuality' was not thought to begin until the troubled age of puberty. Such occasional sexual activities as it had been impossible to overlook in children were put down as signs of degeneracy or premature depravity or as a curious freak of nature. Few of the findings of psychoanalysis have met with such universal contradiction or have aroused such an outburst of indignation as the assertion that the sexual function starts at the beginning of life and reveals its presence by important signs even in childhood. And yet no other finding of analysis can be demonstrated so easily and so completely.

(Freud, 1925a:33)

But how was this to be demonstrated? As we shall see, between 1902 and 1910 it would be necessary to study *the children themselves* (the effects of that decade are still being felt today).

It was during the meetings of the circle of Freud's first students that this study of children was undertaken. The Wednesday psychoanalytical evenings which, from 1902 onwards, took place in Freud's rooms, were to become the Wednesday Evening Sessions. The Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna, founded in 1908, arose out of these meetings, which then became part of its official activities. Reports of these meetings dating back to

1906 are still available to us (see *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, vols I–IV, 1906–18).

The task the members of this rather mixed group set themselves was to endeavour to understand psychoanalysis and to gain ground in this field. They did this with the various means at their disposal, some by analysing patients, others by commenting on philosophical, psychological or literary texts, and yet others by studying themselves. In this last category we might mention Rudolf von Urbantschitsch, who, on 15 January 1908, gave a paper entitled: ‘My developmental years until marriage.’ The participants discussed in learned fashion whether his onanism was harmful or whether it was just the struggle against the urge to masturbate that was harmful. An analysis of the speaker was then undertaken. Freud analysed his feminine side and his exhibitionism. Hitschmann emphasized that ‘it is of great interest to know what has become of a man with such a history (1906–8, p. 283); Isidore Sadger studied his perversions and indicated that ‘It is a question whether the speaker is really quite as healthy as has been asserted’ (p. 284); Max Graf (the father of little Hans) said that ‘one would have to assume that the speaker is severely hysterical’. Freud said that this was not so, since neurosis does not exist when repression is successful. In his response the ‘speaker’ acknowledged his ‘psychic sadism’, but disputed that he was a homosexual or a pervert (p. 285).

We have mentioned this discussion to show that in this sort of atmosphere, talking about one’s own children would not be found shocking in any way.

One sentence from the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* clearly indicates the tasks assigned to the Wednesday researchers:

A formula begins to take shape which lays it down that the sexuality of neurotics has remained in, or been brought back to, an infantile state. Thus our interest turns to the sexual life of children, and we will now proceed to trace the play of influences which govern the evolution of infantile sexuality till its outcome in perversion, neurosis or normal sexual life.

(S.Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905:172)

These tasks are mentioned again in the article on little Hans: ‘With this end in view I have for many years been urging my pupils and my friends to collect observations of the sexual life of children—the existence of which has as a rule been cleverly overlooked or deliberately denied’ (S.Freud, *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy*, 1909:6). The parents of little Hans, Max Graf and his wife, ‘had agreed that in bringing up their first child they would use no more coercion than might be absolutely necessary for maintaining good behaviour’. These remarks echo those of Freud in 1905 (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*): ‘A thorough study of the sexual manifestations of childhood would probably reveal the essential characters of the sexual instinct and would show us the course of its development and the way it is put together from various sources’ (1905:173).

Often forgotten is the fact that right at the beginning of the article on little Hans (the first ten pages) there is an observation of a normal child; these were observations made of Herbert Graf between 3 and 5 years of age, from 1906–8. In his observations, Freud noted elements demonstrating the castration complex, the significance of infantile curiosity, sibling rivalry and, in particular, a polymorphously perverse disposition. The

phobia of 'being afraid of being bitten by a horse in the street' crops up at this point, which permits the actual analysis to take place.

As we can see in this example, Freud distinguishes quite distinctly between psychoanalytical *observation* and psychoanalytical *treatment* very early on in the history of psychoanalysis. The observations mentioned above led to Freud's 1907 paper entitled: 'The sexual enlightenment of children'. In the original edition, the child was still called Herbert: anonymity was not complete. This paper is part of a discussion, commonplace for that period, about the interest of such information, the time chosen for divulging it, the way to do it, and so forth.

It was therefore after two years of observation—and an upbringing 'with no more coercion than might be absolutely necessary—that the child became phobic. The parents were very worried: 'I am sending you a little more about Hans—but this time I am sorry to say material for a case history' (Freud, 1909:22).

Initially, the occurrence of this infantile neurosis must have been very distressful in a circle which was working on the aetiology of neuroses. Besides, was this not an indication of the eventual harmfulness of an upbringing without coercion and with sexual information? We know that these ideas of Freud's were very much criticized at the time. Finally, had the parents not committed some errors in their upbringing? Through the observation from the age of 3, we know that the mother had threatened to have the 'widdler' of Herbert-Hans cut off by Dr A if he continued to masturbate, that his parents sometimes (often?) let him sleep in their bed, that the mother had called his penis a 'filthy thing'. These occasional accounts imply an atmosphere which would make the child feel guilty: the parents too, for that matter. Guilty because of the fear, that modern child psychoanalysts know well, of having not brought up their child correctly and of having been the cause of the child's neurosis. Add to that the fact, which we owe to Jean Bergeret's penetrating study (1987), that other histories are hidden behind this analysis: the systematic scotomization of the role played by the mother seems to indicate the existence of an intentional omission on Freud's part, for he knew this particular mother well (he had analysed her) and was obliged to suppress highly significant details so as not to embarrass the three protagonists.

Whatever the case may be, the child temporarily became a 'pathological case' and the treatment decided on was psychoanalysis. Freud appears to have been very happy with this outcome, which would enable him to study a neurosis *in statu nascendi*, the father being the most suitable person to carry out the analysis, with Freud as supervisor.

We cannot and do not wish to present the psychoanalysis of Hans in this present work, where our intention is to limit ourselves to a historical viewpoint (*vertex*). Those readers who are already acquainted with the case will be bored by the repetition, and those who are not acquainted with it or only slightly will perhaps be prompted to read or reread it.

Yet, this case of child psychoanalysis in history is deserving of more than a passing mention. For one thing it was the first time it had ever been done, and if the credit goes to Freud for inspiring the method, devising the theory, supervising the case, and writing it up, he was not the analyst. This was in fact Max Graf, who undertook this first case. He was not a doctor, he did not have any experience, he was not of the female sex (see below) and, in any case, he was the father of the child. We have often observed in our own supervisory seminars the miraculous treatment carried out by young and inexperienced doctors. These first cases often benefit from inspired intuition, perhaps

because the resistance to insight,<sup>2</sup> which starts to develop at the beginning of their psychoanalysis, has not yet blinded them. One has then to wait for these psychoanalysts successfully to finish their own personal psychoanalysis before seeing their 'therapeutic gift' and their insight reappear.

This was probably the only psychoanalysis that Max Graf ever undertook. It was very distressing for him and Freud's support was essential. When Freud wrote: 'It was only because the authority of a father and of a physician were united in a single person, and because in him both affectionate care and scientific interest were combined, that it was possible in this one instance to apply the method to a use which it would not otherwise have lent itself. [*Ungeeignet*]' (Freud, 1909:5). This was undoubtedly true at the time, because no child psychoanalyst existed at this time, and in fact only the father could have done it. However, one is bound to add that without Freud it would never have happened.

Today's reader might question the psychoanalytical nature of this treatment, which is vastly different from the 'technical' conditions under which psychoanalyses are now conducted. First, it would be reasonable to take Freud's own opinion into account: he published the case under the title '*analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy*'. The benevolent neutrality on the part of the father was no doubt lacking, but his paternal bias was nevertheless tempered by his concern to let the child express himself and it was underpinned by Freud, who had to sustain a double transference: that of the father and that of Hans himself, who knew Freud not just through his father, but directly. Freud had offered him a rocking-horse(!) for his third birthday.

This analysis was carried out with at least as much rigour as all the others practised in 1908. The child recounts his dreams, confides his theories and sexual practices, evokes his anxieties and his symptoms; what the father does not understand, the child explains. For instance, when Hans says that he does not touch his 'widdler' any more and his father takes him to task for nevertheless still wanting to, Hans lectures him, saying: '*Wanting's not doing, and doing's not wanting.*' In the same way, Hans says he wishes his sister Anna were dead, and his father says that a nice little boy should not wish such things. Hans retorts that he has the right to *think* it. His father does not immediately understand, and says that that is not nice. Hans explains: 'If he thinks it, it *is* good all the same, because you can write it to the professor', referring his analyst father back to his supervisor! At this point, Freud writes a footnote: 'Well done, little Hans! I could wish for no better understanding of psychoanalysis from any grown-up.' The father elicits associations from his patient: 'Tell me, quickly, what you are thinking about...and what else.' The interpretations are made, in classic fashion, in the transference: 'the big giraffe is me', etc. At one point, the supervisor-professor takes part in the analysis directly: the father and son consult him. Freud allows himself to venture an interpretation, which would be the turning point: 'I then disclosed to him that he was afraid of his father precisely because he was so fond of his mother.' The symptoms started to improve rapidly from that point and the little boy showed proof of a truly rare 'clarity of mind' says Freud (today we would say that he had gained in insight).

In May 1908, after five months of daily analysis, the child was considered cured, the symptoms having disappeared. The child gave up this game of question and answer with his father and started asking himself questions about the exact nature of his relationship with his father ('I belong to you too.'). The father wrote up the remaining unanalysed material, to which Freud responded: 'our young investigator has merely come somewhat

early upon the discovery that all knowledge is patchwork'. The father added that 'the boy would have gone out for walks soon enough if he had been given a sound thrashing' (which he had not). That was a case of double transference well disposed of!

The treatment in this particular case therefore consisted of an analyst listening in a benevolent fashion to what a child of 5 was saying while remaining as neutral as possible, and supervised by Freud. Listening to the daily events, dreams and memories enabled the analyst to elicit associations of ideas which in turn enabled the child to bring back forgotten memories and thus to reconstruct his primal phantasies. The analysis of the transference (through Freud) and the interpretations made in that transference enabled the child gradually to gain a better understanding of his inner world, to the point that he no longer needed to repress it, that he no longer needed his symptoms.

This case can therefore truly be considered to be an analysis, even in the sense that we understand the word today: it was indeed the first case of child psychoanalysis. In passing, we would just like to mention the 'deferred action' concept, which for a large number of French psychoanalysts means that psychoanalysis for children must be ruled out. Referring to the phrase spoken by little Hans: 'My widdler will get bigger as I get bigger; it's fixed in, of course', Freud observed that this was a *deferred* effect (the emphasis is Freud's) of the maternal threat of castration expressed fifteen months previously. At the time, the threat was not carried out; but the effect of the analysis was to give it some sense, bringing the fear of castration to the fore and causing the child to make this defiant statement. Contrary to what one often reads, this deferred effect can happen well before puberty.

In his annotations, Freud announced that he would demonstrate, in a very systematic fashion, that this case supported the theory of infantile sexuality he had expressed in 1905 (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*), what it contributed to the understanding of phobias, and, finally, what it contributed to the understanding of the mental life of the child and to its upbringing from a psychoanalytical viewpoint.

The point here is neither to comment on nor even to give a summary of this major theoretical text. However, we would like to emphasize the point to which the founder of psychoanalysis came to rely on the psychoanalysis of a child, clearly stated as such, to raise and solve a large number of theoretical problems concerning not just children but psychoanalysis in general. Moreover, he was often to refer to this case in a number of later works.

To the malicious critics of the time who described a child with such polymorphous perversity as 'degenerate', to those who, on the contrary, deplored that such a courageous child should thus be perverted by psychoanalysis, to those who accused Freud and Max Graf of putting ideas into Hans' head, to those who, on the contrary, denied any value to infantile discourse, Freud responded calmly with a scientific and humanistic disquisition, which, in our opinion, is one of his finest texts. The normality of infantile neurosis is mentioned, as is the fact that 'no sharp line can be drawn between "neurotic" and "normal" people—whether children or adults'.

The biological factor is not forgotten: 'Predisposition and the eventualities of life must combine before the threshold of this summation is overstepped.'

Problems of upbringing are mentioned; first, those within the scope of child psychoanalysis: Freud believed that the 'pedagogical experiment' (meaning sexual

education) could have gone further in this case. But on the general problem of education, he had already adopted the sceptical position which he was to maintain throughout:

the information gained by psychoanalysis...can claim with justice that it deserves to be regarded by educators as an invaluable guide in their conduct towards children. What practical conclusions may follow from this, and how far experience may justify the application of those conclusions within our present social system, are matters which I leave to the examination and decision of others.

(Freud, 1909:146–7)

When, at the end of this study, Freud expresses the idea that this particular case had not ‘strictly speaking taught [him] anything new’, we do not think that he was criticizing any psychoanalysis of children that might take place in the future, but rather was reaffirming the similarity of the process of infantile neurosis in both adults and children. Indeed, in the same sentence he indicates that these facts that he already knew were perceptible in adults ‘less distinctly and more indirectly’. Moreover, in 1910 he rectifies as follows (footnote added to the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905:193–4):

When the account which I have given above of infantile sexuality was first published in 1905, it was founded for the most part on the results of psychoanalytic research upon adults. At that time it was impossible to make full use of direct observation on children: only isolated hints and some valuable pieces of confirmation came from that source. Since then it has become possible to gain direct insight into infantile psychosexuality by the analysis of some cases of neurotic illness during the early years of childhood. It is gratifying to be able to report that direct observation has fully confirmed the conclusions arrived at by psychoanalysis—which is incidentally good evidence of the trustworthiness of that method of research. In addition to this, the ‘Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy’ (1909) has taught us much that is new for which we have not been prepared by psychoanalysis: for instance, the fact that sexual symbolism—the representation of what is sexual by non-sexual objects and relations—extends back into the first years of possession of the power of speech. I was further made aware of a defect in the account I have given in the text, which, in the interests of lucidity, describes the conceptual distinction between the two phases of *auto-erotism* and *object-love*<sup>3</sup> as though it were also a separation in time. But the analyses that I have just mentioned, as well as the findings of Bell...show that children between the ages of three and five are capable of very clear object-choice, accompanied by strong affects.

The epilogue to the story of little Hans is well known. In 1922 Hans-Herbert was 19 and went to see Freud. He said to the great man: ‘I am little Hans.’ He was well and, in particular, he had weathered his adolescence well, as he had difficulties resulting from the divorce of his parents. It was satisfying to be able to oppose this result to the



indignant critics of 1909, when ‘a most evil future had been foretold for the poor little boy, because he had been “robbed of his innocence” at such a tender age and had been made the victim of a psychoanalysis’ (p. 148). See also the chapter on Hermine Hug-Hellmuth.)

Jean Bergeret (1984, 1987) shows us Herbert Graf once again in 1970 (at the age of 67!) greeting Anna Freud at a conference in Geneva with the same words. ‘I am little Hans.’ The aim of Bergeret’s book was to delve further into the things which had remained unvoiced in the analysis in 1909, and in particular to give more prominence to the problem of the ‘basic violence’ of this case. We also find interesting this author’s suggestion that this case was in fact a continuation of Freud’s own self-analysis and that in ‘Hans’, he had found more than just an echo of his own childhood, which up to that point he had tended to scotomize. Equally fascinating reading is Hans—Herbert Graf’s (1972) autobiography *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*. This man, son of a writer and music critic, whose godfather was Gustav Mahler, had a very rich professional career, first as an opera singer and then as a producer. He was director of the Metropolitan Opera of New York from 1936 to 1950 and worked on all the great stages of the musical world. He does not seem to have been at all unhappy in his personal life either. He died in 1973.

Let us go back to the Psychoanalytical Society of Vienna in 1909 (see *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, vol. II, 1908–10). At its meeting on 12 May, Freud stated: ‘We simply do not understand children and only since Hans do we know what a child thinks’ (p. 230). Perhaps what he meant to say was: we know that a child *does* think. Reitler blames the parents, which was quite common at that time and not really a modern idea at all: ‘Undeniably, mistakes were made in his education, and these were indeed responsible for his neurosis’ (p. 232). Max Graf was present at the meeting and defends himself: Hans had a ‘strong sexual predisposition *Anlage*, which awoke a premature need for love; this in turn became too strongly linked with his parents’ (p. 235). Freud also comes to his defence: ‘not *that* many mistakes were made, and those that did occur did not have *that* much to do with the neurosis’ (p. 235). In fact, it was a question of constitution: Hans had ‘a strong predisposition to sexuality’.

Many of Freud’s students studied their children. It is a pity that we do not have any notes prior to October 1906, but, as early as 7 November 1906, Bass (a general practitioner) indicates that his child was extremely sensitive to light up to the age of 2; the sudden striking of a match would make him sneeze. On 23 January 1907 Federn observed that his child, aged 13, was showing an aversion to certain foods, which were those also disliked by his mother. On 27 March Reitler talks of a little girl of about 8 or 9, who he seems to know quite well. She was enuretic and had an obsessive ritual which consisted of using the chamberpots of her brothers and father and then having to wash herself ‘until she bled’.

On 12 May 1909, the session where Hans is mentioned, Bass continues to report: his little boy only talks about ‘these things’ with his mother. He thinks that a woman need only look into the eyes of a man to conceive a child.

On 17 November 1909, Heller talks about his children: vomiting and spending a long time on the toilet are the symptoms he has observed, along with a compulsive need to bite (his brother) and a ‘strange’ aversion to kisses.

On 16 March 1910, Friedjung talks about a little boy of 6 and a half. The boy’s father (himself?) sleeps with him and perhaps the child has felt his father’s penis in erection.