SUBJECTIVE DETERMINATION OF THE "FAMILYONAIRO" WITICISM

Heine put this word in the mouth of a comical person, Hirsch-Hyacinth, collector, operator and tax appraiser from Hamburg, and valet of the aristocratic baron, Cristoforo Gumpelino (formerly Gumpel). Evidently the poet has experienced great pleasure in these productions, for he allows Hirsch-Hyacinth to talk big and puts in his mouth the most amusing and most candid utterances; he positively endows him with the practical wisdom of a Sancho Panza. It is a pity that Heine, as it seems, had no liking for this dramatic figure and that he drops the delightful character so soon. From many passages it would seem that the poet himself is speaking behind the transparent mask of Hirsch-Hyacinth, and we are quite convinced that this person is nothing but a parody of the poet himself. Hirsch tells of reasons why he has discarded his former name and now calls himself Hyacinth. "Besides I have the advantage," he continues, "of having an H on my seal already, and, therefore, I am in no need of having a new letter engraved." But Heine himself resorted to this economy when he changed his surname "Harry" to "Heinrich" at his baptism. Every one acquainted with the life of the poet will recall that in Hamburg, where one also meets the personage Hirsch-Hyacinth, Heine had an uncle of the same name, who played the greatest rôle in Heine's life as the wealthy member of the family. The uncle's name was likewise Solomon, just like the elderly Rothschild who treated the impeccable Hirsch on such a familyonaire basis. What seems to be merely a jest in the mouth of Hirsch-Hyacinth soon reveals a background of earnest bitterness when we attribute it to the nephew Harry-Heinrich. For he belonged to the family, nay, more, it was his earnest wish to marry a daughter of this uncle, but she refused him, and his uncle always treated him on a somewhat familyonaire basis, as a poor relative. His rich relatives in Hamburg always dealt with him condescendingly. I recall the story of one of his old aunts by marriage who, when she was still young and pretty, sat next to some one at a family dinner who seemed to her unprepossessing and whom the other members of the family treated shabbily. She did not feel herself called upon to be any more condescending towards him. Only many years later did she discover that the careless and neglected cousin was the poet Heinrich Heine. We know from many a record how keenly Heine suffered from these repulses at the hands of his wealthy relatives in his youth and during later years. The witticism "familyonaire" grew out of the soil of such a subjective emotional feeling.

One may suspect similar subjective determinations in many other witticisms of the great scoffers, but I know of no other example by which one can show this in such a convincing way. It is, therefore, hazardous to venture a more definite opinion about the nature of this personal deter-
mination. Furthermore, one is not inclined in the first place to claim similar complicated conditions for the origin of each and every witticism. Neither are the witty productions of other celebrated men better suited to give us the desired insight into the subjective determination of wit. In fact, one gets the impression that the subjective determination of wit production is oftentimes not unrelated to persons suffering from neurotic diseases; when, for example, one learns that Lichtenberg was a confirmed hypochondriac burdened with all kinds of eccentricities. The great majority of witticisms, especially those produced from current happenings, are anonymous; one might be inquisitive to know what kind of people they are who originate them. The physician occasionally has an opportunity to make a study of persons who, if not renowned wits, are recognized in their circle as witty and as originators of many passable witticisms; he is often surprised to find such persons showing dissociated personalities and a predisposition to nervous affections. However, owing to insufficient data, we certainly cannot maintain that such a psychoneurotic constitution is a regular or necessary subjective condition for wit-making.

A clearer case is afforded by Jewish witticisms which, as before mentioned, are made exclusively by Jews themselves, whereas Jewish stories of different origin rarely rise above the level of the comical strain or of brutal mockery. The determination for the self-participation here, as in Heine's joke "famillionaire," seems to be due to the fact that the person finds it difficult to express directly his criticism or aggression and is thus compelled to resort to by-ways.

Other subjective determinations or favorable conditions for wit-making are less shrouded in darkness. The motive for the production of harmless wit is usually the ambitious impulse to display one's spirit or to "show off." It is an impulse comparable to the impulse to sexual exhibition. The existence of numerous inhibited impulses whose suppression retains a certain degree of liability produces a most favorable disposition for the production of tendency-wit. Thus, certain single components of the sexual constitution may appear as motives for wit-formation. A whole series of obscene witticisms lead one to the conclusion that a person who gives origin to such wit conceals a desire to exhibit. Persons having a powerful sadistical component in their sexuality, which is more or less inhibited in life, are most successful with the tendency-wit of aggression.

**THE IMPULSE TO IMPART WIT**

The second fact which impels one to examine the subjective determination of wit is the common experience that nobody is satisfied with making wit for himself. Wit-making is inseparably connected with the desire to impart it; in fact, this impulse is so strong that it is often realized after
overcoming strong objections. In the comic, too, one experiences pleasure by imparting it to another person; but this is not imperative; one can enjoy the comic alone when one happens on it. Wit, on the other hand, must be imparted. Apparently the process of wit-formation does not end with the witty inspiration. There remains something which strives to complete the mysterious process of wit-formation by imparting it.

We cannot conjecture, at first, what may have motivated the impulse to impart wit. But in wit we notice another peculiarity which again distinguishes it from the comic. If I encounter the latter, I can laugh heartily over it alone; I am naturally pleased if by imparting it to some one else I make him laugh too. In the case of wit, however, which accidentally occurs to me, which I have made, I cannot laugh over it in spite of the unmistakable feeling of pleasure which I experience in the witticism. It is possible that my need to impart the witticism to another is in some way connected with the resultant laughter, which is manifest in the other, but denied to me.

But why do I not laugh over my own joke? And what rôle does the other person play in it?

Let us consider the last query first. In the comic usually two persons come into consideration. Besides my own ego there is another person in whom I find something comic; if objects appear comical to me, it takes place by means of a sort of personification which is not uncommon in our emotional life. The comic process is satisfied with these two persons, the ego and the object person; there may also be a third person, but that is not obligatory. Wit as a play with one's own words and thoughts at first dispenses with an object person, but already, upon the first step of the jest, it demands another person to whom it can impart its result, if it has succeeded in safeguarding play and nonsense against the remonstrance of reason. This second person in wit does not, however, correspond to the object person, but to the third person who is the other person in the comic. It seems that in the jest the decision as to whether wit has fulfilled its task is left to the other person, as if the ego were not quite certain of its opinion in the matter. The harmless wit, too, is in need of the other person's support in order to ascertain whether it has accomplished its purpose. If wit enters the service of sexual or hostile tendencies, it can be described as a psychic process among three persons, just as in the comic, with the exception that there the third person plays a different rôle. The psychic process of wit is consummated here between the first person—the ego, and the third person—the stranger, and not, as in the comic, between the ego and the object person.

Also, in the case of the third person of wit, the wit is confronted with subjective determinations which can make the goal of the pleasure-
WIT AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

stimulus unattainable. As Shakespeare states in Love's Labor's Lost (Act V, Scene 2):

“A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it.”

He whose thoughts run in sober channels is incompetent to declare whether or not the jest is a good one. He himself must be in a jovial, or at least indifferent state of mind, in order to become the third person of the jest. The same hindrance is present in the case of both harmless and tendency wit, but in the latter the antagonism to the tendency which wishes to serve wit appears as a new hindrance. The readiness to laugh about an excellent smutty joke cannot manifest itself if the exposure concerns an honored kinsman of the third person. In an assemblage of divines and pastors no one would dare to refer to Heine’s comparison of Catholic and Protestant priests as retail dealers and employees of a wholesale business. In the presence of my opponent’s friends the wittiest invectives with which I might assail him would not be considered witticisms but invectives, and in the minds of my hearers it would create not pleasure, but indignation. A certain amount of willingness or a certain indifference, the absence of all factors which might evoke strong feelings in opposition to the tendency, are absolute conditions for the participation of the third person in the completion of the wit process.

THE THIRD PERSON OF THE WITTICISM

Wherever such hindrances to the operation of wit fail, we see the phenomenon which we are now investigating, namely, that the pleasure which the wit has provided manifests itself more clearly in the third person than in the originator of the wit. We must be satisfied to use the expression “more clearly” where we should be inclined to ask whether the pleasure of the hearer is not more intensive than that of the wit producer, because we are obviously lacking the means of measuring and comparing it. We see, however, that the hearer shows his pleasure by means of explosive laughter after the first person, in most cases with a serious expression on his face, has related the joke. If I repeat a witticism which I have heard, I am forced, in order not to spoil its effect, to conduct myself during its recital exactly like him who made it. We may now put the question of whether we can draw conclusions concerning the psychic process of wit-formation from this determination of laughter over wit.

Now, it cannot be our intention to take into consideration everything that has been asserted and printed about the nature of laughter. We are deterred from this undertaking by the statement which Dugas, one of Ribot's pupils, put at the beginning of his book Psychologie du rire
"Il n'est pas de fait plus banal et plus étudié que le rire, il n'en est pas qui ait eu le don d'exciter d'avantage la curiosité du vulgaire et celle des philosophes, il n'en est pas sur lequel on ait recueilli plus d'observations et bâti plus de théories, et avec cela il n'en est pas qui demeure plus inexpliqué, on serait tenté de dire avec les sceptiques qu'il faut être content de rire et de ne pas chercher à savoir pourquoi on rit, d'autant que peut-être le réflexion tue le rire, et qu'il serait alors contradictoire qu'elle en découvrit les causes."

On the other hand, we must make sure to utilize for our purposes a view of the mechanism of laughter which fits our own realm of thought excellently. I refer to the attempted explanation of Herbert Spencer in his essay entitled *Physiology of Laughter.*

According to Spencer laughter is a phenomenon of discharge of psychic irritation, and an evidence of the fact that the psychic utilization of this irritation has suddenly met with a hindrance. The psychological situation, which discharges itself in laughter, he describes in the following words: "Laughter naturally results only when consciousness is unawares transferred from great things to small—only when there is what we call a descending incongruity."

In an almost analogous sense the French authors (Dugas) designate laughter as a "détente," a manifestation of release of tension, and A. Bain's theory, "Laughter a relief from restraint," seems to me to approach Spencer's conceptions nearer than many authors would have us believe.

However, we experience the desire to modify Spencer's thought; to give a more definite meaning to some of the ideas and to change others. We would say that laughter arises when the sum of psychic energy, formerly used for the occupation of certain psychic channels, has become unutilizable so that it can experience free discharge. We know what criti-

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2 Different points in this declaration would demand an exhaustive inquiry into an investigation of the pleasure of the comic, a thing that other authors have already done, and which, at all events, does not touch our discussion. It seems to me that Spencer was not happy in his explanation of why the discharge happens to find just that path, the excitement of which results in the physical picture of laughter. I should like to add one single contribution to the subject of the physiological explanation of laughter, that is, to the derivation or interpretation of the muscular actions that characterize laughter—a subject that has been often treated before and since Darwin, but which has never been conclusively settled. According to the best of my knowledge the grimaces and contortions of the corners of the mouth that characterize laughter appear first in the satisfied and satiated nursing when he drowsily quits the breasts. There it is a correct motion of expression since it bespeaks the determination to take no more nourishment, an "enough," so to speak, or rather a "more than enough." This primal sense of pleasurable satiation may have furnished the smile, which ever remains the basic phenomenon of laughter, as the later connection with the pleasurable processes of discharge.
cism such a declaration invites, but for our defense we dare cite a pertinent quotation from Lipps's treatise on *Komik und Humor*, an analysis which throws light on other problems besides the comic and humor. He says: "In the end individual psychological problems always lead us fairly deeply into psychology, so that fundamentally no psychological problem may be considered by itself" (p. 71). The terms "psychic energy," "discharge," and the treatment of psychic energy as a quantity have become habitual modes of thinking since I began to explain to myself philosophically the fact of psychopathology. Being of the same opinion as Lipps I have essayed to represent in my *Interpretation of Dreams* the unconscious psychic processes as real entities, and I have not represented the conscious contents as the "real psychic activity." Only when I speak about the "investing energy cathexis of psychic channels," do I seem to deviate from the analogies that Lipps uses. The knowledge that I have gained about the fact that psychic energy can be displaced from one idea to another along certain association channels, and about the almost indestructible conservation of the traces of psychic processes, has actually made it possible for me to attempt such a representation of the unknown. In order to obviate the possibility of a misunderstanding I must add that I am making no attempt to proclaim that cells and fibers, or the neuron system in vogue nowadays, represent these psychic paths, even if such paths would have to be represented by the organic elements of the nervous system in a manner which cannot yet be indicated.

**LAUGHTER AS A DISCHARGE**

Thus, according to our assumption, the conditions for laughter are such that a sum of psychic energy hitherto employed in the cathexis of some paths may experience free discharge. And since not all laughter (but surely the laughter of wit), is a sign of pleasure, we shall be inclined to refer this pleasure to the release of previously existing cathetic energy. When we see that the hearer of the witlissl laugh, while the creator of the same cannot, then that must indicate that in the hearer a sum of damping energy has been released and discharged, whereas during the

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1 Cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Chap. VII, also *On the Psychic Force*, etc., in the above cited book of Lipps (p. 123), where he says: "This is the general principle: The dominant factors of the psychic life are not represented by the contents of consciousness but by those psychic processes which are unconscious. The task of psychology, provided it does not limit itself to a mere description of the content of consciousness, must also consist of revealing the nature of these unconscious processes from the nature of the contents of consciousness and its temporal relationship. Psychology must itself be a theory of these processes. But such a psychology will soon find that there exist quite a number of characteristics of these processes which are unrepresented in the corresponding contents of consciousness.

2 Cathexis, from the Greek *catheko*, I occupy; the term refers to a sum of psychic energy, which occupies or invests objects or some particular channels.
wit formation, either in the release or in the discharge, inhibitions resulted. One can characterize the psychic processes in the hearer, in the third person of the witticism, hardly more pointedly than by asserting that he has bought the pleasure of the witticism with very little expenditure on his part. One might say that it is presented to him. The words of the witticism which he hears necessarily produce in him that idea or thought-connection whose formation in him was also resisted by great inner hindrances. He would have had to make an effort of his own in order to bring it about spontaneously like the first person, or he would have had to put forth at least as much psychic expenditure to equalize the force of the suppression or repression of the inhibition. This psychic expenditure he has saved himself; according to our former discussion, we should say that his pleasure corresponds to this economy. Following our understanding of the mechanism of laughter we should be more likely to say that the cathexis utilized in the inhibition has now suddenly become superfluous and neutralized because a forbidden idea came into existence by way of auditory perception, and is, therefore, ready to be discharged through laughter. Essentially both statements amount to the same thing, for the economized expenditure corresponds exactly to the now superfluous inhibition. The latter statement is more obvious, for it permits us to say that the hearer of the witticism laughs with the amount of psychic energy which was liberated by the suspension of inhibition cathexis; that is, he laughs away, as it were, this amount of psychic energy.

WHY THE FIRST PERSON DOES NOT LAUGH

If the person in whom the witticism is formed cannot laugh, then it indicates, as we have just remarked, that we deal here with a deviation from the process of the third person, which concerns either the suspension of the inhibition cathexis or the discharge possibility of the same. But the first of the two cases is inconclusive, as we must presently see. The inhibition cathexis in the first person must have also been suspended, for otherwise there would have been no witticism, the formation of which had to overcome just such a resistance. It would have also been impossible for the first person to have experienced the wit-pleasure, which we have indeed been forced to derive from the suspension of inhibition. But there remains the second case, namely, that even though the first person experienced pleasure, he cannot laugh, because the possibility of discharge is disturbed. In the production of laughter such discharge is essential; an interruption in the possibility of discharge might result from the immediate attachment of the freed cathexis to some other endopsychic use. It is well that we have become cognizant of this possibility; we shall soon pay more attention to it. But still another condition leading to the same result is possible in the first person of the wit. Perhaps, after all, no appreciable
amount of energy has been liberated, in spite of the successful release of inhibition cathexis. For in the first person of the wit, the wit-work actually proceeds in a way which must correspond to a certain amount of fresh psychic expenditure. Thus, the first person contributes the power which removes the inhibitions and which surely results in a gain of pleasure for himself; in the case of tendency-wit it is indeed a very big gain, since the fore-pleasure gained from the wit-work takes upon itself the further removal of inhibitions. But the expenditure of the wit-work is, in every case, derived from the gain which results from the removal of inhibitions; it is the same expenditure which escapes from the hearer of the witticism. To confirm what was said it may be added that the witticism loses its laughter effect in the third person, as soon as an expenditure of mental work is exacted of him. The allusions of the witticism must be striking, and the omissions easily supplemented; with the awakening of conscious interest in thinking, the effect of the witticism is regularly made impossible. Here lies the real distinction between wit and riddle. It may be that the psychic constellations during wit-work are not at all favorable to the free discharge of the energy gained. We are here in no position to gain a deeper understanding; our inquiry as to why the third person laughs we have been able to explain better than the question why the first person does not laugh.

At any rate, if we have well in mind these views about the conditions of laughter and about the psychic process in the third person, we have arrived at a place where we can satisfactorily elucidate an entire series of peculiarities which are familiar in wit, but which have not been understood. Before an amount of interlocked energy, capable of discharge, is to be liberated in the third person, there are several conditions which must be fulfilled, or which at least are desirable. 1. It must be assured that the third person really makes this cathexis expenditure. 2. Care must be taken that when the latter becomes freed, that it should find another psychic use instead of offering itself to motor discharge. 3. It can only be of advantage if the cathexis to be liberated in the third person is first strengthened and heightened. Certain processes of wit-work which we can gather together under the caption of secondary or auxiliary techniques serve all these purposes.

The first of these conditions determines one of the qualifications of the third person as hearer of the witticism. He must be in every way so completely in psychic harmony with the first person as to possess the same inner inhibitions which the wit-work has overcome in the first person. Whoever is focused on smutty jokes will not be able to derive pleasure from clever exhibitionistic wit. Mr. N.'s or Mr. Wendell Phillips' aggressions will not be understood by uncultured people who are wont to give free rein to pleasure gained by insulting others. Every witticism thus de-
MOTIVES OF WIT AND WIT AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

mands its own public, and to laugh over the same witticisms is proof of absolute psychic agreement. We have indeed arrived at a point where we are at liberty to examine even more thoroughly the process in the third person's mind. The latter must be able habitually to produce the same inhibition which the joke has surmounted in the first person, so that, as soon as he hears the joke, there awakens within him compulsively and automatically a readiness for this inhibition. This readiness for the inhibition, which I must conceive as a true expenditure analogous to the mobilization of an army, is simultaneously recognized as superfluous or as belated, and is thus immediately discharged in its nascent state through the channel of laughter.¹

The second condition for the production of the free discharge, in which there is another utilization for the liberated energy, seems to me of far greater importance. It furnishes the theoretical explanation for the uncertainty of the effect of wit; if the thoughts expressed in the wit evoke very exciting ideas in the hearer (depending on the agreement or antagonism between the wit's tendencies and the train of thought dominating the hearer), the witty process either receives attention or is deprived of it. Of still greater theoretical interest, however, are a series of auxiliary wit-techniques, which obviously serve the purpose of diverting the attention of the listeners from the wit-process so as to allow the latter to proceed automatically. I advisedly use the term "automatically" rather than "unconsciously" because the latter designation might prove misleading. It is only a question of keeping the psychic process from getting more than its share of attention during the recital of the witticism, and the usefulness of these auxiliary techniques permits us to assume rightfully that it is just the occupation of attention which has a large share in the control, and in the fresh utilization of the freed cathexis.

THE AUTOMATISM OF THE WIT-PROCESS

It seems by no means easy to avoid the endopsyhic utilization of energy that has become superfluous, for in our mental processes we are constantly in the habit of transferring such emotional outputs from one path to another without losing any of their energy through discharge. Wit prevents this in the following way. In the first place it strives for the shortest possible expression in order to expose fewer points of attack to the attention. Secondly, it strictly adheres to the condition of being easily understood (z. s.), for as soon as there is recourse to mental effort, or a demand for a choice between different mental paths, it imperils the effect, not only through the unavoidable mental expenditure, but also through the awakening of attention. Besides this, wit also makes use of the artifice of

¹ Heymans (Zeitschrift für Psychol., XI) has used the viewpoint of the nascent state in a somewhat different connection.
diverting the attention, by offering something in the expression of the witticism which fascinates the hearer, while the liberation of inhibition cathexis and its discharge can take place undisturbed. The omissions in the wording of wit already carry out this intention. They impel us to fill in the gaps and in this way they keep the wit-process free from attention. The technique of the riddle, as it were, which attracts attention is here pressed into the service of the wit-work. The façade formations, which we have already discovered in many groups of tendency-wit, are still more effective. The syllogistical façades excellently fulfill the purpose of riveting the attention by an allotted task. While we begin to ponder wherein the given answer was lacking, we are already laughing; our attention has been surprised, and the discharge of the liberated inhibition cathexis has been effected. The same is true of witticisms possessing a comic façade in which the comic serves to assist the wit-technique. A comic façade promotes the effect of wit in more than one way; it makes possible not only the automatism of the wit-process by riveting the attention, but it also facilitates the discharge of wit by sending ahead a discharge from the comic. Here, the effect of the comic resembles that of a fascinating fore-pleasure, and we can thus understand why many witticisms are able to dispense entirely with the fore-pleasures produced by other means of wit, and make use of only the comic as a fore-pleasure. Among the true techniques of wit it is especially displacement and representation through absurdity which, besides other properties, also develop the deviation of attention so desirable for the automatic discharge of the wit-process.¹

We already surmise, and later will be able to see it more clearly, that

¹ Through an example of displacement-wit I desire to discuss another interesting character of the technique of wit. The genial actress, Gallmeyer, when once asked how old she was, is said to have answered this unwelcome question with abashed and downcast eyes, by saying, "In Brünn." This is a very good example of displacement. Having been asked her age, she replied by naming the place of her birth, thus anticipating the next query, and in this manner she wishes to imply: "This is a question which I prefer to pass by." And still we feel that the character of the witticism does not here come to expression undimmed. The deviation from the question is too obvious; the displacement is much too conspicuous. Our attention understands immediately that it is a matter of an intentional displacement. In other displacement-witticisms the displacement is disguised and our attention is riveted by the effort to discover it. In one of the above mentioned displacement-witticisms, the reply to the recommendation of the horse—"What in the world should I do in Monticello at 6:30 in the morning?"—the displacement is also an obtrusive one, but as a substitute for it it acts upon the attention in a senseless and confusing manner, whereas in the interrogation of the actress we know immediately how to dispose of her displacement answer.

The so-called "facetious questions," which may make use of the best techniques, deviate from wit in other ways. An example of the facetious question with displacement is the following: "What is a cannibal who devours his father and mother?—Answer: An orphan.—And when he has devoured all his other relatives?—Sole-heir.—And where can such a monster ever find sympathy?—In the dictionary under S." The facetious questions are not full witticisms because the required witty answers cannot be guessed like the allusions, omissions, etc., of wit.
in this condition of deviation of attention we have disclosed no unessential characteristic of the psychic process in the hearer of wit. In conjunction with this, we can understand something more. First, how it happens that we rarely ever know in a joke why we are laughing, although by analytical investigation we can determine the cause. This laughing is the result of an automatic process which was first made possible by keeping our conscious attention at a distance. Secondly, we arrive at an understanding of that characteristic of wit as a result of which wit can exert its full effect on the hearer only when it is new and when it comes to him as a surprise. This property of wit, which causes wit to be short-lived and forever urges the production of new wit, is evidently due to the fact that it is inherent in the surprising or the unexpected, to succeed but once. When we repeat wit the awakened memory leads the attention to the first hearing. This also explains the desire to impart wit to others who have not heard it before, for the impression made by wit on the new hearer replenishes that part of the pleasure which has been lost by the lack of novelty. And an analogous motive probably impels the wit producer to impart his wit to others.

ELEMENTS FAVORING THE WIT-PROCESS

As elements favoring the wit-process, even if we can no longer consider them as conditions, I present in the third place those three technical aids to wit-work which are destined to increase the sums of energy to be discharged and thus enhance the effect of the wit. These technical aids also very often accentuate the attention directed to the wit, but they neutralize its influence by simultaneously fascinating it and impeding its movements. Everything that provokes interest and confusion exerts its influence in these two directions. This is especially true of the nonsense and contrast elements, and above all of the "contrast of ideas," which some authors consider the essential character of wit, but in which I see only a means to reinforce the effect of wit. All that is confusing evokes in the hearer that condition of distribution of energy which Lipps has designated as "psychic damming"; and, doubtless, he has a right to assume that the force of the "discharge" varies with the success of the damming process which precedes it. Lipps's exposition does not explicitly refer to wit, but to the comic in general, yet it seems quite probable that the discharge in wit, releasing a gush of inhibition energy, is brought to its height in a similar manner by means of the damming.

It now dawns upon us that the technique of wit is really determined by two kinds of tendencies, those which make possible the formation of wit in the first person, and those guaranteeing that the witticism produces in the third person as much pleasurable effect as possible. The Janus-like double-facedness of wit, which safeguards its original resultant pleasure
against the impugment of critical reason, belongs to the first tendency
together with the mechanism of fore-pleasure; the other complications
of the technique resulting from the conditions discussed in this chapter
concern the third person of the witticism. Thus, wit in itself is a double-
tongued villain, which serves two masters at the same time. Everything
that aims at gaining pleasure is calculated by the witticism to arouse the
third person, as if inner, unsurmountable inhibitions in the first person
stood in the way of the same. Thus, one gets the full impression of the
absolute necessity of this third person for the completion of the wit-
process. But while we have succeeded in obtaining a good insight into the
nature of this process in the third person, we feel that the corresponding
process in the first person is still shrouded in darkness. So far, we have
not succeeded in answering the first of our two questions: Why can we
not laugh over wit made by ourselves? and: Why are we urged to impart
our own witticisms to others? We can only suspect that there is an inti-
mate connection between the two facts yet to be explained, and that we
must impart our witticisms to others for the reason that we ourselves are
unable to laugh over them. From our examinations of the conditions in
the third person for pleasure gaining and pleasure discharging, we can
draw the conclusion that in the first person the conditions for discharge
are lacking, and that those for gaining pleasure are only incompletely ful-
filled. Thus it is not to be disputed that we supplement our pleasure in
that we attain the—to us impossible—laughter in the roundabout way,
from the impression of the person who was stimulated to laughter. Thus
we laugh, so to speak, *par ricochet*, as Dugas expresses it. Laughter belongs
to those manifestations of psychic states which are highly infectious; if
I make some one else laugh by imparting my wit to him, I am really
using him as a tool in order to arouse my own laughter. One can really
notice that the person who at first recites the witticism with a serious
mien later joins the hearer with a moderate amount of laughter. Impart-
ing my witticisms to others may thus serve several purposes. First, it
serves to give me the objective certainty of the success of the wit-work;
secondly, it serves to enhance my own pleasure through the reaction of the
hearer upon myself; thirdly, in the case of repeating a not original joke,
itserves to remedy the loss of pleasure due to the lack of novelty.

**ECONOMY AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE**

At the end of these discussions about the psychic processes of wit, in so far
as they are enacted between two persons, we can glance back to the factor
of economy which impressed us as an important item in the psychological
conception of wit since we offered the first explanation of wit-technique.
Long ago we dismissed the nearest but also the simplest conception of this
economy, where it was a matter of avoiding psychic expenditure in gen-
eral by a maximum restriction in the use of words and by the production of associations of ideas. We had then already asserted that brevity and laconisms are not witty in themselves. The brevity of wit is a peculiar one; it has to be a "witty" brevity. The original pleasure gain produced by playing with words and thoughts resulted, to be sure, from simple economy in expenditure, but with the development of play into wit the tendency to economize also had to shift its goals, for whatever might be saved by the use of the same words or by avoiding new thought connections, would surely be of no account when compared to the colossal expenditure of our mental activity. We may be permitted to make a comparison between the psychic economy and a business enterprise. So long as the latter's transactions are very small, good policy demands that expenses be kept low and that the costs of operation be minimized as much as possible. The economy still follows the absolute height of the expenditure. Later on when the volume of business has increased, the importance of the business expenses dwindles; increases in the expenditure totals matter little so long as the transactions and returns can be sufficiently increased. Keeping down running expenses would be parsimonious; in fact, it would mean a direct loss. Nevertheless, it would be equally false to assume that with a very great expenditure there would be no more room for saving. The manager inclined to economize would now make an effort to save on particular things and would feel satisfied if the same establishment, with its costly upkeep, could reduce its expenses at all, no matter how small the saving would seem in comparison to the entire expenditure. In quite an analogous manner the detailed economy in our complicated psychic affairs remains a source of pleasure, as may be shown by everyday occurrences. Whoever used to have a gas lamp in his room, but now uses electric light, will experience for a long time a definite feeling of pleasure when he presses the electric light button; this pleasure continues as long as at that moment he remembers the complicated arrangements necessary to light the gas lamp. Similarly the economy of expenditure in psychic inhibition brought about by wit—small though it may be in comparison to the sum total of psychic expenditure—will remain a source of pleasure for us, because we thereby save a particular expenditure which we are wont to make, and which we were also ready to make this time. That the expenditure is expected and prepared for, is a factor which stands unmistakably in the foreground.

A localized economy, as the one just considered, will not fail to give us momentary pleasure, but it will not bring about a lasting alleviation so long as what has been saved here can be utilized in another place. Only when this disposal into a different path can be avoided, will the special economy be transformed into a general alleviation of the psychic expenditures. Thus, with clearer insight into the psychic processes of wit, we
see that the factor of alleviation takes the place of economy. Obviously the former gives us the greater feeling of pleasure. The process in the first person of the witticism produces pleasure by removing inhibitions and by diminishing local expenditure; it does not, however, seem to come to rest until it succeeds through the intervention of the third person, in attaining general relief through discharge.
3. THEORETICAL PART
VI

THE RELATION OF WIT TO DREAMS AND TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

At the end of the chapter which dealt with the elucidation of the technique of wit we asserted that the processes of condensation with and without substitutive formation, displacement, representation through absurdity, representation through the opposite, indirect representation, etc., all of which we found participating in the formation of wit, evinced a far-reaching agreement with the processes of "dream-work." We promised, at that time, first to examine more carefully these similarities, and secondly, so far as such indications point, to search for what is common to both wit and dreams. The discussion of this comparison would be much easier for us if we could assume that one of the subjects to be compared—the "dream-work"—were well known. But we shall probably do better not to take this assumption for granted. I received the impression that my book The Interpretation of Dreams created more "confusion" than "enlightenment" among my colleagues, and I know that the wider reading circles have contented themselves to reduce the contents of the book to a catchword, "Wish fulfillment"—a term easily remembered and easily abused.

However, in my continued occupation with the problems considered therein, for the study of which my practice as a psychotherapeutist affords me much opportunity, I found nothing that would impel me to change or improve on my ideas; I can therefore peacefully wait until the reader's comprehension has risen to my level, or until an intelligent critic has pointed out to me the basic faults in my conception. For the purposes of comparison with wit, I shall briefly review the most important features of dreams and dream-work.

We know dreams by the recollection, which usually seems fragmentary and which occurs upon awakening. It is then a structure made up mostly of visual or other sensory impressions, which represents to us a deceptive picture of an experience, and may be mingled with mental processes (the
“knowledge” in the dream), and emotional manifestations. What we thus remember as a dream I call "the manifest dream-content." The latter is often altogether absurd and confused, at other times it is merely one part or another that is so affected. But even if it be entirely coherent, as in the case of some anxiety dreams, it stands out in our psychic life as something strange, for the origin of which one cannot account. Until recently the explanation for these peculiarities of the dream has been sought in the dream itself, in that it was considered roughly speaking an indication of a muddled, dissociated, and "sleepy" activity of the nervous elements.

As opposed to this view, I have shown that the excessively peculiar "manifest" dream-content can regularly be made comprehensible, and that it is a disfigured and changed transcription of certain correct psychic formations which deserve the name of "latent dream-thoughts." One gains an understanding of the latter by resolving the manifest dream-content into its component parts without regard for its apparent meaning, and then by following up the threads of associations which emanate from each one of the now isolated elements. These become interwoven and in the end lead to a structure of thoughts, which is not only entirely accurate, but also fits easily into the familiar associations of our psychic processes. During this "analysis" the dream-content loses all of the peculiarities so strange to us; but if the analysis is to be successful, we must firmly cast aside the critical objections which incessantly arise against the reproduction of the individual associations.

THE DREAM-WORK

From the comparison of the remembered manifest dream-content with the latent dream-thoughts thus discovered, there arises the conception of "dream-work." The entire sum of the transforming processes which have changed the latent dream-thought into the manifest dream is called the dream-work. The astonishment which formerly the dream evoked in us is now perceived to be due to the dream-work.

The function of the dream-work may be described in the following manner: A structure of thoughts, mostly very complicated, which has been built up during the day and not brought to settlement—a day remnant—clings firmly even during night to the energy which it had assumed—the underlying center of interest—and thus threatens to disturb sleep. This day remnant is transformed into a dream by the dream-work and in this way rendered harmless to sleep. But in order to make possible its employment by the dream-work, this day remnant must be capable of being cast into the form of a wish, a condition that is not difficult to fulfill. The wish emanating from the dream-thoughts forms the first step and later on the nucleus of the dream. Experience gained from analyses—not the theory of the dream—teaches us that with children a fond wish left
from the waking state suffices to evoke a dream, which is coherent and senseful, but almost always short, and easily recognizable as a "wish fulfillment." In the case of adults the universally valid condition for the dream-creating wish seems to be that the latter should appear foreign to conscious thinking, that is, it should be a repressed wish, or that it should supply consciousness with reinforcement from unknown sources. Without the assumption of the unconscious activity in the sense used above, I should be at a loss to develop further the theory of dreams and to explain the material gleaned from experience in dream-analyses. The action of this unconscious wish upon the logical conscious material of dream-thoughts now results in the dream. The latter is thereby drawn down into the unconscious, as it were, or to speak more precisely, it is exposed to a treatment which usually takes place at the level of unconscious mental activity, and which is characteristic of this mental level. Only from the results of the "dream-work" have we thus far learned to know the qualities of this unconscious mental activity and its differentiation from the "fore-conscious" which is capable of consciousness.

THE UNCONSCIOUS

A novel and difficult theory that runs counter to our habitual modes of thinking can hardly gain in lucidity by a condensed exposition. I can therefore accomplish little more in this discussion than refer the reader to the detailed treatment of the unconscious in my Interpretation of Dreams, and also to Lipps's work, which I consider most important. I am aware that he who is under the spell of a good old philosophical training, or stands aloof from a so-called philosophical system, will oppose the assumption of the "unconscious psychic processes" in Lipps's sense and in mine, and will desire to prove the impossibility of it preferably by means of definitions of the term psychic. But definitions are conventional and changeable. I have often found that persons who dispute the unconscious on the grounds of its absurdity or impossibility have not received their impressions from those sources from which I, at least, have found it necessary to draw, in order to become aware of its existence. These opponents had never witnessed the effect of a posthypnotic suggestion, and they were immensely surprised at the evidence I imparted to them gleaned from my analysis of unhypnotized neurotics. They had never gained the conception of the unconscious as something which one does not really know, while cogent proofs force one to supplement this idea by saying that one understands by the unconscious something capable of consciousness, something concerning which one has not thought and which is not in the field of vision of consciousness. Nor had they attempted to convince themselves of the existence of such unconscious thoughts in their own psychic life by means of an analysis of one of their own dreams, and
when I attempted this with them, they could perceive their own mental occurrences only with astonishment and confusion. I have also gotten the impression that these are essentially affective resistances which stand in the way of the acceptation of the "unconscious," and that they are based on the fact that no one is desirous of becoming acquainted with his unconscious, and it is most convenient to deny altogether its possibility.

CONDENSATION AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE DREAM-WORK

The dream-work, to which I return after this digression, subjects the thought material uttered in the optative mood to a very peculiar elaboration. First of all it proceeds from the optative to the indicative mood; it substitutes "it is" for "would it were!" This "it is" is destined to become part of an hallucinatory representation which I have called the "regression" of the dream-work. This regression represents the path from the mental images to the sensory perceptions of the same, or if one chooses to speak with reference to the still unfamiliar—not to be understood anatomically—topic of the psychic apparatus, it is the region of the thought-formation to the region of the sensory perception. Along this road which runs in an opposite direction to the course of development of psychic complications, the dream-thoughts gain in clearness; a plastic situation finally results as a nucleus of the manifest "dream picture." In order to arrive at such a sensory representation the dream-thoughts have had to experience tangible changes in their expression. But while the thoughts are changed back into mental images they are subjected to still greater changes, some of which are easily conceivable as necessary, while others are surprising. As a necessary secondary result of the regression, one understands that nearly all relationships within the thoughts which have organized the same are lost to the manifest dream. The dream-work takes over, as it were, only the raw material of the ideas for representation, and not the thought-relations which held each other in check; or at least it reserves the freedom of leaving the latter out of the question. On the other hand, there is a certain part of the dream-work which cannot be traced to the regression or to the recasting into mental images; it is just that part which is significant to us for the analogy to wit-formation. The material of the dream-thoughts experiences an extraordinary compression or condensation during the dream-work. The starting-points of this condensation are those points which are common to two or more dream-thoughts because they naturally pertain to both or because they are inevitable consequences of the contents of two or more dream-thoughts, and since these points do not regularly suffice for a prolific condensation new artificial and fleeting common points come into existence, and for this purpose preferably words are used which combine different meanings in their sounds. The newly framed common points of condensation enter as representa-
tives of the dream-thoughts into the manifest dream-content, so that an element of the dream corresponds to a point of junction or intersection of the dream-thoughts, and with regard to the latter it must in general be called "over-determined." The process of condensation is that part of the dream-work which is most easily recognizable; it suffices to compare the recorded wording of a dream with the written dream-thoughts gained by means of analysis, in order to get a good impression of the productiveness of dream condensation.

It is not easy to convince one's self of the second great change that takes place in the dream-thoughts through the agency of the dream-work. I refer to that process which I have called the dream displacement. It manifests itself by the fact that what occupies the center of the manifest dream and is endowed with vivid sensory intensity has occupied a peripheral and secondary position in the dream-thoughts, and vice versa. This process causes the dream to appear out of proportion when compared with the dream-thoughts, and it is because of this displacement that it seems strange and incomprehensible to the waking state. In order that such a displacement should occur it must be possible for the cathexis to pass uninhibited from important to insignificant ideas—a process which in normal conscious thinking can only give the impression of "faulty thinking."

Transformation into expressive activity, condensation, and displacement are the three great functions which we can ascribe to the dream-work. A fourth, to which too little attention was given in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, does not come into consideration here for our purpose. In a consistent elucidation of the ideas dealing with the "topic of the psychic apparatus" and "regression," which alone can lend value to these working hypotheses, an effort would have to be made to determine at what stages of regression the various transformations of the dream-thoughts occur. As yet, no serious effort has been made in this direction, but at least we can speak definitely about displacement when we say that it must arise in the thought material while the latter is in the level of the unconscious processes. One will probably have to think of condensation as a process that extends over the entire course up to the outposts of the perceptive region, but in general it suffices to assume that there is a simultaneous activity of all the forces which participate in the formation of dreams. In view of the reserve which one must naturally exercise in the treatment of such problems, and in consideration of the inability to discuss here the main objections to these problems, I should like to trust somewhat to the assertion that the process of the dream-work which prepares the dream, is situated in the region of the unconscious. Roughly speaking, one can distinguish three general stages in the formation of the dream: first, the transference of the conscious day remnants into the unconscious, a transference in which the conditions of the sleeping state
must co-operate; secondly, the actual dream-work in the unconscious; and thirdly, the regression of the elaborated dream material to the region of perception, whereby the dream becomes conscious.

The forces participating in the dream-formation may be recognized as the following: the wish to sleep; the sum of cathexis which still clings to the day remnants after the depression brought about by the state of sleep; the psychic energy of the unconscious wish forming the dream; and the opposing force of the "censorship," which exercises its authority in our waking state, and is not entirely abolished during sleep. The task of dream-formation is, above all, to overcome the inhibition of the censorship, and it is just this task that is fulfilled by the displacement of the psychic energy within the material of the dream-thoughts.

THE FORMULA FOR WIT-WORK

Now we recall what caused us to think of the dream while investigating wit. We found that the character and activity of wit were bound up in certain forms of expression and technical means, among which the various forms of condensation, displacement, and indirect representation were the most conspicuous. But the processes which led to the same results—condensation, displacement, and indirect expression—we learned to know as peculiarities of dream-work. Does not this analogy almost force us to the conclusion that wit-work and dream-work must be identical at least in one essential point? I believe that the dream-work lies revealed before us in its most important characters, but in wit we find obscured just that portion of the psychic processes which we may compare with the dream-work, namely, the process of wit-formation in the first person. Shall we not yield to the temptation to construct this process according to the analogy of dream-formation? Some of the characteristics of dreams are so foreign to wit, that that part of the dream-work corresponding to them cannot be carried over to the wit-formation. The regression of the stream of thought to perception is certainly lacking as far as wit is concerned. However, the other two stages of dream-formation, the sinking of a foreconscious thought into the unconscious, and the unconscious elaboration, would give us exactly the result which we might observe in wit if we assumed this process in wit-formation. Let us decide to assume that this is the proceeding of wit-formation in the case of the first person. A foreconscious thought is left for a moment to unconscious elaboration and the results are forthwith grasped by the conscious perception.

Before, however, we attempt to prove the details of this assertion, we wish to consider an objection which may jeopardize our assumption. We start with the fact that the techniques of wit point to the same processes which become known to us as peculiarities of dream-work. Now it is an

\[1\] Cf. The Interpretation of Dreams, Chapter VII.
easy matter to say in opposition that we would not have described the techniques of wit as condensation, displacement, etc., nor would we have arrived at such a comprehensive agreement in the means of representation of wit and dreams, if our previous knowledge of dream-work had not influenced our conception of the technique of wit; so that fundamentally we find that wit confirms only those expectations which we brought to it from our study of dreams. Such a genesis of agreement would be no certain guarantee of its stability beyond our preconceived judgment. No other author has really thought of considering condensation, displacement, and indirect expression as active factors of wit. This might be a possible objection, but nevertheless it would not be justified. It might just as well be said that in order to recognize the real agreement between dreams and wit our ordinary knowledge must be augmented by a specialized knowledge of dream-work. However, the decision will really depend only upon the question whether the examining critic can prove that such a conception of the technique of wit in the individual examples is forced, and that other nearer and farther-reaching interpretations have been suppressed in favor of mine; or whether the critic will have to admit that the expectations derived from the study of dreams can be really confirmed through wit. My opinion is that we have nothing to fear from such a critic and that our processes of reduction have confidently pointed out in which forms of expression we must search for the techniques of wit. That we designated these techniques by names which previously anticipated the result of the agreement between the technique of wit and the dream-work was our just prerogative, and really nothing more than an easily justified simplification.

There is still another objection which would not be vital, but which could not be so completely refuted. One might think that the techniques of wit that fit in so well considering the ends we have in view deserve recognition, but that they do not represent all possible techniques of wit or even all those in use. Also, that we have selected only the techniques of wit which were influenced by and would suit the pattern of the dream-work, whereas others ignored by us would have demonstrated that such an agreement was not common to all cases. I really do not trust myself to make the assertion that I have succeeded in explaining all the current wit-ticisms with reference to their techniques, and I therefore admit the possibility that my enumeration of wit-techniques may show many gaps. But I have not purposely excluded from my discussion any form of technique that was clear to me, and I can affirm that the most frequent, the most essential, and the most characteristic technical means of wit have not eluded my attention.
WIT AS AN INSPIRATION

Wit possesses still another character which entirely corresponds to our conception of the wit-work as originally discovered in our study of dreams. It is true that it is common to hear one say "I made a joke," but one feels that one behaves differently during this process than when one pronounces a judgment or offers an objection. Wit shows in a most pronounced manner the character of an involuntary "inspiration" or a sudden flash of thought. A moment before one cannot tell what kind of joke one is going to make, though it lacks only the words to clothe it. One usually experiences something indefinable which I should like most to compare to an absence, or sudden drop of intellectual tension; then all of a sudden the witticism appears, usually simultaneously with its verbal investment. Some of the means of wit are also utilized in the expression of thought along other lines, as in the cases of comparison and allusion. I can intentionally will to make an allusion. In doing this I have first in mind (in the inner hearing) the direct expression of my thought, but as I am inhibited from expressing the same through some objection from the situation in question, I almost resolve to substitute the direct expression by a form of indirect expression, and then I utter it in the form of an allusion. But the allusion that comes into existence in this manner having been formed under my continuous control is never witty, no matter how useful it may be. On the other hand, the witty allusion appears without my having been able to follow up these preparatory stages in my mind. I do not wish to attribute too much value to this procedure, it is hardly conclusive, but it does agree well with our assumption, that in wit-formation a stream of thought is dropped for a moment which then suddenly emerges from the unconscious as a witticism.

Wit also evinces a peculiar behavior along the lines of association of ideas. Frequently it is not at the disposal of our memory when we look for it; on the other hand, it often appears unsolicited, and at places of our train of thought where we cannot understand its presence. Again, these are only minor qualities, but none the less they point to their unconscious origin.

Let us now collect the properties of wit whose formation can be referred to the unconscious. Above all, there is the peculiar brevity of wit which, though not an indispensable, is a marked and distinctive characteristic feature. When we first encountered it, we were inclined to see in it an expression of a tendency to economize, but owing to very evident objections we ourselves depreciated the value of this conception. At present we look upon it more as a sign of the unconscious elaboration which the thought of wit has undergone. The process of condensation which corresponds to it in dreams, we can correlate with no other factor than with the local-
The relation of wit to dreams

ization in the unconscious, and we must assume that the conditions for such condensations which are lacking in the foreconscious are present in the unconscious mental process. It is to be expected that in the process of condensation some of the elements subjected to it become lost, while others which take over their cathexis are strengthened by it, or are built up too energetically. The brevity of wit, like the brevity of dreams, would thus be a necessary concomitant manifestation of the condensation which occurs in both cases; both times it is a result of the condensation process. The brevity of wit is indebted also to this origin for its peculiar character, which though not further established produces a striking impression.

The unconscious and the infantile

We have defined above the one result of condensation—the manifold application of the same material, play upon words, and similarity of sound—as a localized economy, and have also referred the pleasure produced by harmless wit to that economy. At a later place we have found that the original purpose of wit consisted in producing this kind of pleasure from words, a process which was permitted to the individual during the stage of playing, but which became banked in during the course of intellectual development or by rational criticism. Now we have decided upon the assumption that such condensations as serve the technique of wit originate automatically and without any particular purpose during the process of thinking in the unconscious. Have we not here two different conceptions of the same fact which seem to be incompatible with each other? I do not think so. To be sure, there are two different conceptions, which should be brought in unison, but they do not contradict each other. They are merely somewhat strange to each other, and as soon as we have established a relationship between them we shall probably gain in knowledge. That such condensations are sources of pleasure is in perfect accord with the supposition that they easily find in the unconscious the conditions necessary for their origin. On the other hand, we see the motivation for the sinking into the unconscious in the circumstance, that the pleasure-bringing condensation necessary to wit easily results there. Two other factors also, which upon first examination seem entirely foreign to each other and which are brought together quite accidentally, will be recognized on deeper investigation as intimately connected, and perhaps may be found to be substantially the same. I am referring to the two assertions that on the one hand wit could form such pleasure-bringing condensations

1 Besides in the dream-work and the technique of wit I have been able to demonstrate condensation as a regular and significant process in another psychic occurrence, in the mechanism of normal (not purposive) forgetting. Singular impressions put difficulties in the way of forgetting; impressions in any way analogous are forgotten by becoming fused at their points of contact. The confusion of analogous impressions is one of the first steps in forgetting.
during its development in the stage of playing, that is, during the infancy of reason; and, on the other hand, that it accomplishes the same function on higher levels by submerging the thought into the unconscious. For the infantile is the source of the unconscious. The unconscious mental processes are no others than those which are solely produced during early infancy. The thought which sinks into the unconscious for the purpose of wit-formation only revisits there the old homestead of the former playing with words. The thought is put back for a moment into the infantile state in order to regain in this way childish pleasure-sources. If, indeed, one were not already acquainted with it from the investigation of the psychology of the neuroses, wit would surely impress one with the idea that the peculiar unconscious elaboration is nothing else but the infantile type of the mental process. But this peculiar infantile manner of thinking is by no means easy to grasp in the unconscious of the adult because it is usually corrected, so to say, in statu nascendi. However, it is successfully grasped in a series of cases, and then we always laugh about the "childish stupidity." In fact, every exposure of such an unconscious fact affects us in a "comical" manner.¹

It is easier to comprehend the character of these unconscious mental processes in the utterances of patients suffering from various psychic disturbances. It is very probable that, following the assumption of Griesinger, we would be in a position to understand the deliria of the insane and to turn them to good account as valuable information, if we would not make the demands of conscious thinking upon them, but instead treat them as we do dreams by means of our art of interpretation.² In the dream, too, we were able to show the "return of psychic life to the embryonal state." ³

In discussing the processes of condensation we have entered so deeply into the significance of the analogy between wit and dreams that we can here be brief. As we know that displacements in dream-work point to the influence of censorship of conscious thought, we will consequently be inclined to assume that an inhibiting force also plays a part in the formation of wit when we find the process of displacement among the techniques of wit. We also know that this is commonly the case; the endeavor of wit to revive the old pleasure in nonsense or the old pleasure in word-play meets with resistance in every normal state, a resistance which is

¹ Many of my patients while under psychoanalytic treatment are wont to prove regularly by their laughter that I have succeeded in demonstrating faithfully to their conscious perception the veiled unconscious; they laugh also when the content of what is disclosed does not at all justify this laughter. To be sure, it is conditional that they have approached this unconscious closely enough to grasp it when the physician has conjectured it and presented it to them.

² In doing this we must not forget to reckon with the distortion brought about by the censorship which is still active in the psychoses.

³ The Interpretation of Dreams.
exerted by the protest of critical reason, and which must be overcome in each individual case. But a radical distinction between wit and dreams is shown in the manner in which the wit-work solves this difficulty. In the dream-work the solution of this task is brought about regularly through displacements and through the choice of ideas which are remote enough from those objectionable to secure passage through the censorship; the latter themselves are but offsprings of those whose psychic cathexis they have taken over through full transference. The displacements are, therefore, not lacking in any dream and are far more comprehensive. They not only include the deviations from the trend of thought, but also all forms of indirect expression, especially the substitution for an important but offensive element by one indifferent and seemingly harmless to the censorship, which then looks like a most remote allusion to the first; they also include substitution through symbols, comparisons, or trifles. It is not to be denied that parts of this indirect representation really originate in the foreconscious thoughts of the dream—as, for example, symbolical representation and representation through comparisons—because otherwise the thought would not have reached the state of the foreconscious expression. Such indirect expressions and allusions, whose reference to the original thought is easily detectable, are really permissible and customary means of expression even in our conscious thought. The dream-work, however, exaggerates the application of these means of indirect expression to an unlimited degree. Under the pressure of the censor any kind of association becomes good enough for substitution by allusion; the displacement from one element to any other is permitted. The substitution of the inner associations (similarity, causal connection, etc.) by the so-called outer associations (simultaneity, contiguity in space, assonance) is particularly conspicuous and characteristic of the dream-work.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DREAM-TECHNIQUE AND WIT-TECHNIQUE

All these means of displacement also occur as techniques of wit, but when they do occur they usually restrict themselves to those limits prescribed for their use in conscious thought; in fact, they may be lacking even though wit must regularly solve a task of inhibition. One can comprehend this retirement of the process of displacement in wit-work when one remembers that wit usually has another technique at its disposal through which it defends itself against inhibitions. Indeed, we have discovered nothing more characteristic of it than just this technique. For wit does not have recourse to compromises as does the dream, nor does it evade the inhibition; it insists upon retaining the play with words or nonsense unaltered, but thanks to the ambiguity of words and multiplicity of thought-relations, it restricts itself to the choice of cases in which this
play or nonsense may appear at the same time admissible (jest) or sense-
ful (wit). Nothing distinguishes wit from all other psychic formations
better than this double-sidedness and this double-dealing; by emphasizing
the "sense in nonsense," the authors have approached nearest the
understanding of wit, at least from this angle.

Considering the unexceptional predominance of this peculiar technique
in overcoming inhibitions in wit, one might find it superfluous that wit
should make use of the displacement-technique even in a single case. But
on the one hand, certain kinds of this technique remain useful for wit as
objects and sources of pleasure—as, for example, the real displacement
(deviation of the trend of thought) which in fact shares in the nature of
nonsense—and on the other hand one must not forget that the highest
stage of wit, tendency-wit, must frequently overcome two kinds of inhibi-
tions which oppose both itself and its tendency, and that allusion and dis-
placements are qualified to facilitate this latter task.

The numerous and unrestricted application of indirect representation,
of displacements, and especially of allusions in the dream-work, has a re-
result which I mention not because of its own significance but because it be-
came for me the subjective inducement to occupy myself with the prob-
lem of wit. If a dream analysis is imparted to one unfamiliar with the
subject and unaccustomed to it, and the peculiar ways of allusions and
displacements (objectionable to the waking thoughts but utilized by the
dream-work) are explained, the hearer experiences an uncomfortable
impression. He declares these interpretations to be "witty," but it seems
obvious to him that these are not successful jokes but forced ones which
run contrary to the rules of wit. This impression can be easily explained
by the fact that the dream-work operates with the same means as wit, but
in the application of the same, the dream exceeds the bounds which wit
restricts. We shall soon learn that in consequence of the rôle of the third
person, wit is bound by a certain condition which does not affect the
dream.

IRONY—NEGATIVISM

Among those techniques which are common to both wit and dreams,
representation through the opposite and the application of absurdity are
especially interesting. The first belongs to the strongly effective means of
wit as shown above in the examples of "out-doing wit." The representa-
tion through the opposite, unlike most of the wit-techniques, is unable to
withdraw itself from conscious attention. He who intentionally tries to
make use of wit-work, as in the case of the "habitual wag," soon discovers
that the easiest way to answer an assertion with a witticism is to concen-
trate one's mind on the opposite of this assertion and trust to the chance
flash of thought to brush aside the feared objection to this opposite, by
means of a different interpretation. Maybe the representation through its opposite is indebted for such a preference to the fact that it forms the nucleus of another pleasurable mode of mental expression, for an understanding of which we do not have to consult the unconscious. I refer to irony, which is very similar to wit and is considered a sub-species of the comic. The essence of irony consists in imparting the very opposite of what one intended to express, but it precludes the anticipated contradiction by indicating through the inflections, concomitant gestures, and through slight changes in style—if it is done in writing—that the speaker himself means to convey the opposite of what he says. Irony is applicable only in cases where the other person is prepared to hear the reverse of the statement actually made, so that he cannot fail to be inclined to contradict. As a consequence of this condition, ironic expressions are particularly subject to the danger of being misunderstood. To the person who uses it, it gives the advantage of readily avoiding the difficulties to which direct expressions, as, for example, invectives, are subject. In the hearer it produces comic pleasure, probably by causing him to make preparations for contradiction, which are immediately found to be unnecessary. Such a comparison of wit with a form of the comical that is closely allied to it, might strengthen us in the assumption that the relation of wit to the unconscious is the peculiarity that also distinguishes it from the comical.¹

In dream-work, representation through the opposite has a far more important part to play than in wit. The dream not only delights in representing a pair of opposites by means of one and the same composite image, but in addition it often changes an element from the dream-thoughts into its opposite, thus causing considerable difficulty in the work of interpretation. In the case of any element capable of having an opposite it is impossible to tell whether it is to be taken negatively or positively in the dream-thoughts.

I must emphasize that as yet this fact has by no means been understood. Nevertheless, it seems to give indications of an important characteristic of unconscious thinking which in all probability results in a process comparable to "judging." Instead of setting aside judgments, the unconscious forms "repressions." The repression may correctly be described as a stage intermediate between the defense reflex and condemnation.²

¹ The character of the comical which is referred to as its "dryness" also depends in the broadest sense upon the differentiation of the things spoken from the antics accompanying it.

² This very remarkable and still inadequately understood behavior of antagonistic relationships is probably not without value for the understanding of the symptom of negativism in neurotics and in the insane. Cf. the two latest works on the subject: Bleuler, "Über die negative Suggestibilität," Psych.-Neurol. Wochenschrift, 1904, and Otto Groos's Zur Differential diagnostik negativistischer Phänomene, also my review of the Gegensinn der Urworte, in Jahrb. f. Psychoanalyse II, 1910.
Nonsense, or absurdity, which occurs so often in dreams and which has made them the object of so much contempt, has never really come into being as the result of an accidental shuffling of conceptual elements, but may in every case be proven to have been purposely admitted by the dream-work. Nonsense and absurdity are intended to express embittered criticism and scornful contradiction within the dream-thoughts. Absurdity in the dream-content thus stands for the judgment: "It's pure nonsense," expressed in dream-thoughts. In my *Interpretation of Dreams* I have placed great emphasis on the demonstration of this fact because I thought that I could in this manner most strikingly controvert the error expressed by many, that the dream is no psychic phenomenon at all—an error which bars the way to an understanding of the unconscious. Now we have learnt (in the analysis of certain tendency-witticisms) that nonsense in wit is made to serve the same purposes of expression. We also know that a nonsensical façade of a witticism is peculiarly adapted to enhance the psychic expenditure in the hearer and hence also to increase the amount to be discharged through laughter. Moreover, we must not forget that nonsense in wit is an end in itself, since the purpose of reviving the old pleasure in nonsense is one of the motives of the wit-work. There are other ways to regain the feeling of nonsense in order to derive pleasure from it; *caricature, exaggeration, parody*, and *travesty* utilize the same and thus produce "comical nonsense." If we subject these modes of expression to an analysis similar to the one used in studying wit, we shall find that there is no occasion in any of them for resorting to unconscious processes in our sense, for the purpose of getting explanations. We are now also in a position to understand why the "witty" character may be added as an embellishment to caricature, exaggeration, and parody; it is the manifold character of the performance upon the "psychic stage" that makes this possible.

I am of the opinion that by transferring the wit-work into the system of the unconscious we have made a distinct contribution, since it makes it possible for us to understand the fact that the various techniques to which wit admittedly adheres are not its exclusive property. Many doubts, which have arisen in the beginning of our investigation of these techniques and which we were forced temporarily to leave, can now be conveniently cleared up. Hence, we shall give due consideration to the doubt which expresses itself in the assertion that the undeniable relation of wit to the unconscious is correct only for certain categories of tendency-wit, while we are ready to claim this relation for all forms and from all the stages of development. We may not shirk from testing this objection.

1 An expression of G. T. Fechner's, which has acquired significance from the point of view of my conception.
THE RELATION OF WIT TO DREAMS

We may assume that we deal with a sure case of wit-formation in the unconscious when it concerns witticisms that serve unconscious tendencies, or such as are strengthened by unconscious tendencies; that is, in most of the "cynical" witticisms. For in such cases the unconscious tendency draws the foreconscious thought down into the unconscious in order to remodel it there; a process to which the study of the psychology of the neuroses has added many analogies with which we are acquainted. But in the case of tendency-wit of other varieties, namely, harmless wit and the jest, this power seems to vanish and the relation of wit to the unconscious is an open question.

But now let us consider the case of the witty expression of a thought that is not without value in itself and that comes to the surface in the course of the association of mental processes. In order that this thought may become wit, it is of course necessary that it make a choice among the possible forms of expression in order to find the exact form that will bring along the gain in word-pleasure. We know from self-observation that this choice is not made by conscious attention, but the selection will certainly be better if the cathexis of the foreconscious thought sinks to the unconscious. For in the unconscious, as we have learnt from the dream-work, the paths of association emanating from a word are treated on a par with associations from objects. The cathexis from the unconscious presents by far the more favorable conditions for the selection of the expression. Moreover, we may assume without going farther that the possible expression which contains the gain in word-pleasure exerts a lowering effect on the still fluctuating self-command of the foreconscious, similar to that exerted in the first case by the unconscious tendency. As an explanation for the simpler case of the jest we may imagine that an ever-watchful intention of attaining the gain in word-pleasure seizes the opportunity offered in the foreconscious of again drawing the investing energy down into the unconscious, according to the familiar scheme.

I earnestly wish that it were possible for me on the one hand to present one decisive point in my conception of wit more clearly, and on the other hand to fortify it with cogent arguments. But as a matter of fact, it is not a question here of two failures, but of one and the same failure. I can give no clearer exposition because I have no further proof for my assumption. The latter developed from my study of the technique and from comparison with dream-work, and indeed from this one side only. I could then find that the dream-work as a whole fitted excellently the peculiarities of wit. This assumption is now accepted. If such a conclusion does not lead to a familiar, but rather a strange province, one that is novel to our modes of thought, the conclusion is called a "hypothesis," and the relation of the hypothesis to the material from which it was drawn is justly not accepted as "proof." The hypothesis is admitted as "proved" only if it
can be reached by other ways and if it can be shown to be the juncture for other associations. But in view of the fact that our knowledge of unconscious processes has hardly begun, such proof cannot be had. Realizing then that we are on soil still virgin, we shall be content to project from our viewpoint of observation one narrow slender plank into the unexplored region.

We shall not build much on this foundation. If we correlate the different stages of wit to the mental dispositions favorable to them, we may say: The jest has its origin in the happy mood, which seems to have a peculiar tendency to lower the catheysis. The jest already makes use of all the characteristic techniques of wit and satisfies the fundamental conditions of the same through the choice of such an assortment of words or mental associations as will conform not only to the requirements for the production of pleasure, but also to the demands of the intelligent critic. We may conclude that the sinking of the mental energy to the unconscious stage, a process facilitated by the happy mood, has already taken place in the case of the jest. The mood does away with this requirement in the case of harmless wit connected with the expression of a valuable thought; here we must assume a particular personal adaptation which finds it as easy to come to expression as it is for the foreconscious thought to sink for a moment into the unconscious. An ever watchful tendency to renew the original resultant pleasure of wit exerts thereby a lowering effect upon the still fluctuating foreconscious expression of the thought. Most people are probably capable of making jests when in a happy mood; aptitude for joking independent of the mood is found only in a few persons. Finally, the most powerful incentive for wit-work is the presence of strong tendencies which reach back into the unconscious and which indicate a particular fitness for witty productions; these tendencies might explain to us why the subjective conditions of wit are so frequently fulfilled in the case of neurotic persons. Even the most inapt person may become witty under the influence of strong tendencies.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WIT AND DREAMS**

This last contribution, the explanation of wit-work in the first person, though still hypothetical, strictly speaking, ends our interest in wit. There still remains a short comparison of wit to the more familiar dream, and we may expect that, outside of the one agreement already considered, two such diverse mental activities should show nothing but differences. The most important difference lies in their social behavior. The dream is a perfectly asocial psychic product. It has nothing to tell to anyone else, having originated in an individual as a compromise between conflicting psychic forces it remains incomprehensible to the person himself and has therefore altogether no interest for anybody else. Not only does the dream
find it unnecessary to place any value on intelligibleness, but it must even guard against being understood, as it would then be destroyed; it can only exist in disguised form. For this reason the dream may make use freely of the mechanism that controls unconscious thought processes to the extent of producing undecipherable distortions. Wit, on the other hand, is the most social of all those psychic functions whose aim is to gain pleasure. It often requires three persons, and the psychic process which it incites always requires the participation of at least one other person. It must therefore bind itself to the condition of intelligibleness; it may employ distortion made practicable in the unconscious through condensation and displacement, to no greater extent than can be deciphered by the intelligence of the third person. As for the rest, wit and dreams have developed in altogether different spheres of the psychic life, and are to be classed under widely separated categories of the psychological system. No matter how concealed, the dream is still a wish, while wit is a developed play. Despite its apparent unreality, the dream retains its relation to the great interests of life; it seeks to supply what is lacking through a regressive detour of hallucinations; and it owes its existence solely to the strong need for sleep during the night. Wit, on the other hand, seeks to draw a small amount of pleasure from the free and unencumbered activities of our psychic apparatus, and later to seize this pleasure as an incidental gain. It thus secondarily reaches to important functions relative to the outer world. The dream serves preponderantly to guard against pain, while wit serves to acquire pleasure; in these two aims all our psychic activities meet.
WIT AND THE VARIOUS FORMS OF
THE COMIC

We have approached the problems of the comic in an unusual manner. It appeared to us that wit, which is usually regarded as a sub-species of the comic, offered enough peculiarities to warrant our taking it directly under consideration, and thus it came about that we avoided discussing its relation to the more comprehensive category of the comic as long as it was possible to do so, yet we did not proceed without picking up on the way some hints that might be valuable for studying the comic. We found it easy to ascertain that the comic differs from wit in its social behavior. The comic is content with only two persons, one who finds the comical, and one in whom it is found. The third person to whom the comical may be imparted reinforces the comic process, but adds nothing new to it. In wit, however, this third person is indispensable for the completion of the pleasure-bearing process, while the second person may be omitted, especially when it is not a question of aggressive wit with a tendency. Wit is made, while the comical is found; it is found first of all in persons, and only later by transference may be seen also in objects, situations, and the like. We know, too, in the case of wit that it is not a strange person's, but one's own mental processes that contain the sources for the production of pleasure. In addition, we have heard that wit occasionally reopens inaccessible sources of the comic, and that the comic often serves wit as a façade to replace the fore-pleasure usually produced by the above described technique. All of this does not really point to a very simple relationship between wit and the comic. On the other hand, the problems of the comic have shown themselves to be so complicated, and have until now so successfully defied all attempts made by the philosophers to solve them, that we have not been able to justify the expectation of mastering it by a sudden stroke, so to speak, even if we approach it along the paths of wit. Incidentally we came provided with an instrument for investigating wit that had not yet been made use of by others; namely, the knowledge of dream-work. We have no similar advantage at our disposal for compre-
hending the comic, and we may therefore expect that we shall learn nothing about the nature of the comic other than that which we have already become aware of in wit; in so far as wit belongs to the comic and retains certain features of the same, unchanged or modified in its own nature.

THE NAÏVE

The species of the comic that is most closely allied to wit is the naïve. Like the comic the naïve is found universally and is not made as in the case of wit. The naïve cannot be made at all, while in the case of the pure comic the question of making or evoking the comical may be taken into account. The naïve must result without our intervention from the speech and actions of other persons who take the place of the second person in the comic or in wit. The naïve originates when one puts himself completely outside of inhibition, because it does not exist for him; that is, if he seems to overcome it without any effort. What conditions the function of the naïve is the fact that we are aware that the person does not possess this inhibition, otherwise we should not call it naïve but impudent, and instead of laughing we should be indignant. The effect of the naïve, which is irresistible, seems easy to understand. The expenditure of inhibition which we usually make suddenly becomes inapplicable when we hear the naïve and is discharged through laughter; as the removal of the inhibition is direct, and not the result of an incited operation, there is no need for a suspension of attention. We behave like the hearer in wit, to whom the economy of inhibition is given without any effort on his part.

Following our insight into the genesis of inhibitions, which we obtained while tracing the development of play into wit, it is not surprising to learn that the naïve is mostly found in children, although it may also be observed in uneducated adults, upon whom we look as children as far as their intellectual development is concerned. For the purposes of comparison with wit, naïve speech is naturally better adapted than naïve actions, for speech and not actions are the usual forms of expression employed by wit. It is significant, however, that naïve speeches, such as those of children, can without straining also be designated as “naïve witticisms.” The points of agreement as well as demonstration between wit and naïveté will become clear to us upon consideration of a few examples.¹

A little girl of three years was accustomed to hear from her German nurse the exclamatory word “Gesundheit” (God bless you! literally, may you be healthy!) whenever she happened to sneeze. While suffering from a severe cold during which the profuse coughing and sneezing caused her considerable pain, she pointed to her chest and said to her father, “Daddy, Gesundheit hurts.”

Another little girl of four years heard her parents refer to a Jewish ac-

¹ Given by the Editor.
quaintance as a Hebrew, and on later hearing the latter’s wife referred to as Mrs. X, she corrected her mother, saying, “No, that is not her name; if her husband is a Hebrew she is a Shebrew.”

In the first example the wit is produced through the use of a contiguous association in the form of an abstract thought for the concrete action. The child so often heard the word “Gesundheit,” associated with sneezing that she took it for the act itself. The second example may be designated as word-wit formed by the technique of sound similarity. The child divided the word Hebrew into He-brew and having been taught the genders of the personal pronouns, she naturally imagined that if the man is a Hebrew his wife must be a She-brew. Both examples could have originated as real witticisms upon which we would have unwillingly bestowed a little mild laughter. But as examples of naïveté they seem excellent and cause loud laughter. But what is it here that produces the difference between wit and naïveté? Apparently it is neither the wording nor the technique, which is the same for both wit and the naïve, but a factor which at first sight seems remote from both. It is simply a question whether we assume that the speakers had the intention of making a witticism or whether we assume that they—the children—wished to draw an earnest conclusion, a conclusion held in good faith though based on uncorrected knowledge. Only the latter case is one of naïveté. It is here that our attention is first called to the mechanism in which the second person places himself into the psychic process of the person who produces the wit.

The investigation of a third example will confirm this opinion. A brother and a sister, the former ten and the latter twelve years old, produce a play of their own composition before an audience of uncles and aunts. The scene represents a hut on the seashore. In the first act the two dramatist-actors, a poor fisherman and his devoted wife, complain about the hard times and the difficulty of getting a livelihood. The man decides to sail over the wide ocean in his boat in order to seek wealth elsewhere, and after a touching farewell the curtain is drawn. The second act takes place several years later. The fisherman has come home rich with a big bag of money and tells his wife, whom he finds waiting in front of the hut, what good luck he has had in the far countries. His wife interrupts him proudly, saying: “Nor have I been idle in the meanwhile,” and opens the hut, on whose floor the fisherman sees twelve large dolls representing children asleep. At this point of the drama the performers were interrupted by an outburst of laughter on the part of the audience, a thing which they could not understand. They stared dumbfounded at their dear relatives, who had thus far behaved respectfully and had listened attentively. The explanation of this laughter lies in the assumption on the part of the audience that the young dramatists knew nothing as yet about the origin of children, and were therefore in a position to believe that a wife would ac-
tually boast of bearing offspring during the prolonged absence of her husband, and that the husband would rejoice with her over it. But the results achieved by the dramatists on the basis of this ignorance may be designated as nonsense or absurdity.

These examples show that the naïve occupies a position midway between wit and the comic. As far as wording and contents are concerned, the naïve speech is identical with wit; it produces a misuse of words, a bit of nonsense, or an obscenity. But the psychic process of the first person or producer which, in the case of wit, offered us so much that was interesting and puzzling, is here entirely absent. The naïve person imagines that he is using his thoughts and expressions in a simple and normal manner; he has no other purpose in view, and receives no pleasure from his naïve production. All the characteristics of the naïve lie in the conception of the hearer, who corresponds to the third person in the case of wit. The producing person creates the naïve without any effort. The complicated technique, which in wit serves to paralyze the inhibition produced by critical reason, does not exist here, because the person does not possess this inhibition, and he can, therefore, readily produce the senseless or the obscene without any compromise. The naïve may be added to the realm of wit if it comes into existence after the important function of the censorship, as observed in the formula for wit-formation, has been reduced to zero.

If the affective determination of wit consists in the fact that both persons should be subject to about the same inhibitions or inner resistances, we may say now that the condition of the naïve consists in the fact that one person should have inhibitions which the other lacks. It is the person provided with inhibitions who understands the naïve, and it is he alone who gains the pleasure produced by the naïve. We can easily understand that this pleasure is due to the removal of inhibitions. Since the pleasure of wit is of the same origin—a kernel of word-pleasure and nonsense-pleasure, and a shell of removal- and release-pleasure—the similarity of this connection to the inhibition thus determines the inner relationship between the naïve and wit. In both cases pleasure results from the removal of inner inhibitions. But the psychic process of the recipient person (which in the naïve regularly corresponds with our ego, whereas in wit we may also put ourselves in place of the producing person) is by as much more complicated in the case of the naïve as it is simpler in the producing person in wit. For one thing, the naïve must produce the same effect upon the receiving person as wit does, this may be fully confirmed by our examples, for just as in wit the removal of the censorship has been made possible by the mere effort of hearing the naïve. But only a part of the pleasure created by the naïve admits of this explanation, in other cases of naïve utterances, even this portion would be endangered; as, for example, while
listening to naïve obscenities. We would react to a naïve obscenity with the same indignation felt toward a real obscenity, were it not for the fact that another factor saves us from this indignation and at the same time furnishes the more important part of the pleasure derived from the naïve.

This other factor is the result of the condition mentioned before, namely, that in order to recognize the naïve we have to be cognizant of the fact that there are no inner inhibitions in the producing person. It is only when this is assured that we laugh instead of being indignant. Hence we take into consideration the psychic state of the producing person; we imagine ourselves in this same psychic state and endeavor to understand it by comparing it to our own. This putting ourselves into the psychic state of the producing person and comparing it with our own, results in an economy of expenditure which we discharge through laughter.

We might prefer the simpler explanation, namely, that when we reflect that the person has no inhibition to overcome, our indignation becomes superfluous; the laughing, therefore, results at the cost of economized indignation. In order to avoid this conception, which is, in general, misleading, I shall distinguish more sharply between two cases that I had treated as one in the above discussion. The naïve, as it appears to us, may either be in the nature of a witticism, as in our example, or an obscenity, or of anything generally objectionable; which becomes especially evident if the naïve is expressed not in speech but in action. This latter case is really misleading; for one might here assume, that the pleasure originates from the economized and transformed indignation. The first case, however, is the explanatory one. The naïve speech in the example "Hebrew" can produce the effect of a light witticism and give no cause for indignation; it is certainly the more rare, or the more pure and by far the more instructive case. In so far as we think that the child took the syllable "he" in "Hebrew" seriously, and without any additional reason identified it with the masculine personal pronoun, the increase in pleasure as a result of hearing it, has no longer anything to do with the pleasure of the wit.

We shall now consider what has been said from two viewpoints, first how it came into existence in the mind of the child, and secondly, how it would occur to us. In following this comparison we find that the child has discovered an identity and has overcome barriers which exist in us, and by continuing still further it may express itself as follows: "If you wish to understand what you have heard, you may save yourself the expenditure necessary for holding these barriers in place." The expenditure which became freed by this comparison is the source of pleasure in the naïve, and is discharged through laughter; to be sure, it is the same expenditure which we would have converted into indignation if our understanding of the producing person, and in this case the nature of his utterance, had not precluded it. But if we take the case of the naïve joke as a model for
the second case, viz., the objectionable naïve, we shall see that here, too, the economy in inhibition may originate directly from the comparison. That is, it is unnecessary for us to assume an incipient and then a stran-
gulated indignation, an indignation corresponding to a different applica-
tion of the freed expenditure, against which, in the case of wit, compli-
cated defensive mechanisms are required.

SOURCE OF COMIC PLEASURE IN THE NAÏVE

This comparison and this economy of expenditure that occur, as the result of putting one's self into the psychic process of the producing person, can have an important bearing on the naïve, only if they do not belong to the naïve alone. As a matter of fact, we suspect that this mechanism which is so completely foreign to wit is a part—perhaps the essential part—of the psychic process of the comic. This aspect—it is perhaps the most im-
portant aspect of the naïve—thus represents the naïve as a form of the comic. Whatever is added to the wit-pleasure by the naïve speeches in our examples is “comical” pleasure. Concerning the latter, we might be inclined to make a general assumption, that this pleasure originates through an economized expenditure by comparing the utterance of some one else with our own. But since we are here in the presence of very broad views we shall first conclude our consideration of the naïve. The naïve would thus be a form of the comic, in so far as its pleasure originates from the difference in expenditure which results in our effort to understand the other person; and it resembles wit through the condition that the ex-
penditure saved by the comparison must be an inhibition expenditure.¹

Before concluding let us rapidly point out a few agreements and dif-
fences between the conceptions at which we have just arrived, and those that have been known for a long time in the psychology of the comic. The putting one's self into the psychic process of another and the desire to understand him is obviously nothing else than the so-called “comic burrowing” which has played a part in the analysis of the comic ever since the time of Jean Paul; the “comparing” of the psychic process of another with our own corresponds to a “psychological contrast,” for which we here at last find a place, after we did not know what to do with it in wit. But in our explanation of comic pleasure we take issue with many authors who contend that this pleasure originates through the fluctuation of our attention to and fro between contrasting ideas. We are unable to see how such a mechanism could produce pleasure, and we point to the fact that in the comparing of contrasts there results a difference in ex-

¹ I have everywhere here identified the naïve with the naïve-comic, which is certainly not permissible in all cases. But it serves our purposes to study the characteristics of the naïve as seen in the “naïve joke” and the “naïve obscenity.” It is our intention to proceed from here with the investigation of the nature of the comic.
penditure which, if not used for anything else, becomes capable of dis-
charge and hence a source of pleasure.¹

It is with misgiving only that we approach the problem of the comic. It
would be presumptuous to expect from our efforts any decisive con-
tribution to the solution of this problem after the works of a large num-
ber of excellent thinkers have not resulted in an explanation that is in
every respect satisfactory. As a matter of fact, we intend simply to fol-
low out into the province of the comic certain observations that have been
found valuable in the study of wit.

OCCURRENCE AND ORIGIN OF THE COMIC

The comical appears primarily as an unintentional discovery in the so-
cial relations of human beings. It is found in persons—that is, in their
movements, shapes, actions, and characteristic traits. In the beginning it
is found probably only in their physical peculiarities and later on in their
mental qualities, especially in the expression of the latter. Even animals
and inanimate objects become comical as the result of a widely used
method of personification. However, the comical can be considered apart
from the person in whom it is found, if the conditions under which a
person becomes comical can be discerned. Thus arises the comical situa-
tion, and this knowledge enables us to make a person comical at will by
putting him into situations in which the conditions necessary for the
comic are bound up with his actions. The discovery that it is in our power
to make another person comical opens the way to unsuspected gains in
comic pleasure, and forms the foundation of a highly developed tech-
nique. It is also possible to make one’s self just as comical as others. The
means which serve to make a person comical are transference into comic
situations, imitations, disguise, unmasking, caricature, parody travesty,
and the like. It is quite evident that these techniques may enter into the
service of hostile or aggressive tendencies. A person may be made comical
in order to render him contemptible or in order to deprive him of his
claims to dignity and authority. But even if such a purpose were regu-
larly at the bottom of all attempts to make a person comical this need not
necessarily be the meaning of the spontaneous comic.

As a result of this superficial survey of the manifestations of the comic
we can readily see that the comic originates from wide-spread sources,
and that conditions so specialized as those found in the naïve cannot be
expected in the case of the comic. In order to get a clue to the conditions

¹ Also Bergson (Laughter, An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, translated by Bre-
reton and Rothwell, The Macmillan Co., 1914) rejects with sound arguments this
sort of explanation of comic pleasure, which has unmistakably been influenced by
the effort to create an analogy to the laughing of a person tickled. The explanation
of comic pleasure by Lippa, which might, in connection with his conception of the
comic, be represented as an “unexpected trifle,” is of an entirely different nature.
that are applicable to the comic the selection of the first example is most important. We will examine first the comic movement because we remember that the most primitive stage performance, the pantomime, uses this means to make us laugh. The answer to the question, “Why do we laugh at the actions of the clowns?”, would be that their actions appear to us immoderate and inappropriate; that is, we really laugh over the excessive expenditure of energy. Let us look for the same condition outside of the manufactured comic, that is, under circumstances where it may unintentionally be found. The child’s motions do not appear to us comical, even if he jumps and fidgets, but it is comical to see a little boy or girl follow with the tongue the movement of his pen-holder when he is trying to master the art of writing; we see in these additional motions a superfluous expenditure of energy which under similar conditions we save. In the same way we find it comical to see unnecessary motions or even marked exaggeration of expressive motions in adults. Among the genuinely comic cases we might mention the motions made by the bowler after he has released the ball while he is following its course as though he were still able to control it. All grimaces which exaggerate the normal expression of the emotions are comical, even if they are involuntary, as in the case of persons suffering from St. Vitus’ dance (chorea). The impassioned movements of a modern orchestra leader will appear comical to every unmusical person, who cannot understand why they are necessary. Indeed, the comic element found in bodily shapes and physiognomy is a branch of the comic of motion, in that they are conceived as if they were the result of motion that has been carried too far or motion that is purposeless. Wide exposed eyes, a crook-shaped nose bent towards the mouth, handle-like ears, a hunch back, and all similar physical defects probably produce a comical impression only in so far as the movements that would be necessary to produce these features are imagined, whereby the nose and other parts of the body are pictured as more movable than they actually are. It is certainly comical if some one can “wiggle his ears,” and it would undoubtedly be a great deal more comical if he could raise and lower his nose. A large part of the comical impression that animals make upon us is due to the fact that we perceive in them movements which we cannot imitate.

COMIC OF MOTION

But how does it come about that we laugh as soon as we have recognized that the actions of some one else are inmoderate and inappropriate? I believe that we laugh because we compare the motions observed in others with those which we ourselves should produce if we were in their place. The two persons must naturally be compared in accordance with the same standard, but this standard is my own innervation expenditure con-
nected with my idea of motion in the one case as well as the other. This assertion is in need of discussion and amplification.

What we are here putting into juxtaposition is, on the one hand, the psychic expenditure of a given idea, and on the other hand, the content of this idea. We maintain that the former is not primarily and principally independent of the latter—the content of the idea—particularly because the idea of something great requires a larger expenditure than the idea of something small. As long as we are concerned only with the idea of different coarse movements, we shall encounter no difficulties in the theoretical determination of our thesis or in establishing its proof through observation. It will be shown that in this case an attribute of the idea actually coincides with an attribute of the object conceived, although psychology warns us of confusions of this sort.

I obtain an idea of a definite coarse movement by performing this motion or by imitating it, and in so doing I set a standard for this motion in my feelings of innervation.¹

Now if I perceive a similar more or less coarse motion in some one else, the surest way to the understanding—to apperception—of the same is to carry it out imitatively, and the comparison will then enable me to decide in which motion I expended more energy. Such an impulse to imitate certainly arises on perceiving a movement. But in reality I do not carry out the imitation any more than I still spell out words simply because I have learned to read by means of spelling. Instead of imitating the movement with my muscles I substitute the idea of the same through my memory traces of the expenditures necessary for similar motions. Perceiving, or "thinking," differs above all from acting or carrying out things, through the fact that it entails a very much smaller displacement of energy and keeps the main expenditure from being discharged. But how is the quantitative factor, the greater or lesser element of the movement perceived, given expression in the idea? And if the representation of the quantity is left off from the idea that is composed of qualities, how am I to differentiate the ideas of different big movements, how am I to compare them?

Here, physiology shows the way in that it teaches us that even while an idea is in the process of conception innervations proceed to the muscles, which naturally represent only a moderate expenditure. It is now easy to assume that this expenditure of innervation which accompanies the conception of the idea is utilized to represent the quantitative factor

¹ The recollection of this innervation expenditure will remain the essential part of the idea of this motion, and there will always be methods of thought in my psychic life in which the idea will be represented by nothing else but this expenditure. In other connections a substitute for this element may possibly be put in the form of other ideas, for instance the visual idea of the object of the motion, or it may be put in the form of the word-idea; and in certain types of abstract thought a sign instead of the full content itself may suffice.
of the idea, and that when a great motion is imagined it is greater than it would be in the case of a smaller one. The conception of greater motions would thus actually be greater, that is, it would be a conception accompanied by greater expenditure.

**IDEATIONAL MIMICRY**

Observation shows directly that human beings are in the habit of expressing the big and small things in their ideation content by means of a manifold expenditure or by means of a sort of ideational mimicry.

When a child or a person of the common people or one belonging to a certain race imparts or depicts something, one can easily observe that he is not content to make his ideas intelligible to the hearer through the choice of correct words alone, but that he also represents the contents of the same through his expressive motions. Thus, he designates the quantities and intensities of "a high mountain" by raising his hands over his head, and those of "a little dwarf" by lowering his hand to the ground. If he controlled the habit of depicting with his hands, he would nevertheless do it with his voice, and if he should also control his voice, one may be sure that in picturing something big he would distend his eyes, and in describing something little he would press his eyes together. It is not his own affects that he thus expresses, but it is really the content of what he imagines.

Shall we now assume that this need for mimicry is first aroused through the demand for imparting, whereas a good part of this manner of representation still escapes the attention of the hearer? I rather believe that this mimicry, though less vivid, exists even if all imparting is left out of the question, that it comes about when the person imagines for himself alone, or thinks of something in a graphic manner; that then such a person, just as in talking, expresses through his body the idea of big and small which manifests itself at least through a change of innervation in the facial expressions and sensory organs. Indeed, I can imagine that the bodily innervation which is consensual to the content of the idea conceived is the beginning and origin of mimicry for purposes of communication. For, in order to be in a position to serve this purpose, it is only necessary to increase it and make it conspicuous to the other. When I take the view that this "expression of the ideation content" should be added to the expression of the emotions, which are known as physical by-products of psychic processes, I am well aware that my observations which refer to the category of big and small do not exhaust the subject. I myself could add still other things, even before reaching to the phenomenon of tension through which a person physically indicates the accumulation of his attention and the *niveau* of abstraction upon which his thoughts happen to rest. I maintain that this subject is very important, and I be-
lieve that tracing the ideation mimicry in other fields of aesthetics would be just as useful for the understanding of the comic as it is here.

To return to the comic movement, I repeat that with the perception of a certain motion the impulse to conceive it will be given through a certain expenditure. In the "desire to understand," in the apperception of this movement I produce a certain expenditure, and I behave in this part of the psychic process just as if I put myself in the place of the person observed. Simultaneously I probably grasp the aim of the motion, and through former experiences I am able to estimate the amount of expenditure necessary to attain this aim. I thereby drop out of consideration the person observed and behave as if I myself wished to attain the aim of the motion. These two ideational possibilities depend on a comparison of the motion observed, with my own inhibited motion. In the case of an immoderate or inappropriate movement on the part of the other, my greater expenditure for understanding becomes inhibited in statu nascendi during the mobilization as it were, it is declared superfluous and stands free for further use or for discharge through laughing. If other favorable conditions supervened, this would be the nature of the origin of pleasure in comic movement—an innervation expenditure which, when compared with one's own motion, becomes an inapplicable surplus.

**COMPARISON OF TWO KINDS OF EXPENDITURE AS PLEASURE-SOURCES**

We now note that we must continue our discussion by following two different paths; first, to determine the conditions for the discharge of the surplus; secondly, to test whether the other cases of the comic can be conceived similarly to our conception of comic motion.

We shall turn first to the latter task and after considering comic movement and action we shall turn to the comic found in the psychic activities and peculiarities of others.

As an example of this kind we may consider the comical nonsense produced by ignorant students at examinations; it is more difficult, however, to give a simple example of peculiarities of character. We must not be confused by the fact that nonsense and foolishness which so often act in a comical manner are nevertheless not perceived as comical in all cases, just as the same things which once made us laugh because they seemed comical may appear later as contemptible and hateful. This fact, which we must not forget to take into account, simply points to the fact that besides the comparison familiar to us other relations come into consideration for the comic effect—conditions which we can investigate in other connections.

The comic found in the mental and psychic attributes of another person is apparently again the result of a comparison between him and my own ego. But it is remarkable that it is a comparison which has more often
furnished the opposite result than in the case of comic movement and action. In the latter case is was comical if the other person exerted a greater expenditure than I believed necessary for me; in the case of psychic activity it is just the reverse, it is comical if the other person economizes in expenditure, which I consider indispensable, for nonsense and foolishness are nothing but inferior functions. In the first case I laugh because he makes it too difficult for himself, and in the latter case because he makes it too easy for himself. As to the comic effect, it is obviously only a question of the difference between the two cathexes expenditures—the one of empathy, and the other of the ego—and not in whose favor this difference inclines. This peculiarity, which at first confuses our judgment, disappears, however, when we consider that it is in accord with our personal development towards a higher stage of culture to limit our muscular work and increase our mental work. By heightening our mental expenditure we produce a diminution of motion expenditure for the same activity. Our machines bear witness to this cultural success.

Thus, it coincides with a uniform understanding that that person appears comical to us who puts forth too much expenditure in his physical activities and too little in his mental activities; and it cannot be denied that in both cases our laughing is the expression of a pleasurably perceived superiority which we adjudge to ourselves in comparison with him. If the relation in both cases becomes reversed, that is, if the somatic expenditure of the other is less and the psychic expenditure greater, then we no longer laugh, but are struck with amazement and admiration.

COMIC OF SITUATION

The origin of the comic pleasure discussed here, that is, the origin of such pleasure in a comparison of the other person with one’s own self in respect to the difference between the empathy expenditure and one’s own expenditure—is genetically probably most important. It is certain, however, that it is not the only one. We have learned before to disregard any such comparison between the other person and one’s self, and to obtain the pleasure-bringing difference from one side only, either from empathy, or from the processes in one’s own ego, proving thereby that the feeling of superiority bears no essential relations to comic pleasure. A comparison is indispensable, however, for the origin of this pleasure, and we find this comparison between two energy expenditures which rapidly follow each other and refer to the same function. It is produced either in ourselves by way of empathy into the other, or we find it without any such

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1 From the Greek *en—pathein*, to read oneself into another person or situation.
2 "What one has not in his head," as the saying goes, "he must have in his legs."
3 The problem has been greatly confused by the general conditions determining the comic, whereby the comic pleasure is seen to have its source now in a too-muchness and now in a not-enoughness. Cf. Lipps, l.c. p. 47.
relation in our own psychic processes. The first case, in which the other
person still plays a part, though not in comparison with the ego, results
when the pleasure-producing difference of cathexes expenditures comes
into existence through outer influences which we can comprehend as a
“situation,” for which reason this species of comic is also called the
“comic of the situation.” The peculiarities of the person who furnishes the
comic do not here come into essential consideration; we laugh when we
admit to ourselves that had we been placed in the same situation we
should have done the same thing. Here we draw the comic from the rela-
tion of the individual to the often all-too-powerful outer world, which is
represented in the psychic processes of the individual by the conventions
and necessities of society, and even by his bodily needs. A typical exam-
ple of the latter is when a person engaged in an activity, which claims all
his psychic forces, is suddenly disturbed by a pain or excremental need.
The opposite case which furnishes us the comic difference through em-
pathy, lies between the great interest which existed before the disturbance
occurred and the minimum left for his psychic activity after the disturb-
ance made its appearance. The person who furnishes us this difference
again becomes comical through inferiority; but he is only inferior in
comparison with his former ego and not in comparison with us, for we
know that in a similar case we could not have behaved differently. It is
remarkable, however, that we find this inferiority of the person only in
the case of empathy, that is, we can only find it comical in the other,
whereas we ourselves are conscious only of painful emotions when such or
similar embarrassments happen to us. By keeping away the painful from
our own person we are probably first enabled to enjoy as pleasurable that
difference which resulted from the comparison of the changing cathexes.

COMIC OF EXPECTATION

The other source of the comic, which we find in our own transformations
of cathexes, lies in our relations of the future, which we are accustomed to
anticipate through our ideas of expectation. I assume that a quantitatively
determined expenditure underlies our every idea of expectation, which in
case of disappointment becomes diminished by a certain difference, and
I again refer to the observations made before concerning “ideational
mimicry.” But it seems to me easier to demonstrate the real mobilized
cathetic expenditure for the cases of expectation. It is well known con-
cerning a whole series of cases that the manifestation of expectation is
formed by motor preliminaries; this is first of all true of cases in which
the expected events make demands on my motility, and these preparations
are quantitatively determinable without anything further. If I am expect-
ing to catch a ball thrown at me, I put my body in states of tension in order
to enable me to withstand the collision with the ball, and the superfluous
motions which I make if the ball turns out to be light make me look comical to the spectators. I allow myself to be misled by the expectation to exert an immoderate expenditure of motion. A similar thing happens if, for example, I lift out a basket of fruit which I took to be heavy but which was hollow and formed out of wax in order to deceive me. By its upward jerk my arm betrays the fact that I have prepared a superfluous innervation for this purpose and hence I am laughed at. In fact there is at least one case in which the expectation expenditure can be directly demonstrated by means of physiological experimentation with animals. In Pavlov's experiments with salivary secretions of dogs who, provided with salivary fistulae, are shown different kinds of food, it is noticed that the amount of saliva secreted through the fistulae depends on whether the conditions of the experiment have strengthened or disappointed the dogs' expectation to be fed with the food shown them.

Even where the thing expected lays claims only to my sensory organs, and not to my motility, I may assume that the expectation manifests itself in a certain motor emanation causing tension of the senses, and I may even conceive the suspension of attention as a motor activity which is equivalent to a certain amount of expenditure. Moreover, I can presuppose that the preparatory activity of expectation is not independent of the amount of the expected impression, but that I represent mimically the bigness and smallness of the same by means of a greater or smaller preparatory expenditure, just as in the case of imparting something and in the case of thinking when there is no expectation. The expectation expenditure naturally will be composed of many components, and also for my disappointment diverse factors will come into consideration; it is not only a question whether the realized event is perceptibly greater or smaller than the expected one, but also whether the expectation is worthy of the great interest which I had offered for it. In this manner I am instructed to consider, besides the expenditure for the representation of bigness and smallness (the conceptual mimicry), also the expenditure for the tension of attention (expectation expenditure), and in addition to these two expenditures there is in all cases the abstraction expenditure. But these other forms of expenditure can easily be reduced to the one of bigness and smallness, for what we call more interesting, more sublime, and even more abstract, are only particularly qualified special cases of what is greater. Let us add to this that, among other things, Lipps holds that the quantitative, not the qualitative, contrast is primarily the source of comic pleasure, and we shall be altogether content to have chosen the comic element of motion as the starting-point of our investigation.

In discussing Kant's thesis, "The comic is an expectation dwindled into nothing," Lipps made the attempt in his book, often cited here, to trace the comic pleasure altogether to expectation. Despite the many instruc-
tive and valuable results which this attempt brought to light, I should like
to agree with the criticism expressed by other authors, namely, that Lipps
has formulated a field of origin of the comic which is much too narrow,
and that he could not subject its phenomena to his formula without much
forcing.

CARICATURE

Human beings are not satisfied to enjoy the comic as they encounter it in
life, but they aim to produce it intentionally. Thus, we discover more of
the nature of the comic by studying the methods employed in producing
the comic. Above all one can produce comical elements in one's person-
ality for the amusement of others, by making one's self appear awkward
or stupid. One then produces the comic exactly as if one were really so,
by complying with the condition of comparison which leads to the dif-
ference of expenditure; but one does not make himself laughable or con-
temptible through this; indeed, under certain circumstances one can
even secure admiration. The feeling of superiority does not come into
existence in the other when he knows that the actor is only shamming,
and this furnishes us a good new proof that the comic is independent in
principle of the feeling of superiority.

To make someone else comical, the method most commonly employed
is to transfer him into situations wherein he becomes comical regardless
of his personal qualities, as a result of human dependence upon external
circumstances, especially social factors; in other words, some one resorts to
the comical situation. This transferring into a comic situation may be real
as in practical jokes, such as placing the foot in front of one so that he falls
like a clumsy person, or making some one appear stupid by utilizing his
credulity to make him believe some nonsense, etc., or it can be feigned by
means of speech or play. It is a good aid in aggression, in the service of
which, production of the comic is wont to place itself, in order that the
comic pleasure may be independent of the reality of the comic situation;
thus every person is really defenseless against being made comical.

But there are still other means of making one comical which deserve
special attention and which in part also show new sources of comic pleas-
ure. Imitation, for example, belongs here; it accords the hearer an ex-
traordinary amount of pleasure and makes its subject comical, even if it
still keeps away from the exaggeration of caricature. It is much easier to
fathom the comic effect of caricature than that of simple imitation. Caric-
ature, parody and travesty like their practical counterpart unmasking,
are directed against persons and objects who command authority and
respect and who are exalted in some sense. These are procedures which
tend to degrade. In the transferred psychic sense, the exalted is equivalent to something great and I want to make the statement, or more accurately to repeat the statement, that psychic greatness like somatic greatness is exhibited by means of an increased expenditure. It needs little observation to ascertain that when I speak of the exalted I give a different innervation to my voice, I change my facial expression, and attempt to bring my entire bearing as it were into complete accord with the dignity of that which I present. I impose upon myself a dignified restriction, not much different than if I were coming into the presence of an illustrious personage, monarch, or prince of science. I can scarcely err when I assume that this added innervation of conceptual mimicry corresponds to an increased expenditure. The third case of such an added expenditure I readily find when I indulge in abstract trains of thought instead of in the concrete and plastic ideas. If I can now imagine that the mentioned processes for degrading the illustrious are quite ordinary, that during their activity I need not be on my guard and in whose ideal presence I may, to use a military formula, put myself “at ease,” all that saves me the added expenditure of dignified restriction. Moreover, the comparison of this manner of presentation instigated by empathy with the manner of presentation to which I have been hitherto accustomed, which seeks to present itself at the same time, again produces a difference in expenditure which can be discharged through laughter.

As is known, caricature brings about the degradation by rendering prominent one feature, comic in itself, from the entire picture of the exalted object, a feature which would be overlooked if viewed with the entire picture. Only by isolating this feature can the comic effect be obtained which spreads in our memory over the whole picture. This has, however, this condition; the presence of the exalted element must not force us into a disposition of reverence. Where such a comical feature is really lacking, caricature then unhesitatingly creates it by exaggerating one that is not comical in itself. It is again characteristic of the origin of comic pleasure that the effect of the caricature is not essentially impaired through such a falsifying of reality.

UNMASKING

Parody and travesty accomplish the degradation of the exalted by other means; they destroy the uniformity between the attributes of persons familiar to us and their speech and actions; by replacing either the illustrious persons or their utterances by lowly ones. Therein they differ from caricature, but not through the mechanism of the production of the

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1 Degradation: A. Bain (The Emotions and the Will, 2nd Ed., 1865) states: “The occasion of the ludicrous is the degradation of some person of interest possessing dignity, in circumstances that excite no other strong emotion” (p. 248).
comic pleasure. The same mechanism also holds true in unmasking, which comes into consideration only where some one has attached to himself dignity and authority which in reality should be taken from him. We have seen the comic effect of unmasking through several examples of wit, for example, in the story of the fashionable lady who in her first labors cries: “Ah, mon Dieu!” but to whom the physician paid no attention until she screamed: “A-a-a-ai-e-e-e-e-e-E-E-E!” Being now acquainted with the character of the comic, we can no longer dispute that this story is really an example of comical unmasking and has no just claim to the term witticism. It recalls wit only through the setting, through the technical means of “representation through a trifle”; here it is the cry which was found sufficient to indicate the point. The fact remains, however, that our feeling for the niceties of speech, when we call on it for judgment, does not oppose calling such a story a witticism. We can find the explanation for this in the reflection that usage of speech does not enter scientifically into the nature of wit so far as we have evolved it by means of this painstaking examination. As it is a function of the activities of wit to reopen hidden sources of comic pleasure, every artifice which does not bring to light the barefaced comic may in looser analogy be called a witticism. This is especially true in the case of unmasking, though in other methods of comic-making the appellation also holds good.1

In the mechanism of “unmasking” one can also utilize those processes of comic-making already known to us which degrade the dignity of individuals by calling attention to one of the common human frailties, but particularly to the dependence of his mental functions upon physical needs. Unmasking them becomes equivalent to the reminder: This or that one who is admired like a demigod is only a human being like you and me after all. Moreover, all efforts in this mechanism serve to lay bare the monotonous psychic automatism which is behind wealth and apparent freedom of psychic achievements. We have become acquainted with examples of such “unmasking” through the marriage agent’s witticisms and at that time we felt doubt whether we could rightly count these stories as wit. Now we can decide with more certainty that the anecdote of the echo who reinforces all assertions of the marriage agent and in the end reinforces the latter’s admission that the bride has a hunchback with the exclamation “And what a hunch!” is essentially a comic story, an example of unmasking of the psychic automatism. But here the comic story serves only as a façade; to any one who wishes to note the hidden meaning of the marriage agent, the whole remains a splendidly put together piece of wit. He who does not penetrate so far sees only the comic story. The same

1 “Thus, every conscious and clever evocation of the comic is called wit, be it the comic of views or situations. Naturally we cannot use this view of wit here.” Lipps, L. c., p. 78.
is true of the other witticism of the agent who, to refute an objection, finally confirms the truth through the exclamation: "But who in the world would lend them anything?" This is a comic unmasking which serves as a façade for a witticism. Still the character of the wit is here quite evident, as the speech of the agent is at the same time an expression through the opposite. In trying to prove that the people are rich he proves at the same time that they are not rich but very poor. Wit and the comic unite here and teach us that a statement may be simultaneously witty and comical.

We eagerly grasp the opportunity to return from the comic of unmasking to wit, for our real task is to explain the relation between wit and comic and not to determine the nature of the comic. Hence to the case of uncovering the psychic automatism, wherein our feeling left us in doubt as to whether the matter was comical or witty, we add another, the case of nonsense-wit, wherein likewise wit and the comic fuse. But our investigation will ultimately show us that in this second case the meeting of wit and comic may be theoretically deductible.

In the discussion of the techniques of wit we have found that giving free play to such modes of thinking as are common in the unconscious, which in consciousness are conceived only as "faulty thinking," furnishes the technical means of a great many witticisms. We had then doubted their witty character and were inclined to classify them simply as comic stories. We could come to no decision regarding our uncertainty because in the first place the real character of wit was not familiar to us. Later we found this character by following the analogy to the dream-work, as to the compromise formed by the wit-work between the demands of the rational critic and the impulse not to abandon the old word-pleasure and nonsense-pleasure. What thus came into existence as a compromise, when the foreconscious thought was left for a moment to unconscious elaboration, satisfied both demands in all cases, but it presented itself to the critic, in various forms and had to stand various criticisms from it. In one case wit succeeded in surreptitiously assuming the form of an unimportant but none the less admissible proposition; a second time it smuggled itself into the expression of a valuable thought. But within the outer limit of the compromise activity it made no effort to satisfy the critic, and defiantly utilizing the pleasure-sources at its disposal, it appeared before the critic as pure nonsense. It had no fear of provoking contradiction because it could rely on the fact that the hearer would decipher the distortion of the expression through the operation of his unconscious and thus give back to it its meaning.

Now in what case will wit appear to the critic as nonsense? Particularly when it makes use of those modes of thought, which are common in the unconscious, but forbidden in conscious thought; that is, when it resorts to faulty thinking. Some of the modes of thinking, of the unconscious,
have also been retained in conscious thinking, for example, many forms of indirect expression, allusions, etc., even though their conscious use has to be much restricted. Using these techniques, wit will arouse little or no opposition on the part of the critic; but this only happens when it also uses that technical means with which conscious thought no longer cares to have anything to do. Wit can still further avoid offending, if it disguises the faulty thinking by investing it with a semblance of logic as in the story of the fancy cake and liqueur, salmon with mayonnaise, and similar ones. But should it present the faulty thinking undisguised, the critic is sure to protest.

THE MEETING OF WIT AND THE COMIC

In this case, something else comes to the aid of wit. The faulty thinking, which as a form of thinking of the unconscious, wit utilizes for its technique, appears comical to the critic, although this is not necessarily the case. The conscious giving of free play to the unconscious and to those forms of thinking which are rejected as faulty, furnishes a means for the production of comic pleasure. This can be easily understood, as a greater expenditure is surely needed for the production of the foreconscious cathexis than for the giving of free play to the unconscious. When we hear the thought which is formed like one from the unconscious we compare it to its correct form, and this results in a difference of expenditure which gives origin to comic pleasure. A witticism which makes use of such faulty thinking as its technique, and therefore appears absurd, can produce a comic impression at the same time. If we do not strike the trail of the wit, there remains to us only the comic or funny story.

The story of the borrowed kettle, which showed a hole on being returned, whereupon the borrower excused himself by stating that in the first place he had not borrowed the kettle; secondly, that it already had a hole when he borrowed it; and thirdly, that he had returned it intact without any hole, is an excellent example of a purely comic effect through giving free play to one’s unconscious modes of thinking. Just this mutual neutralization of several thoughts, each of which is well motivated in itself, is the province of the unconscious. Corresponding to this, the dream in which the unconscious thoughts become manifest, also shows an absence of either—or.1 These are expressed by putting the thoughts next to one another. In that dream example given in my Interpretation of Dreams,2 which in spite of its complication I have chosen as a type of the work of interpretation, I seek to rid myself of the reproach that I have not removed the pains of a patient by psychic treatment. My arguments are: 1. she is herself to blame for her illness, because she does not wish to accept my solution, 2. her

1 At the most this is inserted by the dreamer as an explanation.
pains are of organic origin, therefore none of my concern, 3. her pains are connected with her widowhood, for which I am certainly not to blame, 4. her pains resulted from an injection with a dirty syringe, which was given by another. All these motives follow one another just as though one did not exclude the other. In order to escape the reproach that it was nonsense I had to insert the words "either—or" instead of the "and" of the dream.

A similar comical story is the one which tells of a blacksmith in a Hungarian village who has committed a crime punishable by death; the burgomaster, however, decreed that not the smith but a tailor was to be hanged, as there were two tailors in the village but only one blacksmith, and the crime had to be expiated. Such a displacement of guilt from one person to another naturally contradicts all laws of conscious logic, but in no ways the mental trends of the unconscious. I am in doubt whether to call this story comic, and still I put the story of the kettle among the wit- ticsms. Now I admit that it is far more correct to designate the latter as comic rather than witty. But now I understand how it happens that my feelings, usually so reliable, can leave me in the lurch as to whether this story be comic or witty. The case in which I cannot come to a conclusion through my feelings is the one in which the comic results through the uncovering of modes of thought which exclusively belong to the unconscious. A story of that kind can be comic and witty at the same time; but it will impress me as being witty even if it be only comic, because the use of the faulty thinking of the unconscious reminds me of wit, just as in the case of the arrangements for the uncovering of the hidden comic discussed before.

I must lay great stress upon making clear this most delicate point of my analysis, namely, the relation of wit to the comic, and will therefore supplement what has been said with some negative statements. First of all, I call attention to the fact that the case of the meeting of wit and comic treated here is not identical with the preceding one. I grant it is a fine distinction, but it can be drawn with certainty. In the preceding case the comic originated from the unmasking of the psychic automatism. This is in no way peculiar to the unconscious alone and it does not at all play a conspicuous part in the technique of wit. Unmasking appears only accidentally in relation to wit, in that it serves another technique of wit, namely, representation through the opposite. But in the case of giving free play to unconscious ways of thinking the union of wit and comic is an essential one, because the same method which is used by the first person in wit as the technique of releasing pleasure, will naturally produce comic pleasure in the third person.

We might be tempted to generalize this last case and seek the relation of wit to the comic in the fact that the effect of wit upon the third person,
follows the mechanism of comic pleasure. But there is no question about
that; contact with the comic is not in any way found in all nor even in most
witticisms; in most cases wit and the comic can be cleanly separated. As
often as wit succeeds in escaping the appearance of absurdity, which is to
say in most witticisms of double meaning or of allusion, one cannot dis-
cover any effect in the hearer resembling the comic. One can make the
test with examples previously cited or with some new ones given here.

Congratulatory telegram to be sent to a gambler on his 70th birthday:
"Trente et quarante" ¹ (word-division with allusion).

Madame de Maintenon was called Madame de Maintenant (modifica-
tion of a name).

We might further believe that at least all jokes with nonsense façades
appear comical and must impress us as such. But I recall here the fact
that such witticisms often have a different effect on the hearer, calling
forth confusion and a tendency to rejection (see footnote, p. 212). There-
fore, it evidently depends on whether the nonsense of the wit appears
comical or common plain nonsense, and the conditions for this we have
not yet investigated. Accordingly, we hold to the conclusion that wit, judg-
ing by its nature, can be separated from the comic, and that it unites with
it on the one hand, only in certain special cases, on the other in the
tendency to gain pleasure from intellectual sources.

In the course of these examinations concerning the relations of wit and
the comic there revealed itself to us that distinction which we must em-
phasize as most significant, and which at the same time points to a psycho-
logically important characteristic of the comic. We had to transfer to the
unconscious the source of wit-pleasure; there is no occasion which can be
discovered for the same localization of the comic. On the contrary, all
analyses which we have made thus far indicate that the source of comic
pleasure lies in the comparison of two expenditures, both of which we
must adjudge to the foreconscious. Wit and the comic can above all be
differentiated in the psychic localization; wit is, so to speak, the contri-
bution to the comic from the sphere of the unconscious.

COMIC OF ImitATION

We need not blame ourselves for digressing from the subject, for the rela-
tion of wit to the comic really furnished the occasion which impelled us
to examine the comic. But it is time for us to return to the point under
discussion, to the treatment of the means which serve to produce the
comic. We have advanced the discussion of caricature and unmasking,
because from both of them we can borrow several points of similarity for
the analysis of the comic of imitation. Imitation is mostly replaced by
caricature, which is an exaggeration of certain otherwise not striking

¹ "Trente et quarante" is a gambling game.
traits, and also bears the character of degradation. Still this does not seem to exhaust the nature of imitation; it is incontestable that in itself it represents an extraordinarily rich source of comic pleasure, for we laugh particularly over faithful imitations. It is not easy to give a satisfactory explanation of this if we do not accept Bergson's view,¹ according to which the comic of imitation is put next to the comic produced by unmasking the psychic automatism. Bergson believes that everything gives a comic impression which manifests itself in the shape of a machine-like inanimate movement in the human being. His law is that "the attitudes, gestures, and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine." He explains the comic of imitation by connecting it with a problem formulated by Pascal in his Thoughts, why is it that we laugh at the comparison of two faces that are alike although neither of them excites laughter by itself. "The truth is that a really living life should never repeat itself. Wherever there is repetition or complete similarity, we always suspect some mechanism at work behind the living." Analyze the impression you get from two faces that are too much alike, and you will find that you are thinking of two copies cast in the same mould, or two impressions of the same soul, or two reproductions of the same negative—in a word, of some manufacturing process or other. This deflection of life towards the mechanical is here the real cause of laughter. We might say it is the degradation of the human to the mechanical or inanimate. If we accept these winning arguments of Bergson, it is moreover not difficult to subject his view to our own formula. Taught by experience that every living being is different, and demands a definite amount of expenditure from our understanding, we find ourselves disappointed when, as a result of a perfect agreement or deceptive imitation, we need no new expenditure. But we are disappointed in the sense of being relieved, and the expenditure of expectation which has become superfluous is discharged through laughter. The same formula will also cover all cases of comic rigidity considered by Bergson, such as professional habits, fixed ideas, and modes of expression which are repeated on every occasion. All these cases aim to compare the expenditure of expectation with what is commonly required for the understanding, whereby the greater expectation depends on observation of individual variety and human plasticity. Hence in imitation the source of comic pleasure is not the comic of situation but that of expectation.

As we trace the comic pleasure in general to comparison, it is incumbent upon us to investigate also the comic element of comparison itself, which likewise serves as a means of producing the comic. Our interest in this question will be enhanced when we recall that in the case of comparison

¹ Bergson: Le Rire, essai sur la signification du comique.
the "feeling" as to whether something was to be classed as witty or merely comical often left us in the lurch.

The subject really deserves more attention than we can bestow upon it. The main quality for which we ask in comparison is whether it is pertinent, that is, whether it really calls our attention to an existing agreement between two different objects. The original pleasure in refining the same thing (Groos), is not the only motive which favors the use of comparison. Besides this there is the fact that comparison is capable of a utilization which facilitates intellectual work; when for example, as is usually the case, one compares the less familiar to the more familiar, the abstract to the concrete, and explains through this comparison the more strange and the more difficult objects. With every such comparison, especially of the abstract to the concrete, there is a certain degradation and a certain economy in abstraction expenditure (in the sense of a conceptual mimicry), yet this naturally does not suffice to render prominent the character of the comic. The latter does not emerge suddenly from the freed pleasure of the comparison but comes gradually; there are many cases which only touch the comic, in which one might doubt whether they show the comic character. The comparison undoubtedly becomes comical when the niveau difference of the expenditure of abstraction between the two things compared becomes increased, if something serious and strange, especially of intellectual or moral nature is compared to something banal and lowly. The former release of pleasure and the contribution from the conditions of conceptual mimicry may perhaps explain the gradual change—which is determined by quantitative relations—from the universally pleasurable to the comic, which takes place during the comparison. I am certainly avoiding misunderstandings by emphasizing that I deduce the comic pleasure in the comparison, not from the contrast of the two things compared but from the difference of the two abstraction expenditures. The strange which is difficult to grasp, the abstract and really intellectually sublime, through its alleged agreement with a familiar lowly one, in the imagination of which every abstraction expenditure disappears, is now itself unmasked as something equally lowly. The comic of comparison thus becomes reduced to a case of degradation.

The comparison, as we have seen above, can now be witty without a trace of comic admixture, especially when it happens to evade the degradation. Thus, the comparison of Truth to a torch, which one cannot carry through a crowd without singeing somebody's beard, is pure wit, because it takes an obsolete expression ("The torch of truth") at its full value and not at all in a comical sense, and because the torch as an object does not lack a certain distinction, though it is a concrete object. However, a comparison may just as well be witty as comic, and what is more, one may be independent of the other, in that the comparison becomes an aid for
certain techniques of wit, as, for example, unification or allusion. Thus Nestroy's above mentioned comparison of memory to a "Warehouse," is simultaneously comical and witty, first, on account of the extraordinary degradation to which the psychological conception must consent in the comparison to a "Warehouse," and secondly, because he who utilizes the comparison is a clerk, and in this comparison he establishes a rather unexpected unification between psychology and his vocation. Heine's verse, "until at last the buttons tore from the pants of my patience," seems at first an excellent example of a comic degrading comparison, but on closer reflection we must ascribe to it also the attribute of wittiness, since the comparison as a means of allusion strikes into the realm of the obscene and causes a release of pleasure from the obscene. Through a union not altogether incidental the same material also gives us a resultant pleasure which is at the same time comical and witty; it does not matter whether or not the conditions of the one promote the origin of the other, such a union acts confusingly on the "feeling" whose function it is to announce to us whether we have before us wit or the comic, and only a careful examination independent of the disposition of pleasure can decide the question.

As tempting as it would be to trace these more intimate determinations of comic pleasure, the author must remember that neither his previous education nor his daily vocation justifies him in extending his investigations beyond the spheres of wit, and he must confess that it is precisely the subject of comic comparison which makes him feel his incompetence.

We are quite willing to be reminded that many authors do not recognize the clear notional and objective distinction between wit and comic, as we were impelled to do, and that they classify wit merely as "the comic of speech" or "of words." To test this view let us select one example of intentional and one of involuntary comic of speech and compare it with wit. We have already mentioned before that we are in a good position to distinguish comic from witty speech. "With a fork and with effort, his mother pulled him out of the mess," is only comical, but Heine's verse about the four castes of the population of Göttingen: "Professors, students, Philistines, and cattle," is exquisitely witty.

As an example of the intentional comic of speech I will take as a model Stettenheim's Wippchen. We call Stettenheim witty because he possesses the cleverness that evokes the comic. The wit which one "has," in contradistinction to the wit which one "makes," is indeed correctly conditioned by this ability. It is true that the letters of Wippchen are also witty in so far as they are interspersed with a rich collection of all sorts of witticisms, some of which very successful ones (as "festively undressed" when he speaks of a parade of savages), but what lends the peculiar character to these productions is not these isolated witticisms, but the
superabundant flow of comic speech contained therein. Originally Wippchen was certainly meant to represent a satirical character, a modification of Freytag's Schmock, one of those uneducated persons who trade in the educational treasure of the nation and abuse it; but the pleasure in the comic effect experienced in representing this person seems gradually to have pushed to the background the author's satirical tendency. Wippchen's productions are for the most part "comic nonsense." The author has justly utilized the pleasant mood resulting from the accumulation of such achievements to present beside the altogether admissible material, all sorts of absurdities which would be intolerable in themselves. Wippchen's nonsense appears to be of a specific nature only on account of its special technique. If we look closer into some of these "witticisms," we find that some forms which have impressed their character on the whole production are especially conspicuous. Wippchen makes use mostly of compositions (fusions), of modifications of familiar expressions and quotations. He replaces some of the banal elements in these expressions by others which are usually more pretentious and more valuable. This naturally comes near to the techniques of wit.

THE COMIC OF SPEECH

Some of the fusions taken from the preface and the first pages are the following: "Turkey's money is like the hay of the sea." This is only a condensation of the two expressions, "Money like hay," "Money like the sands of the sea." Or: "I am nothing but a leafless pillar which tells of a vanished splendor," which is a fusion of "leafless trunk" and "a pillar which, etc." Or: "Where is Ariadne's thread which leads out of the Scylla of this Augean stable?", for which three different Greek myths contribute an element each.

The modifications and substitutions can be treated collectively without much forcing; their character can be seen from the following examples which are peculiar to Wippchen, they are regularly permeated by a different wording which is more fluent, most banal, and reduced to mere platitudes.

"To hang my paper and ink high." The saying: "To hang one's bread-basket high," expresses metaphorically the idea of placing one under difficult conditions. But why not stretch this figure to other material?

"Already in my youth Pegasus was alive in me." When the word "Pegasus" is replaced by "the poet," one can recognize it as an expression often used in autobiographies. Naturally "Pegasus" is not the proper word to replace the words "the poet," but it has thought associations to it and is a high-sounding word.

From Wippchen's other numerous productions some examples can be shown which present the pure comic. As an example of comic disillusion-
ment the following can be cited: "For hours the battle raged, finally it remained undecided"; an example of comic unmasking (of ignorance) is the following: "Clio, the Medusa of history," or quotations like the following: "Habent sua fata morgana." But our interest is aroused more by the fusions and modifications because they recall familiar techniques of wit. We may compare them to such modification witticisms as the following: "He has a great future behind him," and Lichtenberg's modification witticisms such as: "New baths heal well," etc. Should Wippchen's productions having the same technique be called witticisms, or what distinguishes them from the latter?

It is surely not difficult to answer this. Let us remember that wit presents to the hearer a double face, and forces him to two different views. In nonsense-wit as those mentioned last, one view, which considers only the wording, states that they are nonsense; the other view, which, in obedience to suggestion, follows the road that leads through the hearer's unconscious, finds very good sense in these witticisms. In Wippchen's wit-like productions one of these views of wit is vacant, as if stunted. It is a Janus head with only one countenance developed. One would get nowhere should he be tempted to proceed by means of this technique to the unconscious. The condensations lead to no case in which the two fused elements really result in a new sense; they fall to pieces when an attempt is made to analyze them. As in wit, the modifications and substitutions lead to a customary and familiar wording, but they themselves tell us little else, as a rule nothing that is of any possible use. Hence, the only thing that remains to these "witticisms" is the nonsense view. Whether such productions, which have freed themselves from one of the most essential characters of wit, should be called "bad" wit or no wit at all, every one must decide as he feels inclined.

There is no doubt that such stunted wit produces a comic effect for which we can account in more than one way. Either the comic originates through the uncovering of the unconscious modes of thinking in a manner similar to the cases considered above, or the wit originates by comparison with perfect wit. Nothing prevents us from assuming that we here deal with a union of both modes of origin of the comic pleasure. It is not to be denied that it is precisely the inadequate dependence on wit which here shapes the nonsense into comic nonsense.

COMIC OF INADEQUACY

There are, of course, other quite apparent cases, in which such inadequacy produced by the comparison with wit, makes the nonsense irresistibly comic. The counterpart to wit, the riddle, can perhaps give us better examples for this than wit itself. A facetious question states: What is this: It hangs on the wall and one can dry his hands on it? It would be a foolish
riddle if the answer were: a towel. On the contrary this answer is rejected with the statement: No, it is a herring,—"But, for mercy's sake," is the objection, "a herring does not hang on the wall."—"But you can hang it there,"—"But who wants to dry his hands on a herring?"—"Well," is the soft answer, "you don't have to." This explanation given through two typical displacements shows how much this question lacks of being a real riddle, and because of this absolute insufficiency it impresses one as irresistibly comic, rather than mere nonsensical foolishness. Through such means, that is, by not restricting essential conditions, wit, riddles, and other forms, which in themselves produce no comic pleasure, can be made into sources of comic pleasure.

It is not so difficult to understand the case of the involuntary comic of speech which we can perhaps find realized with as much frequency as we like in the poems of Frederika Kempner.¹

ANTI-VIVISECTION

Fraternal sentiment should urge us
To champion the guinea-pig,
For has it not a soul like ours,
Although most likely not as big?

Or a conversation between a loving couple.

THE CONTRAST

The young wife whispers "I'm so happy,"
"And I!" chimes in her husband's voice,
"Because your virtues, dearest help-mate,
Reveal the wisdom of my choice."

There is nothing here which makes one think of wit. Doubtless, however, it is the inadequacy of these "poetic productions," as the very extraordinary clumsiness of the expressions which recall the most commonplace or newspaper style, the ingenious poverty of thoughts, the absence of every trace of poetic manner of thinking or speaking—it is all these inadequacies which make these poems comic. Nevertheless, it is not at all self-evident that we should find these poems comical; many similar productions we merely consider very bad, we do not laugh at them but are rather vexed with them. But here it is the great disparity in our demand of a poem which impels us to the comic conception; where this difference is less, we are inclined to criticise rather than laugh. The comic effect of Kempner's poetic productions is furthermore assured by the additional circumstances of the lady author's unmistakably good intentions, and by the fact that her helpless phrases disarm our feeling of mockery and

¹ Sixth Ed., Berlin, 1891.
anger. We are now reminded of a problem the consideration of which we have so far postponed. The difference of expenditure is surely the main condition of the comic pleasure, but observation teaches that such difference does not always produce pleasure. What other conditions must be added, or what disturbances must be checked in order that pleasure should result from the difference of expenditure? But before proceeding with the answers to these questions we wish to verify what was said in the conclusions of the former discussion, namely, that the comic of speech is not synonymous with wit, and that wit must be something quite different from speech comic.

As we are about to attack the problem just formulated, concerning the conditions of the origin of comic pleasure from the difference of expenditure, we may permit ourselves to facilitate this task so as to attain for ourselves some pleasure. To give a correct answer to this question would amount to an exhaustive presentation of the nature of the comic for which we are fitted neither by ability nor authority. We shall therefore again be content to elucidate the problem of the comic only so far as it distinctly separates itself from wit.

All theories of the comic were objected to by the critics on the ground that in defining the comic these theories overlooked the essential element of it. This can be seen from the following theories, with their objections. The comic depends on a contrasting idea; yes, in so far as this contrast affects one comically and in no other way. The feeling of the comic results from the dwindling away of an expectation; yes, if the disappointment does not prove to be painful. There is no doubt that these objections are justified, but they are overestimated if one concludes from them that the essential characteristic mark of the comic has hitherto escaped our conception. What depreciates the general validity of these definitions, are conditions, which are indispensable for the origin of the comic pleasure, but in which one must not necessarily search for the nature of comic pleasure. The rejection of the objections, and the explanations of the contradictions to the definitions of the comic, will become easy for us, only after we trace back comic pleasure to the difference resulting from a comparison of two expenditures. Comic pleasure and the effect by which it is recognized—laughter, can originate only when this difference is no longer utilizable and when it is capable of discharge. We gain no pleasurable effect, or at most only a slighty feeling of pleasure in which the comic does not appear, if the difference is put to other use as soon as it is recognized. Just as special precautions must be taken in wit, in order to guard against making new use of expenditure recognized as superfluous, so also can comic pleasure originate only under relations which fulfill this latter condition. The cases in which such differences of expenditure originate in
WIT AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

Our ideational life are therefore uncommonly numerous, while the cases in which the comic originates from them are comparatively very rare.

THE CONDITIONS OF ISOLATION OF THE COMIC

Two observations obtrude themselves upon the observer who reviews even only superficially the origin of comic pleasure from the difference of expenditure; first, that there are cases in which the comic appears regularly and as if necessarily; and, in contrast to these cases, others in which this depends on the conditions of the case and on the viewpoint of the observer. But secondly, that unusually large differences very often triumph over unfavorable conditions, so that the comic feeling originates in spite of it. In reference to the first point one may set up two classes, the inevitable comic and the accidental comic, although one will have to be prepared from the beginning to find exceptions in the first class to the inevitableness of the comic. It would be tempting to follow the conditions which are essential to each class.

What is important in the second class are the conditions, of which one may be designated as the "isolation" of the comic case. A closer analysis reveals something like the following relations:

a) The favorable condition for the origin of comic pleasure is brought about by a general happy disposition in which "one is in the mood for laughing." In happy toxic states almost everything seems comic, which probably results from a comparison with the expenditure in normal conditions. For wit, the comic, and all similar methods of gaining pleasure from the psychic activities, are nothing but ways to regain this happy state—euphoria—from one single point, when it does not exist as a general disposition of the psyche.

b) A similar favorable condition is produced by the expectation of the comic or by putting one's self in the right mood for comic pleasure. Hence when the intention to make things comical exists and when this feeling is shared by others, the differences required are so slight that they probably would have been overlooked had they been experienced in unpremeditated occurrences. He who decides to attend a comic lecture or a farce at the theater is indebted to this intention for laughing over things which in his everyday life would hardly produce in him a comic effect. He finally laughs at the recollection of having laughed, at the expectation of laughing, and at the appearance of the one who is to present the comic, even before the latter makes the attempt to make him laugh. It is for this reason that people later admit that they are ashamed of that which made them laugh at the theater.

c) Unfavorable conditions for the comic result from the kind of psychic activity which may occupy the individual at the moment. Imaginative or mental activity tending towards serious aims disturbs the dis-
charging capacity of the cathexis which the activity needs for its own displacements, so that only unexpected and great differences of expenditure can break through to form comic pleasure. All manner of mental processes far enough removed from the obvious to cause a suspension of ideational mimicry are unfavorable to the comic; in abstract contemplation there is hardly any room left for the comic, except when this form of thinking is suddenly interrupted.

d) The occasion for releasing comic pleasure vanishes when the attention is directly fixed on the comparison which is capable of giving rise to the comic. Under such circumstances the comic force is lost from that which is otherwise sure to produce a comic effect. A movement or a mental activity cannot become comical to him whose interest is fixed at the time of comparing this movement with a standard which distinctly presents itself to him. Thus the examiner does not see the comical in the nonsense produced by the student in his ignorance; he is simply annoyed by it, whereas the offender's classmates who are more interested in his chances of passing the examination than in what he knows, laugh heartily over the same nonsense. The teacher of dancing or gymnastics seldom has any eyes for the comic movements of his pupils, and the preacher entirely loses sight of humanity's defects of character, which the writer of comedy brings out with so much effect. The comic process cannot stand examination by the attention, it must be able to proceed absolutely unnoticed in a manner similar to wit. But for good reasons, it would contradict the nomenclature of "conscious processes" which I have used in The Interpretation of Dreams, if one wished to call it of necessity unconscious. It rather belongs to the foreconscious, and one may use the fitting name "automatic" for all those processes which are enacted in the foreconscious, and dispense with the attention cathexis which is connected with consciousness. The process of comparison of the expenditures must remain automatic if it is to produce comic pleasure.

e) It is exceedingly disturbing to the comic if the case from which it originates gives rise at the same time to a marked release of affect. The discharge of the affective difference is then as a rule excluded. Affects, disposition, and the attitude of the individual in occasional cases make it clear that the comic comes or goes with the viewpoint of the individual person; that only in exceptional cases is there an absolute comic. The dependence or relativity of the comic is therefore much greater than that of wit, which never happens but is regularly made, and at its production one may already give attention to the conditions under which it finds acceptance. But affective development is the most intensive of the conditions which disturb the comic, the significance of which is well known.² It is, therefore, said that the comic feeling comes most in tolerably indif-

² "You may well laugh, that no longer concerns you."
different cases which evince no strong feelings or interests. Nevertheless, it is just in cases with affective release that one may witness the production of a particularly strong expenditure-difference in the automatism of discharge. When Colonel Butler answers Octavio's admonitions with "bitter laughter," exclaiming:

"Thanks from the house of Austria!"

his bitterness has thus not prevented the laughter which results from the recollection of the disappointment which he believes he has experienced; and on the other hand, the magnitude of this disappointment could not have been more impressively depicted by the poet than by showing it capable of effecting laughter in the midst of the storm of unchained affects. It is my belief that this explanation may be applicable in all cases in which laughing occurs on other than pleasurable occasions, and in conjunction with exceedingly painful or tense affects.

f) If we also mention that the development of the comic pleasure can be promoted by means of any other pleasurable addition to the case which acts like a sort of contact-effect (after the manner of the fore-pleasure principle in the tendency-wit), then we have discussed surely not all the conditions of comic pleasure, yet enough of them to serve our purpose. We then see that for these conditions, as well as for the inconstancy and dependence of the comic effect, no other assumption so easily lends itself as this one which traces the comic pleasure from the discharge of a difference, which under many conditions can be diverted to a different use than discharge.

It still remains to give a thorough consideration of the comic of the sexual and the obscene, but we shall only skim over it with a few observations. Here, too, we shall take the act of exposing one's body as the starting-point. An accidental exposure produces a comical effect on us, because we compare the ease with which we attained the enjoyment of this view with the great expenditure otherwise necessary for the attainment of this object. The case thus comes nearer to the naïve-comic, but it is simpler than the latter. In every case of exhibitionism in which we are made spectators—or, in the case of the smutty joke hearers—we play the part of the third person, and the person exposed is made comical. We have heard that it is the purpose of wit to replace obscenity and in this manner to reopen a source of comic pleasure that has been lost. On the contrary, spying out an exposure, forms no example of the comic for the one spying, because the effort he exerts thereby abrogates the condition of comic pleasure; the only thing remaining is the sexual pleasure in what is seen. If the peeper relates to another what he has seen, the person looked at again becomes comical, because the viewpoint that predominates is that the expenditure was omitted which would have been necessary for
the concealment of the private parts. At all events, the sphere of the sexual or obscene offers the richest opportunities for gaining comic pleasure beside the pleasurable sexual stimulation, as it exposes the person's dependence on his physical needs (degradation) or it can uncover behind the spiritual love the physical demands of the same (unmasking).

THE PSYCHOGENESIS OF THE COMIC

An invitation to seek the understanding of the comic in its psychogenesis comes surprisingly from Bergson's well written and stimulating book *Laughter*. Bergson, whose formula for the conception of the comic character has already become known to us—"mechanization of life," "the substitution of something mechanical for the natural"—reaches by obvious associations from automatism to the automaton, and seeks to trace a series of comic effects to the blurred memories of children's toys. In this connection he reaches this viewpoint, which, to be sure, he soon drops; he seeks to trace the comic to the after-effect of childish pleasure. "Perhaps we ought, even to carry simplification still further, and, going back to our earliest recollection, try to discover in the games that amused us as children the first faint traces of the combinations that make us laugh as grown-up persons." . . . "Above all, we are too apt to ignore the childish element, so to speak, latent in most of our joyful emotions" (p. 67).

As we have now traced wit to that childish playing with words and thoughts which is prohibited by the rational critic, we must be tempted to trace also these infantile roots of the comic, conjectured by Bergson.

As a matter of fact we meet a whole series of conditions which seem most promising, when we examine the relation of the comic to the child. The child itself does not by any means seem comic to us, although its character fulfills all conditions which, in comparison to our own, would result in a comic difference. Thus we see the immoderate expenditure of motion as well as the slight psychic expenditure, the control of the psychic activities through bodily functions, and other features. The child gives us a comic impression only when it does not behave as a child but as an earnest grown-up, and even then it affects us only in the same manner as other persons in disguise; but as long as it retains the nature of the child our perception of it furnishes us a pure pleasure, which perhaps recalls the comic. We call it naïve in so far as it displays to us the absence of inhibitions, and we call naïve-comic those of its utterances which in another we would have considered obscene or witty.

On the other hand the child lacks all feeling for the comic. This sentence seems to say no more than that this comic feeling, like many others, first makes its appearance in the course of psychic development; and that would by no means be remarkable, especially since we must admit that it shows itself distinctly even during years which must be accredited to
childhood. Nevertheless it can be demonstrated that the assertion that the child lacks feeling for the comic has a deeper meaning than one would suppose. In the first place it will readily be seen that it cannot be different, if our conception is correct, that the comic feeling results from a difference of expenditure produced in the effort to understand the other. Let us again take comic motion as an example. The comparison which furnishes the difference reads as follows, when put in conscious formulae: "So he does it," and: "So I would do it," or "So I have done it." But the child lacks the standard contained in the second sentence, it understands simply through imitation; it just does it. Education of the child furnishes it with the standard: "So you shall do it," and if it now makes use of the same in comparisons, the nearest conclusion is: "He has not done it right, and I can do it better." In this case it laughs at the other, it laughs at him with a feeling of superiority. There is nothing to prevent us from tracing this laughter also to a difference of expenditure; but according to the analogy with the examples of laughter occurring in us we may conclude that the comic feeling is not experienced by the child when it laughs as an expression of superiority. It is a laughter of pure pleasure. In our own case whenever the judgment of our own superiority occurs we smile rather than laugh, or if we laugh, we are still able to distinguish clearly this conscious realization of our superiority from the comic which makes us laugh.

It is probably correct to say that in many cases which we perceive as "comical" and which we cannot explain, the child laughs out of pure pleasure, whereas the child's motives are clear and assignable. If for instance, some one slips on the street and falls, we laugh because this impression—we know not why—is comical. The child laughs in the same case out of a feeling of superiority or out of joy over the calamity of others. It amounts to saying: "You fell, but I did not." Certain pleasure motives of the child seem to be lost for us grown-ups, but as a substitute for these we perceive under the same conditions the "comic" feeling.

THE INFANTILE AND THE COMIC

If we were permitted to generalize, it would seem very tempting to transfer the desired specific character of the comic into the awakening of the infantile, and to conceive the comic as a regaining of "lost infantile laughter." One could then say, "I laugh every time over a difference of expenditure between the other and myself, when I discover in the other the child." Or expressed more precisely, the whole comparison leading to the comic would read as follows:

"He does it this way—I do it differently—
He does it just as I did when I was a child."
This laughter would thus result every time from the comparison between the ego of the grown-up and the ego of the child. The uncertainty itself of the comic difference, causing now the lesser and now the greater expenditure to appear comical to me, would correspond to the infantile condition; the comic therein is actually always on the side of the infantile.

This is not contradicted by the fact that the child itself as an object of comparison does not make a comic impression on me but a purely pleasurable one, nor by the fact that this comparison with the infantile produces a comic effect only when any other use of the difference is avoided. For the conditions of the discharge come thereby into consideration. Everything that confines a psychic process in an association of ideas works against the discharge of the surplus cathexis and directs the same to other utilization; whatever isolates a psychic act favors the discharge. By consciously focussing on the child as the person of comparison, the discharge necessary for the production of comic pleasure therefore becomes impossible; only in foreconscious energetic states is there a similar approach to the isolation which we may moreover also ascribe to the psychic processes in the child. The addition to the comparison: “Thus, I have also done it as a child,” from which the comic effect would emanate, could come into consideration for the average difference only when no other association could obtain control over the freed surplus.

If we still continue with our attempt to find the nature of the comic in the foreconscious association of the infantile, we have to go a step further than Bergson and admit that the comparison resulting in the comic, need not necessarily awake old childish pleasure and play, but that it is enough if it touches the childish nature in general, perhaps even childish pain. Herein we deviate from Bergson, but remain consistent with ourselves, when we connect the comic pleasure not with remembered pleasure but always with a comparison. This is possible, for cases of the first kind comprise in a measure those which are regularly and irresistibly comic. Let us now draw up the scheme of the comic possibilities instanced above. We stated that the comic difference would be found either

(a) through a comparison between the other and one’s self, or (b) through a comparison altogether within the other, or (c) through a comparison altogether within one’s self.

In the first case the other would appear to me as a child, in the second he would put himself on the level of a child, and in the third I would find the child in myself. To the first class belong the comic of movement, of forms, of psychic activity, and of character. The infantile corresponding to it would be the urge for motion and the inferior mental and moral development of the child, so that the fool would perhaps become comical to me by reminding me of a lazy child, and the bad person by reminding me of a naughty child. The only time one might speak of a childish pleas-
ure lost to grown-ups would be where the child's own motion pleasure came into consideration.

The second case, in which the comic altogether depends on empathy, comprises numerous possibilities such as the comic situation, exaggeration (caricature), imitation, degradation, and unmasking. It is under this head that the presentation of infantile viewpoints mostly takes place. For the comic situation is largely based on embarrassment, in which we feel again the helplessness of the child. The worst of these embarrassments, the disturbance of other activities through the imperative demands of natural wants, corresponds to the child's lack of control of the physical functions. Where the comic situation acts through repetitions it is based on the pleasure of constant repetition peculiar to the child (asking questions, telling stories), through which it makes itself a nuisance to grown-ups. Exaggeration, which also affords pleasure even to the grown-up in so far as it is justified by his reason, corresponds to the characteristic want of moderation in the child, and its ignorance of all quantitative relations which it later really learns to know as qualitative. To keep within bounds, to practice moderation even in permissible feelings is a late fruit of education, and is gained through opposing inhibitions of the psychic activity acquired in the same association. Wherever this association is weakened, as in the unconscious of dreams and in the mono-ideation of the psychoneuroses, the want of moderation of the child again makes its appearance.

The understanding of comic imitation has caused us many difficulties so long as we left out of consideration the infantile factor. But imitation is the child's best art and is the impelling motive of most of its playing. The child's ambition is not so much to distinguish himself among his equals as to imitate the big fellows. The relation of the child to the grown-up determines also the comic of degradation, which corresponds to the lowering of the grown-up in the life of the child. Few things can afford the child greater pleasure than when the grown-up lowers himself to his level, disregards his superiority, and plays with the child as its equal. The alleviation which furnishes the child pure pleasure is a debasement used by the adult as a means of making things comic and as a source of comic pleasure. As for unmasking, we know that it is based on degradation.

The infantile determination of the third case, the comic of expectation, presents most of the difficulties; this really explains why those authors who put this case to the foreground in their conception of the comic, found no occasion to consider the infantile factor in their studies of the comic. The comic of expectation is farthest from the child's thoughts, the ability to understand this is the latest quality to appear in him. Most of those cases which produce a comic effect in the grown-up are probably felt by
the child as a disappointment. One can refer, however, to the blissful expectation and gullibility of the child, in order to understand why one considers himself as comical "as a child," when he succumbs to comic disappointment.

If the preceding remarks produce a certain probability that the comic feeling may be translated into the thought that everything is comic which does not fit the grown-up, I still do not feel bold enough—in view of my whole position to the problem of the comic—to defend this last proposition with the same earnestness as those that I formulated before. I am unable to decide whether the lowering to the level of the child is only a special case of comic degradation, or whether everything comical fundamentally depends on the degradation to the level of the child.¹

HUMOR

An examination of the comic, however superficial it may be, would be most incomplete if it did not devote at least a few remarks to the consideration of humor. There is so little doubt as to the essential relationship between the two that a tentative explanation of the comic must furnish at least one component for the understanding of humor. It does not matter how much appropriate and important material was presented as an appreciation of humor, which, as one of the highest psychic functions, enjoys the special favor of thinkers, we still cannot elude the temptation to express its essence through an approach to the formulae given for wit and the comic.

We have heard that the release of painful emotions is the strongest hindrance to the comic effect. Just as aimless motion causes harm, stupidity mischief, and disappointment pain;—the possibility of a comic effect ends, at least for him who cannot defend himself against such pain, who is himself affected by it or must participate in it, whereas he who is unconcerned shows by his behavior that the situation of the case in question contains everything necessary to produce a comic effect. Humor is thus a means to gain pleasure despite the painful affects which disturb it; it acts as a substitute for this affective development, and takes its place. If we are in a situation which tempts us to liberate painful affects according to our habits, and motives then urge us to suppress these affects in statu nascendi, we have the conditions for humor. In the cases just cited the person affected by misfortune, pain, etc., could obtain humoristic pleasure while the disinterested party laughs over the comic pleasure. We can only say that the pleasure of humor results at the cost

¹ That comic pleasure has its source in the "quantitative contrast," in the comparison of big and small, which ultimately also expresses the essential relation of the child to the grown-up, would indeed be a peculiar coincidence if the comic had nothing else to do with the infantile.
of this discontinued liberation of affect; it originates through the economized expenditure of affect.\(^1\)

**THE ECONOMY IN EXPENDITURE OF AFFECT**

Humor is the most self-sufficient of the comic forms; its process consummates itself in one single person and the participation of another adds nothing new to it. I can enjoy the pleasure of humor originating in myself without feeling the necessity of imparting it to another. It is not easy to tell what happens during the production of humoristic pleasure in a person; but one gains a certain insight by investigating these cases of humor which have emanated from persons with whom we have entered into a sympathetic understanding. By sympathetically understanding the humoristic person in these cases one gets the same pleasure. The coarsest form of humor, the so-called humor of the gallows or grim-humor (*Gelgenhumor*), may enlighten us in this regard. The rogue, on being led to execution on Monday, remarked: "Yes, this week is beginning well." This is really a witticism, as the remark is quite appropriate in itself, on the other hand it is displaced in the most nonsensical fashion, as there can be no further happening for him this week. But it required humor to make such wit, that is, to overlook what distinguished the beginning of this week from other weeks, and to deny the difference which could give rise to motives for very particular emotional feelings. The case is the same when on the way to the gallows he requests a neckerchief for his bare neck, in order to guard against taking cold, a precaution which would be quite praiseworthy under different circumstances, but becomes exceedingly superfluous and indifferent in view of the impending fate of this same neck. We must say that there is something like greatness of soul in this blague, in this clinging to his usual nature and in deviating from that which would overthrow and drive this nature into despair. This form of grandeur of humor thus appears unmistakably in cases in which our admiration is not inhibited by the circumstances of the humoristic person.

In Victor Hugo's *Ernani* the bandit who entered into a conspiracy against his king, Charles I, of Spain (Charles V, as the German Emperor), falls into the hands of his most powerful enemy; he foresees his fate; as one convicted of high treason his head will fall. But this prospect does not deter him from introducing himself as a hereditary Grandee of Spain and from declaring that he has no intention of waiving any prerogative belonging to such personage. A Grandee of Spain could appear before his royal master with his head covered. Well:

"Nos têtes ont le droit
De tomber couvertes devant de toi." \(^2\)

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2 "Our heads have the right to fall covered before thee."
This is excellent humor and if we do not laugh on hearing it, it is because our admiration covers the humoristic pleasure. In the case of the rogue who did not wish to take cold on the way to the gallows we roar with laughter. The situation which should have driven this criminal to despair might have evoked in us intense pity, but this pity is inhibited because we understand that he who is most concerned is quite indifferent to the situation. As a result of this understanding, the expenditure for pity, which was already prepared in us, became inapplicable and we laughed it off. The indifference of the rogue, which we notice has cost him a great expenditure of psychic labor, infects us, as it were.

Economy of sympathy is one of the most frequent sources of humoristic pleasure. Mark Twain’s humor usually follows this mechanism. When he tells us about the life of his brother, how, as an employee in a large road-building enterprise, he was hurled into the air through a premature explosion of a blast, to come to earth again far from the place where he was working, feelings of sympathy for this unfortunate are invariably aroused in us. We should like to inquire whether he sustained no injury in this accident; but the continuation of the story that the brother lost a half-day’s pay for being away from the place where he worked diverts us entirely from sympathy and makes us almost as hard-hearted as that employer, and just as indifferent to the possible injury to the victim’s health. Another time Mark Twain presents us his pedigree, which he traces back almost as far as one of the companions of Columbus. But after describing the character of this ancestor, whose entire possessions consisted of several pieces of linen each bearing a different mark, we cannot help laughing at the expense of the stored-up piety, a piety which characterized our frame of mind at the beginning of this family history. The mechanism of humoristic pleasure is not disturbed by our knowing that this family history is a fictitious one, and that this fiction serves a satirical tendency to expose the embellishments which result in imparting such pedigrees to others; it is just as independent of the conditions of reality as the manufactured comic. Another of Mark Twain’s stories relates how his brother constructed for himself subterranean quarters into which he brought a bed, a table, and a lamp, and that as a roof he used a large piece of sailcloth with a hole through the centre; how during the night after the room was completed, a cow being driven home, fell through the opening in the ceiling on to the table and extinguished the lamp; how his brother helped patiently to hoist the animal out and to rearrange everything; how he did the same thing when the same disturbance was repeated the following night; and then every succeeding night; such a story becomes comical through repetition. But Mark Twain closes with the information that on the forty-sixth night when the cow again fell through, his brother finally remarked that the thing was beginning to grow monotonous; and here we
WIT AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

can no longer restrain our humoristic pleasure for we had long expected to hear how the brother would express his anger over this chronic malheur. The slight humor which we draw from our own life we usually produce at the expense of anger instead of irritating ourselves.

The excellent humoristic effect of a character like that of the fat knight, Sir John Falstaff, is based on economized contempt and indignation. To be sure, we recognize in him the unworthy glutton and fashionably dressed swindler, but our condemnation is disarmed through a whole series of factors. We understand that he knows himself to be just as we estimate him; he impresses us through his wit; and besides that, his physical deformity produces a contact-effect in favor of a comic conception of his personality instead of a serious one; as if our demands for morality and honor must recoil from such a big stomach. His activities are altogether harmless and are almost excused by the comic lowness of those he deceives. We admit that the poor devil has a right to live and enjoy himself like anyone else, and we almost pity him because in the principal situation we find him a puppet in the hands of one much his superior. It is for this reason that we cannot bear him any grudge and turn all we economize in him in indignation into comic pleasure, which he otherwise provides. Sir John’s own humor really emanates from the superiority of an ego which neither his physical nor his moral defects can rob of its joviality and security.

On the other hand, the courageous knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha, is a figure who possesses no humor, and in his seriousness furnishes us a pleasure which can be called humoristic, although its mechanism shows a decided deviation from that of humor. Originally Don Quixote is a purely comic figure, a big child whose fancies from his books on knighthood have gone to his head. It is known that at first the poet wanted to show only that phase of his character, and that the creation gradually outgrew the author’s original intentions. But after the poet endowed this ludicrous person with the profoundest wisdom and noblest aims and made him the symbolic representation of an idealism, a man who believed in the realization of his aims, who took duties seriously and promised literally, he ceased to be a comic personality. Like humoristic pleasure, which results from a prevention of emotional feelings, it originates here through the disturbance of comic pleasure. However, in these examples we already depart perceptibly from the simple cases of humor.

FORMS OF HUMOR

The forms of humor are extraordinarily varied according to the nature of the emotional feeling which is economized in favor of humor, as sympathy, anger, pain, compassion, etc. This series seems incomplete because the sphere of humor undergoes a constant enlargement, as often as an art-
ist or writer succeeds in mastering humoristically the, as yet, unconquered emotional feelings and in making them, through artifices similar to those in the above example, a source of humoristic pleasure. Thus, some artists have worked wonders in gaining humor at the expense of fear and disgust. The manifestations of humor are above all determined by two peculiarities, which are connected with the conditions of its origin. In the first place, humor may appear fused with wit or any other form of the comic; whereby it has for its task the removal of a possible emotional development which would form a hindrance to the pleasurable effect. Secondly, it can entirely or only partially abolish this emotional development, which is really more frequently the case, because the simpler function and the different forms of "broken" humor, results in that humor which smiles under its tears. It withdraws from the affect a part of its energy and gives it instead the additional humoristic ring.

As was noticed from former examples, the humoristic pleasure gained through subsequent sympathy results from a special technique resembling displacement, through which the liberation of affect held ready is checked and the cathexis is deflected to other, and not often, to matters of secondary importance. This does not help us, however, to understand the process by which the displacement from the development of affect proceeds in the humoristic person himself. We see that the recipient imitates the producer of the humor in his psychic processes, but we discover nothing thereby concerning the forces which make this process possible in the latter.

When, for example, somebody succeeds in disregarding a painful affect because he holds before himself the greatness of the world's interest as a contrast to his own smallness, we can only say that we see in this no function of humor, but one of philosophic thinking, and we gain no pleasure even if we put ourselves into his train of thought. The humoristic displacement is, therefore, just as impossible in the light of conscious attention as in the comic comparison; like the latter it is connected with the condition to remain in the foreconscious—that is to say, to remain automatic.

One reaches some solution of humoristic displacement if one considers it in the light of a defense process. The defense processes are the psychic correlates of the flight reflex and follow the task of guarding against the origin of pain from inner sources. In fulfilling this task they serve the psychic occurrence as an automatic adjustment, which, to be sure, finally proves harmful and, therefore, must be subjected to the control of the conscious thinking. A definite form of this defense, the failure of repression, I have demonstrated as the effective mechanism in the origin of the psychoneuroses. Humor can now be conceived as the loftiest of these de-

1 A term which is used in quite a different sense in the Aesthetik of Theo. Vischer.
fense functions. It disdains to withdraw from conscious attention the ideas which are connected with the painful affect, as repression does, and it, thus, overcomes the defense automatism. It brings this about by finding the means to withdraw the energy from the ready held pain release, and through discharge changes the same into pleasure. It is even credible that it is again the connection with the infantile that puts at humor’s disposal the means for this function. Only in childhood did we experience intensively painful affects over which today as grown-ups we would laugh, just as a humorist laughs over his present painful affects. The elevation of his ego, which is evidenced by the humoristic displacement—the translation of which would nevertheless read: I am too big to have these causes affect me painfully—he could find in the comparison of his present ego with his infantile ego. This conception is to some extent confirmed by the rôle which falls to the infantile in the neurotic processes of repression.

THE RELATION OF HUMOR TO WIT AND COMIC

On the whole, humor is closer to the comic than wit. Like the former its psychic localization is in the foreconscious, whereas wit, as we had to assume, is formed as a compromise between the unconscious and the foreconscious. On the other hand, humor has no share in the peculiar nature in which wit and the comic meet, a peculiarity which perhaps we have not hitherto emphasized strongly enough. It is a condition for the origin of the comic that we be induced to apply—either simultaneously or in rapid succession—to the same thought function two different modes of ideas, between which the “comparison” then takes place and the comic difference results. Such differences originate between the expenditure of the stranger and one’s own, between the usual expenditure and the emergency expenditure, between an anticipated expenditure and one which has already occurred.¹

The difference between two forms of conception resulting simultaneously, which work with different expenditures, comes into consideration in wit, in respect to the hearer. The one of these two conceptions, by taking the hints contained in wit, follows the train of thought through the unconscious, while the other conception remains on the surface and presents the witticism like any wording from the foreconscious which has become conscious. Perhaps it would not be considered an unjustified statement if we should refer the pleasure of the witticism heard to the difference between these two forms of presentation.

Concerning wit, we here repeat our former statement concerning its

¹ If one does not hesitate to do some violence to the conception of expectation, one may ascribe—according to the process of Lipps—a very large sphere of the comic to the comic of expectation; but probably the most original cases of the comic which result through a comparison of a strange expenditure with one’s own, will fit least into this conception.
Janus-like double-facedness, a simile we used when the relation between wit and the comic still appeared to us unsettled.  

The character thus put into the foreground becomes indistinct when we deal with humor. To be sure, we feel the humoristic pleasure where an emotional feeling is evaded, which we might have expected as a pleasure usually belonging to the situation; and in so far humor really falls under the broadened conception of the comic of expectation. But in humor it is no longer a question of two different kinds of ideas having the same content. The fact that the situation comes under the domination of a painful emotional feeling which should have been avoided, puts an end to possible comparison with the nature of the comic and of wit. The humoristic displacement is really a case of that different kind of utilization of a freed expenditure, which proved to be so dangerous for the comic effect.

FORMULÆ FOR WIT, COMIC AND HUMOR

Now, that we have reduced the mechanism of humoristic pleasure to a formula analogous to the formula of comic pleasure and of wit, we are at the end of our task. It has seemed to us that the pleasure of wit originates from an economy of expenditure in inhibition, of the comic from an economy of expenditure in thought, and of humor from an economy of expenditure in feeling. All three modes of activity of our psychic apparatus derive pleasure from economy. All three present methods strive to bring back from the psychic activity a pleasure which has really been lost in the development of this activity. For the euphoria which we are thus striving to obtain is nothing but the state of a bygone time, in which we were wont to defray our psychic work with slight expenditure. It is the state of our childhood in which we did not know the comic, were incapable of wit, and did not need humor to make us happy.

1 The characteristic of the “double face” naturally did not escape the authors. Mélinaud, from whom I borrowed the above expression, conceives the condition for laughing in the following formula: “Ce qui fait rire, c’est qui est à la fois, d’un côté, absurde et de l’autre, familier” (“Pourquoi rit-on?” Revue de deux mondes, February, 1895). This formula fits in better with wit than with the comic, but it really does not altogether cover the former. Bergson (l. c., p. 96) defines the comic situation by the “reciprocal interference of series,” and states: “A situation is invariably comic when it belongs simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time.” According to Lipps the comic is “the greatness and smallness of the same.”
FIVE

TOTEM AND TABOO
I

THE SAVAGE’S DREAD OF INCEST

Primitive man is known to us by the stages of development through which he has passed: that is, through the inanimate monuments and implements which he has left behind for us, through our knowledge of his art, his religion and his attitude towards life, which we have received either directly or through the medium of legends, myths and fairy tales; and through the remnants of his ways of thinking that survive in our own manners and customs. Moreover, in a certain sense he is still our contemporary: there are people whom we still consider more closely related to primitive man than to ourselves, in whom we therefore recognize the direct descendants and representatives of earlier man. We can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well-preserved, early stage of our own development.

If this assumption is correct, a comparison of the psychology of primitive races as taught by folklore, with the psychology of the neurotic as it has become known through psychoanalysis, will reveal numerous points of correspondence and throw new light on subjects that are more or less familiar to us.

For outer as well as for inner reasons, I am choosing for this comparison those tribes which have been described by ethnographers as being most backward and wretched: the aborigines of the youngest continent, namely Australia, whose fauna has also preserved for us so much that is archaic and no longer to be found elsewhere.

The aborigines of Australia are looked upon as a peculiar race which shows neither physical nor linguistic relationship with its nearest neighbours, the Melanesian, Polynesian and Malayan races. They do not build houses or permanent huts; they do not cultivate the soil or keep any domestic animals except dogs; and they do not even know the art of pottery. They live exclusively on the flesh of all sorts of animals which they kill in the chase, and on the roots which they dig. Kings or chieftains are unknown among them, and all communal affairs are decided by the elders.
in assembly. It is quite doubtful whether they evince any traces of religion in the form of worship of higher beings. The tribes living in the interior who have to contend with the greatest vicissitudes of life owing to a scarcity of water, seem in every way more primitive than those who live near the coast.

We surely would not expect that these poor naked cannibals should be moral in their sex life according to our ideas, or that they should have imposed a high degree of restriction upon their sexual impulses. And yet we learn that they have considered it their duty to exercise the most searching care and the most painful rigour in guarding against incestuous sexual relations. In fact their whole social organization seems to serve this object or to have been brought into relation with its attainment.

Among the Australians the system of Totemism takes the place of all religious and social institutions. Australian tribes are divided into smaller septs or clans, each taking the name of its totem. Now what is a totem? As a rule it is an animal, either edible or harmless, or dangerous and feared; more rarely the totem is a plant or a force of nature (rain, water), which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan. The totem is first of all the tribal ancestor of the clan, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector; it sends oracles and, though otherwise dangerous, the totem knows and spares its children. The members of a totem are therefore under a sacred obligation not to kill (destroy) their totem, to abstain from eating its meat or from any other enjoyment of it. Any violation of these prohibitions is automatically punished. The character of a totem is inherent not only in a single animal or a single being but in all the members of the species. From time to time festivals are held at which the members of a totem represent or imitate, in ceremonial dances, the movements and characteristics of their totems.

The totem is hereditary either through the maternal or the paternal line (maternal transmission probably always preceded and was only later supplanted by the paternal). The attachment to a totem is the foundation of all the social obligations of an Australian: it extends on the one hand beyond the tribal relationship, and on the other hand it supersedes consanguineous relationship.¹

The totem is not limited to district or to locality; the members of a totem may live separated from one another and on friendly terms with adherents of other totems.²

¹ Frazer, Totemism and Exogamy, Vol. I, p. 53. "The totem bond is stronger than the bond of blood or family in the modern sense."
² This very brief extract of the totemic system cannot be left without some elucidation and without discussing its limitations. The name Totem or Totam was first learned from the North American Indians by the Englishman, J. Long, in 1791. The subject has gradually acquired great scientific interest and has called forth a copious literature. I refer especially to Totemism and Exogamy by J. G. Frazer, 4 vols., 1910, and the books and articles of Andrew Lang (The Secret of Totem, 1905). The credit