The Oedipus complex has been understood as a series of conflicts between feelings of love and hate (sexuality and aggression) in the relationship between the child and his/her parents. This article presents a different view, defining oedipal struggles as conflicts between love and care, sexual desires and self- and object-preservative needs. The crucial conflict the child has to deal with is: to love the one and nevertheless to preserve the other (the rival). Further, the author distinguishes between monolithic conflicts, which are conflicts between different objects of one drive's strivings, and binary conflicts, which involve the objects of both basic drives. In three illustrative examples, she shows that monolithic conflicts can indicate a regressive movement, while binary conflicts tend to foster a progression in the analytic work.

The royal conflict in psychoanalysis is the Oedipus conflict. Discovered during his self-analysis in 1897 and formulated in his Interpretation of Dreams in 1900, this jewel of Freud's psychic archeology was cherished by him throughout his life, and he did not hesitate to make its recognition “the shibboleth that distinguishes the adherents of psycho-analysis from its opponents” (1905, p. 226n). In fact, Oedipus Rex became the most famous amongst Freud's ancient
heroes, and—as frequently portrayed in all sorts of cartoons—Oedipus even advanced in public culture to some sort of representative of psychoanalysis itself. Thus, everybody knows about Oedipus—the man who killed his father and had sex with his mother.

However, this version of oedipal conflict presented only a rough general scheme. In further exploring this important period in human development, Freud eventually realized that the oedipal situation is actually a configuration made up of several conflicts—a fact that he acknowledged in 1910 in introducing the more comprehensive notion of the oedipal complex. This complex of conflicts was not just about love and hate or sexual fantasies and rivalry; it included the narcissistic injuries of gender and generational differences, castration anxieties and penis envy, the many versions and failures of infantile sexual theories (compromise formations between the eagerness and anxieties to know), and it was complicated by constitutional bisexuality, expressed in the positive and negative Oedipus.

Few concepts have been so extensively elaborated in innumerable papers and books, both in support and in negation of Freud's conception, as has the Oedipus complex. Yet I contend that there is more to it—a whole other side of Oedipus that plays a silent though crucial role in the many conflicts that haunt our patients throughout their lives.

As analysts, we struggle with conscious and preconscious derivatives of emergent neurotic conflicts, while trying to analyze how the dynamic unconscious is involved in them, because

… the pathogenic conflict in neurotics is not to be confused with a normal struggle between mental impulses, both of which are on the same psychological footing. In the former case the dissension is between two powers, one of which has made its way to the stage of what is preconscious or conscious, while the other has been held back at the stage of the unconscious. For that reason the conflict cannot be brought to an issue; the disputants can no more come to grips than, in the familiar simile, a polar bear and a whale. A true decision can only be reached
when they both meet on the same ground. To make this possible is, I think, the sole task of our therapy. [Freud 1916-1917, p. 433]

What a subtle warning to the clinician: You might lumber with your patient like the polar bear that sometimes catches a fish while the major part of the conflict keeps on moving, like an archaic, mysterious sea-mammal, a whale, in the depths of the unconscious—it takes a while before it shows up for a moment, then disappears again and leaves us back on the ice floe.

Smith (2003), emphasizing the central role of conflict in psychoanalysis, has recently highlighted the essential positions of Freud, as well as those of some prominent American theorists (Brenner, Boesky, Gray, Kris, Bromberg, and Pizer), concluding that conflict is ubiquitous, and can be observed, analyzed, and described with different methods and on different levels of abstraction. The two levels of abstraction on which I choose to explore the basic tenets of the Oedipus conflict are the theoretical and the clinical perspectives of drive theory. I contend that if we resist the trend to marginalize the past (Smith 2001) and to limit ourselves to an “archaic view of drive theory” (Smith 2003, p. 89), we can think in new ways about this most archaic side within ourselves, as it is conceptualized in drive theory, and learn something new about the many conflicts of the Oedipus complex.

Thus, I will not address here either modern developmental theories or infant research. Instead, I will stay with the basic psychoanalytic scheme of the Oedipus complex as presented by Freud and by Klein—because these views still provide our basic, background understanding—and I will add to these perspectives another view, based on the concept of the preservative drive.

**The Preservative Drive: A Metapsychological Sketch**

It is my understanding (Schmidt-Hellerau 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, in press) that an important shift in Freud's theoretical thinking
with far-reaching consequences, equal to those of the move from the
topographic to the structural model, occurred in 1920, when Freud
reorganized his drive theory. Up to that year, he had conceptualized the
dynamics of mental life on the basis of two primal drives, the sexual and the
self-preservation drives. This idea, borrowed from Darwin, formed part of
Freud's lifelong interest in evolutionary biology, and it made sense:
preservation and procreation seemed to be the two success categories in the
evolution of each species. Of course, Freud focused his research nearly
completely on the sexual drive, leaving the self-preservation or ego drives (as
he called them from 1910 on) much on the sidelines. However, he never
abandoned the concept of a self-preservation drive, not even in the midst of
his struggles with the introduction of narcissism (1914). Yet in his famous
essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920), he fundamentally rearranged
the definition and division of his drives—which had a tremendous impact on
the further development of psychoanalysis.

It was not so much the new notion of his pair of primal drives, the life
drive and death drive; rather, it was their conceptualization, and the transition
from the first to the second drive theory, that changed things dramatically. In
this 1920 turn, the original antagonism of self-preservation and sexuality was
jointly subsumed under the umbrella of a life drive (Eros)—while the new
dead drive was understood as an aggressive drive. Thus, sexuality and
aggression emerged and prevailed as the two basic motivating factors in
mental life.

It goes without saying that aggression is an important phenomenon in
human behavior and mental life. However, as I have expressed elsewhere
(Schmidt-Hellerau 2001, 2002), I doubt that it is wise to conceptualize
aggression as a primal drive, or that it is in itself a motivating factor. Yet
more important here is that, in consequence of Freud's 1920 shift, the concept
of a self-preservation drive got lost. Even though sexuality and self-
preservation can easily be thought of as contributing to life—at least
according to a phenomenological plan fitting the term life drive—it seems to
me a crucial factor that we are able to distinguish in the material of our
patients between what is sexual and what is preservative, or between what is love and what is care. And without the concept of a preservative drive, we have a much harder time being aware of these differences and recognizing their specific strivings—if indeed we pay attention to them at all.

It is quite an amazing fact that such a basic and primal need as self-preservation could become marginalized in our thinking, or even excluded from psychoanalysis, as Laplanche (1997, p. 153) suggested. Thus, it has strangely escaped our theoretical and clinical perception that the struggle to survive, in its many derivative and often subtle expressions, is something man is constantly and powerfully driven toward—something that actually involves and stirs up a considerable amount of our daily mental activity (we cannot help it). Following is a rough outline of what self-preservation, understood as a comprehensive drive activity, might be about.

On a physical level, self-preservation concerns our general bodily well-being. This includes, e.g., eating, drinking, digesting, defecating, breathing, resting, sleeping, being warm and clean, and immunologically well defended. Psychologically, anxieties and neurotic, perverse, or pathological derailments around these issues include fantasies of engulfing, stuffing, starving, suffocating, and dying while sleeping, to name a few examples. Further, the different versions of rescue fantasies (both passive and active) revolve around survival; greed and stinginess stem from the wish for it; anxieties of becoming infected or poisoned, obsessions with washing oneself and cleaning things are also based in it; and eating disorders, hypochondria, and psychosomatic diseases seem to be parts of this same family. There is no doubt that all these fantasies, anxieties, and pathological formations are complex configurations that need to be analyzed in detail. At the same time, however, I propose that they can be advantageously understood as mainly driven by self-preservation and survival needs.

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1 In a few exceptions, the notion of a self-preservative drive has been considered (Loewenstein 1940; Modell 1985; Plaut 1984; Simmel 1924, 1933, 1944; Young-Bruehl and Bethelard 1999).
Further, I suggest that we are driven not only to preserve ourselves; we are equally driven to preserve those we care about. Most prominently, we experience the driven nature of these preservative strivings as mothers with babies or parents to our children. To nurture, preserve, and protect one's children is such a powerful drive that we are not surprised to hear of parents' risking or giving their own lives in order to preserve those of their children. Thus, since the object is “what is most variable about a drive and is not originally connected with it” (Freud 1915, p. 122), the notion of a self-preservation drive was misleading. We are better off calling it a preservative drive, implying that it is viewed as directed toward oneself as well as toward another object; its strivings are thus self-preservative or object preservative.

We are accustomed to talking about what we conceptualize as sexual drive activities, making use of the energy term libido in speaking simply of libidinal objects, libidinal strivings, or libidinal investments. Freud never came to terms with an energy notion for the self-preservation drive (although he briefly tried using the word interest). For reasons elaborated elsewhere (Schmidt-Hellerau 1997, 2001), I have suggested the term lethe as an energy term for the preservative drive. Having this notion enables us to talk about a lethic object (which can be both an object to nurture, as is the baby, and a nurturing object, as is the parent), or lethic strivings (as in wanting to be taken care of, as well as wanting to take care of someone else), or lethic activities (e.g., eating, cooking, cleaning, and so on, as mentioned above).2

On the affective-behavioral side, there is a range of healthy to pathological expressions that I attribute to lethic strivings. These include a tendency toward carefulness, introversion, quietude, and silence—on up to mutism—all processes of mental digestion. These represent healthy caution and hesitation, but also rigidity and immobility; the capacity to be alone, but also withdrawal; and, finally,

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2 Lethe is a term taken from Greek mythology, meaning forgetting. It therefore captures the quieter tendencies of the preservative drive—including resting, sleeping, and perhaps healthy forgetting (its repressive function).
they include hopelessness, coldness, darkness, heaviness, sadness, passivity, absence, falling asleep, depression, lethargy, and suicidal thoughts.

In contrast, we might assume a dominance of libidinal strivings when we work with a patient who loves, fights, and talks, but is also chatty or even logomaniac, moves yet also rushes to conclusions. Such a patient may be quick, funny, clear, active, creative, spirited, alert, flexible, cheerful, happy, social, and may show initiative—but is also restless, hyperactive, manic, and so on, just to mention some strong libidinal opposites to the former lethic ones. This indicates a major shift: Freud based his drive antagonism of sexuality and aggression on feelings of love and hate. I suggest affective opposites for the antagonism of the sexual and preservative drives, such as lively and deadened, happy and sad—or, as Freud (1930) put it, noisy and silent (p. 119), or, in Damasio's (2003) terms, joy and sorrow.

**Binary and Monolithic Conflicts**

Amongst the different ways of thinking about conflict, I want to show how drive theory can illuminate our understanding of psychic conflict. In 1910, Freud stated:

> Our attention has been drawn to the importance of the drives in ideational life. We have discovered that every drive tries to make itself effective by activating ideas that are in keeping with its aims. These drives are not always compatible with one another; their interests often come into conflict. Opposition between ideas is only an expression of struggles between the various drives. From the point of view of our attempted explanation, a quite specially important part is played by the undeniable opposition between the drives which subserve sexuality, the attainment of sexual pleasure, and those other drives, which have as their aim the self-preservation of the individual—the ego-drives. As the poet has said, all the organic drives that operate in our mind may be classified as “hunger” or “love.” [pp. 213-214]
Here as well as on many other occasions, Freud not only links ideas directly with drives—thus, whatever comes to mind can be viewed as representative of an ongoing drive activity—but he also conceptualizes conflict as a struggle between the two basic drives, namely, sexual and self-preservation. Whichever drive is stronger (i.e., supplies more energy) will prevail and suppress the other and its related ideas. It follows that in this conception, the energetic side of repression (the force required to suppress any drive activity) is provided by the opposite of each of the two drives (Schmidt-Hellerau 1997, 2001).

Conflicts that involve both basic antagonistic drives can be called binary conflicts. According to Freud's statement, they would manifest in a struggle or shift of the guiding ideas, which include the aimed-for objects and/or the kind of satisfaction. For example, thoughts about the libidinal object might be repressed and become permanently replaced by an increase in self-preservation thinking (such as obsession about nutrition or other concerns with health issues); or, if self-preservation needs seem unacceptable (shameful), they can be defended against by a surge in a promiscuous sex life.

In these examples, both drives involve different objects—the libidinal (love) or the lethic (care) object—with the repressed one fading out of sight or being replaced by the self as an object of this very drive activity. In a mature version of binary conflict, both drive objects stay cathected, e.g., “Shall I clean my apartment, or shall I go for a weekend trip with my lover?”—and the answer would be: first the one, and then the other (whichever comes first). Yet both drives can also aim for the same object and cause conflicts expressed by the question of, e.g., “Do I want to have sex with my partner, or do I want to take care of him/her?” While a healthy decision might momentarily opt for the one or the other, a rigid either-or choice indicates a neurotic defense.

In his two “Contributions to the Psychology of Love” (1910, 1912), Freud talks about people who fail to resolve these kinds of conflicts: “Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love. They seek objects which they do not need to love, in order to keep their sensuality away from the objects...
they love” (Freud 1912, p. 183). Freud describes patients who suffer from total or psychical impotence or frigidity, or who show passion only for unavailable partners or for prostitutes. The interesting point here is Freud's explanation based on the strivings or currents of his two basic drives:

Two currents whose union is necessary to ensure a completely normal attitude in love have, in the cases we are considering, failed to combine. These two may be distinguished as the affectionate and the sensual current.

The affectionate current is the older of the two. It springs from the earliest years of childhood; it is formed on the basis of the interests of the self-preservative drive and is directed to the members of the family and those who look after the child…. It corresponds to the child's primary object-choice. [1912, p. 180, italics in original]

It is worthwhile to note that in these failed love relations, Freud sees the conflict as not between love and hate (sexuality and aggression), but between love and care, the sensual (sexual/libidinal) and the affectionate (preservative/lethic) currents. In his understanding, mature love necessitates the union of both drives' currents. To put it differently, mature love requires a structural integration of the love and the care object, a convergence of both drives onto one object. Love relations fail when the self-preservative drive's affectionate strivings for the primary object remain divided from the sexual drive's sensual strivings. Thus, we must not mistake the affectionate for the libidinal. The distinction might become more apparent if we stay with the above wording and differentiate between the caring current of the preservative drive and the sensual strivings of the sexual drive. If there is a split of objects between the sexual and preservative drives, the sexual object cannot be preserved in a maturing relationship (i.e., the lover does not care for the love object), leading either to promiscuity, or—as we will see later in this paper in the example of Eveline—to a caretaker without a love life.

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3 Strachey translated Freud's Trieb with the word instinct.
All the examples above involve the activity of both drives, and thus they are binary conflicts. However, other conflicts may also play out between different objects without involving both drives, but instead only one of them —and I call these monolithic conflicts. Monolithic conflicts struggle with the choice of the aimed-for objects. In a developmentally early state, we might find on the side of the preservative drive an expression such as, for example, “Shall I eat all the cookies or give some to my sister?” Later in life, this same conflict may read: “Shall I take advantage of my insider knowledge and sell my stocks, or shall I care for all the other stockholders and notify the authorities of the state of accounts?” The failure of a mature resolution of this conflict—correctly called a greed crime—might indicate an unconscious exaggeration or perversion of self-preservative needs, and even more so when there is no awareness of any wrongdoing. An example of monolithic conflict on the side of the sexual drive is the unconscious struggle in narcissistic states of: “Shall I love myself or shall I love (give some of my love to) the object?” Or, in the oedipal phase, a monolithic conflict may be expressed in the choice of parental objects: “Do I love mother or do I love father?” Or later: “Do I love mother/my analyst or do I love my spouse?”

In wondering “what is a conflict about?,” I suggest a basically simple answer: Conflicts are about drives and their objects. Binary conflicts play out between the preservative and the sexual drives (both of which might aim for different as well as the same objects). Since each of these drives involves its own cathexis of object representations, binary conflicts are more complexly structured, thus indicating a progressive line of psychic processes. By contrast, monolithic conflicts involve just one of the two primal drives and the struggle between its different objects—with the self's usually being one of them. I suggest that monolithic conflicts presuppose a powerful repression of the opposite drive's strivings, and/or a deep split between the two drives' objects, followed by a regressive state or movement. All fantasies, objects, or actions are then either sexualized or relate to being taken care of. When this is the case, we have to first deal with this division or split in order to equally
balance the spheres where the whale and the polar bear move—that is, to help the whale surface again.4

A Case in Point: Eveline

In order to illustrate lethic drive activities, as well as the above outlined types of conflicts, let us look at “Eveline,” one of James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). (In the section below, the original text is printed in italics.)

Eveline is nineteen years old, and she is about to leave home in order to marry Frank. On the day of her departure, she sits at the window, *the evening invades* her thoughts and she is *tired*. She looks around at her home, *all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for many years*. She thinks *she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided*. She wonders, *was that wise?* ... *In her home anyway she has shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her*. As she promised her mother when she died, Eveline has always worked *hard ... to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly*. Her father is hard on her—he is stingy, and Eveline *sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. ... he had begun to threaten her. ... she had nobody to protect her*. This has been Eveline's life, a mostly lethic life: the hard work of cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings, thus replacing the dead mother. This heightened demand and promise to be object preservative toward the family seem to have recently come into a (monolithic) conflict with Eveline's basic needs for self-preservation: she is *threatened* by the *violence* of her father and *has nobody to protect her*. Yet now she is about to embark on a new life.

4 My suggestions resonate with Kris's (1985) notion of *divergent* and *convergent conflict*—except that here, convergence and divergence are specified as applying to the drives and/or their objects. Thus, monolithic conflicts are always divergent, while binary conflicts may be divergent or convergent.
She was about to run away with a fellow, she would be married.... People would treat her with respect.... She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres.... He took her to the theater, and she felt elated.... He was awfully fond of music and sang. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused.... First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. When her father found out that she was having an affair, he demanded that it stop, and she had to meet her lover secretly.... She felt she had a right to happiness.

Here comes the love object, arousing pleasantly confusing feelings in Eveline when he sings of love and takes her to the theater and has fun with her. It seems as if sexual wishes have been stirred up, and Frank has become a libidinally cathected object: this fellow, this kind, manly, open-hearted sailor. Yet the invading evening has already cast a dark shadow on her mind:

Eveline is thinking about her home, her shelter, that her father was becoming old lately.... He would miss her.... She remembers the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room.... The pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being.... She trembled.... Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live.... She was standing with Frank in the station. He held her hand and she knew he was speaking to her.... She felt her cheek pale and cold and out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty.... Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body.... All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. Having let go of him, she gripped with both hands at the iron railing. He called her again: "Come!" But No! No! No! It was impossible.... Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish! He, already on the boat, called her to follow because the barrier was closing. "Eveline, Evvy!".... She set her white face to him,
passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

This is the end of the story. How can we understand it psychoanalytically, in terms of Eveline's inner conflict? If we deal with this literary figure as though it portrayed the essentials of human conditions, and if we follow Freud's statement that “every drive tries to make itself effective by activating ideas that are in keeping with its aims” (1910, p. 213), then we can be deliberately simple and say: Eveline's conflict plays out between her preservative and her sexual drives and the objects and ideas/fantasies about them.

For a brief moment, she struggled with a binary conflict between love and care: *She had a right to happiness*—*yet was it wise to go away from food and shelter*? Praying that God would *direct her*, she seemed to give up resolving this conflict between her duties (of caretaking) and her rights (for love). Instead, her preservative strivings prevailed: *she wanted to live*—and yes, to *love*, too, but love took a back seat when she felt she had to rescue herself. Self-preservation (the familiarity of her home) and object preservation (caring for father and siblings) succeeded in completely repressing her sexual longings for the man who wanted to marry her and sing with her. Her *lethic thoughts* started to grow profusely, and the whale of her sexual strivings—having recently shown up and filled her with hope—disappeared again in the ocean of her unconscious.

At this point, we are no longer witnessing a conflict between going with the libidinal object or staying with the lethic objects, a binary conflict between *love* and *care*. Instead, it all turns *lethic*, ending up with simply the wish to be *saved*. At first, Eveline thought *Frank would save her*—but Frank did not carry the same familiar lethic cathexes as did her old objects. Thus, she let go of Frank's hand (and, with it, of his libidinal investment), completely falling prey to an excessive self-preservation panic. Who would rescue this *pale and cold, nauseated and helpless animal* that she then felt herself to be—and her conviction was: *Frank would drown her*. Was it her libidinal self that was drowning with the lost love object? In the vortex of her struggle to survive, Eveline could think only of rescuing
herself by turning back to the poor and dusty, yet familiar, safety of her father's home. Her eyes had lost all signs of love or recognition for her lover.

What was for a little while a binary conflict between the two drives and their objects—love and care—has regressed to a monolithic preservative conflict between different objects: Would Frank take care of Eveline? Or should she take care of her aging father and younger siblings—in order to be taken care of herself by her family, in the end?

But couldn't staying with her violent father also represent a masochistic surrender to an unconsciously loved oedipal object? No doubt, there is masochism present, if only in its moral version. However, if we call Eveline's father an oedipal object, it might still be helpful to scrutinize whether her (a patient's) attachment to him is libidinal at all (tinged with infantile sexual longings), or whether it is predominantly object- and self-preservative (limited to issues of taking care of the object that is supposed to save oneself). This latter notion, at least, is where Eveline ends up in this story: all she can think of is the need to rescue her very survival.

**Klein's Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex**

While for Freud, the Oedipus phase takes place between the ages of about three and five, Klein places the early stages of the Oedipus complex within the first year of life. The difference between the formulation of these two concepts was not rooted in factors related to the sexual drive—of which, as is well known, Freud acknowledged the existence from the time of an individual's birth onward. However, his understanding of structural development made it difficult for him to reconcile his views with Klein's. Freud postulated the mental representation of one object in the oral phase (a "me" who incorporates the mother and everything relevant to the infant's needs), two objects in the anal phase ("me" and "you"—with father and mother and everybody else being "you"), and three objects only in the genital phase, when gender differences start to
divide objects into male and female. Since the mental representation of an object is a crucial determinant of a drive's purposeful strivings, and since triangulation is basic to Freud's Oedipus complex, he called those phases preceding the mental acknowledgment of three different objects preoedipal.

Klein (1928), by contrast, proceeded from different assumptions about (inner) objects and object relations. Since she conceptualized objects as an active part of the infant's mental life from birth on, the existence of phantasies of triangular relationships—and, consequently, of the early stages of the Oedipus complex—were consistent with her thinking. She suggested that, for both sexes, the Oedipus complex usually starts with weaning, and then takes on specific oral- and anal-sadistic features, mostly revolving around the mother's breast and phantasies about the good and bad contents of her body, urine, and feces, mingled with phantasies about the father's penis and the babies. Sadistic expressions of these early phantasies and actions were attributed to a primary aggressive drive that conflicted with the sexual drive. Thus, a failure to resolve early oedipal conflicts would weigh heavily (most often in an inhibitory way) on later sexual life.

I will use one of Klein's famous case examples, that of 10-yearold Richard, as a model to rethink, from my point of view, not the object concepts of Freud and Klein and how they differ, but instead, a different view of the drives activating these early objects or their representations. It is my view that conflict in these early years does not arise between aggression and sexuality, but rather between self-preservation and sexuality.

Klein (1945) portrays Richard as a boy who was “excessively preoccupied with his health and was frequently subject to depressed moods” (p. 340). His “suckling period had been short and unsatisfactory.” His mother was depressive and was “very worried about any illness in Richard, and there was no doubt that her attitude had contributed to his hypochondriacal fears”; she “lavished much care

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5 The Kleinian spelling of the word phantasies, used specifically to refer to unconscious fantasies, is respected in this paper.
on him and in some ways pampered him.” Richard “was over-anxious and over-affectionate towards his mother and clung to her in a persistent and exhausting way” (p. 340). In analysis with Klein, Richard drew a starfish, explaining that it was “a hungry baby which wanted to eat” (p. 342), and then an octopus, representing “his father and his father's genital” and unconsciously a “monster.” He identified himself with a “destroyer” named “Vampire” and had it “bump into the battleship ‘Rodney’ which always represented his mother” (p. 344). Klein understands the bumping of the two ships as symbolizing sexual intercourse, and Richard's then pulling away from this as a “repression of his genital desires towards his mother” because of his fear of the “destructiveness of sexual intercourse” (p. 344), in consequence of the oral-sadistic character he attributed to it.

Richard, who suffered from an “unsatisfactory feeding period” (p. 362), and shared with his mother a heightened concern about both his and her health and well-being (depressed moods), seemed not to have been able to establish a solid sense of good self and object preservation. However, a child's feeling of safety for the self and the nurturing object is a precondition for the capacity to phantasize about sexual penetration not as an act of destruction (endangerment), but as a pleasurable and procreative drive activity. Richard was afraid of his own penis because it seemed to him a “dangerous organ that would injure and damage his loved mother” (p. 365). Thus, his sexual strivings were in conflict with his object-preservative needs.

Because of his unconscious fear and guilt about his own oral-sadistic impulses, however, infants predominantly represented to him oral-sadistic beings. This was one of the reasons why he could not in phantasy fulfil his longing to give children to his mother. More fundamental still, oral anxiety had in his early development increased the fear connected with the aggressive aspects of the genital function and of his own penis. Richard's fear that his oral-sadistic impulses would dominate his genital desires and that his penis was a destructive organ was one of the main causes of his repression of his genital desires. [Klein 1945, pp. 363-364]
It seems to me that Richard could not maintain a binary-conflict level in which his preservative and sexual strivings for his mother were sufficiently balanced. Instead, he seemed caught in a vicious cycle: oral, self-preservative frustration with his depressive mother might have (aggressively) intensified his lethic drive activity—making him a “vampire” who would attack and endanger his mother. Thus, he needed to withdraw, which increased his frustration and greed—and, consequently, his concern about his potential to attack his nurturing object (“He often asked, even after quite harmless remarks to his mother or to myself: ‘Have I hurt your feelings?’” [p. 346]). His developing sexual urges further complicated these difficulties. The increased push of the sexual drive aroused phantasies of penetration and of intruding on the mother's body, which appeared as a catastrophic danger—thus necessitating a defensive regression to a lethic preoccupation with self and object-preservative concerns.

Klein (1945, pp. 365-ff.) confirms Freud's above-mentioned contribution to the psychology of love as she formulated it in Richard—namely, the presence of a split between the affectionate (preservative) and the sensual (sexual) strivings (Freud 1912, p. 180), or, as Klein (1945) also puts it, a split between the “good breast-mother” and the “bad genital mother” (p. 346).

Presupposing destructive damage, Klein then emphasizes a “drive for reparation” (p. 380) that counters aggression and supports feelings of love. This drive for reparation is part of what I would conceptualize as (object-)preservative drive activity. Klein describes Richard's conflicts, as well as early oedipal conflicts in general, as binary: struggles between sexuality and aggression. I would agree with her analysis and general conclusions while understanding these struggles as a conflict between the sexual and the preservative drives, with a hyperactivity of the latter.

**The Libidinal Side of Oedipus**

Freud (1900) describes conflicts within the oedipal complex as what I would call monolithic conflicts (affecting the different objects...
of just the sexual drive), even though they seem to exist as conflicts between sexuality and aggression: “It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father” (p. 262). It is worth noting that this is not a conflict between love and hate; rather, these murderous wishes are fully in accord with sexual strivings for the mother; they occur in order to eliminate the paternal obstacle on the way to the libidinal object, and can be understood as a reinforcement or intensification—or simply as an expression of the sexual drive (Schmidt-Hellerau 2002). In fact, this conflict is not with mother, but instead arises because there are positive feelings (identification) for father as well (Freud 1923, p. 32). Yet are these feelings primarily “affectionate” (lethic), or are they “sensual” (libidinal)?

Freud bypassed this question by introducing his notion of bisexuality and the negative Oedipus complex (p. 33). Thus, he focused on conflicts between homo- and heterosexual fantasies about a male or a female self who is in a sexual relationship with a male or female object—stating that the boy also behaves as mother does and wants to be loved by father, just as mother does. This might bring up another conflict, one occurring around a confusion between passive as in “wanting to be loved” (receptive), and passive as female or homosexual. Thus, the child struggles between wanting to love mother, wanting to love father, wanting to be loved by the one, and by the other—and all of this at different times and without any annoying interference by the respective other.

With all these facets, Freud described a whole range of conflicts on the libidinal side of Oedipus. They all concern the sexual drive and its objects and work on the structural development of what I have called the erotogenic self and the erotogenic objects (Schmidt-Hellerau 2001, pp. 219-ff.). In the end, complete resolution of the Oedipus complex will require not so much the repression of the negative Oedipus as the integration of male and female identifications and strivings, in order to foster the formation of an erotogenic self that strives for and is empathic with the desires of the erotogenic object.
The Lethic Side of Oedipus

Earlier, I suggested that monolithic conflicts tend to be more regressive than binary conflicts. Calling the conflicts Freud outlines for the Oedipus monolithic thus seems to contradict our common understanding of the progressive nature of this developmental period. Therefore, we might wonder whether lethic strivings and structural formations are occurring simultaneously with libidinal ones that so far have not been part of our general Oedipus concept, since their presence would elevate these struggles to the more advanced, binary-conflict level.

Freud (1923) suggests the arousal of considerable aggression not only within the jealous oedipal child, but also within his/her parents, which eventually—at the height of the Oedipus complex—leads to the threat of castration and the “demolition of the Oedipus complex” (p. 32).

If the satisfaction of love in the field of the Oedipus complex is to cost the child his penis, a conflict is bound to arise between his narcissistic interest in that part of his body and the libidinal cathexis of his parental objects. In this conflict the first of these forces normally triumphs: the child's ego turns away from the Oedipus complex. [Freud 1924, p. 176]

Freud (1923), in focusing on the sexual drive, again presents this centerpiece of his Oedipus as a conflict between object-love (mother) and narcissistic self-love (penis); this conflict leads to the “transformation of object-libido into narcissistic libido,” which is understood as a “déssexualization—a kind of sublimation” (p. 30). However, if we are serious about Freud's concept of a self-preservative drive, then we understand castration anxiety as creating a binary conflict: on the one side, there is the libidinal desire to love mother; on the other side, there is the lethic need to preserve the penis/oneself—and, interestingly enough, self-preservation “normally triumphs,” as noted in Freud's remarks above. I suggest that, in the shadow of the glamorous libidinal side of the oedipal conflicts,
there are important processes going on to deal with the child's self and object-preservative urges and their conflicting, as well as balancing, potential; they constitute the other side of Oedipus, and advance these processes to an altogether more integrated binary conflict level.

It should not come as a surprise that self-preservative strivings conflict with sexual ones when the latter begin to gain strength. Without reference to self-preservative issues, Freud (1932) speaks to the heart of these new difficulties by quoting Heine: “Was dem Menschen dient zum Seichen/Damit schafft er Seinesgleichen” (p. 192). He elaborates:

The sexual organ of the male has two functions; and there are those to whom this association is an annoyance. It serves for the evacuation of the bladder, and it carries out the act of love which sets the craving of the genital libido at rest. The child still believes that he can unite the two functions. According to a theory of his, babies are made by the man urinating into the woman’s body. [1932, p. 192]

While these and other infantile sexual theories (Freud 1908) are well known—and we are certainly familiar with some children’s and patients' worries about the genitals being dirty, sexuality being disgusting, and/or masturbation making people sick—we have not conceptualized these conflicts as driven by the need for self-preservation (e.g., being clean, healthy, not harmful, and also decent) and the desire for sexual pleasure. To conceptualize the “antithesis between the two functions” (Freud 1932, p. 192) of one organ (and later one object) is a mental challenge that affords the resolution of conflicts between lethic and libidinal drive activities.

Thus, a complicated task in the genital phase is to differentiate between what I have called the biogenic (preservative) and the erotogenic (sexual) functions and zones, and, further, between a biogenic and an erotogenic self and object (Schmidt-Hellerau 2001). The biogenic self demands to be taken care of and is preoccupied with

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6 Strachey translates in a footnote: “With what serves a man for pissing he creates his like.”
taking care of him-/herself in order to be healthy and to feel safe and well. The biogenic object is the object who has to take care of, nurture, and protect the child and has self-preservation needs of his/her own that might require being taken care of by others. By contrast, the erotogenic self is pleasure seeking, as is the erotogenic object, which is also required as a pleasure-providing partner for sexual encounters in both direct and sublimated ways. It follows that the complicated task of the oedipal phase is not only to differentiate between a male and female self and object; it is also to differentiate between biogenic and erotogenic self and object representations.

The subsequent step will afford this re-union of “the affectionate and the sensual current” (Freud 1912, p. 180). That is to say, the preceding differentiation (elimination of confusion) is the necessary precondition for a subsequent mature integration of both functions. Then the self will be represented as capable of taking care of him-/herself and others, while also having sexual pleasures, and, in addition, the object will be represented as self and object preservative, while also being sexually exciting and enjoying him-/herself.

The active and passive strivings of sexual and preservative drives aiming for parental objects create a full range of conflicts within the triangular situation of the Oedipus. For the positive Oedipus, the formula says that the child’s aim is to establish a two-person relationship that would eliminate the third—the boy wants to love mother and fights against father. Yet the child also expects to be taken care of by this third. This situation constitutes a conflict between the wish to get the love object—which requires fighting the rival—and the wish to be taken care of by this very rival. One way to resolve this conflict is to distribute the sexual and preservative strivings to both parental objects, keeping father and mother simultaneously cathected with different drive energies. We could thus visualize two sides to the oedipal structure: a libidinal front side that is balanced by a lethic reverse side.7

7 A more detailed scheme of these conflicts was published in Schmidt-Hellerau 2001, p. 225.
If we look at it this way, the active libidinal side of the positive Oedipus would read: “The boy wants to love mother (as father does) and fights against the paternal rival.” On the reverse side, however, another silent wish might occur: “The boy wants to take care of father (as mother does), and fights against the maternal rival.” That is to say, the identification with both parents, father and mother, is constantly at work (the boy internally enacts the relationship with the parental couple). Further, we realize that feelings of rivalry are not limited to libidinal (erotic) strivings; they also come into play with lethic (caretaking) needs and urges (who does and gets the “better” caretaking?).

On the passive libidinal side of the positive Oedipus, we then find: “The boy wants to be loved by mother (as father is) and fears the father”—with its reverse side: “The boy wants to be preserved/protected by father (as mother is) and fears mother.” The boy's wish to be also taken care of by father (as mother is) might feel competitive with mother's being cared for by father, thus creating the (later unconscious) fear of an envious, retaliatory action by her. Therefore, if we wonder why preservative wishes need to be repressed and become unconscious, we might remember that it is the gratification of these wishes within a meaningful relationship with parental objects, together with fantasies of envy and rivalry (arising from the infantile idea that all love or care goes to only one object, with nothing left for a second or third), that appear to be too dangerous to know about. The same active and passive configuration as described with the opposite objects would then apply to the scheme of the negative Oedipus as well.

In thinking about different combinations of libidinal-lethic conflicts, a much more complex picture emerges. We realize, for example, that there is a subtle but crucial difference between a negative homosexual wish (the boy wants to be loved [penetrated] by father [his penis]) and a lethic wish (the boy wants to be protected by father)—in short, there is a difference between love and care. I think that the creation of structures to organize issues of care (for both male and female objects) is essential for psychic development and growth—and that these structures must exist separately from
issues of sexual love. Analysts must know about these differences (which do not presuppose aggression, I might add). This conception also ensures that the libidinal wish to love mother is counterbalanced by the antagonistic drive's wish to preserve father, which modulates the impulse to fight against the father—and thus, the sexual strivings for the maternal love object are eventually relinquished. Therefore, it seems to me that the classical Oedipus conflict is not between love and hate, sexuality and aggression; it is between love and care: to love one parent and to preserve the other (rival), nevertheless (see also Schmidt-Hellerau 2001).

In this manner, the basis for a triangular representation of object relations can be established—even though there is still one more step for the child to master: that is, to keep on loving and caring for his/her parental objects, even while realizing that they have loving and caring relationships with each other without the child's being part of the parental couple.

The outcome of these developmental achievements at the end of the oedipal phase is understood to be crucial for the development of the superego. As I have elaborated elsewhere (Schmidt-Hellerau 2001), the preservative drive's structures will form the foundation of the superego's protective functions (which could not be explained by aggression as a primal drive), while the libidinal precipitate (ego ideal) creates its orienting function; and both interact favorably in a balanced way.

Lora

In order to illustrate the complexity of conflicts of differentiation between sexual and preservative strivings, I will briefly sketch representative vignettes from the third and fourth years of a fivetimes-per-week analysis with Lora, a 35-year-old, married mother of three. She came to me because she often felt depressed and suffered from migraines, backaches, and frequent incontinence; she also had great difficulties in her marriage.

Lora grew up as the only girl among five brothers. She always felt devalued, incapable, and sad, and she remembered that she
cried a lot when she was little. She thought that people behaved “as if I weren't there.” She might enter a room and nobody would look at her. Nowadays, she might cook an elaborate meal, but people would thank her husband when leaving. For a long time, she did not want to apply for a job because she was afraid people would find out that she could not do it. All her efforts seemed never to yield the appreciation she wanted so badly. She said: “I'll never be good enough; I'll never have it all. There is something missing.” Our work often centered around understanding the links she made between being a girl/woman (not male) and the many disappointments and frustrations she had experienced in her life.

One day in the third year of her analysis, she told me of her recent birthday party. The band had played for her and she had danced all night. Eventually, the bandleader asked her on stage and she had sung a song. She felt great. “I walked around having the sense that my inside was out. I felt so powerful—it was really exciting!” That night, she dreamed the following: “I had to use the bathroom. I was standing over the toilet—it was a men's toilet—the water started bubbling up, and I was torn between having to go to the bathroom and the feeling that I could have an orgasm. I was so excited, yet I had to go to the bathroom.”

Later in the same session, Lora wondered: “What do men do when they get excited and have an orgasm?” I said, “Your dream seems to say that there is a conflict with urinating.” Lora answered, “Yes, I only learned at age nineteen that I had a vagina, and it was extremely uncomfortable to use tampons.” She told me that she could not wear pantyhose; the stockings always wound around her legs oddly. “It drives me nuts being a woman!” she exclaimed. Many sessions followed that wrapped around penis issues, highlighting her fantasies, worries, and curiosities.

Lora lived with the unconscious wish to have an inner penis—which, as it turned out, was one of the reasons that she was unaware of having a vagina until she was nineteen. As a part of her sexual fantasies, this was an important source of hope: one day, she would make it; and it was also a constant source of renewed disappointment: she would never have it all. In this brief vignette,
she demonstrated that she finally felt recognized and accepted by the men in the band at her birthday party, joining them as alike (male). She had the sense that her inside was out, and this made her feel powerful. Proudly, she presented this feeling to me. But how to deal with this new achievement? The dream spelled out that it aroused a binary conflict: “I was torn between having to go to the bathroom and the feeling that I could have an orgasm.” Her question to me was: “What do men do when they get excited and have an orgasm?” The sexual excitement (having an orgasm) conflicted with the preservative urges (having to urinate).

In the fourth year of her analysis, Lora told me another dream: “I was in a clothing store, trying on a white dress. I had taken up my other clothes and my necklace with a golden-heart pendant and put them somewhere. The new dress looked very round on me, as if I were pregnant. After I had changed back into my clothes, I couldn't find the necklace with the heart pendant. I searched on the couch. A security man said, ‘It isn't there.’ I put my fingers in the slit of the couch, pulling out a fold, and behind this fold I found it.”

Lora found this dream interesting. She said that when the fold came out, it looked like a woman's genitals. She thought that she often had dreams about searching and finding her jewelry. She concluded that in this dream, she found her womanliness in the slit of my couch—because it looked like my couch. What she was searching for she found here, she said, in my office—it was her self, her womanliness. The heart of the matter, reflected in her pendant, was to be found here in analysis. She said it was hard to bring her love here and to put it on the couch, but now she found love in my couch—she had found my love. And she talked of the dress, white like a wedding dress, in which she also looked pregnant.

The next day, Lora came in angry with Pete, her husband. Eventually, she wondered: “What has my anger to do with having found your love here? I can only love one at a time. How is it different—Pete's love and your love and my love for you and my love for Pete? It is so confusing. I don't feel comfortable in myself, my legs hurt, it's so unfair, why can't I be comfortable with myself?”
The next day, she came in angry with me and did not feel like talking. We gradually understood that she had thought I would push her to be with Pete. She felt offended, thinking that I did not love her. She had thought that her life was going so well, and yet deep down, there was still a tiny spot where she felt she would kill herself. She knew she would not really do it, but there was this feeling, and she thought she would not tell me about it because she was mad at me. “I thought, I could do it alone, without you. But this isn't really the case until I have understood how I can love people—separately and differently.”

I understand this dream as part of Lora's negative Oedipus, her wish to find my love (heart) by using her finger-penis to penetrate the slit in my couch, representing my vagina. By doing so in her dream, she created a concept of a woman's genitals. This helped her to find her womanliness and to fantasize herself as pregnant. Unconsciously, it was I impregnating her while she was doing the same with me; we were the wedding couple. This made her angry with her husband, who interfered with our relationship.

I think the patient had correctly picked up some subtle countermovements on my part in the second of these three sessions, which had offended her and made her express her anger with me in the third session. However, she came to an important insight: even though she had been disappointed with me, she would not withdraw; she would stay with me until she had understood how she could love people separately and differently—which meant how to love and how to care for both her husband and her analyst, or for both her father and her mother.

All these conflicts provoked aggression. Lora was angry with herself, angry at her husband, and angry at her female analyst. Most of this anger focused on impatience and annoyance for not getting it, or for feeling prevented from getting it. Yet this anger and the aggressive outbursts it triggered did not represent a conflict, but rather emphasized sexual strivings and their aim: wanting to get it and get through to the sexual object—and, in the end, to do so without losing the care and protection of the preservative objects.

These few analytic moments—from the patient's never having it all (the missing penis/the parental love objects), to this powerful
and exciting feeling of having it out, to the question of what it does, to using it (putting her fingers in the slit of my couch) in order to find the heart of the matter, her womanliness = her jewel, in the vagina—illustrate how our patients need time and space to sort out their different and conflicting fantasies and feelings about love and care, and about being male and/or female with a male and/or female transferential object, the analyst. It is not just about finding out what one really is (gender identity); rather, it is about trying all this out in order to integrate it into a gendered sense of one's erotogenic self as coexisting with an erotogenic object in a sexual and caring relationship.

**Conclusion**

The other side of Oedipus is the lethic side of structure formation, the side that is at work during all these difficult developmental processes in childhood. In the pregenital phase, the lethic demands of self- (and object) preservation dominate the expression of early libidinal strivings, but in the genital phase, it seems crucial that the sexual drives prevail, simultaneously retaining the preservative currents in a stabilizing function. Both drives must and will at times be pursued aggressively, whenever they seem to be thwarted. However, I suggest that, instead of an aggressive drive, we might conceptualize the preservative drive as the primal antagonist to the sexual drive. Thus, we might better comprehend the two directions of man's motivational strivings that shape the oedipal complex, two basic demands of the body to the mind: the need for safety (preservation) and the desire for love (sexuality).

The concept of a preservative drive existing alongside sexuality helps us grasp the difference between monolithic and binary conflicts. Further, appreciating the direction of lethic strivings prevents us from interfering with their expressions (e.g., in not interpreting concern and care as veiled hostility or guilt and reparation for preceding aggression) when they are about (progressively) building up the structures of self and object-preservative functions. Such an appreciation also helps us understand when a patient's
clinging to safety needs eventually becomes a defense against sexual strivings, and—if not analyzed as such—might even lead to malignant regression.

Thus, knowing about the importance of the lethal side of Oedipus by no means implies favoritism of preservative issues. Green (1995) is concerned that our interest in early disturbances leads to a predilection of the preoedipal issues, with a corresponding neglect of oedipal ones, a trend he describes as a shift from the penis to the breast. Yet “the role of a sexual relationship is not to feed and nurture but to reach ecstasy in mutual enjoyment” (p. 877). Green emphasizes the importance of sexual drives for achieving and working through the oedipal phase and reaching a certain stability of psychic functions.

We should ask: what is important? What has the greatest value? The price of life is attached to what all human beings share and are longing for: the need to love, to enjoy life, to be part of a relationship in its fullest expression, etc. Again, here we are confronted with our ideology of what psychoanalysis is for. What is its aim? Overcoming our primitive anxieties, to repair our objects damaged by our sinful evil? To ensure the need for security? To pursue the norms of adaptation? Or to be able to feel alive and to cathect the many possibilities offered by the diversity of life, in spite of its inevitable disappointments, sources of unhappiness and loads of pains? [p. 874]

Can this be an either-or choice? Isn't it always about both? While in both psychoanalysis and in life, we might hope to develop sexual pleasure within a loving relationship, as long as we are haunted by primitive anxieties and basic threats to our security, there will be no room for erotic enjoyment. And even after we have overcome these primitive fears in a healthily neurotic life, the basic threats to our survival travel with us as an ever-lurking potential to regress that flings open as soon as we feel endangered. That is why I think psychoanalysts need to know about the power of both the preservative and the sexual drives, because this knowledge
will help them analyze, and thus to structure, their patients' capacities to love and to care for themselves as well as their objects.

Finally, the other side of Oedipus is also the other side of the ancient myth—the parental failure and its consequences, which were left out of Freud's conception. Laïos, reacting to the oracle that his son will kill him, pierces (that is, penetrates and hurts) Oedipus's feet and abandons him in the wild, thus hoping to kill or get rid of the child and to preserve his own life. If this is meant to imply a conflict at all, it is a monolithic one—self-preservation versus the preservation of a newborn son—that is decided regressively in favor of Laïos's own survival needs. The father's decision amounts to a murderous plan shared by Jocaste, the baby's mother. Thus, the story says that both parents want to enjoy sexuality, but are not willing to care for their offspring.

Whether we take this to encapsulate the horrendous fantasy of the oedipal child who is excluded from the parental couple (Britton 1998, p. 36), or whether we take it as a failure in parenting, the myth tells us that Oedipus—even though he was accidentally saved and well reared by his foster parents—unconsciously carries on what has informed his early mind. He lacks the very object-preservative concerns toward his real parents that they failed to provide for him. The wisdom of Greek mythology implies what psychoanalysts know: that a defense against an imagined threat (oracle) brings about the very danger that attempts are made to avoid. Thus, the tragedy makes sense to us when Oedipus ends up killing Laïos—not only as a failure of the incest taboo, but also, and most important, as a failure of object preservation.

References
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