LVIII

THE DREAM OF THE 'CLEVER BABY' 1

Not too seldom patients narrate to one dreams in which the newly born, quite young children, or babies in the cradle, appear, who are able to talk or write fluently, treat one to deep sayings, carry on intelligent conversations, deliver harangues, give teamed explanations, and so on. I imagine that behind such dream-contents something typical is hidden. The superficial layer of dream-interpretation in many cases points to an ironical view of psychoanalysis, which, as is well known, attributes far more psychical value and permanent effect to the experiences of early childhood than people in general care to admit. The ironic exaggeration of the intelligence of children, therefore, expresses a doubt as to analytical communications on this subject. But as similar appearances in fairy tales, myths, and traditional religious history very often occur, and in the painter's art are also effectively represented (see the Debate of the young Mary with the Scribes), I believe that here the irony serves only as a medium for deeper and graver memories of their own childhood. Therefore the wish to become learned and to excel over 'the great' in wisdom and knowledge is only a reversal of the contrary situation of the child. One part of the dreams of this content observed by me is illustrated by the pithy observation of the ne'er-do-well, when he said, 'If I had only understood how to make better use of the position of the baby.' Lastly, we should not forget that the young child is familiar with much knowledge, as a matter of fact, that later becomes buried by the force of repression.1

1 *Zeitschrift,* 1923, IX. 70. [Translated by Olive Edmonds.]

1I do not believe that thiscommunication has in any way exhaustedthe interpretationof this typeof dream, and intendsonly to turn the attentionof the psycho-analyst to it. (A recent observationof the samekind showed me that such dreams illustrate the *actual* knowledge of the child on sexuality.)