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The Contemporaneity of the Unconscious: Interview with Cristiana Cimino

Cristiana Cimino, MD, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, with a Freudian and Lacanian training. She practices in Rome. She is associate member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (IPA). She is a member of the Institute Elvio Fachinelli. (Rome), has been co-editor of the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*. She is in the Editorial Board of *Vestigia*, has long worked on the thought of the psychoanalyst Elvio Fachinelli, has collaborated with the Istituto di Studi Filosofici of Naples-Rome. She has published several texts on specialized journals, in various languages, including English. She is author of *Il discorso amoroso. Dall'amore della madre al godimento femminile* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2015); *Tra la vita e la morte. La psicoanalisi scomoda* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2020).

Can you describe the idea of unconscious which is closest to your theoretical conception?

My idea of the unconscious is very close to the Freudian idea: that of a system with its own language that needs to be decoded in the context of treatment and through transference. I find essential, even for the clinic, the Lacanian subdivision of the unconscious into Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. About the latter I find interesting the more recent idea of procedural memories.

On the other hand, what is the theoretical conception of the unconscious which is farthest from it? And why?

I would say that of an a priori existing container and/or container of unknowable chaos. Because the unconscious is always in motion and in close relation to the work of analysis. And because it has a code that makes it reliable and “knowable.”

What do you think is the relation between the unconscious processes or the unconscious *tout court* and the conscious? Can you describe it?

I do not believe in an autonomy of the “conflict-free” ego. I believe that desire (Freudianly *Lust*) is the engine of the unconscious and that it always reaches its object because the drive wants to emerge, despite defenses. I consider that the pathways of desire, in the conscious system, are just longer and more complicated than their unconscious origin, hence the origin of the symptom. I therefore consider the two systems to be closely related, rather, one derived from the other.

In the last years of your career have you modified and/or integrated your idea of the unconscious? And through which specific contributions?

My idea of the unconscious remains very much the same over time although, as I have already said, I find the theme of procedural memory interesting with respect to the drawing in of the real unconscious (in Lacanian terms).

Thinking from a clinical perspective, what does it mean having to deal with the unconscious of the patient in the psychotherapeutic process?

The bet of psychoanalytic treatment, from my point of view, is to make the unconscious speak through its formations: dreams, lapses, symptoms and, of course, the patient's free associations. All this can happen only because a transference becomes structured and because of the analyst's listening.

And finally, do you think that there are some conceptions of the unconscious that, even if you do not agree with, are however useful from a clinical perspective? And why?

I don't know if it is relevant, but I find the joint research between psychoanalysis and neuroscience very interesting and promising. The model I am referring to is the Ansermet-Magistretti model.

Bios:

Leonardo Provini is a psychologist, psychotherapist, and PhD student at the Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, and Health Studies, of Sapienza University of Rome. He's co-editor of the Italian side of the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

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