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# The Crisis of Interpretation

## 1.

Interpretations and the management of transference are the particular working tools of psychoanalysis as any psychoanalyst, regardless of school or trend, would agree. Knowing how to use, and limiting oneself to, these two tools, distinguishes an analyst from other psychotherapists. Yet, in recent decades, in both analytic practice and theory, a certain disdain for interpretation has taken hold. (1) Many analysts try to not interpret, and would seemingly agree with those films which poke fun at analysts who blurt out interpretations such as: “You left your umbrella with me. What you really wanted to leave me was your penis.” For an increasing number of scholars influenced by structuralism or cognitivism (whether analysts or not), the interpretive keys offered by the various schools tend to appear both arbitrary and dogmatic. Arbitrary, either because they are not based on any proof of a scientific character which might render them plausible, or because they are founded on a pre-constituted theory of the unconscious. And dogmatic because they sustain something by way of an arbitrary choice: “x means y simply because the theory says so”.

Yet psychoanalysis as a curing technique began as a “cathartic method”, based not on interpretation but on abreaction, that is, on a sort of avowal of a secret, we would say today of something semi-repressed. And those analysts who mistrust interpretations return, in a certain sense unknowingly, to the cathartic method which in many ways appears more “modern” than classical psychoanalysis. But let us take a closer look.

## 2.

Freud accepted as a patient Elisabeth von R., a 24-year-old member of the Viennese aristocracy, because she was nearly paralyzed, and suffered in particular from a certain “pain” in her right thigh. Freud felt he had reached a turning point in her cure when he succeeded in making her confess a secret (which was not a remembrance of something unconscious): that she was in love with her widowed brother-in-law. Buoyed up by this discovery, Freud did something which today would cause him to be ousted from any IPA society: he revealed everything to Elisabeth’s mother, who in turn let on that his discovery was a well-known secret, even to her (despite her sick, neurotic and nearly blind state) (2). Freud’s gaffe sent Elisabeth into a fury, and for a while her symptoms worsened; Freud was dismissed. But this proved to be the last flicker before the fire was extinguished. Some months later, Freud learned that Elisabeth was practically healed. In the spring of 1894, at a ball, Freud had the pleasure of seeing his “former patient whirl past in a lively dance”. (3) A happy end to the story. The cathartic method was based on patients’ revealing their secrets, and Freud explained Elisabeth’s cure as her recognition, through Freud, that she loved her ex-brother-in-law. But, for analysts shaped by Freud’s later work, recognition is not enough, interpretation is needed. And if it is true that the admission of love was decisive, why was it so? In what way can Freud’s “action” be reinterpreted today?

Viewed today, Elisabeth's relation with her father after whose death she developed hysteria is particularly striking. She was her father's favorite son, "son", because "this daughter of his took the place of a son and a friend with whom he could exchange thoughts"; (4) she herself, as a "keck und rechthaberisch" child ('cheeky' and 'cock-sure' (5) were her father's words), "was in fact greatly discontented with being a girl. [...] She was indignant at the idea of having to sacrifice her inclinations and her freedom of judgment by marriage". (6) Yet this turn-of-the-century feminist at a certain point "decides" to become a woman: "she now was overcome by a sense of her weakness as a woman and by a longing for love [eine Sehnsucht nach Liebe] in which [...] her frozen nature began to melt". (7)

Freud reconstructs the series of "Elisabethan loves", all platonic. Her first love which Freud does not state explicitly is her father, whom she herself nurses during the course of his illness up until his death. Her second love is a "young man, who was himself an orphan; [he] was devotedly attached to her father and followed his advice in pursuing his career. He had extended his admiration for her father to the ladies of the family"; (8) in short, he was an "adopted" son, the husband-designate for the favorite child. But with the father's illness, the suitor-pretender disappears, and it is not difficult to imagine why. Her third love is her former brother-in-law, a relationship disapproved of by her family. Freud does not intuit the fourth love whom we, owing to his successive blunders as an analyst, see clearly: it is Freud himself. Today we would say that Elisabeth was healed "for love of Freud". But even Freud, who is married, is an impossible love. This sequence of loves traces a centrifugal, but incomplete, path, from Elisabeth's family setting and her "male" position, up to the present. Even Freud, last in the series, a doctor honored with a due honorarium, extraneous to the family clan, is in a certain way coopted, at least during her treatment, into this domestic universe still weighed down by the recently deceased pater familias within which our heroine fishes for her loves. Freud respectfully, and somewhat assiduously, visits her at home (was not Elisabeth a noblewoman?). And all this leads us to believe that Freud's lively interest for the Fräulein was founded on nothing less than his ambition as a scientist, to go down in history as the first to grasp "the secret of hysteria". But a young woman languishing in love might question the nature of his desire. Moreover, when the conscientious doctor touches the painful parts of her leg, the patient does not hide her pleasure: "her face assumed a peculiar expression, which was one of pleasure [lust] rather than pain (eher den der Lust als des Schmerzes). She cried out and I could not help thinking that it was as though she was having a voluptuous tickling sensation her face flushed, she threw back her head and shut her eyes and her body bent backwards". (9) After a century of psychoanalysis, any further comment here would be superfluous. Nonetheless, Freud writes:

It still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own (Vorliebe). (10)

In dealing with hysterics, positivist medicine, via Freud, finally becomes part of the romance novel. But Freud is unaware that, just as in soap operas, the young doctor cannot long remain outside the net, and is instead destined to become a protagonist. On this trail of impossible loves, Elisabeth's astasia-abasia would then signify, as she herself said, that "she could not 'take a single step forward' (sie 'komme nicht von der Stelle') [on the path of femininity]" (11). Owing to the illness of her two parents, Elisabeth had heretofore been the caretaker; however, after a summer vacation during which her secret idyll with her brother-in-law flowered, Elisabeth instead "was the invalid of the family". (12) Hysteria permitted this role reversal from caretaker to cared for, an allegory for the turnabout taking place within her in that period of changes (precipitated by the death of the pater familias): transforming "a very brusque male" to a woman desirous of being loved and "taken care of" by a man. The front of the thigh a metonymy (we would say today) of her vagina which had been ignored as long as she was dominated by her father represented a painful coagulation of her request for genital pleasure. Furthermore, that was the place where "her father used to rest his leg every morning, while she renewed the bandage round it, for it was badly swollen" (13). How can we not interpret in the dying father's swollen leg, resting on his daughter's thigh, what even an inexperienced analyst would clearly see, and what any romance novelist would not fail to ascertain?: the pathetic figures of

Eros and Thanatos, the turgid body of pleasure and the stiff corpse, the “walk along life’s pathway” (which for Elisabeth, at a certain point, is quite difficult) and the still remains. Today, we read the core of Elisabeth’s hysterical conflict: in love, not by chance, with impossible men, it is impossible for her to continue her walk; her symptom displays a discord between a life she does not yet dare face, and the paternal death, which pushes her away from Heim and from male identification. The pain in her thigh represents her forbidden pleasures, not so much because of social taboos (after all, marrying your widowed brother-in-law was disapproved of but was not illegal), but because her love-objects still lay in the shadow of her father, overseen by his too swollen phallic leg. Even Freud falls under its shadow, compensated as he is with the money of her father, “a vivacious man of the world” (14) and thus, the opposite of a puritan repressor. Ergo, the hysteric symptom, like a dream, is a metaphor which demands interpretation.

So, if our Freudian interpretations of Freud’s exploit are correct, why is Elizabeth cured, at least so long as Freud follows her case? Because Dr. Freud was in the right place at the right time: by investing all his scientific interest in her, rather than providing her with the few pleasures a positivist doctor might have given her, he cut her off from her brother-in-law by putting her “on the road” towards someone (Freud himself) outside the incestuous circle. But Freud, object of the famous transference, is but a stage: even he, like all her beloved ones, will “betray” her (by revealing everything to her mother). However, he nonetheless lets her know that she must go beyond the Heim, by inventing for herself a femininity which does not need the impossible. In fact, Freud concludes his “romance” as follows: “Since then, by her own inclination, she has married someone unknown to me (Fremden)”. (15) Here the English translation is incorrect: Freud, using Fremden, plays on the ambiguity between stranger and foreigner as though to say, “she did not have an incestuous marriage”. Elisabeth’s Bildungsroman recounts that laborious step away from endogamy and the assumption of a sexual identity, which Freud will later call Oedipus and which every human being is destined to confront. Freud produced effects not just love or transference, but cures not by interpreting, but by being there (even unknowingly) in a certain way. And by being there, along with his latest techniques such as hypnosis, he allowed Elisabeth to articulate the cry: “I love my brother-in-law!” It would have been much better if he had succeeded in evoking “I love you, my doctor!”. However, what is important is that this young woman made a move, and that she began again to “dance away”.

### 3.

But, if the true analytic act is what I have described, if, in short, my interpretation appears to me more likely, why was Freud’s rough, incomplete explanation sufficient in its time? Analysts today face the same problem when constrained to explain the therapeutic successes of therapists belonging to schools other than their own. Hardly any Freudian would deny that a Jungian or Rogersian might produce therapeutic results, and vice versa; but arrogance leads any school to suppose that only they can truly interpret that event. A Freudian analyst stated that “an effective analyst can belong to any school, but the cure is always Freudian”; obviously, an analyst of any other school could turn the aphorism to his advantage. And it is arrogance of which I myself have just been guilty, by interpreting what Freud really did beyond what he said he was doing at the time, despite the fact that my inference is on the later Freud. Schools and posterity are convinced of holding the meta-interpretation revealing that which is effective in the interpretations of “pioneer forebears” or “colleagues of other schools”. But if the clinical practice of these pioneers or colleagues suffices to produce desirable effects, then what statute can our meta-interpretation have? Will it be the ultimate scientific explanation, or merely an interpretive ceremonial, a theoretical frame imposed from without on the magma of practice? In the latter case, we would really be dealing with what we might call a “Freudulence”.

Suffice it to say that our interpretations seem to us slightly more likely, or verosimiglianti (seemingly true) in Italian. Interpreting Freud’s initiatives as unwitting transference’s acts would seem to us to come closer to the truth: he believed that he was eliciting memories or confessions, although today it is generally believed that, by exposing his body and his ambitions to the hysterics’ desires and, without being seduced by them,

Freud sometimes permitted them to be able to walk away their home. (16) But why does our interpretation look more likely?

Those who criticize Freudian interpretation in general questioning whether or not unlocking the deeper meanings of symptoms or dreams is effective with patients, and justified theoretically instead find psychoanalysis interesting for its practical effects. Freud's *Menschbild*, his vision of the Human Being, seems to them a mythology like any other; their practice increasingly resembles certain Oriental ones, such as Zen, where the guru does not interpret, but rather, in some way, acts. But this anathema against interpretation might seem somewhat Don Quixotic. In fact, post-Heideggerian and hermeneutic literature makes it clear that, barring the use of brute force, every human act (including the analytic one) is effective only through beliefs, rules, customs that is, layered with interpretations. Even an effective act should be interpreted as such an act, and as effective and not necessarily interpreted unanimously, in the same way. Every interpretation, in so far as it makes claim to knowledge, is mythical, in the sense that it never really tells the truth. However, without putting the myth at risk, it is impossible to draw close to the truth, or to the Thing, as Lacan called it.

Nevertheless, Freudian interpretation must be understood as an interpretation of interpretations: dreams, neurotic symptoms, ravings, myths are interpretations by the subject. These psychic formations reveal the fundamental interpretative drive of humans. (17) The wish for an analytic practice which is ultimately neither interpretive nor mythological can often smack of rationalistic naiveté: the analyst unwittingly presumes the possibility of an analytic act "at zero degree", as Roland Barthes would say, unclouded by interpretations, an act which is really an act. Yet this attack on interpretation is also a sign of the time that is, the way in which our Western culture is modifying its own subjectivity (in an era in which the combined triumphs of narcissism and pragmatism have distracted subjects from a belief in intimate and deep realities). There is a growing dissatisfaction with the Freudian conception of man. Today, psychoanalysis would appear to be wedged between two opposite but at the same time growing beliefs: verified knowledge through scientific procedures on the one hand (and thus the precise data furnished by experimental psychology), and the magical Knowledge revealed by certain esoteric traditions or spiritualistic doctrines such as the New Age on the other. Furthermore, the disenchantment is not only philosophical: older analysts confirm that once effective interpretations or strategies do not work in analysis today. An interpretative crisis is occurring not because Prozac has replaced tricyclides in treating depression, but rather because the relation between knowledge and truth (to borrow Lacanian terminology) in the West is changing in a way that we have not yet succeeded in fully conceptualizing. (18) Thus, Freudianism appears to be losing its charge of truth, and to being reduced to just one more interpretation, to end up being recycled by a New Age culture which legitimizes any seductive interpretation. Freudian theory, which was formerly a revealing interpretation, today tends to be considered as a myth which veils the thing. A healthy crisis, perhaps, insofar as it reduces a chronic tendency in much of psychoanalysis towards interpretative omnipotence. And by reducing its interpretative power, psychoanalysis can save the real.

#### 4.

Yet, hermeneutic criticism has reminded us modern folk, insofar as we are all (fatally) "enlightened", a bitter truth: that it is impossible to know something without interpreting, and that it is impossible to be definitively "objective". Post-Heideggerian thought insisted that the enlightened criticism of human illusions is itself in large part an illusion. Even structuralism, with its scientific pretenses, later became post-modernism, that is, it denounced the illusion of losing all illusions. And Lévi-Strauss himself admitted that a "scientific" analysis of myths must, in the end, assume a mythic pace, that is, inscribe itself as a new myth which links, in different ways, the myths of other cultures. (19) The "scientific" interpretation of other myths is itself, of necessity, our own society's myth. The difference between the myths of primitive people and those of mythologists is that the latter are convincing for us Europeans, demonstrating amply what primitive myths can mean for us.

At the core of this hermeneutic turn lies Nietzsche's famous sentence, "facts don't exist, only interpretations do"; (20) a phrase in itself to be taken as an interpretation, and obviously a provocation: every interpretation must be the interpretation of something, and particularly of a text or a speech. But a text or speech, like a coin, always has a factual side (ink spots, sounds, etc.), so that some facts must be interpreted as texts before these texts can then be interpreted. Does not the concept of interpretation necessarily assume the concept of fact? The Nietzschean paradox is that every interpreted fact/text must in its turn be considered an interpretation, and that this recognition of every interpretable fact as in its turn an interpretation, is an endless deference. So, the dream which the Freudian analyst interprets is the recounting of a dream, that is, a verbal interpretation of oneiric images which in their turn are "visual" interpretations of thoughts, drives, etc. But is there a point at which we can touch ground, or touch the real before interpreting, thus escaping the endless spiral of interpretations? Not for hermeneutics, for which this endless spiral of interpretations cannot stop at a basic fact. But if in psychoanalysis the deference cannot be stopped, it can be better directed, but towards what? Towards something real, but a real not to be confounded with objective facts.

A fact always proceeds from a public consensus. "Your car's tires are flat" is factual because anyone can ascertain if the tires are indeed flat. Were someone to assert the contrary, we would then immediately suspect that the above-mentioned statement does not depict a fact, but is rather an interpretation. For example, when the optimist says, "the glass is half full," and the pessimist counters with, "the glass is half empty", we are no longer confronted simply with a fact, but with interpretations. The real recedes: the relation between water and the glass can enter the sphere of knowledge, Kant would say, only thanks to categories; and optimism and pessimism are styles of our interpretative categorizing of the world. In fact, we state that something is interpretation precisely because it implies a possible public dissent. But psychoanalysis works neither with public consensus nor with dissent, it works with subjective, not private, interpretations.

But what is specific about analytic interpretations with respect to all the other interpretations that we produce during our lives, and above all as regards neurotic interpretations? If it is ultimately true that for Freud the neurotic is bound by certain interpretations, the the problem is: what basic difference is there between the neurotic interpretation which binds and the analytic interpretation which ought to unbind? Analytic interpretations "unbind" when they succeed in confronting the subject with a real not with objective facts of public consensus, but with something that dissents from the subjective interpretation. The analytic interpretation dis-interprets the subject, and so suddenly confronts him with that radical discordance (and discord) which distinguishes the real conceived in a non-objectivist sense.

Nevertheless, criticizing the illusion of not-interpreting does not result in the skeptical conclusion that one interpretation is as good as any other. Not because some interpretations are true and others false, but because some interpretations, unlike others, have grace, in the sense also that they "give the grace" of healing. Not because our discourse arrives at pure or elementary facts, at the latest data of a neurosis. But because some interpretations by revealing to the subject certain interpretations which bind him, which make him miss the real allow him to glimpse a 'real' which no discourse, no matter how "objective", could recount. And it is this "ek-static" evocation of a real which gives these interpretations their historical plausibility as well as that emotion of truth to the subject. Let us consider how.

## 5.

Many analysts harbor doubts as to whether the analyst, when he produces effects, does so simply by lavishly blurting out meanings. To provide Freudian, Jungian or Kleinian meanings appears to them a too intellectualistic activity, just words. With Elisabeth, Freud apparently produced effects not because he interpreted but because, in a certain sense, he acted out. The act that is, that point in which an interpretative myth engages the real must be deeply questioned. But which act, and which real?

One of my patients mentioned how appalling she found people who use cellular phones in public places. When I asked her if she was equally disturbed by people who conversed loudly about their private lives in public, she responded, "No, much less so". And when I pointed out that what really appeared to bother her was actually the telephone itself, she was struck by my observation, and quickly confessed that, as a child, she couldn't bear the telephone, and became deeply anxious every time it rang at home. Her fear of the telephone seemingly disappeared in adulthood, only to re-emerge with the appearance of cellular phones. This simple recollection sufficed to change her attitude towards cellular phones: she no longer reacted excessively when people used them in public. There was, in short, a small catharsis. Only later was the traumatic event reconstructed: in her childhood, the telephone signified for her the separation of her parents, and in particular, her father's calls to his family. But even before the reconstruction of her childlike interpretation of the telephone, it sufficed that the subject realized that her hostility towards cellular phones was "her own problem", something going back to a dark real. The point is that even my intervention must first be interpreted as an act before it can appear as an act: interpreting something as an analytic act remains a hermeneutic activity, and is based not on facts but on subjective recognition. However, if it is impossible to escape the command (arche) to interpret and the interpretative drive, and if, consequently, no interpretation in and of itself is truer than any other, does not one fall into a cynical relativism?

Many analysts bluntly admit that their being Jungian, Winnicottian, Lacanian, etc. is merely a question of personal taste, or circumstantial choice: "I belong to my own analyst's or supervisor's school because he gave me my formation". Such a relativistic attitude certainly has an enormous ethical advantage, as it makes all "wars" and disagreements between analytic schools appear ridiculous, and casts a certain peace over the tribe. And it makes the Freud-Klein controversies in a London bombarded by the Germans seem today like anachronistic diatribes. The "war" between impassioned prima donnas could at that time drag on because every school was convinced of being in possession of the truest, or most complete, interpretation, or even the secret of the analytic act itself, pushing all rival schools to be considered as heretical. Analytic wars are no more justifiable than religious wars. Yet analysts remain divided by their interpretative styles, and so much the better! What a boring world indeed if even psychoanalysis were homogeneous, and all analysts interpreted in the same way! As Mao said, we must let the hundred flowers flourish.

## 6.

But once the analyst corroded by philosophical acids or battered by tough professional disillusionments recognizes that his supposed Freudian knowledge is a myth, and that his analytic interpreting, even when it goes well, is not objectively founded, he will end up asking himself the crucial question: "What then distinguishes me from any other healer, from a doctor who produces placebo effects, from a hypnotist who convinces malleable spirits, from a preacher with his soul-saving interpretations?" In fact, if the specificity of analysis consists neither in prescribing behavior nor in calling upon visions of the world, but rather in calling only on the truth of the subject, then what remains of this specificity once this truth is recognized as just one of its interpretations, one of the 100 possible flowers? That is, when an analyst recognizes that his theory cannot fully contain its practice, but can at best provide a post-factum or ad hoc justification. In other words, is the analyst's job despite his high income or university tenure really a serious one?

Analytic interpretation would not be just an ordinary interpretation if it could demonstrate that it helped to express a truth. The analyst, freed from his "scientific" pretenses, could say: my interpretations and my attitude make a truth emerge which, for the subject, lights the way. My reaction to this woman's phobia of cellular phones helped one of the subject's truths to emerge, which was related to the separation from her father. Just as a truth emerged in the case of our limping Elizabeth von R.: her hysteria was her "limping" interpretation of femininity. According to this hermeneutic reinterpretation, it is no longer truth in an objectivist and scientific sense which is at play a Truth1 which, in the metaphysical tradition, is always *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Rather, it is another truth, a Truth2, more in the Heideggerian sense: an interpretation which is carried out on the horizon of a previous opening. In this second sense, the problem is

not whether a certain interpretation is true or false, correct or incorrect, but rather which truth emerges through the opening of the analytic rapport. This difference between the “two truths” can already be found in everyday language. If someone tells me that the tires of my car are flat and I verify this by stating, “it’s true that my car’s tires are flat!”, we are dealing with a Truth1, a correspondence between speech and things (a notion of truth which, according to Heidegger, in the Western metaphysical tradition reaches even scientific and technical thought, although it is common to much of everyday life). It is Tarski’s definition of truth: (21)

Truth1: “the tires are flat” only and only if the tires are flat. (22)

But after a film, we might say, “Woody Allen comes across as very true when he plays the awkward New Yorker”; or a man, after a night of lovemaking, can say to his woman, “tonight you were a real woman”. In these two cases, we are dealing with a sense of truth which certainly comes closer to the sense of Truth2. (23) In effect, when we say that Woody Allen was true, we don’t mean that in real life he really is neurotic, but that, as Aristotle stated in his Poetics, that he interprets the poios, the neurotic type. Thanks to his talent, the awkwardness appears to reveal its essence (24) through his playing a neurotic New Yorker. Analogously, when I say to my woman, “you were really a woman”, I don’t assume a formal definition of “womaness” which implies a woman’s behaving in bed in a certain way: I am instead testifying that, on that occasion, her “womaness” revealed itself openly in its authenticity, that her femininity emerged from behind a screen of reservedness. In both cases, there was an aletheia in the Greek etymological sense, like the falling away of a veil, the un-veiling of something (neurotic awkwardness, femininity) in its essentiality.

But, if we accept the hermeneutic reconstruction of psychoanalysis as a practice which aims at revealing something subjective such as Truth2, the question remains: if, as an analyst, I succeed in making this Truth2 emerge, how then do I interpret it? Can I communicate it to others be they colleagues or notas anything other than one of my latest interpretations? In the case of the actor, I can say: “Go see his latest film, and tell me if you too don’t find him true to life!”. But the analytic practice is a most private affair between two people, unlike science, art and philosophy which are essentially public. If I renounce dogmatism, how can I testify as to what takes place in analysis, and as to the fact that something really does happen (and which is essentially different from what happens in other religious, political, aesthetic, suggestive practices), without seeking in my own turn to interpret what is happening, without bearing witness for others? (25) But before this question can be answered, we must ask, with deliberated naïveté, what we are actually referring to when we say we are interpreting.

I will limit myself to examples drawn from everyday life, or found at the margins of the analytic practice (i.e., first sessions with patients unacquainted with psychoanalysis). Drawing examples from an analysis already well underway always raises suspicions as to their genuineness: the suspicion that, with time, a culture à deux is created, a subtle complicity between analyst and analysand, casts a shadow on the plausibility of nearly all analytic reports. The hermeneutics of daily life is more convincing. (26)

## 7.

(a) In the 17th century, especially in Germanic and Flemish countries, a pictorial style flourished that I would call that of the Dim-witted Doctor. A man, dressed in the somber, bizarre style of doctors of that period, is checking the pulse of a pallid young woman, unaware that her other hand grasps an open letter. His eyes widen with delight as he touches a finger to his temple, as if to say: “Now I understand!” In that period, everyone easily understood those vignettes: the doctor took the young woman’s illness “literally”, while “the cause” lay evidently in a love “letter”. Theater then dealt with similar situations. In Molière’s *Amour Médecin*, for example, the barbon father calls no less than five different doctors to treat his daughter Lucinde’s melancholic state, but the maid Lisette is the only one who really grasps the situation, repeating

(unheard) the refrain: “What she needs is a husband... a husband... a husband!” (27) The positivist doctor is concentrated on the pulse-rate, while the more insightful servant intuits the pulses of the heart. Freud left his mark on the 20th century because he imitated the servant Lisette: called upon as a doctor to treat hysterics, he dealt with the letter in the left hand, and not the pulse-rate on the right. (A century later, with their emphasis on the organic causes of disease, Western doctors appear to be returning to the right-hand pulse.)

(b) From a first session: A young woman whose parents were separated, and who had always lived with her mother in a sort of argumentative, fusional lovesought help for her anguish and phobias. Although extremely diffident towards any “psychologist”, her friends had convinced her in any case to seek help. She was moved when describing the mixed couples that she had noticed on a trip to New York, particularly when she thought about their possible offspring. Being the wild young psychologist that I was then, I said, “Of course, even you are a mulatto child”. She burst out laughing, finally relaxing, and admitted, “But of course, that’s exactly how it is”, adding that she had considered her father, whom she viewed quite ambivalently, as being “of another race”, and that she had always wondered how her mother could possibly have had a child with someone so different from her!

(c) A woman acquaintance of mine a passionate, militant pacifist during the hottest years of the Cold War during the 1960s, according to those close to her, began going overboard with her causes, becoming too obsessively anguished over a possible atomic war. But her anguish one day turned to serenity, although she continued her anti-nuclear militancy. What happened was that she had run into an old friend of hers, who had also been a militant pacifist. When she confided to him her anguish over an atomic war, her handsome, wise and bearded friend smiled and said, “You’ve taken it too much to heart because you’re afraid of death!”, a remark which had the effect of a Buddhist satori. She asked herself, “But am I really so afraid of dying? Actually, no more than anyone else”. Her “obsession” passed. Her serene friend knew nothing of psychoanalysis, and she herself did not consider her politically correct anguish pathological. A therapeutic act took place by means of a “wild” interpretation.

(d) One night I went to bed, not because I was really tired, but because I had to get up early the next morning. Before falling asleep, I experienced a series of hypnagogic images midway between thought and dream. I didn’t fall completely to sleep, and I awoke with the last semi-oneiric image still imprinted clearly in my consciousness: on a sort of stage, one man was beating with a stick another man who lay supine, as though trying to flatten him into the pavement; accompanying this image was the feeling, “I have to sleep!”. The meaning of this image was very clear upon my sudden awakening: I was dramatizing my trying to force myself to sleep. The two men represented my divided Self, with one part of my Self trying to force the other to cease being a Self. As is often the case with these images which fall somewhere between dream and reverie, I had a sort of “introspective verification” of the Freudian thesis on the nature of dreams. (28) That oneiric fantasy satisfied my desire to sleep to the degree that it played out the work depicted in that oneiric image; here, in an outright, conscious way, the dream sought to reconcile two contradictory desires, of which one is always, for Freud, the desire to sleep. That image had expressed my semi-awakened state, but in so expressing it, had helped me to sleep. The representation of my effort to sleep helped my effort, in the same way that screaming helps to bear pain. In fact, the Freudian theory of imaginary productions is that the representation of the conflict is part of the conflict itself, or that the representation of an impossibility... renders it (imaginatively) possible. But in this case, I had no need to interpret all this: I saw the meaning of those images, just as on a forehead beaded with sweat “we see” anguish and effort.

(e) One weekend, my companion and I had as house-guests a couple we knew only casually. The woman recounted a strange dream she had had while staying with us, a dream which took place in our house. In the dream, I announced to my companion and to our guests that I had to go out for a while, which threw my companion into a state of desperation, with her pleading that I stay, and crying next to our guests’ bed. But, all of a sudden, my companion got a hold of herself, slipped into something sexy and fixed her hair, so that I (in the dream), instead of “going there” as I had announced, stayed behind, and started to dance with her. End of the dream. My companion and I immediately sensed that, through her dream, our guest was revealing something about their relationship as a couple. We interpreted the dream as a mirroring projection on us: our

house-guest was jealous of her husband, fearing that he might wander sexually. With time, our house-guest became our close friend, and we came to learn that her situation was exactly as we had intuited. Her husband continuously had affairs with other women, and she was constant afraid that he would abandon her, at the most unexpected and inconvenient moments, to visit one of his lovers. Thinking that she was not interesting enough sexually, she tried to improve herself. In other words, that dream was a mirror representation: given certain external similarities between them and us, the dream had used us as actors in a drama whose characters were actually her husband and herself.

## 8.

The common feature of all these disparate examples of “interpretation” is that they are all convincing. Either because they produced a particular effect on the other, or because nearly anyone (perhaps even Popper!) would agree on their trueness. These interpretations produced “effects-affects of truth”: there is the feeling that they capture a truth, and this feeling in certain cases can bring about a change in the subject’s attitude. Even if there is no proof as to their truth, their plausibility is nonetheless considerable.

The last example shows that interpretations inspired by “analytic insights” have a weak, albeit non-negligible, predictive value. Every day an experienced analyst “guesses” situations or attitudes very close to reality, thanks to insightful interpretations. The diagnosis of someone as a hysteric, for example, implies certain expected behavioral traits: that the hysteric is probably frigid, or her love relationships approach the “impossible”, etc., is usually confirmed. Thus, what those psychologists and philosophers who reject psychoanalytic interpretations assert that these interpretations, unlike real scientific explanations, are without predictive value is not entirely true. Although the interpretative field does not coincide with the field of empirical knowledge, it nevertheless contains an aspect of knowledge (besides, any practice even Catholic confession or magic will over time create a halo of knowledge). It is thus not entirely true as some hermeneutical writers claim that analytic interpretations resemble, for example, literary explications on *The Divine Comedy*. For this reason, anyone who has had some experience with psychoanalysis often tends to use analytic interpretation even in everyday life, as an instrument for better understanding others. Our example is only one of the successful interpretations in everyday life. For example, every time someone starts out with: “I am not racist...”, even if we are Popperian, we can bet that he is a racist, and will surely continue on with something like, “...but Jews are a threat” or “...but we have to keep blacks out”. One need not have read Freud’s article on *Verneinung* (29) to be aware that certain negative premises should be read as positive.

From this capacity of interpretation, through dreams, slips of the tongue, etc., to understand something that the subject does not manifest either publicly, or at times even to himself, many have concluded that analysis is a practice of historical reconstruction or narration in the broadest sense of these terms. Analysis has nothing to do with physics or chemistry, which formulate conditional predictions (counterfactual) (30) which can be articulated as universal laws; instead, analysis resembles “historiographic” knowledge, like that found in paleontology, archaeology, historiography or detective investigation “historical” because they aim not at predicting the future, but at reconstructing a past or present. Countless novels and films have used the analogy between psychoanalysis and police methods. Although many turn up their noses at this, I believe that police investigation as “historical narration” comes conjecturally closest to psychoanalysis, despite one limitation: a police investigation aims at reconstructing a real event for instance, understanding how and when Louis Althusser strangled his wife while analytic reconstruction aims at reconstructing subjective processes, something impalpable why Althusser strangled her, what she represented for him, if he in fact felt “strangled” by her, etc. More than as an historian of events, the analyst works as an historian of historiography: he reconstructs the narration of the lives that each of us unknowingly “writes”. Furthermore, the “hermeneutic” activity of the analyst and the historical reconstruction through clues share an important element: both tend to reconstruct processes of the past which, nonetheless, have real consequences. This reconstruction does not take place by calling on general laws, as happens in the natural sciences i.e. “heat

always expands metals”but by reconstructing specific, singular, causal sequences (history never repeats itself!). Dinosaurs disappeared and are now merely reconstructed; however, they left behind traces, fossils, which confront us today. A crime’s effects are felt in the present: a person now is no longer with us. After all, it is not so important to know, as Jeffrey Masson believes, if Freud really did reconstruct true, actual abuses committed by adults against those who would be his future neurotic patients: what is important is that, in both cases, past processes and events—whether mental or physical—be reconstructed by a likely narration, and that a causal force be attributed to them in relation to the subjects’ actual problems. (31)

Analysis interprets interpretations as conjectures of a real. The analytic interpretation always has a side consisting of historical reconstruction, because it aims above all not at a general meaning, but at something which escapes meaning and intent, and which is instead on the order of an event. This is the hermeneutic limit of psychoanalysis (which many analysts have noted (32)), which does not simply enunciate possible meanings. Analytic interpretation needs an opaque horizon, a sort of originary trauma. But is this claim to evoke events illusory? As the analyst, unlike the historian (including geologists, paleontologists or detectives), reconstructs not real events and processes but only psychic ones (thus unshowable, all the more showable), does he aim only at reconstructing possible meanings, as in textual explanation?

In fact, even hermeneutical activity in the proper sense of the term—literature, art or in cultural anthropology when myths are analyzed—often goes beyond the mere conjecture of meaning when, somehow, it bets on a real which yields the text. Here, the detective’s narrative reconstruction and the hermeneutical interpretation of texts are not as far removed as they might first appear: both tend to produce, if not uncontested evidence, at least “supporting pieces”, elements which render a certain causal interpretation plausible: for example, the discovery of certain documents on Dante’s life might cast light on an obscure passage of his poem. The most famous philosophical contribution on art of this century is Heidegger’s article “On the Origin of Art Work”, which considers a painting by Van Gogh depicting a pair of soft boots (33). Heidegger elaborates on the supposition that they belong to peasants, but art historians have now demonstrated that, in fact, Van Gogh was painting his own boots. (34) A discovery which does not necessarily invalidate Heidegger’s aesthetic conception, but nonetheless, we can no longer “interpret” the world of peasants in those boots: they change Gestalt, and will henceforth appear as a sort of allegorical self-portrait of the painter, a metaphor of his fragility and solitude. Even art commentary is not entirely *verstehen* (comprehension); after all, factual documentation has its importance.

All of this goes against Diltheyan dualism, which has, in my opinion, blinded a good part of this century’s thought; this dualism drastically opposes the scientific-type explanation (*Erklärung*), which aimed at determining the causes, with an interpretative comprehension (*verstehen*), which aimed at revealing significances. Psychoanalysis’ historical bet consisted in shattering the Diltheyan barrier between explanation and comprehension, between the determination of causes and the enunciation of meanings. Those who contest psychoanalysis today are essentially saying that this attempt to breach the barrier failed: the “Dilthey Barrier” remains. (35) Be it a causal-mechanistic explanation, or the comprehensive intuition of meanings, it remains an *aut aut*. There is no third way out. And yet, the aforementioned cases illustrate interpretation’s explanatory force, its ability to conjecture a cause, and to itself act as a cause of behavior, although certainly not a cause in the sense of physics. Elisabeth’s hysterical abasia has no material cause, yet for an analyst it has a cause which in a certain sense is real, deriving from her difficulty to interpret her reality as a woman. In the case of our friend’s dream, our interpretation (as a mirror projection of her couple problems) implies that even the dream has a cause: to protect her sleep by deviating the anguish of her jealousy. Even if a dream shows nothing apparently real, the analytic interpretation tends basically to bring it into the real; in our example, the dream dodges the very real problem of that couple, that is, “how to hold on to this man whom I love, in such a way as to give him that sense of play, that dance he seeks elsewhere?” These two women are faced with a real that, in both cases, is depicted as the loss of a male “support”: the actual death of Elisabeth’s father, the husband’s fleeing in the case of our friend. Can one deny that the absence of a man is, for a woman, a real problem? Is not something which is really missing real? Psychopathology, dreams, or jokes all considerably affect the lives of those affected by them, because these thoughts, gestures, acts and fancies derive from a clash between a subject’s interpretations and that against

which he must measure himself: sex, life, death, lost love, failed [unrealized] dreams. Their origin lies not in what is real for the scientific researcher, but in what is real for the subject.

All the above examples of interpretation show that there is really no great leap between our daily 'living-with' and the sophisticated interpretations of the analytic setting. Yet many are convinced that analysis is something esoteric, no less so than Einstein's theory of relativity, and that, even more, common sense ends up subverted. Yet, Freud wrote the *Traumdeutung*, and *Deutung* also means "to translate into everyday language". Freud's success stems really from having given a "scientific-like" guarantee to certain popular knowledge, which has always been interpretive. To state that dreams fulfil a desire seems a great epistemological revolution, but in everyday language do we not call a dream a desire which we would like to fulfill? Even here, Freud did nothing other than take everyday language literally.

Because all these examples of interpretation should not be considered either true or false in the sense of Truth in the sense that the discourse is adequate to the thing they are striking for their likelihood. But for Popper, even truly scientific theories are never verified, but only more or less likely (insofar as more or less corroborated). So, how does the likelihood (when it exists) of these interpretations differ from that of scientific explanations, or even that of everyday interpretations? The difference is the fact that effective analytic interpretations are rather "real-like". Take again the example of *The Dim-witted Doctor* painting. A Popperian could go on and on about how our interpretation of these paintings is not falsifiable, yet at that time only a dimwit or simpleton would have missed the meaning (and even its clinical correctness). In "reading" any work of art, we do nothing other than interpret, that is, guess at meanings and/or causes. For example, in Orson Welles' film *The Magnificent Ambersons*, there is one scene where a girl is talking to her father about an Indian legend connected to the place where they are, about an Indian who goes away, but one day returns. Anyone viewing the film will understand that the Indian legend is an allegory of the girl's own love story. Worse yet, her father makes a comment from which anyone with a minimal intelligence (even if he is Popperian) would grasp that he has understood that she is talking about her boyfriend. Yet, in the script, there is no explicit sign connecting the beloved with the legend: we don't even know if the legend is real, if the girl simply made it up, or even if she is aware of its "private" meaning. Nothing is known, yet everything is understood.

If we can live among people, it is because we continually count on usually non-falsifiable, inconfutable interpretations. Even cognitivist analyses, which claim to renounce any interpretive rashness, in some way interpret behavior, but simply in a more reticent way than do analytic analyses. But not all interpretations we guess at in life produce the effects which analysts strive for: effects which I would not call therapeutic, but rather "the abandonment of old, unhappy interpretations". Psychoanalysis, like traditional popular knowledge, bets on the fact that dreams and symptoms are interpretable texts, but implies even further that these texts are in their turn interpretations having a causal force. For example, according to Freud, a dream always interprets a desire which, if not metaphorized in oneiric images, would lead to a real awakening, as happened in my own aforementioned dream. All the interpretations proposed above are likely enough, and thus produce effects insofar as they all, in various ways, reveal to the subject how and to what degree he interprets, put him finally in contact with a real, that is, with something discordant with respect to himself. "Real" in a sense not far from Lacan's meaning when he said, "le réel est l'impossible".

## 9.

All objectivist criticisms of psychoanalysis consist in the following: that "the affect of truth" induced by psychoanalysis are not publicly ascertainable facts. The fact that a girl says with conviction, "Yes, I am that mulatto child", has the same value for the objectivist as would any mystical (i.e., "I feel with certainty the presence of God within me") or aesthetic ("Cézanne allows me to grasp the deep structure of the real") statement: the subjective evidence is not public fact, and thus has zero evidential value. Besides, part of analytic philosophy ended up rejecting the very idea of any scientific psychology tout court: only social sciences are acceptable, insofar as they are sciences of populations, behavior and acts. Psychology, as a science of something "private", is nonsense. Objectivist criticism is partly correct: psychoanalysis cannot be

a science because it has nothing to do with facts; it does however permit a subjective experience and change connected to the effects-affects of truth.

We have mentioned that, we daily make conjectures and interpretations of “private events”. If my saying something makes another person blush, I interpret (usually correctly) that his blushing is a sign that my words have made him feel ashamed; for example, blushing is often interpreted as a confession. The fact that the feeling of shame is a “private fact” does not at all weaken the plausibility of my interpretive inference. The idea that any convincing discourse on internal processes is impossible is a corollary of a Cartesian prejudice, which in a dichotomous fashion splits the *res cogitans* from the *res extensa*. But even if the effect-affect of Truth2 brought about by certain interpretations were only an illusion, the problem would remain as to why certain interpretations unleash this illusion, while others don't. The analyst can even think that the subjective consensus on his interpretations is an illusion: what remains interesting is what causes this illusory effect-affect. To reduce it generically to suggestion would be tantamount to washing one's hands of the problem.

Usually, any suggestive power the analyst has acquired over his patients results from having in the past produced these affects-effects of truth, and not vice versa. If the analyst becomes a “subject supposed to know”, to use Lacan's expression, it is usually because he has shown, thanks to his interpretations, his... know how. Now, the cause producing these effects does not belong to Truth2 alone: the cause is the confrontation with a real, that is, with an impossibility. And when the analyst recounts his practice, he does not recount facts: he must seek and here his style, of speaking and of writing, becomes essential to bear witness to the subject's encounter with a real, that is, with something absolutely dissonant from his interpretative field. The analyst is a witness, not a judge. He is an empirical explorer, like Livingstone, and not a man of science.

The analyst can witness that “an encounter with the real took place” to the degree that he, as Lacan once said, is an amateur du réel, a dilettante of (one who takes delight in) the real. Psychoanalysis is probably in crisis today because of the success of an entirely different type of culture, that of the virtual; psychoanalysis can prosper only insofar as subjects prefer the real to the virtual. The mistake often committed by the analyst is believing that his power lies in his interpretations insofar as they are explanatory, and not in what they permit to be “realized”: the fact that a subject grasps as evident something that heretofore escaped him because he shunned the real. All interpretations are believed to constitute a knowledge, when instead they are merely the instruments, something makeshift, of a practice which helps individuals to see more clearly into what produces effects/affects in them. The Freudian interpretation of dreams or of slips of the tongue, for example, is not a theory explaining all dreams and all slips, because it lacks the universalistic claims of scientific theories. The Freudian interpretation of dreams or slips is interesting only insofar as it permits certain subjects, through certain dreams and certain slips, to come into contact with a subjective truth.<sup>(36)</sup> So that, as an extreme, the analyst would not even need words in order to interpret. A sudden cough, a glance, a smile would suffice to produce its effect.

## 10.

We are convinced that our interpretation of the paintings of *The Dull Doctor* is correct not so much because it corresponds to the painter's intentions (which we cannot know), but because it calls on our capacity to grasp a different causality: from the explanatory order of sciences, it brings us back to the ability to see what has power and force not in general, but in singular cases. The doctor in the painting is unaware that the opened letter is the cause of the young woman's illness, in the primitive, “Greek” sense of “cause” (aition): in the sense that it is “one's fault”. Freud told us that our interpretations cause certain phenomena that we call psychic: hysteric attacks, dreams, parapraxis, etc. (what we might call “interpretative formations”). Lisette, Molière's maid, would say that the letter of the beloved Clitandre is to blame for Lucinde's illness. Freud attempted to say something similar. Thus psychoanalysis, although it does not follow the scientific method, is nonetheless linked to an empirical, grounded (or better, face-to-face) knowledge similar to that of historiographic narratives (although what psychoanalysis reconstructs are not material events of the past, but subjective interpretations of the real). Psychoanalysis is not experimental, but has experience. Of what? Of

the way in which subjects interpret the real, finding a meaning in it, while at the same time eschewing this real. In fact, psychoanalysis reconstructs certain subjective interpretations as the cause-fault of a series of so-called “psychic” events.

The neurotic strives to give meaning to the forceful event, he attempts to tame it. In our example, she does not say, “Clitandre no longer loves me,” but rather, “I don’t care at all about Clitandre, the cause of my illness is perhaps some heart problem”. The “problem of the heart” is interpreted as a cardiological problem, or, in Elisabeth von R.’s case, as a muscular problem. (37) Freud tried to say this when he spoke of Abwehr, a term poorly translated as “defense”, but which is closer to “avoid” or “shun”. To shun drives, as the analytic tradition has repeated, but drives as something which is dissonant in myself. In that 17th century painting, we interpret the girl’s illness as a way of evading the real cause-fault, of evading the real. Freud, unlike Molière’s doctor, unveiled the hysterical interpretation, and thus brought subjects back to that real (as in those paintings, a loss, a lack, an absence) which their symptoms, insofar as interpretations, sought to evade. The woman obsessed by atomic war was probably trying to give the shape of an avoidable, and thus anguishing, event (war), to an unavoidable one: her own death. In my oneiric fantasy, I fell asleep dreaming of forcing myself to fall asleep. In all cases, the symptom allows the non-“realization” of something impossible, as Lacan would say. The neurotic’s interpretation, whether “realistic” as in hysteria, or “mentalist” as in obsession, twists the real, spins around it, producing dreams or skin eruptions, delusions or obsessions: the real eludes him, he lacks it. And, lacking it, he makes of it his manque, as Lacan would put it. Freud interpreted this avoidance as, above all, the avoidance of the recognition of sexuality and subsequently of death. Today, perhaps, analysts have taught us that there are many other things as well that they avoid. Freud’s theory is out of style, but his act of opening a horizon on the real seduces us yet.

In effect, if the woman obsessed by war renounced that obsession, it was not because the real object of her fear was finally expressed, but because it was shown to her that her death will always remain for her something unspeakable. If I say, “Place red roses on my grave”, I am not actually speaking of my death, but of what my death will be for others. Our death is beyond anguish: it must be interpreted to anguish us, and the real of death must be camouflaged because its gloomy mask terrifies us. The intellectualistic error of psychoanalysts is to think that “telling the truth” is the cause of healing, whence their therapeutic failures. What “healed” in the bearded man’s wit was instead his smile, his having shown that one can even be unafraid of death, precisely by not wanting to evade it. The fear of a nuclear holocaust, no matter how justified realistically, was nevertheless a metaphor, a mask, an Abwehr. Like every neurosis, it gives a form realistic or mentalistic, hysterical, obsessional or phobic to the suffering to shield one from the real. Elisabeth von R.’s symptoms signified the impossible love for a man. But once the impossibility of true love was assumed, life could go on; Elisabeth “realized” this because Freud himself unwittingly proposed himself as the last impossible love. By the same token, my saying to the girl, “You are trying to put two different races together,” produced an effect-affect of truth in her, not because I ventured the real reason for her fascination for mulatto children (we will never know if this mini-myth were true, in the sense of Truth1), but because my quip turned her towards something impossible, because it was terribly real: she could not be the fruit of a maternal parthenogenesis. She will never be able to free herself of this “thing” the coupling of two so different parents. But she knows/does not know that she needs that male world, just as her mother once did: she would like to make that Other hers, that Other who, in some ways, is already within her. In her emotion over mulatto children, she reveals and veils at the same time her own, and that of every human, mulatto reality, born of two different sexes. The pacifist woman smiled because she admitted that nothing could be done against death; the girl smiled because she admitted that nothing could be done against sexuality.

But everything I am saying is itself only interpretation in short, chatter. And in my chattering, I attempt to say how interpretations are the cause of a subject’s actual problems. Because, if it is true that every human being can do nothing less than interpret (thus exposing himself to every kind of suffering and failure), still, the recognition that this necessary interpreting allows him a certain evasion can help him to bear the impossible.

## Notes:

1 – This diffidence shows up in quite diverse analysts, including those influenced by cognitivism, Lacanians (above all, Jacques-Alain Miller) and Winnicottians (see Masud R. Khan's latest book, *The Long Wait and Other Psychoanalytic Narratives* [New York: Summit Books, 1989]), etc.

2 – Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* (1892-95), S.E., 2, p. 159.

3 – *Ibid.*, p. 160.

4 – *Ibid.*, p. 140.

5 – Freud, *GW*, 1, p. 202. *Rechthaberish* is “someone who wants to be always right”, who is too sure of himself. Freud himself will become a victim of this anti-male arrogance: Elisabeth continually reproached Freud for her lack of improvement and, Freud adds, “when she looked at me as she said this with a sly look of satisfaction (*listig-schadenfroh*) at my discomfiture, I could not help being reminded of old Herr von R.'s judgement about his favourite daughter that she was often ‘cheeky’ (*keck*) and ‘ill-behaved’ (*schlimm*)”. Elisabeth continually challenges the male who has power (Freud included).

6 – *Studies on Hysteria*, *cit.*, p. 140.

7 – *Ibid.*, p. 155.

8 – *Ibid.*, p. 145-6.

9 – *Ibid.*, p. 137; *GW*, p. 198.

10 – *Ibid.*, p. 160; *GW*, p. 227.

11 – *Ibid.*, p. 152; *GW*, p. 217.

12 – *Ibid.*, p. 142.

13 – *Ibid.*, p. 148.

14 – *Ibid.*, p. 140.

15 – *Ibid.*, p. 160; *GW*, p. 226.

16 – Unlike with Elisabeth, with Dora (*SE*, 7, pp. 7-121) this exploit did not suffice: it was not enough to make her confess, “I love Mr. K”. In Dora's case it would have been necessary for her to say, “only your (Freud's) love can extricate me from this hellish family quadrille!” Were even more likely interpretations, or even (perhaps non-analytic) acts, necessary?

17 – This “need to interpret” evokes the a priori categories of the Kantian transcendental Ego, that is, the forms structuring our experience and practice. Even if Hegel and Nietzsche came between Kant and us: unlike the Kantian categories, interpretations are not universal categories of the Mind, but historically produced, and thus changeable, forms.

18 – This mutation is perhaps connected to the abandonment of the Socratic model of “cure” (“recognize yourself in what appears to you as extraneous, and you will be free”) which inspired psychoanalysis: it is no longer thought that recognition of the truth frees one from the symptom, but rather, that only that which frees one from the symptom is true.

19 – *Cfr.*, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Overture”, *Le cru et le cuit* (Paris: Plon 1964).

20 – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Wille zur Macht*, Aph. 481.

21 – Viktor Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, IV, 1944; republished in Leonard Linsky, ed., *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois, 1952).

22 – The fact that the tires are flat is considered (as any Hegelian epistemologist, such as Lakatos or Feyerabend, would immediately observe) as an alternative decision, such as the decision taken by a judge faced with two logoi, with two theses: one stating that “the tires are flat” and the other that “the tires are not flat”. This factual reality is not the real which we will shortly discuss, because it is caught up in a dialogical competition, it is that which we will call upon to decide between diverse descriptions (themselves interpretations) of the world: it is a selector of discourses. The real we want to put forward is something which our language can “caress” only in an indirect way.

23 – I could be accused of male chauvinism, having chosen this example and not the contrary of a woman who says, “Tonight you were a real man!” In fact, the latter seems rather closer to the “objectivist” sense of Truth1: one expects a man to live up to his inherent masculinity. Virility carries a structure of Truth1, that is of “adequateness”, while our way of considering femininity seemingly tends more towards a soft or “hermeneutic” acceptance of Truth2.

24 – Aristotle would have said that Allen’s performance was “more philosophical”: poetry (poiesis: the production of writings) is “more philosophical and spoudaioteron [more elevated, serious]” than historiography, that is, of the factual story, precisely because it simulates the type, and not the token (event).

25 – Modern hermeneutic thought counters the primacy of verification in the objectivist sense with the instance of witnessing. In a factual verification, only my discourse and the fact external to it are confronted; witnessing is from the start an inter-subjective commitment to “tell the truth”.

26 – Analysts rarely evoke any more this “wild” dimension of interpretation, precisely because they want to give analysis a more respectable image, that of a “clinical laboratory”. Freud, on the other hand, often drew examples from everyday life, and I will follow his example.

27 – Act I, scene 3.

28 – Even Ferenczi had singled out some “introspective evidence” of the Freudian theory of dreams. Ferenczi’s “Guided Dreams” of 1912 (*Opere*, vol. 1 [Milan: Cortina 1989], p. 175-6) examines cases of a “dream within a dream”, that is, when the dreamer uses a dream to “prolong” his sleep, thus becoming aware that he is dreaming, and modifying his dreams to have more satisfying outcomes: “These types of dreams have a theoretical interest, in that they in some way represent implicitly the recognition that dreams tend to fulfil a desire.”

29 – Freud, “Negation” (1925), SE, 19, pp. 235-240.

30 – A contrafactual statement is in fact a conditional prediction, of the type, “if we have x, if we have y, ..., then we get z: (i.e., “if a match is struck, and if it contains enough sulphur, etc., then it will light”). Laws of physics are formulated in a substantially contrafactual form.

31 – Jeffrey Masson and others who believe that real abuses during childhood are the cause of neurosis, remain fundamentally in the Freudian track: these therapists gamble everything on real, rather than mental, events or processes, but in every case, they attribute to past events or processes a causal power over the present state.

32 – For example, Jean Laplanche in “Aims of the Psychoanalytical Process”, *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, 5, 1997, pp. 69-80.

33 In Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950).

34 – Meyer Shapiro, “The Still Life as a Personal Object. A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh”, in Marianne L. Simmel, ed., *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein* (New York: Springer, 1968). See also: Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), pp. 293 sgg.

35 – Here lies the gist of the demolition of psychoanalysis' credibility by, for example, Jacques Bouveresse, in *Wittgenstein Reads Freud. The Myth of the Unconscious*, transl. by Carol Cosman (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995).

36 – Besides, and by luck, the experienced analyst never reacts “scientifically”; for example, he does not interpret all the dreams or slips of tongue recounted by the analysand, but only those that can bring about a blitz of truth, a glance at a real.

37 – The hysteric's error is much like that of her doctor. The hysteric whom Freud sees is “a positivist”; Freud's achievement consisted in discovering that hysteria is an iatrogenic illness in the sense that the hysterical symptom has a medical form.