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Freud and the Dream of Dreams (1)

The first detailed interpretation of a dream presented by Freud was of the one he himself had the night of July 23/24, 1895, and analyzed the next morning. This so-called “dream of Irma” paved the way to the unconscious and represents the cornerstone of psychoanalysis.

Since about five years elapsed between the oneiric experience and its publication in 1900, we shall never know what difference there is between the interpretation made immediately, upon awakening, and its final formulation in print. Nonetheless, during that period Freud was making great exterior and conceptual breakthroughs, which led him to attribute a fundamental value to his “pilot dream”, the paradigm for all subsequent interpretation.

No one has ever doubted the legitimacy of Freud’s evaluation, however it might be useful to review the external and internal motives of that choice. Certain recurring landscape metaphors may help us visualize the mental outlook and identify the place of the “dream par excellence” of Freud’s life and work. Four years after that oneiric experience, on August 6, 1899, while Freud was completing the draft of Die Traumdeutung, he wrote to his friend Fliess, outlining the structure of his work:

The whole thing is planned on the model of an imaginary walk (Spaziergansphantasie). At the beginning, the dark forest of authors (who do not see the trees), hopelessly lost on wrong tracks. Then a concealed pass through which I lead the reader my specimen dream with its peculiarities, details, indiscretions, bad jokes and then suddenly the high ground and the view and the question: which way do you wish to go now? (2)

The dark woods represent the first chapter, devoted to reviewing the “obtuse” studies of the past, so the narrow hidden passage should correspond to the beginning of the second chapter, dedicated to relating the Dream of Irma. From the narrow hidden passage, Freud’s interpretation climbs to reach a height, from which opens up a horizon so vast as to disorient him, leading Freud in fact to plead to be shown a destination. “Where do you want to arrive?”, asks Freud with a deferential tone, speaking to ghostly presences. In them we can personify the unconscious thoughts that led Freud and that, in the dream of Irma, led the interpretation beyond his intentions.

This symbolic geography, which assigns a crucial role to the first dream, is then returned to and confirmed at the opening of the third chapter of Die Traumdeutung, “A Dream is the Fulfilment of a Wish”. As Freud wrote:

When, after passing through a narrow defile, we suddenly emerge upon a piece of high ground, where the path divides and the finest prospects open up on every side, we may pause for a moment and consider in which direction we shall first turn our steps. (3)

The quiet tone with which he sets about his choice quite different from the dismayed question presented in his correspondence with Fliess tells us that the course to follow has already been traced.

Such a recognition produces sudden clarity. That same clarity, as we shall see, makes the formula of “Trimethylamine” stand out in the eyes of the dreamer.

I note how the metaphor of the height contrasts with the verse from book VII of Virgil’s Aeneid, used as an opening in Interpretation of Dreams: “Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo”. Indeed, the book is presented as an initiatory journey proceeding toward the Underworld a katabasis like other fundamental works of our civilization, such as Plato’s Republic and Dante’s Divine Comedy.

Thus, the analytic itinerary, which tends towards the sublime vision of truth and goodness, begins with a descent, a narrow and murky stretch in which it would be easy to become lost. At last a height is reached, from which a forest is visible, representing the inextricable tangle which forms the reality of things. However, the view from above does not end at the surrounding slopes, and the dreamer is beckoned beyond the woods, toward the indistinguishable. In Interpretation of Dreams, in the introduction to The Psychology of the Dream-processes in chapter VII, Freud wrote:

But before starting off along this new path, it will be well to pause and look around, to see whether in the course of our journey up to this point we have overlooked anything of importance. For it must be clearly understood that the easy and agreeable portion of our journey lies behind us. Hitherto unless I am greatly mistaken, all the paths along which we have traveled have led us towards the light towards elucidation and fuller understanding. But as soon as we endeavor to penetrate more deeply into the mental process involved in dreaming, every path will end in darkness. (4)

Paradoxically, in thought which is founded on vision, the cognitive itinerary leads from darkness to darkness, even while crossing through light that reveals the undefinable openness of the beginning and end of the journey. The analysis goes from the past to the future crossing through the present, the hic et nunc of interpretation, during which, for a moment, there is a flash of clarity. Vis-à-vis the time of interpretation, Freud ponders:

And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is of course no question of that. It would be truer to say instead that they give us knowledge of the past. For dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been molded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past. (5)

This declaration so involved is the final part of Interpretation of Dreams. Something which confers it an oracular aura.
It is precisely while Freud, an heir to the biblical Joseph, opens the dream interpretation to the future, that he orients his perspective towards the past, following the classics’ cyclic course of time.

In his tormented speculating (which develops within Hebrew culture far more than was hitherto suspected) we may discern a shift from prophecy to hermeneutics, from theological history to human history. As Spinoza would have it, it isn’t prophecy which explains history according to Freud, but historic inquiry which reestablishes the true sense of prophecies (6). The meanings of dreams come into being a posteriori, thanks to their connection with the dreamers’ biographies. In this sense Freud reformulates the Bible’s prophetic word, understood as God’s intervention in history, by assigning it the value of human truth. A truth constructed through psychoanalytic work in its progress from (deconstructing) analysis toward (interpreting) synthesis and then again toward analysis, on a course known to be interminable. Thus, he

replaces the escatologic time of religion with the narrative one of history. But his way of reformulating is not that simple. Freud, who does not agree with the linearity of the historiography of Enlightenment, with its idea of progress, introduces a dimension of counter-time where end and beginning are joined.

Even while he is replacing the sacred dimension of prophecy with the profane dimension of hermeneutic science, Freud denies what he seems to be advocating, a complete laicization of history. In a sense, the past prefigures the future, but this does not happen by prolonging its trajectories in a Cartesian perspective. As the trauma at the basis of hysteria demonstrates, there is no cause-effect consequentiality in the unconscious. It is rather the atemporal element of time, the resistance to motion, the immodified aspect of experience, the unthought of in thought that we can predict will return in the unintentional form of the repetition compulsion. Even if, as Fornari believes, the fundamental motivation of the unconscious is not the search for pleasure or the avoidance of displeasure but the tendency to signify (7), we must nonetheless agree with Lacan when he states that unconscious signification is, as such, nonsensical, so as to be an unavoidable call to interpretation.

Evoking unconscious desires as the motors of dreams, Freud introduces an element extraneous to chronology, a factor that does not lend itself to historicization. Thus the book with which he founded psychoanalysis ends with an open problem, which he would take up twenty years later. Only then was Freud finally able to accept the challenge which arises at the conclusion of Interpretation of Dreams, and write Beyond the Pleasure Principle.

Freud was convinced that Die Traumdeutung would represent for our culture a point of no return. On June 12, 1900 he wrote to Fliess not without a touch of self-irony that perhaps, one day, at the place where he achieved his first complete work of interpretation, a marble plaque would be placed which would read: “In this house, on July 24, 1895, the secret of dreams was revealed to Dr. Sigmund Freud.” I would like to call attention to the passive character, in the grammatical construction of the sentence, of the dreamer and interpreter, to whom the secret of dreams was revealed, as if in an impersonal instance in which we can recognize the unconscious’ compulsion to signify, as well as the ambiguous character of signification itself.

The dream of Irma as an experience and as the cornerstone of ‘Die Traumdeutung”

The dream occurred at the end of July, 1895. The Freud family was spending its holidays at the Belle Vue castle, rented out to summer guests. The writing adorning the façade of this eclectic building evokes the fundamental function Freud attributes to visions in producing and theorizing psychoanalytic knowledge.

During the night of July 24, Freud “saw” the dream and the next morning interpreted it fully. I might point out that “the isolated house called Belle Vue” not only hosted the dreamer but also provided, as we shall see, the location for the dream.

In his For the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Freud warns us that the discovery and interpretation of dreams represents the immediate consequence of his innovation in the technique for in-depth exploration of neurotic symptoms, that is, the replacement of hypnosis with free association (8).

Applying the free association method with patients, resulted in their spontaneously narrating their dreams. Under analysis, oneiric contents proved to be, like symptoms, capable of revealing precise meanings.

The subject at hand is, first and foremost, Freud himself, who was involved, in the late summer of 1895, in the initial phases of his self-analysis. But not only: the incident is part of an intense theoretic attempt to outline a general system for psychology which was interrupted. Published posthumously, in 1950, with the title Project for a Psychology, the manuscript anticipated many elements of the theory of dreams which would receive their final shape in the Interpretation, in which dreams officially would attain the “theoretical value as a paradigm” because their logic is the logic of the unconscious (9). All of this is a confirmation of the fact that the Dream of Irma, the “pilot dream,” represents a crucial experience, occurring at a moment of great creativity for Freud.

On October 23, 1896, Jacob Freud, a central figure in his son Sigmund's life, died. The following November 2, the latter wrote to Fliess: "By the time he died, his life had long been over, but in [my] inner self the whole past has been reawakened by this event. I now feel quite uprooted." (10) On May 16, 1897, Freud revealed to his friend: "I felt impelled to start working on the dream" (11). At the same time and in a parallel way another project matured in him as well: to undergo, himself, an analysis similar to the one he undertook with his patients.

Seven months later, in May of 1897 (a year which Jones has called "the acme of Freud's life"), he began drafting his Interpretation of Dreams.

Thus, Die Traumdeutung appears to be the result of a dual journey, one in which theoretical elaboration proceeded hand in hand with self treatment and self knowledge.

During the summer of 1908, confirming his initial proposition, Freud wrote in the foreword to the second edition:

For this book has a further subjective significance for me personally a significance which I only grasped after I had completed it. It was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life. (12)

In For the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement (1914), Freud reveals to us that Interpretation of Dreams had been complete as regard its essential elements since 1896, even though it was drafted only during the summer of 1899 (13). Finished in September, 1899, after two years' work, the book was published on November 4, 1899, but the publisher had it dated 1900, in order to inaugurate the new century. About a hundred years later, we realize that this book represents both the self-analysis of a single individual and the point of arrival of a millennial culture.

In the period from 1897 to 1900, Freud solved his Oedipal complex, ridding himself, as far as that is possible, of the unsolved conflicts in his relationship with his parents. Two dates in his biography testify to the fact that the neurotic blocks that inhibited his thought were overcome, then his speculation and action gained a freedom of motion.
As far as the solution of his paternal complex is concerned, his meditation upon his famous amnesia of the name "Signorelli" appears very relevant (this forgetting was reported in Psychopathology of Everyday Life, in 1901).
In Orvieto, during his trip to Italy in 1897, Freud admired "the magnificent frescoes of the 'Four Last Things'" by Luca Signorelli, but strangely, during his trip to Dalmatia the following year, he forgot the name of this painter he knew so well (14). At the end of a careful self analysis, the author leads us, following a plan of his own design, to the roots of the unconscious. There are stored the repressed thoughts related to the great principles regulating all living beings: death and sexuality. His father's death becomes a meditation on death, valid for everybody, an universal acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. What was most difficult to rid himself of was his maternal complex, which was connected with the pre-oedipal, primal plane, on which healing is demonstrated through action rather than thought.

In fact, in 1901, during another of his trips to Italy, Freud finally managed to see Rome. What had kept him away from the Capital was a neurotic block, a phobia. Nonetheless, thanks to his explicit identification with Hannibal, in Freud's wish to spend Easter in Rome we perceive his dream of conciliating his own Semitic culture with gentile culture, represented by the Rome of the Popes.

But Freud identified the eternal city with his mother, thus projecting on a geographic location that mixture of attraction and interdiction which every son feels for the woman who gave him life. It is true that Freud had since October 1897 been able (as his famous letter to Fliess proves) to recognize in himself elements of the Oedipal complex, but, as in every analysis, he needed further work to solve the conflicts connected to it, to relive what had been mentally anticipated as a conceptual intuition. In this sense the dream of Irma is a pre-

figuration, along oneiric visual lines, of Freud's entire journey of self analysis.

Judging whether or not what is valid for our author ultimately acquires a general significance, will be left to the dream's pregnancy and to the hermeneutic ability of its interpreter.

Analysis of the dream of Irma in the light of Lacan's teachings

Lacan presented the dream of Irma's injection in his 1954-5 seminar. The text of those lessons was published in France in 1978 (15).

Lacan approaches Interpretation of Dreams as though it were a sacred text, at once motionless in its religiousness and open, through various generations, to a sequence of, often conflicting, interpretations. Referring to this, he speaks of 're-interpretation', all the while demonstrating his faithfulness to the original text. The dream is not in time, but time does change the gaze through which we examine it. We are the ones to change our stance in relation to it.
In the words of Freud's latest biographer, Peter Gay:

> The dream of Irma's injection was a carefully constructed, highly intricate scenario designed at least in part to rescue Freud's idealized image of Fliess in defiance of some damning evidence. (16)

We can accept this hypothesis, which is substantiated by certain silences in the correspondence between the two men, but only by considering Fliess as Freud's Alter-ego figure, his idealized Ego. Thus, analysis returns to that intra-psychic dimension to which it belongs. Here Freud is initially dealing with the Ego's passion: recognition. As Hegel states it in Phenomenology of the Mind, there is no subjectivity outside the dialectic of reciprocity. Self recognition, as it occurs only within a relationship, implies a recognition of the Other. The Master, exposing himself to the risk of death, submits his existence to his Servant's recognition. The latter, fearing death, withdraws from the contest. In such a way two complementary but non-symmetrical positions are defined. The Master, by submitting to the other's recognition and hence to the possibility of negation, acquires, in one move, superiority and dependence. For his part, the Servant, who is such only in relation to the Master, has had placed in his hands the identity of the other, of whom he is at once subject and arbiter. This way, subjectivity is shaped as an effect of a relationship, one which is reciprocal albeit asymmetrical. Likewise, Freud, in the oneiric reality, asks the others for a professional recognition which is, beyond the contingent sphere, an existential permission. While Freud apparently questions his colleagues about his worth as a therapist, what he is really concerned about is his position in the world as a subject. Here "subject" implies several dimensions which are closely related to each other. First of all, that of the "narrating Ego", which, during psychoanalytic work, gains consistency as protagonist of its own story in spite of the linguistic laceration between the narrating "I" and the "I" in the narration. But the subject also involves the imaginary Ego, which is continuously tested by means of its confrontation with the Other, inexorably suspended from the Other's recognition. Finally, the symbolic subject may have two meanings: both as an expression of unconscious desires and as the Latin meaning of subjectum, "subjected to", "subjugated by", its intentions. In any case, the subject is divided internally by the unconscious' shadow.

Returning to the great halls of Belle Vue castle, where the oneiric feast takes place, we find Freud busy reasserting his ideal Ego, undermined by his feelings of guilt, that the dream considers a result of the silent reproach of a colleague. At this point Lacan raised an objection that was unavoidable: How could Freud, who used this dream to demonstrate the function of unconscious desires in the activation of dreams, be content with the presentation of a dream that was fully explained "by the satisfaction of a desire which one cannot but call preconscious, and even entirely conscious?" (17). If this is the case, the importance Freud attributed to the dream of Irma seems paradoxical, to say the least. On the other hand, Freud felt he had made a decisive step towards the unconscious and if that was his impression, Lacan concludes, it means he

had. But, at this point, it is up to his successors to reveal what was handed down as an enigma. Lacan showed (rather than demonstrated) how the hidden content of the sample dream is not the satisfaction of daytime desires but rather the object of Freud's cognitive passion, concerning the statute of the unconscious. In a sense, the dream of Irma is the dream of psychoanalysis itself, as in it Freud outlines both the ends and the object of his inquiry.

Going back to the manifest content, the reason for the contest is Irma, towards whom Freud confesses a certain amorous involvement. Irma was a patient Freud had been unable to cure and whose trust he had also been unable to earn, even though he had suggested to her the use of the "right solution" (Lösung). This is an ambiguous term referring both to a chemical compound to be injected and to the resolution of a conflict.

Who is Irma? She is a composite figure. According to Peter Gay, she represents first of all Anna Lichtheim, the daughter of his religion instructor from the time of junior high school and a great friend of his wife's. A relation which forces him to face his belonging to Jewish culture, which he had always attempted to minimize. But Irma also resembles beyond any doubt Emma Eckstein, the main character in an incident of malpractice in which Freud, and even more so Fliess, had a far from positive role. In the course of surgery, the latter had forgotten a good half-meter of gauze in the patient's nasal conchae. So Irma personifies any doctor's nightmare: the inability to cure one's patient both from a psychological and a somatic point of view.

Nonetheless, the dreamer charges her with the evaluation he is to receive, even before appealing to his colleagues. In this predilection we see a characteristic trait of the relation between the sexes: the function of arbiter that men attribute to the opposite sex (think of the domina, mistress, in the world of chivalry) in the contest with their peers.

If Irma occupies an idealized position, she does so improperly: as a patient she is not above the fray. Freud does everything to make her appear guilty of her symptoms, so he can feel, as her therapist, personally innocent.

Struck by her complaining (something is suffocating her [zusammenschnüren]), Freud calls her to the window and asks her to open her mouth. But Irma resists, not just the solution Freud offers her, but the examination as well.

At this point free associations place another two suffering women alongside the sick woman: Freud's wife, who was pregnant at the time, and a seductive young woman whom Freud reputes smarter than Irma and would like to have as a patient.

So far, we have remained at the level of real relationships, with all their imaginary coloring. But when Freud "sees" Irma's throat though during the medical examinations she has never opened her mouth everything changes. Returning to the scene in the dream: "She then opened her mouth properly Freud wrote and on the right I found a big white patch; at another place I saw extensive whitish gray scabs upon some remarkable curly structures which were evidently modeled on the turbinal bones of the nose." (18)

The reference to Emma Eckstein's unfortunate surgical operation is immediate. And equally immediate is also Freud's fear that his frequent use of cocaine might have caused the necrosis in his nasal conchae: shortly thereafter he too would have to undergo a painful operation. But the associations lead him even further back, reminding him of the awful suggestion given once to his friend Ernst Fleishl von Marxow, to replace morphine with cocaine. An irresponsible suggestion which led to his unfortunate friend's precocious death.

All of this must be seen against the backdrop of Fliess' theory about the close correspondence between the nose and the genital organs, and their connection to hysteria. Nonetheless, in this scene there is a distance from the everyday order, from the network of interpersonal relations, which cannot be closed, a real Medusa's head revealing something unnamable (19). Before it, thought is swept away by an excess of anguish through which shines a flash of truth (20).

Lacan commented, in a redundant style reminiscent of baroque iconography:

> There's a horrendous discovery here, that of the flesh one never sees, the foundation of things, the other side of the head, of the face, the secretory glands par excellence, the flesh from which everything exudes, at the very heart of the mystery, the flesh in as much as it is suffering, is formless, in as much as its form in itself is something which provokes anxiety. (21)

But anxiety, to cite Lacan's famous aphorism, "is a feeling which never deceives you" (22). But it doesn't defer to a specific object as its point of reference. Rather, anguish expresses the impotence of knowledge, its limit.

"Anxiety Heidegger wrote in Being and Time 'does not know' what that in the face of which it is anxious is." (23)
Its truth is not that of a (scientific) discovery, but of a (religious) revelation: it pertains to the dimension of sacredness, to its ability to indicate rather than signify. Lacan translated it in Biblical terms of "You are this, which is so far from you, this which is the ultimate formlessness". And noted: "Freud comes upon a revelation of the type, Mene, Tekel, Peres at the height of his need to see, to know, which was until then expressed in the dialogue of the ego with the object" (24). At this point we would all expect the dreamer to awaken, as Erikson has pointed out. But this doesn't happen.

"He's a tough customer", Lacan commented ironically. From here on his Ego disappears, Freud isn't mentioned any more. Instead, three doctors appear on stage. In them commentators have identified different characters from Freud's entourage.

To everyone doctor M. is a father figure. To Lacan, he represents Philipp, the half-brother with whom Freud apparently structured his imaginary Oedipal conflict, thus leaving his symbolic father, represented by Jacob Freud, protected from his passions. To others, like Peter Gay, Dr. M. is instead a pseudonym for the prestigious Josef Breuer, with whom Freud collaborated, a relationship marked by an insurmountable ambivalence.

Otto is another friend-foe figure, of whom Freud himself confessed he had always felt the need, while Leopold impersonates his positive antagonist. In him Peter Gay identifies a transposition of Fliess, whom in those years he obstinately idealized against all evidence.

According to Lacan, we have here the spectral decomposition of the Ego, made up, according to Freud in The Ego and the Id, of the sedimentation of its objects.

The male triad has replaced the three women who appeared in the first part of the dream: Irma, her friend, presented as the "good patient", and Martha, Freud's wife.

Three men for three women. But what do those female figures represent?

Lacan, referring to Freud's essay of 1913, The Theme of the Three Caskets, called them the "mystic trio". The female threesome, which appears so often in myths, in fables, in folklore (the three sisters, the three goddesses, the three Graces, the three Horae, the three Fates, the three jewel cases), represents the inevitable places held by women in men's lives: the mother, the spouse, and the third, quiet one, man's final inexorable choice, mother-earth, to whose breast he must return, Death.

The ineluctable severity of Law and its relation to death and dissolution, which had been avoided in the charming figures of the Horae, were now stamped upon the Moerae, as though men had only perceived the full seriousness of natural law when they had to submit their own selves to it (.25)

The theme of Death is, in a sense, the obscure leitmotiv of the dream: symbolized by the three women, represented by the infected matter in Irma's throat, where life and death contaminate one another confirmed at last by the threat the diphtheric membrane represented for one of Freud's three daughters.

This round dance of female figures had not yet found in Die Traumdeutung, its conjugation along the spiral of cyclic time. Nevertheless, Freud perceived that in the way they deferred to one another there was something escaping the geometry of social relations, and observes in a note:

I had a feeling that the interpretation of this part of the dream was not carried far enough to make it possible to follow the whole of its concealed meaning. If I had pursued my comparison between the three women, it would have taken me far afield there is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown. (26)

Just as the first part of the interpretation reached its acme in Irma's throat, the second proceeded toward a peak that is represented, as we shall see, by the formula of Trimethylamine. To reach it, it is necessary to wade through the idle prattle that shatters the dream's manifest matter-guilt-into a thousand questions. The three doctors, in whom behind the surface we can easily discern a father figure and representations of the brothers, all bustle around Irma's body, as through a mime of the Oedipal complex. In this picture, Dr. M., who appears pale, limping and unshaven, makes his prediction that everything will be resolved in dysentery that will eliminate the venom. The prediction seems to hint at the overcoming of the Oedipal conflict itself as an effect of the father's death, and of the subsequent liquidation of childhood Oedipal residues. But the pantomime ends with the sudden discovery of the culprit: it is Otto. Otto, the fool who dared accuse Freud of incompetence in treating Irma. At this point the dream appears to have completed the task that Freud gave it in the economy of the text: demonstrating that oneiric activity is the realization of a desire. What greater satisfaction could there be, than to turn the accuser into the accused? Nevertheless, such a solution to the conflict seems to belong to daydreams and not to the economy of the dream, which, not content with this first victory, goes further.
At this point Freud introduces a sort of comic interlude, noting, ironically, that so far the dream has piled up too many reasons, when one would have sufficed for acquittal. He commented:

> The whole plea for the dream was nothing else reminded me vividly of the defense put forward by the man who was charged by one of his neighbors with having given him back a borrowed kettle in a damaged condition. The defendant asserted first, that he had given it back undamaged; secondly, that the kettle had a hole in it when he borrowed it; and thirdly, that he had never borrowed a kettle from his neighbor at all. So much the better: if only a single one of these three lines of defense were to be accepted as valid, the man would have to be acquitted. (27)

But what sort of reasons were these, since their falsehood is obvious? Certainly not true Reason, for if it exists it escapes all relativization. Probably, at a certain level, one of the many justifications would suffice for one of the many faults that men hurl at each other in their everyday social intercourse. These small, disputable faults have the truth of symptoms, for they refer, like a fragmented echo, back to humanity's first great fault/guilt: parricide.

As Freud would later say in Constructions in Analysis, "our bait of falsehood had taken a carp of truth" (28). In this case, truth consists in revealing, at the insistence of self-justification, the repressed fault/guilt which is the basis of every social pact. As the compulsion to repeat urges people on, what was repressed may formulate its accusations in the courtroom we call conscience, with everyone stammering his innocence as best he can. The child turns to his father, the adolescent to his representatives, the adult if anyone ever really becomes one to the impersonal force of fate. Freud wrote in The Economic Problem of Masochism (1924):

“The last figure in the series that began with the parents is the dark power of Destiny which only the fewest of us are able to look upon as impersonal” (29). And again, the following year, he commented: the last metamorphosis of anguish “is, it seems to me, the fear of death (or fear of life) which is a fear of the super-ego projected on to the powers of destiny (30)”.

In a view of Reason that is no longer psychological, but theological, the excessive defense resembles the proofs of the existence of God: more than one, are too many.

True fault/guilt does not lend itself so easily to being reduced to its projection on the other. There is enough for all. The conquest of innocence is an illusion a necessary one, but none the less deceiving.

The more Freud insists on denouncing poor Otto’s faults (according to Peter Gay, he is really Oscar Rie, the family pediatrician), the more his accusation slips from his grasp.

Not only must Otto have used a dirty syringe for Irma’s injection, proof that he is a less than scrupulous doctor, he also sullied himself with another reprehensible act: he brought the Freud family a bottle of pineapple liquor that gave off an awful smell of brandy. So much so that Freud opposed the idea of giving it to his domestics because he didn’t think it right for them to be poisoned either.

The poison recalls the concoction injected into Irma: it was propyle… propylene… propionic acid… when suddenly Freud sees the formula before his eyes, printed in bold lettering “as if wanting to make something particularly important stand out of its context”. At this point the dream images halt, as if they had finally come to their conclusion, or as if it were not possible to proceed any further.

Through Freud’s interpretation, we learn that Trimethylamine, according to what his friend Fliess told him, was one of the products of sexual metabolism of sperm. It was probably the brandy odor (amil…) that ushered the recollection of a number of chemical compounds into the dream (propyl, methyl, and so forth), fragments of which attached themselves to the organic chemical formula of Trimethylamine.

At this point Freud himself points out the fact that the formula appeared to him suddenly, at night, with the evidence of a delusion: he clearly sees its bold lettering written on nothing. This is prophetic vision. Nevertheless, in his analysis, this revelation seems not to have received the importance it deserved. Trimethylamine, according to Freud, refers to sexuality, which is at the root of hysteria. Here, Love and Death seem to form, as they would a year later in the analysis of the name Signorelli, the final thoughts of the dream. But is this sufficient to uphold the meaning of a dream that Freud himself presented as exceptional, unique, fundamental? Why does the dream not limit itself to bringing up the scientific term? Why, instead, does it go as far as visualizing the elements of the compound through the appearance of its chemical formula? Freud does not reproduce the structure of the formula in his comment, he does not show it to us. He keeps the image of that vision to himself. In Interpretation of Dreams, the enigma of Trimethylamine is left partially unsolved. This lack of conclusion in the interpretation, its sudden interruption, invites a hermeneutic supplement.

Lacan, aware of its implicit challenge, views it as the dream’s second crucial moment, after the one of the infected throat. The analyst, turning back during the ascent to the peak, attempted to grasp the unfathomable point of origin. Instead, the view that opens up before him once he reaches the top concerns what is beyond ego, the great Other.

In between the ‘before’ and the ‘after’, the interlude of small passions (professional rivalry, envy among colleagues, fear of error, hopes of success) wedges in, and it distracts us from the great passion, the passion for truth. This is the purpose of psychoanalysis, in the typically Platonic belief in the correspondence between truth and goodness.

The first part of the journey, organized around a crowd of male and female figures, pertains to the imaginary sphere, while the chemical formula refers to the symbolic sphere

Then there is the register of reality, emotionally overwhelming. It is a symptomatic apparition which cannot be assimilated mentally. It is readily expelled from the scene by being projected into the unknown, through the umbilical cord of dreams. The opening to the absolute exterior signals the existence of reality as an unrepresentable element, as a waste or residue of both imaginary and symbolic activity (31). It refers to Kant's "thing itself", to what in reality subtracts itself from knowledge even while forming the secret motor of the passion for knowledge.

After confronting death without withdrawing, like Heidegger, the dreamer saw the shattering of the mirages of the Ego, the multiple identifications that form it like overlapping capes, Lacan said. The revelation of being-in-the-world as an appearance of being leads the dreamer to truth. It leads man, through the "thou art this" with which the Biblical word flogs human vanity through the recognition of caducity, to the eternal that transcends him. In mysticism the subject, coming out of himself and abandoning the imaginary identity that constitutes him as an Ego, reunites with God as with a whole that contains and permeates him. Lacan called this dimension, that is of man and beyond man, the Other, the locus of language, where all the words that have been historically formulated may accumulate as sediment. Once all connection to the speaking subject is lost, meanings disaggregate and aggregate again. Thus they create a grid which, unknown to us, runs through us. Anyone with any experience of psychoanalytic work knows that at times patients' symptoms are the answer to interlocutions reaching them from a time and space that are not directly part of their lives. The patients are reached by a vow or a curse of an ancestor unknown to them; they have become the extreme consequence of this vow or curse, along strings that only psychoanalysis can trace.

The function of the formula of Trimethylamine in Freud's dream can be fully understood only in the perspective indicated by Lacan: the signifiers' autonomy from their ability to produce, autonomously, ever new meanings. Bion, assuming a perspective analogous to Lacan's, spoke of thought without thinker as the locus of truth.

The formula of Trimethylamine communicates nothing to the dreamer, it is an empty grapheme, but because of this emptiness it is meaningful: it indicates that there is nothing beyond the game of symbols, so that:

> So when we wish to attain in the subject what was before the serial articulations of speech, and what is primordial to the birth of symbols, we find it in death, from which his existence takes on all the meaning it has. (32)

Thus, Lacan intended the symbolic as a screen on which there remain signs related to each other through ties as necessary as they are arbitrary. They are somewhat akin to the mathematical expressions with which Lévi-Strauss formalized kinship structures. Formulas representing the "force of fate", that is, the determination that human beings receive from the nomenclature of alliances. Lacan observed:

> Founding speech, which envelops the subject, is everything that has constituted him: his parents, his neighbors, the whole structure of the community, and not only constituted him as symbol, but constituted him in his being (33).

Nevertheless, for truth inert in itself to become effective and humanized, it must enter the circuits of experience and incarnate itself in the life of an individual. It must become an interpersonal discourse, flowing along the line connecting language to words, and reinvent itself at the cost of infecting itself with lies.

The analysis of the formula of Trimethylamine, instead, grasps the symbolic sphere in its most radical impersonality, anonymity, aloofness, self-sufficiency.

Antonietta and Gérard Haddad, isolating its ironic aspect, stress the resemblance between the chemical formula of Trimethylamine (TMA) and the Hebrew letter Shin (34).

The graphic representation of TMA resembles a tree-shape growing out of the letter N, the symbol for nitrogen. From nitrogen, the molecule is called -amine. The tree is crowned by three methyl radicals, which makes the amine trimethyl, whence comes the name of the formula. This crown, the two authors point out, irresistibly calls to mind the Hebrew letter Shin. In a sense TMA is the pictogram of the following formula: Shin/n.

The letter N, representing the chemical function “amine”, is also the initial of the word “name”, Name in German. Shin, which corresponds to the diagram of tri-methyl, is the initial of the Hebrew word Shem, which also means “name”. Both the common name and God’s ineffable name. The grapheme shin also symbolizes another of God’s names, Shaddaï, he who stops Abraham’s arm as he is about to sacrifice his son Isaac. With this meaning, the letter Shin adorns the threshold of every Jewish home. Thus, N and Shin correspond to the same signifier which, in the ciphered language of the unconscious, symbolizes the Name of the Father.

Here I will concentrate on the letter evoked by the linguistic art of the unconscious: the name of the Father. Via the Trimethylamine tree we have apparently been led back to the initial motivations behind Traumdeutung. That is, to recompose in the reparation of mourning the paternal function threatened by the Oedipal conflict. The name of the Father recalls the tombstone Freud had built on his father’s grave at the same time he began drafting Traumdeutung. We know the name of the Father represents the symbolic function risen upon the death of the imaginary father of his childhood to represent Law in its impersonal objectivity.

Freud arrives at that point through the shattering of imaginary evidence, on a journey to salvation that leads him out of himself, to that impersonal place he would call das Unbewusste, the unconscious.

Lacan, who had already paired the horrific image of death infecting Irma’s throat with words such as Mene, Techel, Peres, subsequently places the revealing triad into its context in the dream’s economy.

This context is the symbolic sphere which provides the preceding chaos of imaginary identifications with a principle of order. A chaos that reveals itself as such only after the formation of a regime capable of delegitimizing, as Matte Blanco claims, everything not belonging to its own logic (35).

Let’s now return to Lacan’s reinterpretation, and the moment at which it denounced the disappearance of the dream’s subject, diluted in the ghost of its own protective identifications. These identifications all have an anthropomorphic, indeed even egomorphic, character, in that they represent parts of his self. But all anthropomorphism disappears as soon as the discourse itself appears on stage, “independently of its meaning, for it is fundamentally a meaningless discourse”. What matters is that there is a primordial Law that, by inserting the element of prohibition in the original promiscuity, introduces the order of culture in the shapelessness of nature. In this sense formal logic represents the most suitable mode for eliminating from the symbolic sphere the barnacles of the imaginary sphere blurring its structure. An a priori structure vis-à-vis every phenomenal experience.

The three Biblical terms, in Lacan’s text, are never translated nor are they contextualized: like magical graphs they seem to have merely a function of symbols. Their purpose is not to say but simply to lead somewhere else.
After lingering on Freud’s typically middle-class diatribe on whether or not to give the liquor gone bad to the house servants, Lacan writes:

What emerges, printed in heavy type, beyond the hubbub of speech, like the Mene, Tekel, Upharsin of the Bible, is the formula for trimethylamine. I will write this formula out for you (36):

> “What emerges from this?” From where, if we may ask? From the dissolve of the imaginary, from its Luciferine smoke. And for whom is this epiphany? For Freud and for us who take, one generation after another, the role of interlocutors of his perpetually re-interpreted analysis. Lacan writes:
>
> Like the oracle, the formula gives no reply whatsoever to anything. But the very manner in which it is spelt out, its enigmatic, hermetic nature, is in fact the answer to the question of the meaning of the dream. One can model it closely on the Islamic formula There is no other God but God. There is no other word, no other solution to your problem, than the word (37).

What gives this dream its veritable unconscious value he further points out whatever its primordial and infantile echoes, is the quest for the word, the direct confrontation with the secret reality of the dream, the quest for signification as such. In the midst of all his colleagues, of this consensus of the republic of those who know… in the midst of this chaos, in this original moment when his doctrine is born into the world, the meaning of the dream is revealed to Freud that there is no other word of the dream than the very nature of the symbolic.

And he adds: “Symbols only ever have the value of symbols” (38).

What can the dream tell us for the solution of “our problem”? First of all, that this solution does not pertain to the dimension of consciousness, but resides somewhere else. The sense of the dream does not consist primarily of the message. Rather, it is the journey, the acting out of the decentralization of the subject in relation to the Ego, that allows us to grasp the influence of unconscious desires in our lives.

By further dis-assembling the structure of the formula, made of “sacred signs”, as Lacan says, we arrive at a figure composed of multiples of three.

[…]

The number three is, as we have seen, the dream’s secret cipher: three women, three doctors, Tri-methylamine.
The composite structure that takes the place of the dreamer’s ego in the symbolic dimension presents us with the question of its placement. The Ego has no place in this headless structure that signifies without it. The Ego is left, says Lacan, between A and Z, between alpha and omega or, ‘in other terms’, in that root N in which he reads the word Nemo, no-one, the answer that saves Ulysses from being captured by Polyphemus.

The structure in which the subject has a place under the semblance of an absence is the unconscious, which “in the subject is of the subject and not of the subject” (39). An exception to the principle of non-contradiction which can be admitted only because it is a-logical. This is a dimension transversal to individuals, something that, like language, belongs to all and none.

In any case, the dreamed dream is in language, so there is no word in the dream other than the very nature of symbolism. In this sense the dream of Irma goes well beyond the deciphering that Freud offers us, by delineating the overall architecture of the Freudian field.

With the dissolve of the subject, Lacan points out, both the object and the subject’s dramatic relationship with the world dissolve as well.

The disappearance of the interpersonal plane causes a total return to innocence. The world justifies itself, as in the usage of the philosophical principle: everything real is rational (40). Recognizing that the world does not need us, that it exists outside our thought in other words: that God does not need mankind our hypertrophied ego regains its own dimension and, along with it, its truth. A truth that coincides with the third of the narcissistic wounds with which Freud outlines the history of science: the recognition of the

unconscious as an exile from oneself: I am there, where I don't think. Lacan writes:

> At the heart of the flow of events, of the functioning of reason, the subject from the first move finds himself to be no more than a pawn, forced inside this system, and excluded from any truly dramatic, and consequently tragic, participation in the realization of truth (41).

Here, to the tragic man, delusively convinced of his centrality, is opposed the stoic man, rationally convinced that the atarassia of the sage, who bows to the ineluctability of fate, is the ultimate ideal of morality.

Kohut, admirable interpreter of the illusions of the contemporary age, proposes a passage from Freud's guilty man to the tragic man of good narcissism, projected toward self-realization without knowing anything about (his) Self. Lacan instead sees an overcoming of guilt in the impersonal objectivity of its symbolic statute (think of guilt without crime in the writings of Kafka). But he immediately denounces this philosophical, not psychoanalytic, illusion. The Ego, even while managing to dissolve into nothingness or into wholeness, remains nonetheless tied to the mirror identification that produced it. For Kant, pathos is an effect of Eros, while for Lacan the profound nature of desire is mortal, without avoiding, because of this, the persistence of a narcissistic residue (42).

Returning to the Hegelian scene of master-servant dialectic, Lacan, a student of Kojève, observes that in interrelation the death of one of the two is always at stake. The two-party relationship is tendentially mortal. Only the intersection of words, representing the impersonal dimension of symbolism, the impartial third party in relation to the original dyad, introduces the time dimension in the immediacy of reciprocal glances: "the name is the object's all".

All begins, as Genesis teaches us, with the Word naming the various species, thus subtracting them from the chaos of the imaginary plane. According to Lacan, in the end this is the meaning of dreams: to outline the field and function of language. Here the desire of knowledge finally finds its ultimate object: the unconscious. But since its economy is not that of need (a specific lack fulfilled by a precise object), satisfaction of this desire carries along with it transgression, excess, guilt, and the need for Law.

Once this dimension that crosses the imaginary plane has been posited, guilt is not cancelled, it is simply diluted in the universality of the subjects. All considered, Freud's fault, in his search for truth, lies in having gone beyond the limit. His hybris coincides with his passion for knowledge (43). His act of contrition, according to Lacan, could be somewhat like the following:

> I am he who wants to be forgiven for having dared to begin to cure these patients, who until now no one wanted to understand and whose cure was forbidden. I am he who wants not to be guilty of it, for to transgress any limit imposed up to now on human activity is always to be guilty. I want to not be (born) that [Je veux n'être pas cela]. Instead of me, there are all the others. Here I am only the representative of this vast, vague movement, the quest for truth, in which I efface myself. I am no longer anything. My ambition was greater than I. No doubt the syringe was dirty. And precisely to the extent that I desired it too much, that I partook in this action, that I wanted to be, myself, the creator, I am not the creator. The creator is someone greater than I. It is my unconscious, it is this voice which speaks in me, beyond me (44).

This is at once a declaration of responsibility and of irresponsibility. It seems to conclude the dream's hermeneutic emergency with a moral message condensing the moderate ethic of psychoanalysis, its search for a just mean between the omnipotence of desire and the impossibilities brought on by our dual belonging to the realms of nature and language.

We are an intermediate species, Lacan seems to say, between gods and animals. Man is an animal that inhabits language. An animal worked, in every fiber, by the symbol that made it a man and has spoken it, unknown to it, long before it could say “I”. Vis-à-vis the world’s great dimension, in which every single life is inscribed, it is not possible to act as if it didn’t exist, to entrust oneself exclusively to the dimension of the Self, ignoring all that is, at once, outside and inside us.

Psychoanalysis, as a treatment and as an ethical horizon, takes the form of an exhaustion of impossibilities with which to tear out painfully those few residual degrees of freedom afforded to everyone. Freedom is not an original condition of man that can only be lost, but a conquest of knowledge and wisdom. When the two limits conditioning us have been found (the one of life and death, which follows its course regardless of our consent, and the one of the symbolic axis that exists independently of our intentionality), we can narrate our own biography feeling like subjects and not just objects of the plot relating to us. Fate, if it is not recognized, goes on presenting us with the same events, at the insistence of the repetition compulsion. Individual responsibility instead produces the variations in the self-narration in which we can recognize the cipher of human freedom, all the more precious because of its rarity.

In the plot of the dream of Irma, which by now has incorporated all of the depth of subsequent interpretations, there is a complex discourse that can be simplified into the “granting of a wish”. While Freud reveals the dream’s meaning to us as his desire not to be guilty, to establish his absolute innocence, at the same time he warns us against such an omnipotent pretense.

The admonishment, which remains uninterpreted in his analysis, manifests itself clearly to our view as soon as we provide a content for the three sacred words (Mene, Techel, Peres) that Lacan has evoked often as pure signifiers, as empty graphemes and phonemes. This is not so: they are three prophetic terms, of extreme cognitive and emotional pregnancy.

Just as Lacan wished to show us graphically the formula of Trimethylamine, to obtain from it the maximum degree of signification, I have tried to render their cultural contents to the three empty terms. I found them in the book of prophecies of Daniel, in which it is narrated that Belshazzar, king of Babylon, had organized a banquet for one thousand excellent personages, during which toasts had been made in honor of the false gods with wine poured in the gold and silver vases that his father Nebuchadnezzar had subtracted from God’s temple in Jerusalem (45).

Suddenly, the fingers of a hand appeared and began writing, before the chandelier, on the plaster wall of the royal palace. The king, at the sight of that detached hand writing, was seized by great fear. In vain did he call all the sages to read and interpret the writing. No one was able to. Then Daniel, whom Nebuchadnezzar had elected as his court interpreter, said:

> And this is the writing that was inscribed, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians […] In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old (46).

The contextualization of the Biblical terms quoted by Lacan reconnects the failed recognition of guilt–the foolishness of the sinner unaware he is such–to death. A death decreed neither by God nor by men (the cut-off hand), but by an automatism of events in which we can recognize that impersonal dimension of justice called Fate by some, Providence by others.

Although psychoanalysis recognizes a sacred dimension, its journey is not mystical, it does not tend to the extreme, the absolute. Rather, the analytic proceeding remains within the spheres of the relative, the ephemeral. It requires a renunciation of omnipotence, an acceptance of the limits posed by the Id and by

death. “Anyway, a certain narcissistic pleasure can arise from the satisfaction of being able to bear all this, and we can get some pleasure from life.” (47)
Thanks to Lacan’s commentary, which led us to the peak of the dream scaled by Freud, a vaster horizon opens up before us: “This analysis will now enable us Lacan writes to go further and understand how we should conceive of the death instinct, the death’s instinct relation to the symbol, to this speech which is in the subject without being the speech of the subject.” (48)

But at this point, since interpretation is, like analysis, interminable, we leave the discourse unfinished, open to an infinite entertainment, in the hope, shared by Sherazade, that saying may exorcise dying.

Translated from Italian by David Spafford

Notes:

(1) This paper first was read at the International Congress Il sogno dell’interpretazione, “Imago. Ricerche di psicoanalisi applicata”, Bolzano (Italy), 1995; it was published in Italian in aut aut, 280-1, 1997, pp. 157-180.
(2) Sigmund Freud, The Complete Letters to Wilhelm Fliess (1887-1904), Joseph M. Masson ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1985) p. 365.
(3) Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, SE, 4, p. 122.
(4) Ibid., SE, 5 , p. 511.
(5) Ibid., pp. 621.
(6) See Mario Miegge, Il sogno del re di Babilonia (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995), p.195.
(7) Franco Fornari, Coinema e icona (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1979).
(8) Sigmund Freud, On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement (1914), SE, 14, pp. 19-20.
(9) Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, SE, 4, p. XXIII.
(10) Freud, Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, cit., p. 202.
(11) Ibid., p. 243.
(12) Freud, SE, 4, p. XXVI.
(13 Freud, “On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement”, SE, 14, p. 22.
(14) Freud, Psychopathology of Everyday Life, SE, 6, p. 2.
(15) Eng.tr., Jacques Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2. The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis (1954-1955), trans. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 146-171.
(16) Peter Gay, Freud: A Life for our Times (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), p. 82.
(17) Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2, cit., p. 151.
(18) Freud, Interpretation of Dreams, SE, 4, p. 107.
(19) Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2, cit., p. 164.
(20) Perrella sees, in Irma’s throat’s festering, a precognition of the cancer of the jaw which caused Freud’s death after years of unheard of torments. See Ettore Perrella, Il mito di Crono (Pordenone: Biblioteca dell’Immagine, 1993) p. 23.
(21) Lacan, cit., p. 154.
(22) See Marisa Fiumanò, Un sentimento che non inganna. Sguardo e angoscia in psicoanalisi (Milan: Cortina, 1991); and Federica Sossi, Mentre l’angoscia si fa guardare (Milan: Guerini, 1995).
(23) Sein und Zeit, I,6, p. 186; Being and Time, trans. by Macquarrie and Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) p. 233.
(24) Lacan, cit., p. 155.
(25) Freud, SE, 12, p. 298.
(26) Freud, SE, 4, p. 111, note 2.

(27) Ibid., p. 119-120.
(28) Freud, Constructions in Analysis, SE, 23, p. 262.
(29) Freud, SE, 19, p. 168.
(30) Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, SE, 20, p. 140. Freud writes in The Ego and the Id (SE, 19, p. 58): “the Super-Ego fulfills the same function of protecting and saving that was fulfilled in earlier days by the father and later by Providence or Destiny.”
(31) On the subject, Freud wrote: “reality will always remain ‘unknowable'” (An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, SE, 23, p. 196). On the same subject, see Silvia Vegetti Finzi, “Paradossi della maternità e costruzione di un’etica femminile”, in Gabriella Buzzatti & Anna Salvo eds., Corpo a corpo. Madre e figlia in psicoanalisi, (Roma: Laterza, 1995) pp. 147-190; and in Silvia Vegetti Finzi, “Il mito delle origini”, in Silvia Lagorio, Lella Ravasi & Silvia Vegetti Finzi, Se noi siamo la terra (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1996).
(32) Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”, Ecrits. A Selection (London: Tavistock Publ., 1977, p. 105.
(33) Lacan, The seminar. Book 2, cit., p. 20.
(34) Antonietta and Gérard Haddad, Freud en Italie: Psychanalyse de voyage (Paris: Bibliothèque Albin Michel, 1995) pp. 164-65.
(35) Ignacio Matte Blanco, Unconscious as an Infinite Set: An Essay in Bilogic (London: Duckworth, 1975).
(36) Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2, cit., p. 158.
(37) Ibid., p. 158.
(38) Ibid, p 159-160.
(39) Ibid., p. 159.
(40) Ibid., p. 168.
(41) Ibid.
(42) Regarding the theme of desire in analysis, see La Psicoanalisi. Rivista italiana della Scuola Europea di Psicoanalisi, 17, 1995.
(43) See Silvia Vegetti Finzi, “Freud, dalla conoscenza delle passioni alla passione della conoscenza”, in Silvia Vegetti Finzi ed., Storia delle passioni (Rome: Laterza, 1995) pp. 243-278.
(44) Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2, cit., pp. 170-1.
(45) I owe this reference to Francesca Calabi and Mario Miegge (in particular to the latter’s book Il sogno del re di Babilonia, cit.).
(46) Daniel, V.25-31. Interpreting a dream, Elvio Fachinelli [La mente estatica (Milan: Adelphi, 1989), p.86] notes: “how can we not remember here the biblical hand writing the king’s destiny on the wall?”
(47) Claude Parat, “Psychanalyse et sacré”, in Henri Vermorel, Anne Clancier & Madeleine Vermorel eds., Freud: judéité, lumière et romantisme (Lausanne-Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1995) p.320.
(48) Lacan, The Seminar. Book 2, cit., p. 171.