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Psychoanalysis has Completed the Time of its Life

Summary

The title of this article could appear to imply the liquidation of psychoanalysis as a model of the mind and as clinical practice. On the contrary, the author actually advances a perspective according to which, following “psychagogy” – that is, the magical practice for summoning the dead, those who have literally “outrun the time of their life”, for the purposes of divination – might help psychoanalysts to fulfil the time of the death of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis survives itself, despite the thousands of limits and restrictions increasingly imposed on it by epistemology, anthropology, sociology, biology, and customs, in the course of the tumultuous development of the past century. “Evoking” psychoanalysis implies rewriting the history of its long agony, crushed by the colonizing hegemony of heteronomous disciplines, and at the same time recovering those germs of complex, historicist, relational and relativistic thought, which Freud as well as many of his followers had so often announced, without providing them a real acceptance within their own constructions or a real “listening” on behalf of the psychoanalytical movement.

Genesis is one of those fundamental concepts around which the “psychoanalytic door” might hinge so that on the one side it makes psychoanalysis undergo the time of its death, recognizing itself as a cultural and institutional fossil, and on the other it opens a space adequate to its germinal, embryonic elements.

Psychoanalysis has, at its roots, worked through the concept of genesis in the sense of the originary, and especially of that “once familiar” subsequently rendered “unfamiliar” (repressed); but psychoanalysis has left virtually in the dark the other, semantic aspect which regards the generative, the becoming, the might-be, the creative, the actually and inflexibly unknown. All that which refers to this “in progress” (and not process) remains easily caged and suffocated by what Bion called the “Satanic jargon” of psychoanalysis.

The article makes ample reference to Bion, beginning with his pitiless attack on “Bionese” to move towards his definition of a pattern of psychoanalysis which is isomorphic to the neotenic condition of man – as the only embryonic animal developing its own morphogenesis and forming its own formation, with no predetermined aim, in an indefinable and constitutive cognitive opening.

There is presently much discussion in Italy as to a legislation which would “normalize” the profession of psychotherapist, through university degrees or accreditation by legally recognized schools. In this perspective, psycho-therapy is considered a technical-scientific practice to be included, albeit ambiguously, in the order of techno-scientific professions similar to a medical practice (a form of therapy, in fact), a practice assuming the knowledge of an object completely autonomous of its observer – the psyche rather than the body – to which techniques are consequently applied which avail themselves of tools. The psycho-therapeutic tools are not scalpels, medicines or diets, but words and behaviors (indicative, prescriptive, comforting, pedagogic, or what have you) intended to provide a remedy for the ill/ness. Whatever the theoretic reference, each psychotherapist would apply a set of hypotheses which presumably have been confirmed experimentally or statistically. Exhaustive information on this discipline and a specific training in order to develop the sensory-motor coordination necessary to that specific technique are fundamental conditions for the professional practice, methodologically analogous to any other technologically definable

training.

This approach would be flawless if the accent on the compound term “psycho-therapy” were placed on the second half of the term, relegating the first to the shadows. However, when considering the word psyche, is it possible to propose so linear an approach? Could we speak with equal lightness of a therapy of the mind when considering the unresolved – and perhaps unsolvable – problematic status of the substance to which the concept “mind” is intended to refer? To what objective knowledge, or one firmly believed to be such, to what episteme (countered, as the Greeks would have it, to opinion or empirical acquaintance) could we make recourse when we discuss the mental facts? According to Foucault (1):

Only through making our discourse conform with the structure of discursive practice [that is with the dominant episteme, with that set of rules imposed in a given historical area, the use of which regulates not only the spoken language, but thought about anything which becomes part of the experience of man] can the subject accede to the discourse – take the floor.

However, if the epistemology of psychology were made up of a set of certain and objective assumptions of knowledge, each one deriving from a different discipline and in itself sufficiently defined (as biology, sociology, animal ethology, theology, philosophy, cybernetics), the area of psychology would be a square crowded with hucksters, each one offering his product as truer than the others, vociferating loudly in order to drown out any other voice. No reciprocal listening (as is the case in any scientific field), no reciprocal stimulus – admiring and perhaps envious (as occurs in the arts) – but a tendency to exclusion which is more appropriate to religious fundamentalism.

Apropos of the present uncertain status of psychology, James Hillman (2) asks whether it is possible to find out a collective model of psychology, its radical metaphor, its general myth, in which our specific, individual variables could integrate and act. And this pattern – always according to Hillman – would involve the search for our patron (allotropic terms up until 1700), i.e. the father who creates and who is the creative principle in us. This is the first task, and as long as the confusion as to our paternity is not eliminated, there will be always those who consider our psychology bastard; neither art nor science, neither medicine nor religion, neither academia nor free, neither investigative nor curative, but rather a syncretistic amplification, a pot-pourri, or a pot-pour rire, of any – and every – thing having to do with the human soul. Until the father is found, each of us must be torn between phenomena, inventing languages, diagnosing, preparing techniques with which to separate and bind together the innumerable aspects of the soul, as uncertain about what we are doing as we are about our author, from whom both our authority and our authenticity would derive.

I do not know whether the various brands of psychology will ever find a “father”. Perhaps the only ones to remain visible will be the colonizers – philosophies, sciences, religions – which, perhaps by coupling variously among themselves, have left their mark on that area of thought which reflexively thinks itself, in the shadow of the unthinkable. As long as psychoanalysis affirms itself as one of the many vend criers trying to sell its own truth about the psyche, and as long as it runs after the mirage of its therapeutic effectiveness (responding either with arrogance or contrite courtesy to the admonitions of Popper or Grünbaum), it remains contained within the great discordant chorus of various psychologies and, blinded by the ephemeral splendor of its colonizer (Medicine), remains in danger of not recognizing its very Author any more, with the resultant loss of both authority and authenticity. In this perspective, the training of future psychoanalysts becomes extremely problematic. Should the training of candidate-analysts repeat that same procedure of colonization enforced by Freud (despite his admonitions that psychoanalysis should never become the handmaid of medicine) and subsequently repeated by the psychoanalytic institutions? or rather, should psychoanalysis free itself from these encumbrances by abolishing all formalization and rules in the training process? It is about time for a radical rethinking of the adaptive view of the mind, as well as of the aims of the analytical practice and, consequently, of the ways candidates are trained. On the other hand, the short road to becoming analysts, limited to self-legitimization, is more an anti-institutional rebellion than a culturally founded plan. Without an authoritative authenticity, psychoanalysis is in danger of breaking down into a myriad of currents lacking spirit, both in the scientific debate and on the professional market.

We all agree that the Author of psychoanalysis has been Freud. By this convention we include Freud in the considerable ranks of mythological fathers, of nations or of churches. Of these figures, so compact and

univocal in their sacred aura, we can only be exegetes, each one convinced that only his reading definitively captures “what He really meant!” As exclusive depositories of the Word, the so-called schools of the Freudian thought multiply and – as occurs in religious sects or in political parties making reference to a single founding father – fight and excommunicate each other reciprocally, instead of passing over with constructive criticism the history of their fathers. Freud’s extraordinary adventure (he described himself as “an adventurer rather than a scientist”) began with the practice he defined as “self-analysis”: no conjecture as to the object “psyche” would be minimally credible unless it takes into consideration also the mind which produces it, its peculiar history and the affective, emotional and (pre)judicial ties within which it is intertwined. It is exemplary how, in the preface to the second edition of the *Traumdeutung*, which he began writing in 1897, a year after the death of his father, Freud writes:

[This book] 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 (3).

This explicit reference to a family event is on the one hand a transparent and courageous indication of how intimately interconnected are the explorative mental meandering with the affective and cognitive wefts and warps constituting the historical fabric of the searching mind. It is precisely this indication on the necessity of self-analysis (never exhaustively completed or “terminable”) which should be considered the most precious legacy of Freud’s teaching. On the other hand, that reference (menzione in Italian) indicates the constitutive status of the lie (menzogna) of any formulation the mind (mente) proposes. In Italian, the only verbal declination of the word mente (mind) is mentire (to lie). And yet, the narrative act of lying is the only one in which we can with certainty say what is “true” because indisputably “true” is having knowingly said one thing for another. As Bion stated, “a lie is always in need of a thinker”. But to what “lie” do we refer when we assume the significance of mentire, “lying”, intended as fare mente, “to become a mind”? The mind becomes itself, thoughts come to mind, and beginning with this autopoyetic (self-making) event a thinking subject constructs his statements. But both the event which occurs and the construction made of it is unleashed from one specific and peculiar terrain of cognitive and affective experience. There is no objective reality, no encounter with the world, which is not a hybrid, that is the result of a violence (ubris) (4) of individual preconception on perceived data. Every concept, every experience, is unknowingly a mention of that primary violence, and therefore no mental act is extraneous to the relativity and fortuitous relational nature in which it was formed and in which it can be cultivated.

In this perspective the analytical process itself is therefore by necessity a lie: whether addressed to oneself, or to the other, or to the relationship as a whole, it is in any case a question of being confronted with this type of ubris. Freud called this transference and made of this “lying” the foundation of his entire analytical practice. But the transference area had for him very narrow limits; it emerged only in the analytical situation and the transference qualified the analytic situation as such. It exclusively concerned the patient and not the analyst; it was activated by drives, whose repressed primary experiences could be re-enacted in the analytical relationship as a result of an “error” of person favored by the concealing of the analyst (the screen-analyst). The transference simply meant a transferal of the object, with the subject of that operation remaining a constant of that operation. The transference was resolved with its elaboration aimed at a conscious recollection of the repressed events. Success in analysis coincides with the discovery of the deceptive character of the transference – as well as in any other symptomatic behavior or in dreams (disguise, displacement and similar mechanisms) – and therefore, with the triumph of the truth. One century of history of the psychoanalytic field has witnessed discussions on these themes in all directions, strengthening the Freudian propositions while extending them.

The transference is menzogna, deceptive, in the sense that the person to whom reference (menzione) is really made is concealed within the semblance of the person actually present; sub specie of the analyst. In the classic conception, the experience is always the same subject’s, who subsequently cast it from the mind (repression) and successively proposed it again disguised. However, what if the subjects of these mental acts were diverse, within the individual complexity? And what if each subject saw the same thing hybridizing it subsequently with his own personal history in a totally individual way? And what if the mental universe – supposedly “one” in that it is the expression of the unique individual expressing it – were rather a multiverse?

Freud had already anticipated this vision with the construction of the second topology, taking it up again with the concept of introjected identification, until he stated, in 1921, that individual psychology is above all a kind of social psychology due to the multitude of presences animating the psychic life of the individual. Thus, he concluded the following year (1922) by this statement:

The Ego were merely the part of the id modified by the influence of the perceptual system, the representative in the mind of the real external world, we should have a simple state of things to deal with. But there is a further complication (5).

This complication, which implies a leap unto another dimension, consists of the process of introjected identification, that is a process of an alteration of the Ego which we must describe as the rising of the object itself within the Ego. And subsequently:

At any rate the process, especially in the early phases of development, is a very frequent one [Freud does not tell us why this should be only “frequent in” and not “constitutive to” the development of individual identity] and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexis and that it contains the history of those object-choices (...) If they obtain the upper hand and become too numerous, unduly powerful and incompatible with one another, a pathological outcome will not be far off (...) perhaps the secret of cases of what is described as “multiple personality” is that the different identifications seize hold of consciousness in turn (6).

The altering identification of the Ego, the progressive crowding of intentional presences (and thus not inert presences or memory traces) in that area of experience of the individual connoted as his own internal world, and the expropriating character of this process – the cornering of the individual awareness – constitute the basis of a theoretical prospect of human beings. This is no longer intended as the result of reciprocal adjustments, more or less successful, between impersonal and only metaphorically anthropomorphic agencies: that is, the intra-psychic conflict is seen in group terms. In other words, this conflict is between one emerging subjectivity and another (composite) otherness assumed as one’s own. This conflict is not only a consequence of the fusional or symbiotic devices which characterize the most primitive mother-child relationship, but also a consequence of the actively intentional influences on the child by those making up his family universe – often in conflict as regards the child itself, its birth, its education, the hegemony on its affects.

Thus, we have three arguments to prove why in Italian the word *mente* (mind) can only be declined as *mentire* (to lie):

1. Each statement as to the empirical experience, and as to lived experience, is not the expression of an adequateness of the intellect to the thing, but is the fruit of a clash (*ubris*) between a pre-concept device and the thing from time to time relevant in present experience. The expression cognitive domain referred to human knowledge implies the violent domination which precognition (like a *dominus*, master) exercises on the object which becomes known (7);
2. The objects of the experience are for the most part mutually fungible, when they function as representatives (signifiers) of objects with which there has been a particular significant relationship. The term *transference* was coined to express the mentality of the patient before the analyst; however, this does not describe the analytical relationship (which would be rather the elaboration of the *transference*), since it can be used to understand the particular ways of any interpersonal relationship, or particular ideo-affective transfers onto somatic or behavioral sets (the symptomatic structures, as manifestations of an *intra-personal transference*);
3. The multiverse identifying one self greatly weakens the presumed sovereignty of the Ego. This weakening is not because the cultural figure of the intimate imaginary scenario is submitted to the presence of that natural figure, called *Id*, which avails itself of the economic power of drives. The fable of nature versus culture no longer holds; thus, the conflict should be understood at times as the reiteration of conflicts between identity personages (also including the personage-son who at any moment can corner the individual consciousness, to paraphrase Freud) (8), and at times as the contrast between the transforming necessities

induced by every emerging thought (as reorganizer of the individual's habitual relationship with the world) and conservative necessity pertinent to the identical foundation of individuality.

The psychoanalytic practice cannot thus be exempt from the encumbrance of "fare mente" (mind making), in the sense of mentire (of lying), since this very practice opened the historicist, relational, possibilist dimensions (countering the meta-historic, monadic, causal dimensions constituting the metaphysical structure of meta-psychology). Every "discovered truth" is thus a deceit, i.e. a fanciful approximation to "how things really are". The difference between psychoanalytical "lying" (disguise) and "lying" in any other cognitive sphere consists in the fact that sciences do – that is, they operate transformations in the world and in man's relationship with the world, discovering truths (daily more transitory and partial) having nothing to do with the substance of things but only with their way of appearing before an increasingly sharper and more powerful gaze; this gaze becomes increasingly more distant from the naked gaze of the child. The psychoanalyst instead has only that naked eye with which he could open himself to the unknown, in his relationship with the patient, with all the stupor, the scandal, the doubt and anxiety, experienced by Freud at the beginning of his story. By naked gaze I intend a way of seeing which does not presuppose a single aim, therefore surprises, open to comprehension and uninterested in the explanation, not caught up with the shapes on our side of the horizon, because it sees that which is beyond sensible limits. The gaze of the mystic, of the poet. A disarming gaze, therefore, one which induces in the one invested by it the renouncement of the armor or arms with which s/he confronts the prejudicially, mostly hostile world. A naked gaze makes the gazed on naked and, in these circular returns, where there had been constraint there is the possibility of growth. The reciprocal, hostile affronto (confrontation) yields the way to a con-fronto (confront) in a reciprocal amorous interest: not ubris but eros, in the straining to conceive which is proper to it.

Probably Freud began to look at his female patients with this gaze, finding himself at a certain point involved in affective situations so disturbing (9) as to induce him to take up once more his "scientific" armor, supplying that gaze with the naturalist and positivist culture of his times. Culture makes the disarming gaze neither more perceptive nor more profound, rather aims it selectively towards its own horizons.

We see this brusque hybridization in Freud's correspondence with Fliess (10). Following a correspondence lasting up until May 31, 1897, in which he explains to his mentor his theory on the historical-relational origin (roughly called theory of trauma) of the neurosis, on September 21 of the same year, Freud writes that he has abandoned that point of view, and he presents a set of hasty and superficial considerations, as though he wished to quickly eliminate a cumbersome cadaver. This occurred at the beginning of the process Freud defined "self-analysis", which began with the letter of September 21 to Fliess, in which he admits that:

I was so far influenced [by my previous Neurotica] that I was ready to give up two things: the complete resolution of a neurosis and the certain knowledge of its etiology in childhood. Now I have no idea of where I stand because I have not succeeded in gaining a theoretical understanding of repression and its interplay of forces. (...) [W]ith this the factor of a hereditary disposition regains a sphere of influence from which I had made it my task to dislodge it – in the interest of illuminating neurosis.

Freud continues, pointing out that although the abandonment of his attempt to see in the symptom the translation of real experiences represents for him a "catastrophe", he is not at all depressed:

Of course I shall not tell it in Dan (...) in the land of the Philistines, but in your eyes and my own, I have more the feeling of a victory than a defeat.

But whose triumph, and – albeit subdued – whose defeat? If we apply here Freud's idea on the conflict between identificatory presences, we could hypothesize that the triumph is of his father, dead only a few months, menaced by the son, of having his "sins" of seducing his children unmasked (11) and the defeat is Freud's own, as an emerging subject, who with this veritable act of contrition suffocates his own speech in order to conform to the episteme of the fathers. If Freud's self-analysis was developed more as a "reaction to the death of his father" than as creative reorganization of his knowledge, we can see all the (theoretical and

constitutional) subsequent Freudian constructions as battlefields between paternal (and/or filial) positions and authentically innovative thoughts. This because all experience and effort is based on the conflict between conservation and change: these two teleological polarities appear as two orders of necessity inherent to the neotenic or embryonic condition (see following) of the human being, and they would appear to be spoken respectively by one or the other of the two semantic declinations included in the concept of consciousness: the necessity of conservation is for the most part proposed by moral conscience (Gewissen), while the necessity for change is mainly proposed by the noethic consciousness (Bewusstsein), confined by Freud to the function of perception, but which extends to every aspect of the formation of thought and its every action.

After having made his moral conscience prevail, disguised by scientist statements, in his dramatic abjuration of the Neurotica, he returned often, if only briefly, to the problem; for example, in 1910, when he exclaims:

But may one not take objection to the findings of an inquiry which ascribes to accidental circumstances of his parental constellation so decisive an influence on a person's fate? (...) We naturally feel hurt that a just God and a kindly providence do not protect us better from such influences during the most defenceless period of our lives (12).

Freud reached the highest point of his reflections on the conscience/consciousness (as the result of a combination of moral tradition and original cognitive act) in *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, when, rethinking the hypnotic suggestion, he affirms:

The fact that the ego experiences in a dream-like way whatever [the hypnotist] may request or assert reminds us that we omitted to mention among the functions of the ego ideal the business of testing the reality of things. No wonder that the ego takes a perception for real if its reality is vouched for by the mental agency which ordinarily discharges the duty of testing the reality of things (13).

Later on, he would advance a decidedly historicist hypothesis on the nature of the Ego Ideal and thus on the "group" basis of the *Gewissen* and its determining power in the reality-testing, in comparison with the limits of the *Bewusstsein*:

Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds (...) and he can also raise himself above them to the extent of having a scrap of independence and originality (14).

In this passage, he does not mention the pathology of "multiple personalities" and treats the identifying skin as constitutive element of identity (or transgenerational identity) of the individual, who must disentangle himself/herself to that "minimum" extent to which he autonomously can.

However, as at the beginning of his "self-analysis", when he hurriedly liquidated his *Neurotica*, he restores again the common sense, returning to the order of the ruling episteme, with two very marginal notes. The first was added as a footnote in *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1923), in which he affirms:

There seems, however, to be some doubt whether the attribution of this function (of reality-testing) of the ego ideal is justified. This point requires thorough discussion (15).

The doubt and the resulting in-depth examination would never again be approached either by Freud or any of his followers. To the contrary, the argument would be peremptorily closed by Freud (or, rather, by his "collective souls", his moral conscience) with a second note, which appears in *The Ego and the Id* (1922) in which he hastily declares:

...I seem to have been mistaken in ascribing the function of "reality-testing" to this super-ego – a point which needs correction. It would fit it perfectly with the relations of the ego to the world of perception if reality-testing remained a task of the ego itself. (16).

In no other point in his works does Freud mention with such severity and originality the possibility of intending the conflict outside the limits of an adaptive philosophy according to the economic laws of drives. He contributes to the crisis of the paradigm of the “being-present of the consciousness” with which Descartes believed it possible to define, once and for all, the assumption of a metaphysical truth of thought: as far as the subject of the cogito is also other in relation to the Ego represented as a monolith, the cogito ergo sum could thus be rendered more complex: “Someone thinks in me, and that which I see and think of me is then the product of the thought of the other in me. However, in thinking that another thinks in me, in some way I distinguish myself from him, and it is in this distinguishing – minimally and never totally and definitively – that an adventure opens for me never previously conceived of elsewhere, a becoming in which I am about to be”.

But the “triumph” of the “collective souls” in Freud affected a systematic mutilation of his most autonomous and original thought. In *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (17), Schreber, the paranoid upon whom Freud constructed a bizarre theory on the homosexual genesis of paranoia, extraordinarily stated that “God in person was on my side in His struggle against me” (Schreber)! However, even Freud, or any other human being for that matter, will have experienced something of the sort, even if in the place of the figure of God we find the complex figure of his family tradition. This tradition was cloaked in the “strong” positivist scientism which already at that time showed signs of weakening. Freud then transposed his violent rejection of that in himself which could threaten the stability of his internal institutions, onto his way of managing the psychoanalytical institution he created. He flung his anathema at those “followers” of his, guilty of offering obtuse resistance (like the incurable patients of his) to the truths sanctioned by his “science” (18) (1914). This transference-like way of considering the psychoanalytic institution still constitutes the most evident part of Freudian cultural patrimony. The most original part of his patrimony is suffocated by the monumentality of the International Psychoanalytic Association, with its stamp of North-American, scientist pragmatism, observed by the institutions of various nations. The affiliation of analysts to their national societies and of those to the IPA follows a typically family model (is this the pattern or the patron of psychoanalysis?), by which candidates are submitted to a judgment of conformity to what would be the “psychoanalytic truth”. That occurs through a process of indoctrination, increasingly meticulous and prolonged, of the trainees, consisting in the insidious procedure of didactic analysis; the patient/candidate is welcomed into the community of “mature” analysts only upon providing proof of having made “his own” the vision of his analyst. What the mind of the analyst knows and believes to have ascertained experimentally (a theoretical model and not the mystery of the soul) must become known and believed by the patient. This one will adhere to the meaning of his conflicts according to the model proposed by his analyst, thus exchanging his own truth-in-the-process-of-becoming with the “truth” of the theory borne by interpretations. On the other hand, the value of Freud’s entire work consists in an extraordinary testimony of a process of “self-other-formation” (auto-etero-formazione). This process is developed in the space which Freud opened between his Self and himself, between himself and his patients, between himself and his mentor Fliess and between himself and the community of psychoanalysts. In this single, vast relational space, although formally distinct in various settings, Freud initially spread the germs of his thought. In this polymorphous womb, confused lumps of mental matter progressively took form, although often the womb was shaken by abortive shocks. Freud’s extraordinary merit consists in his documenting, step by step, the conflict between his necessity of conservation of the conscience/consciousness and his necessity of creative transformation, and his offering us thus an exceptionally vast and dramatic panorama of man’s toils intended “to raise oneself to a minimum level of autonomy and originality”.

The word formation comes from the Latin translation of the Greek morfo-genesis, the model of which paradigmatically comes from biology. Through this process some undifferentiated cells develop in such a way as to create organs and tissue which are extremely differentiated and capable of thus giving new form to that lump of living material making up an embryo in its primitive phases. However, while in biology morphogenesis leads – by means of the most diverse metamorphic stages – to a complete and stabile form, in the affairs of the mind, the forms it assumes in the development of individuals, cultures and organizations are never perfect (according to a philogenetic telos) or stabile. This incompleteness of human morphogenesis has caused the converging of modern – philosophical, biological, and anthropological – thought onto the concept of lack as that condition which requires a continuous self-reorganization of man as unique

embryonic animal. The concept of neothenia refers in a very pregnant way to this anthropological vision, which is why this concept is very frequently utilized by psychologists and psychoanalysts to indicate that specific dependence of human beings on the mother in order to survive, which is far more prolonged in man than in any other animal species. In these terms, the neoteny would indicate a particularly slow development of the biological and mental conditions necessary for the individual's self-sufficiency. Neoteny is then called in cause as a condition which would favor the very complex maturing of the human being and also the onset of infantile behavior or experiences at an adult age. This hybridization – a preconception which sees man at the summit of the scale of evolution, in the sense of the most perfect of animals – exercises a violence on a lexical term, bending it to its own anthropological construction. In zoology, in fact, the term neoteny means that certain individuals of certain species of invertebrates reach a reproductive capacity in the larval period, before undergoing the metamorphosis which leads to the definitive adult conformation. In some cases, this character becomes stable and is genetically transmitted. Applied to the human being, this term indicates the fact that he, in his stable condition of embryonic incompleteness, is able not only to sexually reproduce, but also to symbolically and specifically conceive of the world from the most tender age, to exercise thus his peculiar creativity (19).

The embryonic lack of man consists therefore, both in the insufficient specialization of his organism as regards the environment, and his indefinite cognitive opening. These lacks coexist, and are two ways of manifesting the embryonic quality; that is, they are not in a cause and effect relationship, in the sense that the cognitive opening does not originate in the adaptive incompleteness (or vice versa). Galimberti (20) examines the mythological and philosophical lineage (Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Herder, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, and so on up to the ample documentation provided by Arnold Gehlen) of the representation of the state of lack in man, as regards animal “perfection”, considering technology the remedy which man produces in the (mistaken) conviction that with it he will finally render “perfect” his structural biological-cognitive imperfection. To the extent to which psychoanalytic anthropology does not consider the structural lack of the human being (it uses widely the term lack when referring to objects of drives, or the regulative order of speech or the paternal function), analytical practice proposes itself for the most part as technical remedy and “treatment”, availing itself of the deceptive representation that there is an object-mind to be treated with particular manipulative procedures. When psychoanalysis converges with all sorts of psychotherapies, it loses all specificity, while any other more explicitly guiding or persuasive technique proves to be therapeutically more effective. In this context the psychoanalytic market must shortly exhaust itself.

We should therefore think of psychoanalysis as an isomorphic practice to the embryonic condition of man; as a relational process in a continual state of becoming, the interlocutors of which are simultaneously involved in a formative, morphogenetic experience. For Freud himself his state of consciousness (his “collective souls”) as regards the “autonomy and originality” of his thought was very relevant; self-analysis proved to be an exercise in listening more to the voices of the fathers than of personal, germinal ideas. These ideas, for the most part, were prematurely rejected or domesticated by a metapsychological jargon.

The trajectory of Bion, who in the final years described himself as an “analyst in training”, shows us a process of self-other-formation, in which self-analysis – as an experience of reconsideration of his entire life – made possible a radical restructuring of his thought. He had dedicated all his talent, up until the late 1960s, to constructing a gigantic hybridization between what was already known of psychoanalysis (with particular reference to Melanie Klein) and his creative daimon. During the last decade of his life, he became aware of his imminent existential catastrophe, which he summarizes representatively at the end of his last work (21), *The Dawn of Oblivion*: as his having for his entire life been imprisoned, frustrated and forced by common sense, reason, memory, desire and – the biggest bugbear of all – understanding and being understood. This was an attempt to rebel, to bid a farewell to all that.

That attempt was represented by *Memoir of the Future* (22): a book which he described as a psycho-embryonic attempt to write an embryo-scientific description of a voyage from birth to death, asphyxiated and oppressed by the pre-maturity of “knowledge”, “experience”, “glory” and self-intoxicating self-satisfaction.

On the third volume of *A Memoir of the Future*, *The Dawn of Oblivion*, I will avail myself largely of the work of Di Paola (23), unequalled as to completeness and depth guide to the reading of Bion. Di Paola tells

us that, during the last ten years of his life, Bion was committed to contesting radically the jargon which psychoanalysts (himself included) had created and adopted in order to expound its own logic. Di Paola also states however that

“logic has never been truly a theory of thinking (*pensiero*), but rather a theory of the thought about (*pensato*)” substantially limited to the description of the statics of thought – to the post factum justification, based on axioms and deductive rules which have been established and remain, strictly speaking, an open question (24).

At the point at which Bion addresses this dynamic, he proposes an “embryo-logy of the mind”, consisting of the “microscopic” observation of the dispositions of the mind as mind-in-formation. These dispositions appear as larval ideas, not yet defined in any concept; rough ideas which must be “domesticated” before encountering culture and its institutions. The already known, whatever its syntactic, relational or institutional forms, can be a container capable of nurturing the emerging, providing it with rational and aesthetic instruments with which to take form. On the other hand, however, the emerging – to the measure in which it threatens the stability of the already known, anticipating its change which Bion defines emphatically as “catastrophic” – may not find an adequate reception. Thus the emerging, at every step of evolution, is in danger of being suppressed at birth, becoming “still-born” (25). In other words, “a fetal idea can kill itself or be killed, and not only metaphorically speaking” (26).

Bion addressed the conflict between the not yet known (the fetal idea, the “thought without thinker”) and the already known (the establishment internal/external) in the same perspective I proposed between necessity of change (of a morphogenetic formation) and necessity of conservation. Bion developed on himself the drama anticipated by Freud with his striking image of the individual raising himself from his own “collective souls” to a minimum of autonomy and originality. Di Paola (27), commenting on *A Memoir of the Future* (28), states:

he imagines himself ‘buried’ under his own jargon, he anticipates the vision of a ‘Bion’ submersed under the cumulus of stereotypes, ‘grids’, ‘vertices’, small arrows and male-female symbols, clumsy ‘group’ phraseology – in short, an avalanche, of the well-known ‘Bionese’. Prophetic anticipation, considering the historical irony with which the ‘Satanic’ powers (29) of the Jargon take revenge on his most strenuous opponent, inflicting on him, in a kind of retaliation, the punishment of massive jargonization.

Bion goes on to say:

“The Satanic Jargonier” was offended: in some way the psychoanalytical jargon began to be eroded by eruptions of clarity. He was forced to seek refuge in narrative. Camouflaged as fiction, the truth, in bits, slipped through (30).

But of what truth is Bion speaking? Obviously not a rationally constructed truth, which would by necessity be lying, apart from the logical model adopted. Bion speaks of an experienced truth, of a mystery’s truth, of the “thing in itself”-in-becoming; which at the moment it should be de-finite (*de-finita*) would be simply finished, terminated, dead. He thus felt constrained to “find refuge in narration”, but in a type of narration which was unique. According to Di Paola:

A Memoir of the Future, as a drama in three acts, documents a psychagogy. Demonstrating to the reader how many contrasts, dilemmas, “explosive” risks (catastrophic anxiety is not only theorized), what Dante-like Purgatory (31) psychic change cost the author, Bion is no longer addressing the reader in need of partitioned notions, intellectual cavils which would alone replace (and defend against) the responsibility of a different experiment with themselves, the “courage” of a placing in play of one’s own existence (and therefore, when it is the case, of the way of performing a certain... job). Saying who writes also “says”, in an illocutory way, who reads.

Di Paola also remembers Harris Williams who wrote (32) that Bion

Inevitably, in undermining his own prejudices and jargon, his own historical “vertices”, he also undermines our own, as readers – our particular concept of himself, and perhaps of ourselves also.

In these comments is the announcement of the (“catastrophic”?) turn which psychoanalysis could encounter, if we wish to give sense to the narratological perspectives which have developed over the past decade in the psychoanalytical movement (33), in particular through the re-founding experience of Bion.

The word psychagogy, which appears often in the writings of Bion, indicates a religious or magical ceremony which, in certain cultures, was intended to evoke the soul of the deceased, normally for reasons of divination: a presence, locked in its past, is evoked, rendered vividly present, conducted into the present, in order that it can tell about our future. We might see “a memoir of the future” as a poetic locution referring to a psychagogical practice. The “defunct”, the past, the already known is the many-strata, relational foundation of individual identity and has a specific power of attracting, assimilating every idea, vision, dream generated by autòs (autopoyesis, auto-nomy, aut-henticity), which attempts to reorganize incessantly the neotenic couplings of the human individual. The Freudian “unconscious”, as the space of the repressed, is the “totally already known” which makes itself present, beyond a critical awareness, as an a priori law, the law of the defunct, the moral conscience. Each time that this “unconscious” is activated, the future is assimilated to the past, and divination predicts only the already been which, in more or less an identical way, repeats itself, compulsively. If this unconscious is observed by one who, in his turn, is immersed in his own already known, it can be only confirmed – perhaps using the most sophisticated rational arguments which, in psychoanalysis, constitute the “satanic jargon”.

In the opposite view, the defunct instead (literally, “he who has completed the time of his life”) is rendered present in order to conclude the time of his death. Concluding this time, his heir has the possibility of not remaining con-fused with him, of taking that reflective, critical, aesthetic distance in which he can “minimally” affirm his originality. However, in order for the past to conclude the time of its own death, it is not sufficient to remember it, it must also be evoked, called out from the opacity of the unconscious, and interrogated. Which dreams, fears, loves, suffering in the attempt to raise oneself from the “collective souls”, unexpressed feelings a mother entrusted to the children so that they might find the way of her expression? If we succeed in listening to the voice of the mother, thus evoked – who alludes to her own unexpressed which, becoming transcended in her children, searches to enter into the world – then in the son the roots of her personal originality will show up. Originality does not imply the impossible being beyond one’s own history, but a singular way of taking up once more one’s own history (one’s own origins) not to repeat it, but to trans-form it. Originality means offering oneself as that present which renders future the still unknown past and not the already known unconscious.

Bion indicates often a connection between that which is conceived as emerging thought and that which is conceived as embryo in the maternal womb. Di Paola says:

At the maximum metaphoric level, there is an analogy between gestation/birth of the fetus/infant and gestation/birth of the idea: in both cases, there is a time of ripening and a precipitated time (catastrophic change), just as there exist immemorial vestiges, which are nevertheless still active, between that which was virtual and that which will be event.

As the embryo, as it forms, induces a transformation in the maternal body, up to the “catastrophic” point of birth, so the fetal idea threatens to transform the cultural “body” in which it was produced. In both cases, the container of the thing being born experiences a deep crisis of destabilization, of deformation in relation to the form up until that point assumed as stable identity. The anxiety which emerged legitimizes the use of the adjective “catastrophic” to describe a transforming change, and the rejection of part of the “body” container is an immediate remedy for this ill.

In order that an embryo may proceed with its development in an environment which contains (“a good enough”, Winnicott would say), it is necessary that the cognitive body be equipped with that negative capacity already formulated by Keats and then by Bion. It is the capacity to tolerate change and is founded on the shifting of the existential center of gravity towards the future and becoming. The mind which does not reject its own conception has faith (Bion connects this irrational certainty to genius and mystic) in its ability to find itself once more, grown in its own continuity, beyond change. In this psycho-embryonic process Bion

distinguished two figures: “pre-mature” and “em-mature”. While he connotes as premature the mind which holds its center of gravity within the already known, he defines as em-mature the fetal idea, in that it proceeds towards ripening (34). But more than a relationship between two subjects (such as mother and child), I see the relationship between two stages of overall experience of a subject: the human subject in its entirety is embryonic, immersed in an indefinite morphogenetic process, and when he embraces this condition and, faces the trembling of the new with sufficient faith, s/he will be em-mature, while s/he will be pre-mature every time s/he retreats before the event enclosing herself/himself once more in her/his pre-concepts, in the jargon, in the conformance to pre-constituted codes.

The analytical practice, in this perspective, has traits isomorphic to the embryonic condition of man, insofar as it is a morphogenetic practice which involves, personally and reciprocally, analyst and patient who are bound by a common evocation of their own “deceased” (of their own history, ideology, common sense, theories, psychoanalytic knowledge). Both are mutually committed to transpassing the weft (trama) (35) – one, one hundred, one thousand times – until the unexpressed, clotted in the already known, can be utilized as organizer of new forms of existence. The analyst will have confirmation of the fact of being authentically in formation if he succeeds in tolerating the provisory nature of theoretic models, incessantly revisited in that they are always approximate, implicitly contradictory, historically contingent. This is the only material that he is offered, in the light of his relational experience with the patient, as plastic material, in the process of becoming, waiting for new reorganizations. If he succeeds in communicating this tension to the patient, then the patient will feel it in herself/himself as an invitation to follow the analyst’s path, with the same courage. Thus, according to Harris Williams (see citation above), Bion assumed a psychagogic function for us as readers. Testifying to our capacity to not remain trapped in our “pre-maturity”, we will facilitate the emergency and the valorization of the “em-maturity” of the patient and, once for all, the relational structure of our interlocution.

This specifically psychoanalytical pattern could then free us from the condition of being one of many ingredients in the psychological soup, to which with irony Hillman referred (see citation). Our metaphor of psychagogy should be understood not in a transitive way in the mold of “pedagogy”, but in a reflective and communicational way. The analyst is called on to evoke his own past or his own discipline filed away, not to know archeologically its secrets (although there could be even sudden recollections or clarifications), not to obtain the grace of renewed certainties in exchange for renewed fidelity. The analyst, in making the past, successively, to bring about the time of its small deaths, is able to transform it into its germinating originality. In this perspective, “self-analysis” is a formative-transformative process which occurs in the space between many subjects, personal and institutional, and substantially centered on the effort of distinguishing between the imposing voices of moral conscience and the faint voice of one’s own creative consciousness. This evocative tension of the analyst is transmitted to the patient (and not his personal history or doctrine, although the analyst might mention it), and in the communication fluctuate “fetal ideas” of which the analyst knows little or nothing and which can find in the mind of the patient the most suitable environment for their maturing. Every analyst, not too rigidly “pre-mature”, has at least once seen, expressed in the words or choices of the patient, fleeting intuitions had perhaps much earlier and then forgotten. The patient is invited to maintain this evocative tension, with its reflective and communicational declination. And from the circularity of the questionings which bind the two interlocutors, transformations, retreating, sudden blindness, and new expressions are produced.

When I recalled Hillman’s concept of pattern (patron or father), I was not referring to a specific psychoanalytic theory. The pragmatic, psychagogic model is a relational, historicist, hermeneutic model, it is a procedure applicable to any cultural structure instituted in the already completed formation of the analyst’s individual identity. The clearer and more complex the theory learnt by the analyst during his didactic training, the more material there will be available for his neotenic reorganizing capacity. Thus, not only is a deep knowledge of a theoretical system necessary, but in order that this be evoked as a “dearly departed”, it must be reconsidered lovingly. Probably if I had not loved, and did not still love, Freud in his human and scientific drama, I would not have succeeded in “evoking him” with so much continuity and passion. In absence of love, our Authors will remain present in our obedience to them and in our professional licenses, and we ourselves will be tempted to conserve them as severe judges to whom to entrust the certainty of our journey. However, as Bion said, the “Satanic Jargon” will envelope every thought of ours, crushing at birth any possible new idea. Only in the faith of our becoming, through the thousands of rebirths and deaths of our

pasts, it is worth living and dedicating ourselves to this “impossible” craft of ours.

Notes:

(1) Michel Foucault, *Le Parole e le cose* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1978)-

(2) James Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis. Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology* (London: Northwestern University Press, 1972).

(3) Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, SE, IV, p. XXVI.

(4) hybrid (generated by individuals of different species) derives from the Greek *ubrizein*, meaning exceed, surpass, overcome confines, and also rape.

(5) Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1922), SE, 19, p. 28.

(6) Freud, *cit.*, pp. 29-31.

(7) Friedrich Nietzsche [in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974)] maintains that the entire cognitive apparatus is an apparatus of abstraction and simplification – not directed to the knowledge of things, but to the dominion of things.

(8) Following this Freudian perspective, there would be no sense in speaking of a regression at infantile phases, but of a reactivation of the figure of the child equal to that which occurs in the reactivation of the parental figures. The difference consists on the fact that when it is the latter of these who are reactivated, they can be seen as expressions of the quality of being adult.

(9) Immediately after the death of his father, Freud began reflecting on some of the neurotic manifestations shown by some of his siblings, and suspected that they had been in some way involved sexually with the father (see Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, book 1 [New York: Basic Books, 1953], p. 210, p. 324); one of his own vaguely incestuous dreams of his daughter Mathilde seemed to confirm that the seductive attitude was actually very frequent in the behavior of the parent. This development of similar would provide a reverse sense to the myth of Oedipus, placing the figure of Laius at the center of the tragedy.

(10) Sigmund Freud, *Letters to Fliess, 1887-1904* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), transl. and ed. by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson.

(11) The perturbation is produced on two fronts: that of the relationship with the patient and that of his relation with his own internal/external institutions, violated since he began discovering the family histories of his patients.

(12) Freud, *A Childhood Memory by Leonardo da Vinci*, SE, 9, pp. 136-7. Here he seems, in the context of a completely meta-psychological discourse, at a certain point returning to the tension of the ‘scandal’ and added that this stressing the importance of the most remote experiences did not imply a devaluation of the influence of those later ones, but while later impressions speak during analysis with a reasonably clear voice through the mouth of the patient, in favor of the rights of children it is usually the physician analyst who must raise his voice.

(13) Freud, *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1921, SE, 18, p. 114.

(14) Freud, *cit.*, p. 129.

(15) Freud, cit., p. 114.

(16) Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 1922, SE, 19, p. 28.

(17) Daniel P. Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, ed. by Ida MacAlpine & Richard A. Hunter (London: William Dawson & Sons, 1955).

(18) Freud, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (1914), SE. 14, pp. 7-66.

(19) I have considered deeply this problem (see Diego Napolitani, "Verso un'antropologia gruppoanalitica. Al di là della dicotomia individuo-gruppo", *Riv. It. Gruppoan.*, II, 2, 1988; Napolitani, "Si è per esser-ci. Riflessioni epistemologiche sul soggetto collettivo, con particolare riguardo all'opera di E. Morin", *Riv. It. Gruppoan.*, X, 1, 1995), reconsidering the literature on the subject, with particular attention to J. von Uexkull and L. Kriszat, A. Gehlen, E. Morin, and Maturana and Varela. See Jacob von Uexkull & Ludwig Kriszat, *Streifzuge durch Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1956). Arnold Gehlen, *L'uomo: la sua natura e il suo posto nel mondo* (Milan: Adelphi, 1983); Edgar Morin, *Scienza con coscienza* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1984); Morin, *La vita della vita* (Milan: Feltrinelli 1987); Morin, *La conoscenza della conoscenza* (Milan: Feltrinelli 1989). Humberto L. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesi e cognizione* (Milan: Garzanti 1987).

(20) Umberto Galimberti, *Psiche e techne* (Milan: Feltrinelli 1999).

(21) W.R. Bion, *A Memoir of the Future*, vol. III, 1979, *The Dawn of Oblivion* (London: Karnac, 1979).

(22) Wilfred R. Bion, *A Memoir of the Future*, 3 voll. (London: Karnac, 1984); MF I, *The Dream* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Imago Editoria, 1975); MF II, *The Past Presented* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Imago Editoria, 1977); MF III, *The Dawn of Oblivion* (Perthshire: Clunie press, 1979).

(23) Francesco Di Paola, *Il tempo della mente. Saggio sul pensiero di Wilfred Bion* (Ripatransone, Ascoli Piceno: Il Sestante 1995).

(24) Psychoanalytical logic follows a causal physiological model which is included in a cosmogonical representation, following a paradigmatic process inherited from ancient Greece. Of cosmogony, see Jean-Pierre Vernant & Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Librairie Francois Maspéro, 1972) state: "Instead of recounting the successive births, cosmogony defines the first, constitutive principles of being; from historical account it is transformed into a system which expounds the profound structure of the real. The problem of genesis, becoming, changes in the attempt to grasp, beyond the changeable, the stable, the permanent, the identical."

(25) W.R. Bion, *A Memoir of the Future*, vol. III, cit., p. 446..

(26) Bion, *A Memoir of the Future*, vol. II, *The Past Presented*, cit., pp. 417-18.

(27) Francesco Di Paola, *Il tempo della mente. Saggio sul pensiero di Wilfred Bion*, cit.

(28) see note 17.

(29) Bion. *A Memoir of the Future*, vol. II, *The Past Presented*, cit., p. 302.

(30) *Ibid.*, II, p. 302.

(31) *Ibid.*, II, p. 349, 418.

(32) *In the Intern. Journ. of Psychoan.*, 1983, 10.

(33) This applies to all the books of Donald P. Spence [especially to *Historical Truth and Fictional Truth* (London-New York: Norton & Company, 1982) (Italian trans., *Verità storica e verità narrativa* [Milan: Martinelli 1987]).

(34) The prefix “em-” should not be confused with the “im-” of immature, which is a negation, being a neologism coined by Bion to indicate an “about to be”.

See D.P. Spence, *Verità storica e verità narrativa* (Milan: Martinelli, 1987).

(35) The Italian word *trama* means at once warp, weft, plot and conspiracy [Translator’s Note].