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Wittgenstein and Lacan Reading Freud

Summary:

The author compares Lacan's (whose paradigm is essentially Hegelian-Heideggerian) reading of Freud with the apparently opposite—and substantially negative—remarks by Wittgenstein on Freud: the author highlights some surprising convergences and congruities between these two so different approaches. In fact, either Wittgenstein and Lacan embody a “linguistic turn” in the thought of the second half of the 20th century, which took place both in analytic philosophy and in so-called Continental Theory. In particular, both Wittgenstein and Lacan share an anti-psychological and anti-cognitivist view in a wide sense: both reject the idea that a scientific knowledge of the mind would be possible. In that perspective, psychoanalytic activity has nothing to do with some technological application of a scientific theory on a special object (mind): it is rather a practice (a linguistic game in Wittgenstein, an ethical praxis for Lacan) which has the same nature of its object: every subject, interpreting one's own experience through language (always public according to Wittgenstein, always the Other's according to Lacan), alienates and represses this primal experience, the event (*tuche*) of which the psychic processes are at once the repetition and the loss.

1.

Freud in his analysis provides explanations which many people are inclined to accept. He emphasizes that people are dis-inclined to accept them. But if the explanation is one which people are disinclined to accept, it is highly probable that it is also one which they are inclined to accept. And this is what Freud had actually brought out. Take Freud's view that anxiety is always a repetition in some way of the anxiety we felt at birth. [...] It is an idea which has a marked attraction. It has the attraction which mythological explanations have, explanations which say that this is all a repetition of something that has happened before. And when people do accept or adopt this, then certain things seem much clearer and easier for them. (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 43)

I interpret this passage—and the whole complicated attitude of Wittgenstein toward Freud's work—with Wittgenstein's intent of underlining the *seductive power* of psychoanalysis. Wittgenstein himself was certainly seduced by it. “For the rest of his life—says Rush Rhees—Freud was one of the few authors he thought worth reading. He would speak of himself as ‘a disciple of Freud’ and ‘a follower of Freud’” (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 41)[2].

However this Wittgenstein's admiration for Freud—or rather his letting himself be seduced by Freud—seems inconsistent with the severe criticisms that Wittgenstein leveled against psychoanalysis in his conversations and elsewhere. And it seems inconsistent with the rejection of psychoanalysis many followers of Wittgenstein did[3].

Freud thought that modern man had much resistance to psychoanalysis—this is why the legend attributing to him the saying that psychoanalysis was “a plague” for *Kultur*, a legend spread among analysts. For

Wittgenstein, the real difficulty of psychoanalysis is on the contrary that it is rather a seductive Siren. It seduces because it claims to reveal meaningfulness in all that part of human existence which seemed to be abandoned to chance, to contingency, and to meaningless physical processes. Psychoanalysis seduces because it gives a metaphoric tragic flavor to our bland and blind destinies.

In fact, in human beings there is a strong drive to give a meaning to chance. In some primitive societies, for example, the concept of natural death is rejected: if one dies, it is because somebody has killed him by witchcraft. But in fact, are we the moderns so different? In Italy we have a proverbial expression: “it rains! government is a thief!”—the present government is responsible even for weather problems. In fact, to give meaning to chance means generally to accuse somebody as guilty. For example, today in America “psychosomatic” theories, which, for example, always explain cancer as the effect of the patient’s spiritual failure, are thriving. One needs a responsible for the event, i.e. a cause—*aition* in Greek language was either cause and being guilty. The human being, despite Wittgenstein, always condenses causes and faults, events and reasons. Therefore, even the *efficient cause* is thought in terms of an agent and a patient, from the experience of someone pulling toward himself or somebody pushing far from himself. This is why any theory which looks scientific, nourishing causes with a guilt weight, giving reasons to our ills, is very seductive. Undoubtedly, part of the fortune psychoanalysis enjoys among us is for the same reasons certain New Age theories, alternative or exotic medicine, etc., enjoy great popularity in the West: all try to give meanings to pure mechanical processes. In short, psychoanalysis is perceived by both the large public and many analysts as a form of magic—it is seductive as all magic is.

When I speak with even prestigious analysts (but non Lacanians) on the essence of the analytic cure, earlier or later this idea comes out: that, thanks to the analytic relationship. the subject gives a meaning to its sufferance. To what I retort that therefore psychoanalysis is in competition with religion, that is, it puts itself on the same field as religion: what else religions do than to give meaning to pain? They don’t necessarily give a superstitious meaning, such as “one suffers because one is a sinner”; even if you suffer unjustly like Job, the meaning is that... you’ll enjoy Paradise. The matter of fact of sufferance has another meaning, an enjoyment meaning. Psychoanalysis has the strong temptation to do the same thing: “if you suffer, this is because another part of yourself enjoys”. This is not any more, as in religion, “suffer in that life, you’ll get pleasure in the other”, but a secular version of it. That is, psychoanalysis tends generally to propose itself as a secularized form of religion. Wittgenstein is not saying that psychoanalysis is so seductive because it offers the same satisfactions which push us to believe in magic or religion, because he has an image of psychoanalysis as a sophisticated and intellectually seductive theory. (But even certain magics and religions are very sophisticated and intellectually seductive.) Anyway, undoubtedly psychoanalysis intersects with science, magic and religion—risking always to identify itself to them. In fact, often it is considered or as a science, or as magic or as a secularized religion.

This is why Lacan (1966) in “Science and truth” tries to situate the place of psychoanalysis exactly in relation to science, magic and religion. Even if certainly Lacan did not have Wittgenstein’s remarks in his mind, anyway part of his paper can be read as a virtual answer to Wittgenstein’s challenge: “it is true—Lacan seems to say—that psychoanalysis enjoys the seduction of science without being a science, but it enjoys also of magic’s and religion’s charm without being any of these forms of life. Psychoanalysis is a *fourth form*.”

2.

In order to explain psychoanalysis’ place in relationship with explanation, i.e. with causality, Lacan evokes Aristotle’s conception of causality in his *Physics*. In fact, in agreement with Kuhn (1977)[4], Lacan thinks that Aristotle’s paradigm of causality is still useful for describing the state of the art in natural sciences and in other practices. For Aristotle, the cause (*aition*)[5] concerns the being as far as it moves, as far as it has *kinesis*. About the moving things, the pertinent questions according to Aristotle are: *by what* (*ek*, efficient

cause) the movement comes; *towards what* (*eis*, final cause) it goes; *according to what* (*katà*, formal cause) and finally *under what* (*upó*, material cause) it goes. For an *actual* statue, for example, the material cause of its existence is the marble; its efficient cause is the force exerted on the marble by the sculptor's tools and hands; its formal cause is the idealized form of the finished object, present from the start in the sculptor's mind; and the final cause is to endow the Greek city with a new beautiful object.

Unfortunately, when modern epistemologists talk about causality, usually they mean it in an Humean sense: as a statistical and/or probabilistic regularity. This approach represses the historical dimension of causality as concerning events, i.e. changes in the state of things (what Lacan, following Aristotle, calls *tuche*, event or happening). But, because in psychoanalysis we deal with an historical causality—*something changes*—Aristotelian distinctions are very pertinent here.

In this text Lacan is engaged to consider “truth as cause”—such a concept is completely incomprehensible, of course, to rationalists and positivists, but it is absolutely consistent with an Hegelian approach. I consider Lacan's *oeuvre* essentially as an Hegelian reading of psychoanalysis, above all through the mediator of the Heideggerian reading of Hegel by A. Kojève given during the 1930s. Anyway, it is difficult for everybody to grasp completely what he means by truth (and by a speaking truth: “*moi, la vérité, je parle...*”) Certainly it is not the truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus* of the “metaphysical tradition” according to Heidegger (that is, the truth in modern science), but no more an Heideggerian conception of truth as *aletheia*, as un-veiling or revelation, as overcoming an oblivion. Truth for him is rather, in an Hegelian register, a full expression (the “*parole pleine*”), a well-saying: a truth which is plunged in the world and modifies the latter (truth as an *historial event*, some would say).

Now, for Lacan truth can be a cause in the four Aristotelian ways. The cause playing in modern sciences is the formal cause; the cause playing in magic is the efficient cause; and one giving to religions their potency and power is the final cause. Science is on the side of *Verwerfung* (forclosure, then of psychosis), magic on the side of *Verdrängung* (repression, then of neurosis), religion of *Verneinung* (negation; then of perversions?). And psychoanalysis? To which kind of negation or denial—and then to which “pathology”—does it belong? Lacan leaves us questioning. The cause psychoanalysis effects is for Lacan material (at that time – 1965 – the signifier was material for him; later he will say that the *matter* of psychoanalysis is rather *jouissance*)[6].

The idea, that in sciences it is essentially the formal cause which matters, can appear strange to many, because we are naively convinced that in natural sciences rather efficient causes (push and pull) prevail. In fact Lacan, like Kuhn, takes that from Koyré's teaching: this latest one stressed the point that in 19th-century's physics, when you want to explain a particular phenomenon, you have to write an appropriate differential equation and deduce from it, perhaps conjoined with specified boundary conditions, the phenomenon in question. This is a way to explain phenomena by mechanical and mathematical *forms*[7]. In 20th-century the notion of forces was definitely substituted by the concept of *field* (which is an Aristotelian formal cause); but even the matter has acquired mechanically unimaginable formal properties (spin, parity, strangeness, etc.). Even more: quantum mechanics has canceled the supposition of efficient causes in the atomic realm, because according to it many phenomena are uncaused[8]. In this sense Lacan is right: in modern physics the formal causes prevail. But in classical physics—that is, in our domestic world of things not too big (like stars) and not too little (like atoms or quarks)—efficient causes are still there: when we heat the water for pasta, we consider the heat from the stove as the efficient cause of the boiling of the water. Common sense physics give a big role to a classical push-and-pull mechanics. And sciences are not only physics: in these other sciences efficient causes are still pertinent. For example, for Darwinism an efficient cause—the random mutation in gene, this *tuche*—is quite essential: without these stochastic “mistakes” in copying genes, no history of life would be possible.

Wittgenstein appreciates Freud for having read new fruitful meanings in dreams, parapraxis and psychopathological symptoms, but at the same time he underlines the fact that such enrichment of meaning doesn't guarantee the discovery of the true *causes* of dreams, parapraxis and symptoms. In short, Wittgenstein stresses that there is a splitting—which psychoanalysis does not recognize—between the order of meanings and the order of causes, because to explain and to understand are two different “games”[9].

We can take as an example the way in which Freud interprets the forgetting of a Latin word, “*aliquis*“, in a poem by Virgil which a young man speaking with Freud was quoting by heart[10]. Through this man's free associations, Freud is able to connect this memory gap to a very pressing worry of this man: he was waiting not for *aliquis* but for some *liquid*, i.e. the menses of his Italian girl friend, whom he feared might be pregnant. What kind of objection would Wittgenstein make to this Freud's reconstruction? He would argue that, while Freud was very clever to win this confession about this man's private anxieties, he didn't prove at all that the cause of that particular slip of tongue was just *that* particular anxiety. Of course, in the “game” of psychotherapy, a therapist able to solicit with grace, from a banal slip of tongue, certain remembering and connections, can be useful to the patient. But in that *exploit* there would not be any *scientific* achievement. Freud gives no evidence that *that particular meaning* is also *the specific cause* of that particular amnesia[11]. Freud says what this slip of tongue *can mean* in a man's life, not *why* it arrived.

Can we then see psychoanalytic interpretation as similar to the interpretations of ink spots that subjects are invited to produce in the Rorschach test? If in a spot I recognize a rabbit, for example, it doesn't follow that whoever made the spot had in mind evoking a rabbit in our minds. On the contrary, these spots are random on purpose.

The fact that a dream can suggest a meaning, and the fact that the dreamer can persuade himself that this meaning is pertinent in his life, doesn't imply at all that *this* meaning is itself the cause of *that* dream. *Traumdeutung*, the *interpretation* of dreams, is not a *science* of dreams. Interpreting is to say the same thing by other words, rather explaining is to describe causes *other than* their effects.

Often philosophers critique psychoanalytical interpretations for being dogmatic—and generally they smile condescendingly when they see fierce battles among psychoanalysts supporting their own interpretative pattern[12]. Certainly, the dogmatism of psychoanalytic theories is closely linked to their power of seduction: rarely uncertainty provides cultural success. But Wittgenstein's doubts concern a more metaphysical dogmatism.

When Wittgenstein criticizes Freud, he refuses essentially what we could call Freud's “ontological proof of the unconscious”. Here Wittgenstein displays the same concern that led him, in *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953), to stress the essential difference between following a rule from thinking that one is following a rule.

Certain aspects, in fact, of the criticism that Wittgenstein addresses to Freud resemble Kant's criticism of the old “ontological proof” of the existence of God. Of course, in Freud the matter at hand is not, as in Anselm of Canterbury, to demonstrate the existence of God from a thought of perfection, but rather to show that a meaning of a text can be considered the cause of that text. If I grasp the meaning of a sentence—Freud seems to argue—I can automatically consider the thought in the mind of the writer *the cause* of the material existence of the text. In such a case, the thought is, in Aristotle's terms, a *final cause*, but nonetheless a cause.

So, why doesn't Wittgenstein accept the meaning that is in one's mind when writing a sentence as either an *efficient* or a *final cause*? Because the supposed cause of that writing coincides with its meaning. This is one of the consequences of the so-called Private Language Argument (P.L.A.), developed by Wittgenstein (1953). If we were to state the cause of the following written sentence: “Lacan is mortal”, I could only say that the cause is the author's thought “Lacan is mortal”. But here by *thought* I mean only the sentence itself or at least its meaning. In the case of meaningful texts the cause and the effect are the same thing. But such

coincidence of cause and effect shows that the link is not causal at all. Seen from the point of view of causality, meaning is a very strange cause, a cause coinciding with its own effect!

As Anselm considered the thought of a perfect being lacking existence to be a contradiction, so Freud perceived as contradictory a meaning of a text which wasn't also the cause of that text. As a matter of fact—Freud could retort to Wittgenstein, in this imaginary debate—if I prove that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the result of a random combination of letters, if I could show that there wasn't any Shakespeare to have thought it up, *ipso facto* the text would lose all its meaning. Or perhaps it wouldn't[13]?

But Wittgenstein shows that cause and meaning are logically distinct and separate, that they don't imply each other. His point of view is equivalent to Kant's supporting Gaunilon's critique against Anselm, and showing that our representations of the beings don't coincide necessarily with what the beings really are.

4.

Wittgenstein's splitting of causes and meanings seems to go back to the Enlightenment's major splitting, when all right thinking people began to think that only two completely distinct "universes" exist, and that human beings are inserted between them. Kant (1788, pp. 289-290) expressed that splitting by "the starry sky over me, the moral law in my heart." He meant to say that in the natural world, ruled by cause-effect mechanical processes exclusively, there is no meaning; the material world is like a machine. The earth turns around the sun because solar gravitation is the formal-efficient cause of this turning, not because the earth means in that way to signify its love for the sun.

As a part of this starry sky, humans are not free, and their vicissitudes are meaningless; but the free and rational part in them, their heart, obeys to the moral. In classical physics, the causes dominating the starry sky are essentially pushing and pulling forces. And it is not by chance that Freud's (1915) metapsychological theory is expressed in the vocabulary of pushing-pulling (efficient) forces: it is his theory of pushing-pulling libido or drives (*Triebe*). The repressed representations are pushed towards the consciousness, the censorship of Ego pushes back these representations, the complexes pull fantasies, and so on. But taking literally the pushing-pulling Freudian vocabulary means to fall into a crude misunderstanding.

Lacan (1986) tried to overcome this usual (mis)understanding about Freud showing that Freud is not "a biologist of mind": Freud's enterprise was to draw a third space between the starry sky and the heart. The Freudian unconscious according to Lacan is essentially ethical, i.e. it is not "something". But this is not ethics in the Kantian sense, as the reason or order of the heart's laws. The Freudian project cannot be reduced to psychology or cognitive sciences, which are the attempt to describe the human heart as a particular kind of starry sky. And it cannot be reduced to the attempt to make of the starry sky itself a kind of branch of an archetypal Heart (as Jung tried to do). The Freudian unconscious for Lacan is ethical in the sense that it works just as an efficient cause—producing symptoms for example—when a human subject is unfaithful to its own desire, i.e. when a subject denies its own truth—and for Freud this truth is its desire and/or *jouissance*, *die Lust*. The cause, in this perspective, is such because something has lost its meaning.

What makes so dire the Freudian notion of the unconscious for many epistemologists, eager of Scientific Method, is the disturbing Freudian pretension to escape from the Kantian alternative between the causal laws and the heart's rules[14]. The Freudian unconscious has some features of the Kantian moral conscience, but on the other hand this unconscious is described as the realm of drives, lusts and pleasures (what Kant [1788] has called "the pathological"). The unconscious seems to be part of *physis*, but it has many features of *nomos* and *logos*, of ethical rules. This is why Freudian interpretations place themselves at the half way between signs and things, between "causal explanations" and "interpreting understanding," between thinking and the world, between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*—a monstrous centaur.

It is true that some social or cognitive sciences developed later. These sciences, whose object is also the human heart, have had to take into account the realm of ends. Human affairs have to be explained in terms of intentions, plans, thoughts, desires and so on, i.e. in terms of final causes. Modern economics is colonized by game theory, that is, by calculations of rational aims by a multitude of goal-directed actors. In social and cognitive sciences, generally the main efficient cause is the multiplicity of final causes; social sciences are more and more a study of *populations of ends*.^[15] In natural sciences the final causes are absolutely excluded, in social sciences the most important causes are the final ones. This division repeats in its own way the Kantian division between the starry sky and the heart's laws. To be "scientific," in our contemporary times dominated by scientific methods and technology, is to explain natural phenomena in terms of efficient and/or formal causes, and to explain social phenomena on the grounds of the *comprehension* of final causes.

In this context, Lacan says that the Freudian scandal was the bringing back into play the dimension of *material causes*. In fact, in our modern culture the material causes are no longer considered serious causes: they are either reviewed as metaphysical explanations or hermeneutic interpretations. Freud brings into play a possible third order of Being, an order between causes and meanings.

In fact, "materialism" appears today as quite anti-scientific (modern scientists think their work more and more in positivist or Popperian terms, less and less in the terms of Spinoza's, Nietzsche's or Deleuze's materialism!). The material cause is the poor relative of the Aristotelian causalism: in fact, modern science completely resolved the matter in energy or quanta or quarks, that is in beings whose causes are either formal or efficient. According to modern science, the universe has not any more a "substance" (*upokeimenon*), it is just form (strings?). Moreover, for modern cosmology universe is primarily void, pure space: matter is its rare exception, a wrinkle of the space. Then, claiming psychoanalysis as materialist means to remove it from the field of sciences. On this point, Wittgenstein, Lacan and Habermas (1973) agree—psychoanalysis is not a science. But Lacan, instead of Wittgenstein and Habermas, thinks yet that psychoanalysis is not just a matter of meanings: psychoanalysis deals also with causes.

5.

One may object that Freudian interpretations can be redefined as explanations through efficient causes. For example, one could say that the Freudian theory of dreams as imaginary fulfillment of a desire can be read as a kind of biological explanation: there would be a biological drive producing as its effect the dream images (by luck, Freud's theory is not just "materialism"!). For example, if while sleeping I become thirsty, I can dream that I drink water. At a first sight, this interpretation is also an explanation, which can be eventually tested: the physical need to drink water generates the dream of drinking (for example, we could compare two groups, one of people going to sleep thirsty and another of people who have drunk water, and to see how many dreams on water they comparatively produce). Here the need for water would be a classical efficient cause.

But Wittgenstein has noted, speaking of dreams, that

the majority of dreams Freud considers have to be regarded as *camouflaged* wish fulfillment; and in this case they simply don't fulfill the wish. *Ex hypothesi* the wish is not allowed to be fulfilled, and something else is hallucinated instead. If the wish is cheated in this way, then the dream can hardly be called a fulfillment of it. (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 47)

Here also Wittgenstein seems to be criticizing Freud's theory, but at the same time he is grasping this theory in all its ambiguity. A dream, like a symptom or a slip, fulfills the wish just as much as it doesn't fulfill it: Freud said that the fulfillment is *hallucinatory*, it is an illusion (a self-cheating). This paradox is inadmissible either in a causal or logical chain. It is understandable only if we consider the wish "fulfilled" in the dream not something causing the dream, but a net of signs, something from the order of significance. Only a signifying relationship can at the same time reveal and cover, give and take away, fulfill and cheat.

Lacan has stressed another point. If while sleeping I am thirsty, I don't generally dream of simply drinking the glass of water which could satisfy my desire. Rather, I might dream I'm drowning in Victoria Falls, for example. The dream shows a striking hyperbolic characteristic. Indeed, the dream doesn't fulfill the real need, and the persistence of the need hyperbolizes the representation of the wish. But only seemingly are we still in a context of efficient causes.

Let's imagine another likely development of this dream of thirst. When I wake up, I can have forgotten the thirst, the water, and also Victoria Falls: I can remember having dreamt about a fat lady who looks like a fake queen, with a toy crown on her head, giving me her naked breast. Here the dream has become a classical Freudian dream, based on rebus, riddles, puns. I can interpret this strange dream of a fake queen as "I wish to drink" on the ground of a pure game of signifiers (if I associate the queen to Victoria, and then to the water falls....).

What does this mean? According to Lacan's interpretation, the efficient (mainly biological) cause is never sufficient to explain the literal content of a dream. The original thirst, and the other needs expressed in the dream—in our example, the need to have own thirst's quenched again by the mother—are not in this position of a cause, they are merely *signified*.

Does all this mean that in interpreting dreams one doesn't aim at the efficient cause, which is out of the reach of analytic interpretation, but rather at something like formal causes (the net of the language)? Unconscious, as far as it is structured as a language, would force us to consider the supremacy of the formal causes, like in modern physics?

6.

We mustn't identify Wittgenstein's criticisms of Freud with later epistemological criticisms of psychoanalysis, especially those by Popper (1962), Grünbaum (1985) and Crews. Popper tried to show that psychoanalysis is not a science because it is not falsifiable; Grünbaum thinks that it is falsifiable but it is not proved. In both cases there is at stake the status of psychoanalysis as a legitimate scientific theory. But this wasn't the major concern of Wittgenstein. I read Wittgenstein's contributions on Freud rather as a criticism of the illusion that psychoanalysis is a science of efficient causes. Wittgenstein thinks that Freud "is someone who has something to say" not because he was a scientist, but because he invented a new art of interpreting-persuading; a new social practice, an original linguistic game. This art certainly includes a kind of knowledge, but it is not the same kind of knowledge as that derived through the scientific methodology of inquiry.

And here we can grasp a congruity between Wittgenstein and Lacan. Lacan too, as we have seen, refuses to describe Freudian theory as a scientific theory. Actually Lacan states that to think of psychoanalysis as a branch of psychology is a misunderstanding of Freud's doctrine. Psychology is the science of the soul or of the mind. But if we think of the soul or mind as a kind of *res*, and as an object of scientific inquiry, then psychoanalysis is not a science of the soul or of the mind[16].

In fact, Lacan attacks American interpretations of psychoanalysis because he refuses to consider analytic practice as linked to a scientific theory of a particular object, the mind or Self[17]. Not by chance a Lacanian (or generally a Continental philosopher) never speaks of *mind* or *self*, rather of *subjectivity*: the mind is now

seen as a special object of scientific inquiry, but the subject is not an object at all.

When a Continental European comes to America, he is struck by the great importance given to the words *feeling* and *emotion*. This supremacy of the *feeling*-concept is common to academic scholars, to psychoanalysts and to lay people. In the English-speaking countries there is a widespread belief that the human being is divided in two realms: on the one hand the rational realm, the calculative mind which organizes the economic and technical life, and on the other hand a “feeling realm” of emotions, fantasies, “the heart.” Consequently there is a belief that psychoanalysis, as a branch of psychology, should deal with this realm of Pascalian “heart’s reasons” in a rational way[18]. The feelings are the real object of psychology, because Reason has to explain the “reasons of the heart.” Lacan doesn’t share this basic belief.

Before Lacan, Wittgenstein had articulated his P.L.A. Through P.L.A., what Kripke (1982) calls a sophism, Wittgenstein tries to show that our judgments have no foundation on empirical experiences. He rejects the two traditional epistemological foundations of Western tradition, the “I think therefore I am” of Cartesian philosophy, and the “It exists because I perceive it” of the empiricist tradition. My opinion is that the P.L.A. can be seen as the counterpart, the negative part, of both hermeneutical and deconstructive approaches. I don’t say that Wittgenstein is an hermeneutic or a deconstructionist *ante litteram*: what I do say is that he destroys the possibility of a rational foundation of our beliefs, and in so doing shows, as the untold part of his argument, the possibility of an hermeneutical and/or deconstructive approach as a non-foundational one.

According to this Argument we are cheated by the superficial form of our language. We believe that the sentence “I have pain” has the same grammar as the sentence “I have a cavity in my tooth.” Even worse: we confuse a sentence of the type “I love you” with one of the type “I kiss you.” The fact that to give a kiss is sometimes a sign of love doesn’t imply at all that the two sentences have the same grammar.

In short, Wittgenstein asserts that we can only *express* our inner states—like pain or love—but we can’t *know* them. Language gives us the illusion that we talk about our inner states as about objects of a special matter: but we don’t talk about them at all—we manifest them linguistically.

The P.L.A. also ruins every empiricist attempt to “found” our language on perceptions: we cannot say that one day I see a cow, another day I see another cow, and another day another, . . . , and finally I call “cow” all these resembling perceptions. Instead, argues Wittgenstein, we need first the linguistic, social, collective paradigm of “cow” in order to distinguish a cow from other animals and to put different cows (of different colors, size, etc.) under the same word (signifier) *cow*. In fact, P.L.A. has an Hegelian edge: the linguistic (collective) interpretation of the world precedes every single, individual acquaintance with the world. In philosophical terms, Wittgenstein says what F. de Saussure had already established in linguistics: that a tongue does not give a nomenclature to a world of objects that human experience has previously cut and ordered, but that a tongue itself cuts and orders the objects giving a form to the world. As Linneus said: “*nomina si nescis, perit cognitio rerum*”; only taking the names the Other gives to things, I can know things. Both Saussure and Wittgenstein reverse the empiricist and cognitivist conception of the construction of the language: we need *first* a language in order to have a sensed experience of the world, we never are in a solitary, virginal, primal touch with the things. Lacan inherits this radically anti-empiricist and anti-cognitivist approach, because of his Hegelian roots.

If we apply this anti-empiricist & anti-cognitivist view to psychoanalysis, what is at stake becomes then the relationship between our feelings and our (psychic and linguistic) representations: we don’t have *first* some uncorrigible feelings and *later* our mother’s reactions and representations of them which modify or correct our basic pre-verbal feelings; but rather, our named feelings are the result of the linguistic shaping our mother gave to our primal feelings. We can say also that *tuche*, the inaugural traumatic encounter, is with our speaking mother. . . . Our (mythical) primal enjoyment and/or sufferance is not at all our most intimate belonging, the hard core of our subjectivity, but on the contrary, according to Lacan, it is something external to the subject, something which this one was unable to symbolize and to domesticate into the subjective representational forms: *das Ding, la chose*, the thing. . . . Our pre-verbal and most primal experience is not the

ground of our sense of Self, but instead a kind of untamable object which is conceivable only as a void, a nothing, a lack of representation. Lacan (1986) relates this original Thing—which is no-thing—to the ethical disposition of the human beings.

One consequence of this P.L.A. is that we can have a science only of public, external behavior, of pushing and pulling actions. An insight about our inner life is possible, but not a scientific knowledge. Wittgenstein's (1980) late work, turning increasingly around psychology, deals with this problem. What kind of knowledge can there be about the inner life, if only a science of external events is possible? One answer was behaviorism: the most sophisticated behaviorist psychologists found in Wittgenstein's Argument a kind of philosophical premise.

But saying that language is always public and never private can lead not only to a behaviorist interpretation. In fact, also Lacan's work can be seen as a special kind of answer to this question. In fact, this impossibility *to know* subjectivity—the impossibility of a psychology as such—is at the heart also of Lacan's approach: the subject believes to know herself, but in fact she knows an other's traits (her mirror image). The subject never knows herself, she rather *represents* herself.... in order to be recognized as a self! Lacan's answer to Wittgenstein's problem is his Hegelian idea that language is always from the Other. If we need first a language in order to recognize many experiences we have as the experience of a "cow", for example, if public language is the only mean to recognize many things as "the same", it means that the recognition of everything comes from the Other. The public language (the Other, according to Lacan) gives me the rules for recognizing two things as "cows" or as something different from a cow. Applying this to the inner experience: only the language gives me the rules to recognize my wishes, desires, identities, representations, as *myself*. Of course my feeling in pain or happy or enjoying are private, but when I have to represent to myself what I feel or what I have felt, my dwelling in the language alienates all that in representations (signifiers): I can see or experience myself only as a linguistic object or representation (as the Other's thing).

Like Lacan's, Wittgenstein's theory is completely anti-cognitivist because, in a chess game for example, what matters is not the mental images which would be the effective cause of moving my chess pieces (for cognitivism, thoughts and mental images are the efficient causes of the human behavior): in fact, when we try to describe the mental image of moving a queen by three cases, we already need a comprehension of the chess game, of its rules and of the moves made possible by these rules. What matters for Wittgenstein is not thoughts as effective causes of human behaviors, but language and games as their formal causes. Whether cognitivism is Cartesian-Newtonian (a real explanation has to pin up efficient causes), Wittgenstein is rather Aristotelian (what explains human behaviors are formal causes, linguistic games).

In a certain sense, Wittgenstein's criticism of Freud is tied to his interpretation of Freud as a "psychologist", as somebody who wants to explain human phenomena calling up to human thoughts (even if unconscious thoughts). However, Lacan rescues Freud from Wittgenstein's criticism erasing all possible cognitivist interpretation of psychoanalysis: what is primary are not human images (phantasies, the imaginary) but the rules of the Other (the symbolic). I am not saying at all that Wittgenstein would have shared Lacan's approach (he was too far from Hegelianism to accept Lacanian dialectics) but certainly he would have found that Lacan tried to free Freud from a mentalist interpretation[19].

In fact, the great success of Freud's thought in 20th-century seems at first sight in contradiction with the spirit of modern philosophy. On 20th-century's philosophy we can paraphrase what Sartre once said about Husserl: "It has freed us from the inner life." Psychology and mentalism has been that dimension that the great thought of our century has tried to get rid of. How is it possible that this century, characterized by a deep anti-psychological thought, has been also the century of Freud?

Lacan tries to solve this historical paradox interpreting Freud as having broken with the presuppositions of any psychology as a science of the mind. In Kantian terms: psychoanalysis is not the study of the human

heart as a starry sky. Feelings are not the stars studied by psychoanalysis in the sky of the soul. In Lacan's re-elaboration, feelings are just effects of language, at once material and formal causes of subjectivity.

7.

Heidegger said that each great thinker has a "focal thought," a kind of unique thought organizing his very complex theoretical system[20]. A focal thought, according to Heidegger, is a bet on the essence of everything is.

What is Freud's focal thought, his unique thought? I am sure that it is what he has called *Lust*, the fact that human beings are ruled by something that he called *Lustprinzip*, principle or *Prince* of pleasure and lust. Having said that, I don't want to reduce Freud to a mere metaphysician; let us not forget that he founded a liberal art. But very often practices and arts are based on some metaphysical "focal thought"; practices no less than speculative theories are based on metaphysics.

I say here *lust principle*. As Bettelheim (1982) already stressed, the English translations of Freud's texts are often misleading. In English the words full of meaningful echoes, the most authentic words, come from German roots; conversely words coming from Latin roots are far from deep feelings, a little bit hypocritical. The Standard English translation of Freud prefers systematically the Latin words, and in this way it betrays the meaningful, concrete grounds of Freudian concepts. So *Lust* is translated as "pleasure" and not as "lust." *Lustprinzip* is translated generally as "pleasure principle," but I think that the English four-letter word *lust* is better, because in German *Lust* is ambiguous: it means "pleasure," or, as Lacan has put it, *jouissance*, but also "lust," "desire," "wish." This ambiguity is fundamental, because for Freud lust and pleasure are deeply opposite: desire for Freud is displeasure. The German word *Lust* is in itself dialectical, ambiguous, puzzling[21]. And all ambiguities and riddles of psychoanalytic theory maybe derive from this first generative ambiguity. Anyway, I will use here *Lust principle*.

If you examine closely all major Freudian theories, you will see that the key is the interpretation of all significant productions of human beings as the work of this principle, this Prince, this *arche* (power)—*die Lust*. Lust is for Freud the truth of human beings. The unconscious is the scene from where the naked face of *Lust*, without any masks, is supposed to display its power. This truth of human beings can assume different faces: Freud speaks of libido, drives, wishful fantasies and libidinal stages. But all these concepts are always expressions of a material cause, the formless ground which Lacan (1975, pp. 24-27) grasped when he spoke of *substance jouissante*, the "lust substance". This substance, as every substance, is metaphysical: a basic assumption, a paradigm, an ultimate reference—"the truth of Being." The new approach that Lacan brings to Freud is his stress on the other side of material cause: the performance of formal cause (language's structure). Lacan makes explicit the other side of the coin—of which one side is *Lust* as material cause. This flip side is the structure of language as a pure formal organization.

8.

Let me return to the P.L.A., according to which any knowledge about inner states cannot be grounded on the certitude of the personal experience. But if our language practices have no foundation in the perceiving or self-thinking subject, guarantor of certitude, does it mean that they haven't any foundation at all?

Wittgenstein says that our *language games*, our meaningful behaviors, are founded in our forms of life (*Lebensformen*). But our forms of life can't be rationally justified. They have not grounds for certitude and universality, because there are many possible forms of life, many possible games (and then many possible forms of rationality?). When Wittgenstein shows that language is always public, he means that we are always included in this language: it founds our connection with the world, we do not found it. This means, among other things, that when we want to talk about mental phenomena, we can use a public language

which doesn't have any guarantee in specific private lived experiences and *Erlebnisse*. Knowledge of one's self is always grounded in others' language—because language is always the language of others.

On the background of the P.L.A., we can evaluate what Wittgenstein says about Freudian theory.

Wittgenstein had concluded that “Freud has not given a scientific explanation of the ancient myth—what he has done is to propound a new myth.” Wittgenstein (1966, p. 47) also says: “To say that dreams are wish fulfillment is very important chiefly because it points to the sort of interpretation that is wanted—the sort of thing that would be an interpretation of a dream.” Wittgenstein seems to think that psychoanalysis is not essentially an understanding or interpretation of the Other's or others' language, it is rather the prescription of a language. It doesn't discover, it institutes a way of interpreting (an interpretative key)—this is why psychoanalytic theory smells of dogmatism. It is the usual accusation from the philosophers: “psychoanalysts say interesting things, but they are so dogmatic!” But, according to the P.L.A., all language speaking about inner experiences never discovers or describes but prescribes to talk about them. A way we can talk about our heart is to propose or prescribe a way to express our heart. Language always betrays our real feelings, our true heart: but in betraying it, the language makes possible to express it. So Wittgenstein blames Freud for his “scientific self-deception”—to use Habermas' (1973) phrase about psychoanalysis—but at the same time he finds that Freud's interpretation of dreams, for example, is a good way to *express* dreams. We could say that for Wittgenstein Freud offers a *good* vocabulary rather than *true* statements on ourselves. Does it mean that, thanks to Freud, the dream continues? By interpreting dreams do we continue to articulate this interpretation which dreaming itself is? “There is a work of interpretation which, so to speak, still belongs to the dream itself” (Wittgenstein 1966, p. 46). As von Clausewitz said that war is the continuation of politics by other means, so can we say that analytic interpretation is the continuation of dreaming and fantasizing by other means[22]?

Following this line, we can go further and interpret in a different way the splitting between causes and meanings. It is true that Freud's meanings shipwreck against the causes, rather than overlap with them as Freud believes. But this shipwrecking of meanings against the rock of causes is also precisely this interpretive work, this narrative process, that Freud has called unconscious.[23] Unconscious and the theory of unconscious play the same game.

9.

However, there is an important difference between Wittgenstein and Lacan: the latter starts from a Cartesian assumption which is rejected by Wittgenstein. Lacan thinks the subjectivity as a kind of a precise *eye* or *I*, a kind of transcendental correlate of every experience: when this eye-I wants to see or imagine what is inside herself, what stuff this eye-I is made of, it sees-imagines herself.... outside. The subject (eye-I) grasps herself and her Self only in her objects[24]. Wittgenstein (who is not French) does not share this Cartesian assumption about the subject: subjectivity is not a disembodied gazing point but it is shown in what he called “the mystical” (ethics, aesthetics, being happy or unhappy).]

For Wittgenstein, who is not a Cartesian nor an Hegelian, the subject of modern science is not the Cartesian subject (*cogito*) but, I would say, a player; even if Wittgenstein was quite taciturn about sciences, he seems to consider sciences as a set of linguistic games. To “play” a science is not different than to play chess: it is a social game. Certainly a chess player is a *cogito* in the sense that he is conscious and he makes inferences: but what matters are the rules of the game, his capacity to use them in order to play, etc. For Wittgenstein the Cartesian *cogito* is tautological, because saying “I think, therefore I am” means in fact “I think, therefore I am thinking”: from my private awareness of thinking I can infer only my... *thinking* existence. In fact, Descartes needs God—as in all onto-theological tradition—in order to shift from this tautological “knowledge” to a true knowledge by clear and distinct ideas... Thinking assures me only about thinking, never about things. In fact, since the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein (1922) said that mathematics and logic are tautological, but in fact they don't say anything about the real: from a Wittgensteinian point of view the

Cartesian cogito is not a knowledge at all, it is only a way to try to assure certainty to our science. But actually science is always uncertain (modern science would say: knowledge is probabilistic calculation).

This is why Wittgenstein wouldn't have accepted Lacan's Cartesian notion of a split between *knowledge* (cogito) and *truth*[25]: thinking never implies a knowledge (see Kant's argument against ontological proof) and truth is always part of a social game. Wittgenstein would have said of Lacan—if he would have had the opportunity to do so—that, despite his efforts to free Freud from a naïve evolutionist psychological conception[26], Lacan is still bound to a belief on a “private language”: the Cartesian cogito is a kind of private language, that is, the illusion that all knowledge should be based on certainty. Wittgenstein would have said that a certain dogmatism of analytic theory derive from the Cartesian myth of a private language as the ground of all knowledge. For Wittgenstein, knowledge is grounded not on the subject, but rather on concrete forms of life. A knowledge *expresses* a form of life.

It is true that Lacan criticizes also Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” in a way that Wittgenstein would have accepted (when Lacan says that in fact we can only say “I think: ‘therefore I am’”): that thinking never assures an existence independent from thinking itself, that Cartesian appeal for certainty is in fact an empty inference[27]. But if the Cartesian subject according to Lacan is not the “I think, therefore I am”, why to call it Cartesian? And why to think it as the subject of science as Lacan does?

Despite these *essential* differences, Lacan shares Wittgenstein's basic idea that the subject's existence—as far as it is an ethical subject—is not at all object of any kind of “human” science: subjects are “touched” not by a knowledge but by practices. Subjectivity is never unbound from “social bonds”. In this sense, Wittgenstein would have agreed with the contempt Lacan feels towards almost all post-Freudian psychoanalysis, as far as it has tried to constitute a certain kind of psychology. Despite his criticisms, Wittgenstein admired Freud, but frankly I cannot imagine him borrowing the slightest interest to the Kleinian and post-Kleinian psychoanalysis, for example. Wittgenstein would have rejected the Kleinian conception of the psyche as an “internal world” (what Joan Rivière called “a psyche of objects”)—for Wittgenstein in fact inner life, fantasies included, is never “a world”[28].

10.

We find other striking analogies and divergences of Wittgenstein's way of thinking with Lacan's reading of Freud. Lacan's system starts from a very simple presupposition, which we can illustrate through a kind of myth of origins (we call this initiation *mythical* because we cannot exactly date it).

Let us imagine the child's mythical initiation into language. When a child cries, his mother can *interpret* his whimpers not only by putting her nipple or a milk bottle in his mouth, but also by crooning, “You want to suck from my breast...” The fact that the mother not only acts but also talks inevitably entraps the child. According to Lacan, the mother not only *interprets* in her own way the needs expressed by the child's sounds, but also, most importantly, she thus teaches the child *how to interpret its own desire and dissatisfaction*. Thus the child will eventually say to himself, “What I wanted was to suck.” The psychoanalytic interpretation works on a preliminary interpretation accomplished by the maternal speech. The mother gives to the child the rule of the interpretation of his desire—it alienates her child's desire by representations, signifiers. By interpreting she prescribes—and thus, in Wittgenstein's terms, she is a subject's first psychoanalyst. The analyst also trains the subject to accept an interpretative rule: and in doing so s/he allows the subject to express what he is.

However, Lacan thinks that this origin of subjectivity—the Other's interpretation—is not so much a pre-linguistic feeling but rather something traumatic: a *tuche*, an event outside any signification, occurs (for example: the mother's breast lacks). And the psychic work consists in repeating as *automaton* this primal non-inscribed “encounter” in order to give it signification. This means that all psychic (linguistic)

elaboration—our mental world—repeats and re-presents something which is basically real (this is where Lacanism separates from hermeneutics): an initial lack or breach. This is a point where Lacan would agree with “object relation theory”: the origin of subjectivity is not from inside but from outside, a trauma has occurred.

For the average British psychoanalyst, the problem generally posed by the mother-child scene will be whether the mother, in her behavior and speech, has been “a good enough” or “not good enough” mother, whether she has or has not understood the child’s *true* desire[29]. For Lacan, what matters is not ascertaining if the discourse of the Other recognizes the child’s true desire, but rather to see how the desire of the child structures itself as such through this discourse which expresses the Other’s desire. Because the mother (the Other) in teaching language is not outside the “lust matter.” The language which structures desire is itself an expression of desire. In our example, when the mother says “You want to suck,” she is probably expressing her own wish to have the power to satisfy her baby’s needs.

The event (*tuche*) which made the baby cry is simultaneously betrayed by language and transformed into meaningful material. But the real cause, the true object causing the cry, because of the interference of language will remain an eternal enigma. Lacan has given a central role to this enigmatic cause in his system calling it *objet petit a*, small other object. This object escapes out of the language exactly to the extent that language never ceases to interpret it, to automatize that. This other-object is the cause of desire. The *cause* not the *goal* of desire: in fact, all objects that we human beings—alienated as we all are by language—wish and that we will chase after, won’t ever be this original object, this first *jouissance*, cause of the desire; all our objects will be *Ersatz*, symbols, betrayals of this unrepresented object. The true cause of desire can’t ever be conquered. This is why Lacan assumes the shipwreck of meaning against the cause, which I discussed earlier.

A rationalist philosopher can show that a Freudian way of thinking or arguing is contradictory, or at least it is not a faithful Mirror of Nature, as Rorty (1980) would say. But a dialectical philosopher can show that this contradiction and this failure to be the Mirror of Nature expresses better than any other the real historical process of human thinking. In our vocabulary: meaning is not the cause of mental phenomena, but—if we follow Lacan’s Hegelian strategy—only through meanings or signifiers can we have any idea of any real cause in mental life as being something beyond any signifier. In this way, the splitting between causes and meanings is maintained, but at the same time a link between them is built, because the causes appear as historical effects of significant processes. Thus, Wittgenstein provides a previous Kantian criticism of psychoanalysis, and Lacan supplies the Freudian theory with a kind of Hegelian, dialectical *Aufhebung* of this criticism.

Therefore Freud’s “failure,” as it has been described by Wittgenstein, can be seen under a different light.

The failure to demonstrate that the meaning of dreams and symptoms is also their cause becomes through Lacan’s maneuver the theoretical variation of the failure of every human being. Freud, failing as a scientist according to Wittgenstein, succeeded as witness and interpreter of the way in which we are today forced to look at the enormous effort that characterizes us as human beings: a desperate effort to make coincide cause and meaning, to *suture* (sew up) their split, to give the true and authentic name to “the thing” which causes us, and with which language tries to come to terms.

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Notes:

[1] Re-elaborated text from a lecture held at the Department of Philosophy of the New School for Social Research, New York, February 1991.

[2] On Wittgenstein’s reading of Freud, see also: Hanly (1972), Benvenuto (1984), Assoun (1988).

[3] For example, Cioffi (1969), Bouveresse (1995). See also my review of Bouveresse’s book (Benvenuto 1995). Among the analytic philosophers, few have shown a more indulgent attitude towards psychoanalysis (see Wollheim & Hopkins 1982).

[4] I believe that Kuhn did in theory of sciences something similar to what Lacan did in psychoanalysis; in fact, both were in a large sense Hegelian and both students of Alexandre Koyré.

[5] *Aition* at that epoch meant at once *cause, fault or guilt, demand, request*.

[6] The statement that the specific causality of psychoanalysis is material probably is not foreign to a “materialist” taking side (in short, psychoanalysis would belong to the philosophical-political field of materialism—it was important to be “a materialist” in Paris, at that time).

[7] In fact, in 19th-century’s physics things result a little bit more complicated: at that stage regularities in nature were explained by mathematical forms, and anomalies were explained through efficient causes (Kuhn 1977, pp.26-7). The world was ruled by formal causes (differential equations) but specific efficient causes produced deviations from regularity.

[8] Kuhn distinguishes four stages of the Western physics: (1) the Aristotelian physics, until the 16th century, explains the natural world mainly by two causes, formal and final; (2) in the classical physics of 17th- and 18th-century, a true explanation is always mechanical and it calls for efficient causes (Newtonian forces were generally treated in analogy to contact forces; in this sense, even Newtonianism was Cartesian...); (3) in 19th-century physics, as we have seen, a combination of formal and efficient causes is the rule; (4) in the most recent physics, we have a kind of coming back to Aristotelian physics in the sense that formal (but not any more final) causes dominate the “field”.

[9] How far this splitting between meanings and causes in Wittgenstein can overlap the parallel splitting, promoted especially by hermeneutics, between *explanation* and *comprehension*? Sciences explain, “humanities” (history, art criticism, cultural anthropology.... psychoanalysis) comprehend or understand. This splitting has had a strong influence on present, so called “narrativist” psychoanalysis (Spence, Schafer, etc.): according to this trend, the analyst never really explains, rather she understands and proposes to a subject a better narration. More and more Anglo-American psychoanalysis abandons the scientific ideal to cognitive sciences and specializes itself as a special kind of art or literary criticism...

[10] S. Freud (1901, pp. 8?12).

[11] For a similar deconstruction of this same Freudian example from a philological point of view, see Timpanaro (1976).

[12] Most philosophers sympathize with the idea that many aspects of human lives—like dreams, slips, jokes, mental symptoms—are meaningful, but at the same time they are suspicious of being committed to any precise type of meanings to give to these aspects of life. (It is a comfortable position, because in this way philosophers profit from the advantages of the prestige of a deep insight while at the same time avoiding the commitments to an exegetic belief).

[13] Some modernist artists (Pollock for example) proposed random effects as their own works of art. But in that case there were subjects who thought to propose random effects as their works of art... the presumption of a subject is always a condition.

[14] For Popper (1975), the worlds are three rather than two; but Freud's world is not grasped by a Popperian triple framework.

[15] Certain theories do try to bring back the final causes of human beings to effective causes when they state that "the rule" of all aimed action is the rule of the maximization of pleasure and/or of the minimization of displeasure (utilitarianist reduction). The final cause of all final causes is interpreted also as *happiness*: homo sapiens is a machine to produce happiness. Freud began his career accepting this theoretical utilitarianist framework: he stated that the unconscious is ruled by *Lustprinzip*, the principle of lust or pleasure. For Freud, too, human beings ultimately try to maximize pleasure or to minimize displeasure. But in *Beyond the Lust Principle* Freud (1921) acknowledged that his premises were wrong...

[16] Lacan (1966) rather says that psychoanalysis works on the *subject of science*, which is according to him the Cartesian subject ("I think"). In short, psychoanalysis deals with the subject of science but it is not a science of the subject! It is more a cure of the scientific subject than a science curing a subject. See Nobus (2002).

[17] Most Anglo-American psychoanalytic schools think that their task is a kind of evolutionary psychology: to reconstruct the way the adult's mind takes form from its primitive mental stages.

[18] Instead, we might express Freud's basic message by "*le cul a ses raisons que la Raison ne connaît pas*". In fact, the difference between heart's and *cul*'s reasons is that the latter are... also causes.

[19] See Wittgenstein: "unconscious thoughts are always considered conscious thought".

[20] See Heidegger (1961): "Diamo il nome di 'pensatori' a quegli eletti tra gli uomini che sono destinati a pensare un unico pensiero – e questo sempre 'sull'ente nel suo insieme. Ogni pensatore pensa soltanto un unico pensiero."

[21] In fact, Freud (1905, p. 35n) in a first moment rejected the word *Lust* and he preferred the Latin *libido* just because the German *Lust* is ambiguous.

[22] This is the real teaching of Winnicott, for example.

[23] “Freud’s achievement” was in a certain sense the same “mistake” the human Unconscious makes: both try always to bridge the gap between the order of the starry sky and the laws of man’s heart. See Benvenuto (1991).

[24] This resembles to Kleinian “projective identifications” but it is not the same: for Lacan the subject know herself outside like in a mirror (language is in a certain way an always unfaithful mirror).

[25] On this Lacanian split, see Nobus (2002). I suspect that Lacanian split between knowledge and truth is a modernization of the classical Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*: knowledge would be the order of the cogitative subject, and truth concerns the things of the world.

[26] Because of Lacan, Freud could be freed by the radical critique Wittgenstein raised against Fraser, for example. In his *Remarks on “The Golden Bough”* Wittgenstein (1967) clearly denounced what later was called (by C. Lévi-Strauss) the “archaic illusion”: the idea for which social practices have to be explained by their historical origin is radically rejected.

[27] I agree with Henry’s (1993, 2001) reading according to which Cartesian cogito is an early version of a more modern *sentior: cogitans* is a pathetic subject who does not introduce at all to any “clear and distinct ideas”. In fact, Cartesian cogito is not the *ekstatic* subject of science but rather the phenomenological subject which will be developed mainly by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche.... and Freud.

[28] Both analytic philosophy (deriving from later Wittgenstein) and Kleinism dominated the British scene for decades, but in radically diverging directions: UK culture experienced a radical split between philosophy and psychoanalysis. In fact British (analytic) philosophers have contempt for psychoanalysis, and British analysts generally ignore philosophy.

[29] In fact, even the British theory (Winnicott, Bion, etc.) will say that a mother good enough does not just interpret in a correct way, but she fantasizes, “digests” and “transforms” the child’s primal feelings in something symbolizable. Does it mean that the British schools and Lacanians say in fact the same thing by different languages? The attempt to translate mutually different theoretical psychoanalytic “philosophies” is a very hard task... Roughly speaking, we could say that for Lacan the mother is always *a mother bad enough* to produce an unconscious in her child. Lacan’s view is not implicitly pedagogical (“how to be a mother good enough in order to avoid her child’s future psychic disorders”) but to accept the unavoidable alienation that language (mother’s interpretations) produces in every human being: Lacan’s cure is to find a way to cope with the essential and unfixable loss of a *true* enjoyment or thing.

Bio:

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