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## **Editors' Introduction**

### *(Psychoanalysis and Hermeneutics: An Introduction)*

An overview of the relationship between psychoanalysis and hermeneutics. *We would like to open this introduction by confessing an initial ambition that we now see with a more critical eye. The idea that initially prompted the construction of this issue of Critical Hermeneutics was to rethink in a systematic way the relationship between these two disciplines that have constantly but ambivalently attracted each other, perhaps since the birth of the younger one: psychoanalysis.*

*However, we realised that the goal of a systematic review of the relationship between hermeneutics and psychoanalysis is not yet feasible. There are too many directions that can be given to reflection.*

*The works that have arrived – and which we will briefly present in the next paragraph – testify precisely to this polyphony of voices, sometimes dissonant, but fertile and innovative. Indeed, by moving in so many different directions – from clinic to art, from historiography to phenomenology, from ethics to textual analysis – the resulting picture contributes to broadening perspectives, but also suggests the epoché of any possible claim to synthesis.*

*However, it is still appropriate to ask what are the fundamental assumptions that legitimise and make necessary, today more than yesterday, the dialogue between hermeneutics and psychoanalysis. This reminds us of what Hans Georg Gadamer (2003) said at a*

*psychiatry conference about their relationship with hermeneutics: although both disciplines are dedicated to understanding, it is not so much this that distinguishes them, but the common interest in what escapes understanding itself.*

*First of all, psychoanalysis can be included entirely in the field of hermeneutics, since language and the construction of meaning are strictly linked to the affective/emotional transformations they aim to activate. As Ricoeur (1988) states, analytic treatment is possible because affectivity is not foreign to language and consists in bringing into language what has been excluded from it.*

*It seems to us that this may allow us to understand the relationship between the two disciplines in a new way, beyond certain misunderstandings that weighed on the reception of hermeneutics in the psychoanalytic field in the last decades of the last century. We refer to hermeneutic relativism (the opposition between narrative truth and historical truth, the very denial of the existence of a historical past, the absolutisation of the creation of meaning) and coherentism, which sees in hermeneutics the aspiration to a clear and systematic interpretation, without deviations. In the first case, hermeneutics has been flattened into narrativism, which ignores the importance of history and psychic reality, but which is completely alien to many important authors from Pareyson to Betti, from Ricoeur to Gadamer himself. In the second, on the other hand, hermeneutics is considered within the specific paradigm of "strong" narration, with which it has very little to do, given the constant recognition and enhancement of inachèvement.*

*Also in this sense, Paul Ricoeur's reflection is theoretically balanced and fruitful for clinical work, where he argues that the narrative function can sometimes consist in "thickening, in increasing opacity, that is, in referring to mystery but still through language" (Ricoeur 1986a; our translation). It is clear that such a definition of*

*narrative implies also, or perhaps above all, the language of the fragment, of the poetic word, of the inachevé.*

*With these clarifications, it is then possible to fully reaffirm the centrality of language, but at the same time to stop seeing it in opposite terms to the non-verbal sphere (relation, empathy, containment, etc.) on which psychoanalysis of the last fifty years has focused so much. Hans Loewald, a psychoanalyst who has thought a lot about language, quotes Paul Valery, when the poet says that language force us to be rather than to understand, and then comments that this is what happens during the most productive moments of the psychoanalytic session (Loewald 1980).*

*We think that in order to account for the hermeneutic status of psychoanalysis, it is necessary today for psychoanalysts to reflect on the contributions of continental philosophy; at the same time it is important for philosophers to pay attention to the reconceptualisation of the idea of the unconscious that has widely traversed psychoanalysis over the last fifty years and has more recently met with that of neuroscience, which has contributed to defining what is included under the term of the unrepressed unconscious.*

*As Ricoeur puts it in a fundamental passage of his last interview on psychoanalysis il y a un intraduisible devant la traduction et il y a un intraduisible produit et révélé par la traduction (Ricoeur 2003: 108). This is in a way the essence of the psychoanalytic process: to interpret not for the sole purpose of clarifying and thus concluding, but also to augment the untranslatable, to enhance the unrepresentable foundation of the unconscious.*

*In psychoanalysis, the hermeneutic circle first of all declines precisely in the dialectic between representation and the unrepresentable. Accessing one of these two dimensions is not valuable in itself, but – above all – as a gateway to the other. Through unconscious representation we encounter and can enhance the*

*dimension of unrepresentability of the human mind, especially in its creative and symbolic values. At the same time, by connecting with the unrepresentable, mainly on a sensory and emotional level, we can encourage the emergence of new representations.*

*This introduces us to a dialectical conception of psychoanalysis. In the essay *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud* (1965) Paul Ricoeur identifies such a dialectical movement in the circle between archaeology and teleology, thus distancing psychoanalysis from the «philosophies of suspicion», but also freeing it from a rigid link with its metapsychological roots. He thus inaugurated a path that only years later would lead within the psychoanalytic movement to a diffusion of the concepts of intersubjectivity, relation, interaction and, finally, of translation, which is also the expression of Ricoeur's last paradigm of hermeneutics (Jervolino 2001).*

*Note to the contributions in this issue. Let us now take a brief overview at the contributions collected in this issue. In *Truth at the Crossroads Between Internal and External Reality* Giuseppe Martini presents an exhaustive analysis of the problem of truth in the analytic experience and, with reference to Pareyson, he states from the outset, as a fundamental axiom, that truth only appears within interpretation, but that at the same time interpretation can only be directed towards truth. Now, is truth therapeutic? And if so, when and in what way?, the author asks. The clinic teaches that there are powerful forces that oppose head-on the discovery/construction of truth: the desire not to know, supported by the death drive that usually feeds suffering. It should also be added that psychoanalysis is concerned with an emotional truth, not a cognitive one. Adopting a hermeneutic attitude, Martini stresses that what is fundamental is the translational function of the analyst: "l'analista traduce linguisticamente le emozioni del paziente e questi a sua volta converte in 'materia affettiva' l'interpretazione dell'analista".*

*The article demonstrates the impossibility of separating the concepts of truth and internal – psychic – and external reality. Hence the pertinent questions that insist: "A quale realtà si volge la verità? Che cosa è la realtà e cosa la realtà interna?" The author adheres – and rightly so – to the perspectives that affirm that the analytical process implies a continuous co-creative construction. But here the philosophical perspectives on the problem of reality are not neglected, quite the contrary. Relying on Ricoeur, the author dwells on the knot between reality and history, a problematic that is also central to the analytic cure, especially in relation to the concept of trauma in transference we might say, where the present and the past overlap, resignifying each other. Ricoeur's concepts allow the author to dispel any reductionism, while at the same time maintaining the insurmountable ambiguity that runs through philosophy and historiography in terms of the accurate establishment of the concept of reality, which always rides between the illusion of matter and the illusion of fiction. Moreover, Ricoeur presents practical tools that allow us to understand in depth the multiple dialectical processes that sustain this concept, something that the author uses to support and validate the clinical and epistemological use of the paradigm of translation, in which the power of symbolisation acquires a central role.*

*The question What reality is psychic reality? is still insisted on in the essay *Psychic Reality: A Critical Perspective Between Psychoanalysis, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics*, by Vinicio Busacchi and Ignacio Colillas. Although we owe to Freud the establishment of the Unconscious as a psychic reality from the clinical and psychopathological points of view—the ego is not master in its own house—philosophies, as discourses of a non-unitary character, "han contribuido tanto a la aparición y definición de la idea de inconsciente como a su complicación, su puesta en duda, e incluso a su negación" – the authors state. The proposal – which critically interrogates*

*psychoanalysis – focuses mainly on two perspectives: those of Michel Henry and Paul Ricoeur. Henry's phenomenology allows the authors to highlight the centrality of affectivity as an ontological manifestation, since "es la afectividad la que se revela/no se revela tras la representación". Henry's critical perspective on psychoanalysis "permite un interesante enfoque en clave fenomenológica sobre la relación entre pulsión y representación", they explain. Henry insists on the fracture between Being and Representation, which is the critical core of his phenomenological discourse. On the other hand, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology allows us to take up critically the permanent conceptual tension between drive and representation, in order to be able to specify the very constitution of psychic reality. The essay reminds us that Freud did not apply the opposition between conscious and unconscious to the drive, and that the drive itself never comes into consciousness, but only its representation: "es decir, si no apareciera unida a una representación o en forma de afecto, no se sabría nada de ella". And as far as the understanding of the concept of representation is concerned, Ricoeur gave a detailed account of this multiplicity of registers, and how it 'cambia significativamente según el registro y el paradigma adoptado, ya sea energético, mecánico, estructuralista, lingüístico o hermenéutico' – Busacchi and Colillas specify.*

*The perspective adopted by Richard Theisen Simanke in the essay Preliminary Remarks On a Historical-Philosophical Method for Conceptual Research in Psychoanalysis: A Reflection from the Brazilian Experience proposes a combined application of two perspectives in order to consolidate a historical-philosophical method in conceptual research in psychoanalysis: 1) the internal structural and conceptual analysis of the works and 2) the historical analysis of the scientific and intellectual context in which these works appear, this being one of its most substantial contributions. This precise methodology contributes*

*to the construction of a philosophy – or epistemology – of psychoanalysis, within the framework of the reception of psychoanalysis in Brazilian philosophy. In the case of Freud’s work, for example, a conceptual analysis undoubtedly implies a study of 19th century medicine, psychology and biology. The author offers, as an example, what Freud said about infantile sexuality. There has undoubtedly been a neglect of history in the field of the philosophy of psychoanalysis: “C’est le besoin d’un tel type d’historiographie critique et philosophique comme programme de recherche théorique en psychanalyse que l’on a essayé de suggérer ici”, the author concludes.*

*From different perspectives and maintaining multiple differences, these three articles converge in the interrogation of the concepts of psychic reality, truth and history, themes that both hermeneutic phenomenology and psychoanalysis as a method of treatment (Behandlungsmethode) are concerned with.*

*With the following work, Symbol and Interpretation in the Work of Reparation, we move from the more strictly psychoanalytical to the ethical field, but not without an important trait d’union. This link is given by the symbol, which also allows a reference to healing practices and, therefore, to psychoanalysis itself. If we had previously seen the multiform correlations of the symbol, on the one hand, with the drive and affectivity, on the other, with truth, psychic reality and translation, now its restorative value is at stake. Paolo Bettineschi underlines how symbolic reparation is made possible by the equation between the symbol and the original good object to be reconstituted. Equalisation, says the author “è quel rapporto che consente a due cose o due oggetti differenti di rimanere differenti pur essendo assunti [...] come cose o come oggetti che possono stare in pari quanto al loro valore”. Thanks to the symbol, repair widens its range of possibilities, as it is “in grado di aumentare in maniera potenzialmente illimitata il numero degli oggetti buoni che per noi valgono come nuovi o sostitutivi rispetto a*

*quelli originari". This also makes it possible to make the work of symbolic reparation more concrete. The author's reflection thus translates into a firm anchorage between the idea of symbol and the idea of good, so that what the symbol allows is, in the final analysis, "in grado di aumentare in maniera potenzialmente illimitata il numero degli oggetti buoni che per noi valgono come nuovi o sostitutivi rispetto a quelli originari". This also makes the work of symbolic reparation more concrete. The author's reflection thus translates into a firm anchoring between the idea of symbol and the idea of good, so that what the symbol ultimately enables is "l'esperienza del rinnovarsi del bene dopo l'accadimento del male".*

*The next two contributions shift the field again: from ethics to aesthetics, and once again with a special focus on the symbolic. In the first of the two, Only the Truth Can Save Us? Cinema and the Conflict of Interpretations, the reflection focuses on two films that have given rise to much debate from a psychoanalytical and interpretative point of view: Shutter Island and Inception. They appear as two paradigmatic works of the spirit of post-modernity that, although in different ways, propose a radical and perhaps even shattering reflection on identity. Quite appropriately, Maria Teresa Pacilé approaches them in the light of the Ricoeurian concept of narrative identity and, in this way, her reflection connects with the themes of truth and psychic reality addressed in the first two works. Where is truth: in "reality" or in the dream? And is it possible to distinguish between the two? And again: is truth really curative, even when it has a traumatic value that risks rendering it indigestible? This second question seems more difficult to resolve than the first. Indeed, we can recognise that "ogni livello di realtà ha la propria autenticità" and it is good to "vivere la complessità della realtà polidimensionale all'interno della quale da sempre ci troviamo", as Inception seems to invite us to do. And yet, "che ne è della verità, in questo gioco di luci ed ombre?".*



*It seems that the discovery of a highly traumatic truth, to which the protagonist of Shutter Island finally gains access, only generates a new, even more dramatic rejection of reality and of the past, which translates into a narrative identity that places him and us "di fronte ad un abisso" in which we are afraid to reflect ourselves. The author creatively hovers between a (therapeutic) path that leads the protagonist of Shutter Island out of the maze, but that does not save him, definitively consigning him to an inability to live, and a path that allows the protagonist of Inception a symbolic elaboration that reconnects him with the life (with a "capacità di vivere non ostante tutto").*

*From film to literature there is a short step. With the subsequent "The Shimmer Is Inside Really". D.H. Lawrence's Resurrection Myth and Wilfred's Bion's Transformations in "0" Emily Griffiths aims to read the work of the famous English writer and his aesthetic theory centred on the mystery of Christian resurrection through a key offered by the theoretical contributions of the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion. Here, too, there is a connection with one of the previous works (the fourth) insofar as much of the reflection revolves around the Kleinian concept of reparation. In fact, by using Kleinian and Bionian theories instead of Freudian, the author is able to move away from a paranoid reading, more in line with a hermeneutics of suspicion and Freudian metapsychology, towards a reparative reading whose idea she borrows from Sedgwick. This seems more in keeping with a possible function of Lawrence's novels as "reparative container":*

*Employing Bion's notion of epistemophilic '0' demonstrates consonance with Lawrence's depictions of truth in the resurrection myth however, as '0' can only be-ed and not known, Lawrence's attempt to represent this transcendent positionality demonstrates that art is 'more complete' than*

*the hermeneutic act of 'reparative' criticism.*

*In light of this, Griffiths examines three seminal works by the English writer, Son and Lovers, Lady Chatterey's Lover and The Man who Died, to conclude that "Lawrence's dramatization of the transition between paranoid-schizoid and depressive positionalities is made possible by the reparative, containing function of the novel".*

*The overview concludes with a paper by Sanja Ivic: The Significance of Paul Ricoeur's Narrative Theory and Hermeneutics for the Understanding of Carl Jung's Red Book. Indeed, as the author reminds us, the reference to hermeneutics is highlighted in Jung himself several times (unlike Freud), although he too does not seem to have been familiar with the major philosophers of this orientation. However, it is again his peculiar attention to the symbol that naturally leads him to privilege the interpretative aspect in the hermeneutic sense over the semiotic dimension and to correlate dreams and fantasies on the one hand, and myths and legends on the other. Ivic thus argues that it is possible to establish an analogy between the Ricoeurian innovation/sedimentation dialectic and the Jungian present moment/historical psyche. Hence, the author proceeds to a reading of The Red Book as a narrative experiment, taking into account the Ricoeurian idea of the interpretation of a text as an interpretation of the self that finds its result in narrative identity. Jung's own emphasis on narrative suggests that we follow this path and understand his autobiographical text as 'a narrative experiment, which expands the idea of plot and narration to include visions, dreams and fantasies'. This implicitly confirms Ricoeur's idea of plot as a synthesis of the heterogeneous and, at the same time, underlines the collective and not only personal character of the Zurich psychoanalyst's visionary experience, in line not only with the idea of the collective unconscious, which he will develop in his theoretical works, but also to some extent*

*with Ricoeur's conception of the literary tradition.*

How is the hermeneutic horizon reflected in the psychoanalyst's clinical work? *However, we would not like to conclude this introductory note without moving from text to action. That is to say: how much and how is a hermeneutic inspiration reflected in praxis, that is, in the clinical work of the psychoanalyst?*

*Here another term arises that the two disciplines have in common: the person.*

*It is up to the person to open the first horizon in which the encounter between psychoanalysis and hermeneutics is played out:*

*Je reviens toujours à ma question de la souffrance, la souffrance insupportable et la souffrance supportable [...] La psychanalyse nous conduit à reconnaître, dans la souffrance initiale, des ressources de sens qui vont faire apparaître une autre profondeur, et peut-être même une signification qui lui était initialement étrangère. A la fin, on ne souffre ni de la même chose, ni de la même façon. On souffre d'autre chose et autrement, mais d'une façon compréhensible, qui a l'unité d'une certaine cohérence narrative et qui permet tout simplement de continuer de vivre, de vivre avec les autres et avec soi-même comme je viens de le dire (Ricoeur 2003: 106, 108).*

*Is this not what distinguishes the work of the psychoanalyst and his or her particular link to the question of meaning?*

*In line with the above, it is necessary to strongly insist that it is not legitimate to consider hermeneutics as a "tendency" of psychoanalysis, a kind of theoretical model that can be placed in opposition to others, perhaps more interested in neuroscience or more*

*linked to the thought of classical authors (Freud, Klein, Bion, Winnicott, Kouth, Lacan, etc.). Hermeneutics is rather a perspective that inspires the psychoanalyst, informs her or his style (both in clinical and theoretical reflection). Finally, if there is a specificity of hermeneutics, it is that of encouraging dialogue between theories and their dialectical confrontation.*

*But above all – it has been said – it is the attention to the subject, to the other and to intersubjectivity and the consequent vocation for dialogue that both fields share. Hermeneutics strongly raises the question of the subject, which does not mean posing a strong subject: rather, it emphasises the conception of a subjectivity suspended between the cogito and the anticogito (Jervolino 1993) and this is precisely what it shares intimately with psychoanalysis. As an author who dialogued with Ricoeur reminds us, psychoanalysis captures the subject in its division, in its fragmentation, and, in turn, can give rise to a deconstruction, but nevertheless its aim is precisely the emergence of the subject (Castoriadis 1975-1990: 98).*

*At this point, it is possible to attempt again a definition of hermeneutics that can have a significant impact on therapeutic work. We will start again from Paul Ricoeur, who summarises its double task in the reconstruction of the dynamics of the text and in the projection of the work to the outside in order to represent a habitable world (1986).*

*Hermeneutics would then imply three instances: a) the search for meaning while respecting the text and the author's intentions, b) the attribution, once this meaning has been acquired, of a further significance, with a view to opening up new horizons, c) the ability to succeed in converting this text into the representation of a world that our patients "can inhabit".*

*If one ignores only one of these three instances, which we could respectively call veritative, constructive and ethical, one can only fall*

*back on the others, totally disrupting their function, which is indeed specific, but which occurs only in the interconnection with the other two.*

*Taking into account also the multiplicity of the levels of language mentioned above (not reducible only to the semantic dimension), the theoretical opposition between interpretation and relation and the clinical opposition between interpreting and containing is then abandoned. This is a fundamental and widely shared point, to which many currents of psychoanalysis have arrived by their own and diversified paths, but which can find significant support from the hermeneutic perspective.*

*It is interesting that the psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden (2019) has recently proposed to differentiate between two distinct models, in constant interaction with each other, which he has called with happy intuition epistemological and ontological, the first centred on knowledge, the second on being and becoming.*

*The psychoanalyst inspired by hermeneutics is undoubtedly situated in this second aspect in which the word, language and translation open up to being and in particular to "co-existence" and aim at becoming, at the transformation of unbearable suffering into bearable suffering. On this path, both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis are configured as a kind of bridge that connects the shore of the emotional (especially that part of the emotions that cannot tolerate or cannot reach the word) with the shore of language, which opens up the possibility of narrative, self-acceptance and the construction of identity.*

Giuseppe Martini  
Ignacio Iglesias Colillas

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