

Lacan's Epistemic Role in Ricœur's Re-Reading of Freud

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Abstract:

In this paper, the author reconsiders the role played by Lacan in Ricœur's philosophy of psychoanalysis by reconstructing the history of the relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy, and by focusing on some of the important aspects of the reception of Ricœur's work in France. The reception of his work is directly connected to Lacan's School and the role played by his followers, who were against Ricœur. Some of the unpublished documents kept at the Fonds Ricœur should help to clarify some points in this regard. These documents should help to demonstrate how the incompatibility of Ricœur's interpretation with Lacan's structural perspective was determined more by their personal incompatibility and their different interests than by a genuine incommensurability in their theories.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Hermeneutics, Structuralism, Language, Epistemology.

Résumé:

Dans cet article, l'auteur revient sur le rôle joué par Lacan dans la philosophie de la psychanalyse de Ricœur en reparcourant l'histoire de la relation entre psychanalyse et philosophie, et en revenant sur certains des aspects importants de la réception de l'œuvre de Ricœur en France. La réception de l'œuvre ricœurienne est directement liée à l'école lacanienne et au rôle joué par ses disciples, dans leur opposition à Ricœur. À ce titre, certains des documents inédits conservés au Fonds Ricœur aident à clarifier plusieurs points concernant cette confrontation. Selon l'auteur, ces documents démontrent comment l'incompatibilité de l'interprétation de Ricœur avec la perspective structuraliste de Lacan a été davantage déterminée par leur incompatibilité personnelle et leur divergence d'intérêts que par une distance théorique effectivement incommensurable.

Mots-clés: Psychanalyse, hermeneutique, structuralisme, langage, épistémologie.

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There is no doubt that the relationship between Ricœur and Lacan today constitutes one of the most intriguing chapters in the history of French psychoanalysis, even though Ricœur's philosophy of psychoanalysis has not been very relevant in France. What is meaningful is the fact that Roudinesco, in her vast *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* (2 vol., 1982-1986), introduces Ricœur's contribution as an "intermezzo" with a focus that is more biographical than theoretical. Actually, when Ricœur was writing his *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud* (1965), a critical and speculative synthesis in a *hermeneutical* key, French cultural life was under the influence of linguistics, rather than hermeneutics. This is an important aspect to consider in evaluating the function played by Ricœur's philosophy in French psychoanalysis, and a similar evaluation must be made considering the personal and professional history of relationships and intellectual coalitions. In fact, this profoundly marked the evolution of psychoanalysis in France, as Roudinesco has clearly shown. What is particular and common for each one of the psychoanalytical theoretical and practical perspectives in France is the fact that, almost since the beginning, the history of the evolution of psychoanalysis was intertwined with philosophy; and, within Europe, a similar case can be found only in Germany.

Even if my interest in this article is theoretical – I want to re-consider the role played by Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis in Ricœur's philosophy of psychoanalysis –, it is essential to (1) reconstruct (as concisely as possible) the history of the relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy, and (2) investigate some of the important aspects of the reception of Ricœur's work in France. The reception of his work there, in fact, is directly connected to Lacan's School – an important part of the French psychoanalytical world in the nineteen sixties and seventies – and the role played by his followers, against Ricœur. Some of the unpublished documents kept at the Fonds Ricœur should help us to clarify some points in this regard. This is an important step because it will help to demonstrate how the incompatibility of Ricœur's interpretation with Lacan's structural perspective was further caused by their personal incompatibility and personal interests rather by a bottomless theoretical distance.

Surprisingly enough, this long story of biographical and ideological tensions has been prevented by both sides from clarifying the mutual positive and theoretical influence. With this paper I will try to thematise the epistemic role played by Lacan's theory in Ricœur's interpretation of psychoanalysis after his *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*.

The Entrance of Psychoanalysis in France: Ricœur and Lacan's Choice Between Hermeneutics and Structuralism

One of the privileged means of entry into psychoanalysis in France was through the cultural world of literature and art, specifically surrealism, a world in which an interest in and connection with philosophy and science was one of the main characteristics of psychoanalysis. Actually, some of the most interesting and favourable analyses of psychoanalysis appeared in *Le disque vert*, a surrealist review, in the nineteen twenties. But it was Ricœur's first teacher of philosophy, Roland Dalbiez, who produced the first book (*La méthode psychanalytique et la doctrine freudienne*, 1936, 1949) on psychoanalysis, after a long work of theoretical and clinical research. After Dalbiez, next main reference in French philosophical studies on psychoanalysis was Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant* (1943), a work in which psychoanalysis reaches the superior function of a speculative and procedural component of a philosophical construction. Later, from different perspectives and with different disciplinary interests, Merleau-Ponty and Lévi-Strauss pushed psychoanalysis towards new theoretical uses and developments. On the one side, Merleau-Ponty connected Freud's psychoanalysis with his phenomenology, as a speculative source among other sciences for his phenomenology of perception; Ricœur would follow this line of research, connecting it to his reflexive and "spiritual" feeling. On the other side, Claude Lévi-Strauss' research and theoretical conception would prove to be favourable to the opening of structuralism to psychoanalysis (and vice versa), specifically through Jacques Lacan's research and practice of psychoanalysis as therapy, which was theoretically linked to Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic lesson. If structuralism, characterized by works like Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques* (1955), *Anthropologie structurale* (1958) and *La pensée sauvage* (1962), marked the end of spiritualistic hegemony in France, then Lacan's counterposition to Ricœur must be considered and understood in this context, as part of a "war" between ideologies. Lévi-Strauss, more than others, contributed to transforming structuralism into a generalised methodological approach for the human sciences, as well as into a general view or doctrine about the human being. As a philosophical doctrine, it was the counterpart of idealism, historicism, and humanism; therefore, against this "spiritual" conception variably embraced by Ricœur, passing through existentialism (Jaspers), reflexive philosophy (Marcel, Nabert), phenomenology (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty), and personalism (Mounier), and philosophically rooted in the Cartesian modern conception of self-certainty of the Cogito, it is a subject of will with a fully epistemic and ethical focus. Structuralism refuted this conception declaring the dissolution of the human being and his death (Lévi-Strauss, Foucault). It refers to Freud's discovery of the unconscious, to demonstrate that the ego is only a deformed part of the psychic life, and that "das Ich ist nicht Herr im eigenen Haus" (Freud). Lacan, Althusser, and others would sustain in various ways the thesis that it is not the motto "cogito ergo sum" that reveals the quintessence of the human reality and self-comprehension but the motto "Je pense où je ne suis pas; donc je suis où je ne pense pas."

Ricœur took on the challenge presented by Freud's idea of the unconscious from the nineteen forties, critically and speculatively integrating it in his *Philosophie de la volonté*'s first book *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*. In the sixties, his decision to recognise and implement Gadamer's approach within his phenomenology became more than a methodological re-modulation of his eidetic and reflexive approach by connecting the work of interpretation of symbols, myths, and sins. It became his solution to the crisis of the *philosophie de l'esprit* and at the same time an

alternative to the structuralist hegemony of the methodology and conception of the human sciences.¹ His declaration, made at the end of *Finitude et culpabilité* (1960), that his empirical research must be transformed into an hermeneutical exercise applied to the symbols expressed within the work of psychoanalysis, the human sciences, criminology, and political science, must be understood under this vast point of view. Among Ricœur's scientific and interdisciplinary experiences between the nineteen fifties and the sixties (in 1961 he held a series of conferences at Yale University that would be the basis for his *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, 1965; during the same period he followed Lacan's seminars in Paris; in 1963 he met Lévi-Strauss at the *Esprit* review headquarters...), perhaps one of the most representative and significant is the 6th colloque of Bonneval, an interdisciplinary congress organised in 1960 by the psychiatrist Henri Ey, where Ricœur made a contribution, *Le conscient et l'inconscient*, that was collected and published six years later² and again nine years later in his *Le conflit des interprétations* (1969),³ but whose essential content was reproduced in the book of 1965.

Responding to structuralism, Ricœur chose a double doorway, never focusing on it as an ideology: from one side, he seriously considered structural analysis as productive and legitimate when applied to specific determinate domains of experience, and as such he used it in articulation with other analyses; from the other side, he remodelled his personal conception of the human being by purifying it from those elements and aspects which made it both impossible and contradictory to incorporate into a reflexive philosophy the passage through a structural analysis.⁴ It was not the strategical but rather the logical and methodological consequence of Husserl's recognition that the idea of direct access to the self-consciousness had to be reconsidered. Ricœur's *Symbolique du mal* and his hermeneutical *détour* demonstrated his recognition of psychoanalysis and Masters of Suspicion's lesson that direct access to the Self is, by many ways, impossible.⁵ In fact, Ricœur's antithetic position, against Heidegger's ontology, of a philosophy of the long way held the consequence of the impracticability of an immediate knowledge and comprehension of the human being. From this point of view, Ricœur's philosophical alternative and "answer" to psychoanalytic and structuralistic challenges appears as coherent and significant. To him, it is by applying reflection, through a hermeneutical phenomenology, to human spiritual and cultural signs and symbols that the subject can be indirectly rediscovered, exactly by these symbols and signs that attest his desire to be and his effort to exist. Thus, it is clear that Ricœur's choice in favour of hermeneutics responds not only to a methodological need for an interdisciplinary application of philosophy to cultural products (symbols, myths...) or scientific objects of study (dreams, symptoms...), but also to the discovery of the complexity of the Self, having a fundamental closeness, and therefore follows the productive way, inevitably indirect, to gaining an entrance to the Self by the analysis of language and by the hermeneutics of symbols. In a similar general perspective, which is at the same time linguistic and hermeneutic, it is evident how structuralism may play a constructive and essential role in clarifying certain constitutive functions, and at the same time may represent the risk of an anti-anthropological and anti-humanistic drift. The semantic plan of analysis is intertwined with the plan of description and interpretation, as well as with the reflexive plan, but it is the last to reorganise and subsume the speculative consequences of a philosophical work exercised on language, symbols, and myth toward a comprehensive and humanistic understanding of what is human nature and what is human being.

Ricœur's *voie longue* approach began with an analysis of language. The elaboration of a new problem of existence firstly must be based on the semantic analysis of interpretation as a technique applied to the symbols and myths that individuals produce by expressing and realising themselves. Secondly, it must be connected to a reflexive passage which has the goal of revealing how this cultural comprehension is a moment of self-comprehension.⁶ From this point of departure, it is possible to regressively reach a problem of the existence passing through the conflict of opposite hermeneutics, which are substantially rooted to the reality of the existential dynamism of regressive tendencies and forces, and progressive forces and drives. By presenting itself as an archaeology of the Self, Freud's psychoanalysis prospects and indicates a course for an hermeneutic oriented to biological drives, to the *arché*, to the past, to infancy, all conceived as part of the place of the "lost" meaning of human existence. On the contrary, Hegel's phenomenology of spirit presents itself as a teleological process, where its ultimate meaning lies in the future attempts (not only by the attainment of adulthood), after a series of passages and metamorphoses, suffering after suffering, contradiction after contradiction, and conflict after conflict. Ricœur's discovery of the conflict of interpretations (due to the study of Freud)⁷ is in concordance with his philosophy of the Self, elaborated between *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* and *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*: essentially, the human being is conflictual.⁸ His inner dynamic division is reflected not only through the conflict between hermeneutics, but somehow also through the linguistic and disciplinary explosion of the discourse on the human being. The speculative challenge behind this problem of a philosophy of language is more than a problem of structural linguistics, although connected to it. Structural linguistics is met passing through a phenomenological hermeneutics applied to culture and symbols; an attempt to interpolate it faces the unstable domain of a war of hermeneutics (i.e., possible different interpretations), and immediately calls into play psychoanalysis and phenomenology. But before all of this, a general problem of instability and understanding about the human being arises. In fact,

today we are in search of a comprehensive philosophy of language to account for the multiple functions of the human act of signifying and for their interrelationships. [...] We have at our disposal a symbolic logic, an exegetical science, an anthropology, and a psychoanalysis and, perhaps for the first time, we are able to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of human discourse.⁹

But, "today the unity of human language poses a problem." Consequently, even a comprehensive understanding of the human being constitutes a problem today. From this general point of view, the philosophical evaluation and use of psychoanalysis and structuralism in Ricœur's hermeneutics must be primarily looked at as connected to this enquiry into language. However, a substantial difference persists, between psychoanalysis, even as a medical discipline and treatment, and structuralism: the former is focused on the subject; the latter is focused only signs, as unique contents of an objectified language. Therefore, this contemporary problem of a unification of the human language by the reunification of cultural and scientific discourses around the human being call into play the role of philosophy in mediation and synthesis, for the elaboration of a comprehensive philosophy of language. This interpretation re-addresses our focus on Ricœur's hermeneutical phenomenology, now re-considerable as a philosophical attempt to subsume the challenge of a unified discourse on the human being as part of the

challenge to synthesise the human sciences' diversified discourses on the human being under a certain comprehensive and unified speculative conception of the human being.

A Difficult Dialectic

The relationship between Lacan and Ricœur was very difficult from the beginning, as Ricœur recounts in his book-interview *La critique et la conviction*.¹⁰ Their relationship began at the congress of Bonneval, where Ricœur gave a very impressive speech sharing the essence of his new understanding of Freud, developed later in his 1965 essay, after two series of conferences on psychoanalysis given at the university of Yale in 1961, at the university of Louvain in the following year, and after having attended Lacan's seminars in Paris at the beginning of the nineteen sixties. At the Fonds Ricœur, it is possible to consult his annotations taken during Lacan's 1960-61 seminars on *transference* (it is a folio of about thirty pages) and 1962-63 seminars on *anguish* (a folio of about twenty pages). It was this mix between the charismatic supremacy of Lacan in France and the fact that Ricœur followed (or, better, made himself follow)¹¹ his seminars for a certain period which provoked the false accusation of plagiarism in his book *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*. However, in his *Critique and Conviction* Ricœur recalls in particular the lecture he gave at Bonneval, which "contains the essential elements of [...] [his] interpretation of Freud, which had ripened over the course of [...] [his] earlier teaching at the Sorbonne."¹² Ricœur recalls too Lacan's "incredible lack of intellectual integrity" in having asked and obtained the elimination "from the published volume of the Bonneval colloquium" the section of discussion "that took place after [...] [his] lecture, in which [...] [Lacan] participated."¹³ Ricœur continues as follows:

The other texts generally are followed by the discussion to which they gave rise, but not mine. This text is a key text because it presents my overall interpretation of Freud's work, namely that the Freudian discourse is composite, and hence of great epistemological fragility, for it plays on two vocabularies: a vocabulary of energy, with terms like repression, energy, drive, and so on, and on the other hand, a vocabulary of sense and interpretation, present in the very title of *Traumdeutung. The Interpretation of Dreams*. I held that this composite character was to Freud's credit, moreover, without classifying it as a defect of conceptualization or of epistemological lucidity; I saw this as a deliberate use of a language appropriate to its object, which itself is situated precisely at the point of articulation of the domains of force and of language.¹⁴

If, on the one hand, it is true that it would be easy to reinforce Ricœur's proof of his work's originality having this section of discussion with Lacan; on the other, today it is much simpler to check and describe their theoretical differences by reading their works, because we stay so far from Lacanianism's seductions. It is only by the effect of this Lacanian pervasive atmosphere that an author such as F. Châtelet could write that the *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud* (book *Analytic*) is a free reinterpretation where the reference to Lacan's lesson is *clear and constant* ("l'on reconnaît clairement et constamment").¹⁵ The opinions of R. Schérer, L. Beirnaert, and others are similar to the opinion of Châtelet.¹⁶ In particular, some articles against Ricœur's *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, such as M. Tort's *De l'interprétation ou la machine herméneutique* (1966),¹⁷ now prove to be fallacious and calumnious, although Tort's had a strong effect because

the author was not a “Lacanian” and differed from other authors; like Valabrega,¹⁸ he developed a certain argumentation. In order to reinforce his position, Lacan instrumentally referred to Tort in his course on *L'objet en psychanalyse* (1965-66) given at the École Normale Supérieure de Paris (lesson of 23 March 1966), explicitly speaking of a case of plagiarism, and recognising Tort’s value in denouncing Ricœur’s “opération scandaleuse.” However, Tort’s re-reading was already considered as incorrect and unfounded by some of his contemporaries – one of them was A. Schlemmer –, even in relation to the accusation of a Ricœurian re-reading of Freud largely dependent on Lacan’s work.¹⁹ The Fonds Ricœur has the manuscript of Ricœur’s Bonneval lecture, given on 2 November 1960 (the manuscript for the conference is in 18 pages; the final manuscript for the publication, which is refined even in terms of references and quotes, is 27 pages). The most important fact is that it demonstrates that Ricœur was correct in saying that he presented the essence of his own interpretation prior of his contact with Lacan.

However, beyond of all of this, there is a clear, unique point in Ricœur’s interpretation of Freud’s psychoanalysis which does not have any connection with Lacan’s psychoanalysis: his thesis of Freud’s double epistemology, articulated with a hermeneutical register and an energetic register, as explained at the Bonneval *colloque* and in a more articulated manner in *De l’interprétation. Essai sur Freud*. It would be useful to reconsider some of the book *Analytic* and this explicit dialectic with Lacan, not simply to refocus on what is specific to Lacan and what is similar and different in Ricœur, but rather because after Adolf Grünbaum’s criticism of Ricœur’s [and Habermas’] interpretation of psychoanalysis in a hermeneutical key, he came back to reaffirm his thesis and at the same time re-modulated narratively and linguistically his interpretation of Freud’s psychoanalysis. This reinterpretation brings Ricœur closer to Lacan, as seems to be quite evident in his 1978 paper *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis* more than other works published after *De l’interprétation. Essai sur Freud*. We will observe this after a passage from his 1965 book and his response to Grünbaum’s critique.

The Place of Lacan in Ricœur’s Interpretation of Freud’s Psychoanalysis

Within *De l’interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, only the first chapter of the section Dialectic contains an explicit reference to Lacan and a comparative analysis of his theory. However, indirectly, a generalised reference to structuralism and linguistics can be found throughout the entire book through its critical problematisation of a linguistic conception of the unconscious and, more generally, through the positioning of psychoanalysis “in the general debate on language.”²⁰ Without a doubt, Ricœur in this book levels a clear criticism against Lacan and his idea of an unconscious that is linguistically structured. For Lacan, the unconscious is not individual, because if on the one side it constitutes the history of the subject “in that it is a large text outside of the script which is conscious to the subject,”²¹ on the other it is – as Lacan clearly sustains – “that part of the concrete discourse, in so far as it is transindividual, that is not at the disposal of the subject in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse.”²² Ricœur, who embraced a totally different anthropological philosophy,²³ specifically counterpoised his theoretical alternative, which is different for three reasons: (1) it contrasts the idea of a “linguistic dimension” with an idea of a “symbolic dynamism” which is the object of the hermeneutic exercise; (2) it contrasts the idea of a “linguistic structure” thematising the role and dynamic of an energetic dimension; and (3) it contrasts Lacan’s unilateral linguistic theory and epistemology with a

double epistemology and theory expressed through the dialectic of two different discursive and ontological registers: energetics and hermeneutics. In the first chapter (*Epistemology: Between Psychology and Phenomenology*) of the dialectical section, Ricœur condemns Freud's theory of the unconscious as reductionist and distortive to limit it linguistically. First, this conception denies the economic point of view, but the point is that this conception of language as an instauration of meaning that takes place prior to any function or expression makes sense only in conjunction with the economic concepts of Freudian theory.

The linguistic interpretation does not constitute an alternative to the economic explanation; it simply prevents the latter from being reified by showing that the mechanisms that come under the economics are accessible only in their relation to hermeneutics.²⁴

By maintaining that repression is nothing but a "metaphor" is not to overcome the economic hypothesis with a better one, but rather to parallel it with a linguistic interpretation, and thus to stay fixed in a unidimensional linguistic hermeneutics.

It is impossible to make the absence of logic in dreams, their ignorance of "No," accord with a state of real language [...] Freud does not take language [*le langage*] into consideration when he treats of the unconscious but rather restricts its role to the preconscious and the conscious.²⁵

Second, if we consider linguistics in its strict sense of the science of language phenomena realised in and through a given language, then the symbolism of the unconscious can not be considered as a linguistic phenomenon.²⁶

However, something of "linguistic" or, better, some connection with a linguistic dimension must be at work, because between the unconscious and the conscious only a certain degree of closeness and correlation permits the "movement" from one to the other, and vice versa. In fact, the unconscious presents some infra- and supra-linguistic mechanisms, that is phenomena "structured like language," but "*like language*" and not "linguistically structured." "To call these mechanisms infra- or supralinguistic is, of course, still to refer them to language. That is precisely what constitutes the soundness of the linguistic interpretation."²⁷ In conclusion, Ricœur reads:

The linguistic interpretation has the merit of raising all the phenomena of the primary process and of repression to the rank of language; the very fact that the analytic cure itself is language attests to the mixture of the quasi language of the unconscious and ordinary language. But the distortion – the *Entstellung* – which turns that other discourse into a quasi language is not itself achieved by language. The "infra" or the "supra" with respect to language is what separates psychoanalysis from phenomenology. This confusion of language is also what raises the urgent and difficult question of an archeology of the subject.²⁸

If it is not completely correct to speak of the influence of Lacan on Ricœur's interpretation of the unconscious, it is nonetheless correct to consider the understanding of a "quasi language of

the unconscious" as having been developed using Lacan's work as the main reference. At an important conference presentation given in Rome in 1964 (*Technique et non-technique dans l'interprétation*; later collected to form a chapter of *The Conflict of interpretations*), where even Lacan was present, Ricoeur seems to have affirmed a stronger connection with the psychoanalyst. He explains that psychoanalysis does not start working on some observable behaviours, but rather with a non-sense that must be interpreted. Therefore, any attempt to assimilate psychoanalysis to a science of observation and to a technique generated by it does not grasp the essence of psychoanalysis: that is, the analytical experience is involved in the *champ de la parole* (Lacan's formula) and, from this *territorium*, what comes to light is another language, as Lacan maintains and explains (Ricoeur refers explicitly to him); a language which is dissociated from the common language, and that exposes itself to interpretation through the "effects of sense" provoked by this dissociation.²⁹ Here the work of interpretation sounds much more like a decipherment of a (kind of) hieroglyphic instead of a fight against some resistance and mechanisms. But the point is that a similar flexion in Ricoeur's re-reading of Freud was already present in his *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, and precisely in a similar passage where, again, Lacan is explicitly quoted. The first chapter of the section Dialectic (the paragraph *Confrontation with Internal Reformulations*)³⁰ is where he underlines how the

analytic experience unfolds in the field of speech and that, within this field, what comes to light is another language, dissociated from common language, and which presents itself to be deciphered through its meaningful effects – symptoms, dreams, various formations, etc.³¹

In a footnote, he quotes Lacan's essay *Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse* (1953), specifying, however, that he diverges when he goes "on to criticise a conception that eliminates energy concepts in favour of linguistics." Nevertheless, a certain ambiguity in his theoretical position is present there because of this reference to Lacan's linguistic theory of the unconscious, where it is reasonable and rational to speak of a *decipherment* of the "meaningful effects" provoked by the dissociation of conceiving the linguistic constitution of the two dimensions, as well as the linguistic dynamism that permits the distortive or transformative passage from one to the other, and vice versa (from rational to symbolic and from symbolic to rational; from logic to palaeo-logic and from palaeo-logic to logic...). Even if short, nervous, and fragmentary, it is interesting to follow the discussion section of the same congress in Rome, after Lacan's lecture *Du trieb de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste [résumé]*, as it is published in the review *Archivio di Filosofia*.³² Ricoeur tries to introduce his energetic point of view interpreting the concepts of condensation and displacement as referring to a dialectic of forces, where Lacan sees only a dialectic of "persuasion." Then, Ricoeur explains that he already finds this energetic aspect and dimension in the Freudian concept of work, *arbeit*, when used in expressions like dream work, work of displacement, and work of condensation. To him, it is not by chance that Freud uses the word *durcharbeiten*, "working-through," in describing the analyst's therapeutic exercise of interpretation. Unfortunately, this exchange is interrupted by a brusque answer by Lacan, who says just that in psychoanalysis things do not move in this way.³³ What is clear is that where Ricoeur reads the work of the analysis as a working-through, as a technique of psychoanalysis which is opposed to Breuer's catharsis, Lacan considers it far from Breuer's catharsis and rather as a technique of persuasion, somehow nearer to rhetoric than challenge between

hermeneutics and energetics. This last point is an interpretative possibility that Ricoeur considered as present, as fragmentary thematised, in Freud's texts. He (constantly) re-conducts his ambiguous interpretation of the ambivalence of Freud's writing, which offers a vast space for diversified linguistic interpretations, like Laplanche and Leclaire's next to Lacan's interpretation and others. For example, he writes:

We have already noted the parallel between Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and *Jokes*; it is based on the fact that the dream mechanisms of condensation and displacement appear to be well-defined figures of classical rhetoric; but we did not go beyond a general analogy. Starting from the role of the switch-words in the unconscious text of dreams, it is possible to develop in detail the interpretation of condensation as metaphor and displacement as metonymy.³⁴

Ricoeur seems to be partially responsible for the difficult dialectics of linguistics, because he tries to implement *partially* the structuralist's point of view, using his middle-way approach. But in so doing, he introduces another unbalanced element to his previous fluid interpretation of Freud's psychoanalysis, which is articulated between energetics and hermeneutics. Certainly, this parallel and mixture between hermeneutic components and aspects and linguistic elements and concepts enrich and articulate his analysis, but the price to pay is that this theoretical synthesis, which is presented with an opened epistemology reflecting the double discursive register of Freud's psychoanalysis, and appearing at the end as a discourse for all discourses, instead of solving Freud's ambiguities and problems, uses it and multiplies it.

However, it is interesting to look at how Ricoeur, after his *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud* develops his research in two new productive directions: first, he works to develop a new epistemological model for philosophy as well as for the social and human sciences,³⁵ articulated between explanation and understanding, finding in disciplines such as psychoanalysis and history examples of such an epistemology; second, he moves through a more hermeneutic understanding and use of psychoanalysis in his philosophy, specifically working around the narrative hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of the Self. Therefore, if the first reinforces and justifies Ricoeur's intertwining of different discursive and theoretical registers and epistemologies, connecting the problem of the foundation of psychoanalysis to the epistemological problem of the human sciences, the second establishes the centrality of the hermeneutical discourse in the linguistic one, regionalising this as an historical-theoretical passage, and at the same time re-absorbing it within the hermeneutic sphere.

This thesis of a dualism of energetics and hermeneutics is in connection with Hyppolite's analysis, which he developed in following up Dalbiez's work. Ricoeur continues with his critique; that in psychoanalysis there is a contrast between Freud's positivist language (the topic of the ego, the superego, and the id, for example) and the character of his research and discovery.³⁶ For Hyppolite, the originality of Freud lies in the discovery of psychical phenomena that are meaningful but need to be "decrypted" in their sense and meaning.³⁷ Freud's research was equipped with an inadequate language, covering the exegetical structure of the psychoanalytic procedure. In fact, starting from the interpretation of the psychic as a "significant whole," as a domain of sense, he founded his methodology following an historical-archeological approach, which works by moving from significant to signify. Ricoeur, however, interprets it differently,

recognising a specific role played by the corporal, natural, and causal dimension of the human being at the level of his cerebral and mental life, and in relation to the constitution of specific psychopathology, and in relation to psychoanalysis as psycho-therapy. However, it is certainly by following Hyppolite that he may clearly identify a strong, apparently unsolvable, antinomy between causal nexus and nexus of significance, and by correlation between causalistic-scientific language and interpretative-hermeneutic language. What is original in Ricœur is the fact that he tries to harmonise the two registers by correcting Freud's scientific auto-misunderstanding (Habermas) and Hyppolite's excess in radicalising the hermeneutical approach. In some way, Hyppolite had a similar unilateral approach similar to Lacan; and what Ricœur tries to do with him is similar to what he tries to do with Lacan. In Ricœur's *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, Hyppolite's lesson certainly helps him to manage the epistemological debate (Ricœur focused on this in 1958 at the historical Washington symposium), and he connects it to the phenomenological point of view (which indirectly ties Ricœur to the French tradition which re-reads psychoanalysis phenomenologically: Sartre, De Waelhens, Merleau-Ponty, Henry *et al.*). Reversibly, Lacan's theory helps him to articulate the theory of language and the linguistic point of view in dialectic with hermeneutics and to redefine the position and functioning of energetics in relation to it. But there is another element, a third element of commonality, which binds Hyppolite, Lacan, and Ricœur: their interest in variously relating Hegel's phenomenology to Freud's psychoanalysis. Actually, Ricœur largely employs Hegel's dialectical-progressive approach, but Hyppolite and Lacan were the first to apply Hegelianism to the speculative revisiting of Freud, using Alexandre Kojève's 1933 seminars on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hyppolite was interested in demonstrating that it was possible to implement Freud's work within a contemporary phenomenology of spirit by constructing/recognising a new figure of spirit, that of *conscience dénégatrice*.³⁸ On the contrary, Lacan moved in the opposite direction, trying to present psychoanalysis as the overriding philosophy. Ricœur, however, borrowed from both in reconsidering Hegel's phenomenology; and above all to Lacan, because he too used Kojève's philosophy of desire to re-interpret the therapeutic relationship between analyst and patient in parallel with Hegel's master-slave dialectic of recognition; a dialectic of recognition that Kojève reinterprets as the dialectic of desire for the desire of the other, because "all human, anthropogenetic Desire – the Desire that generates Self-Consciousness, the human reality – is, finally, a function of the desire for 'recognition'."³⁹ The idea of pre-eminence as accorded to desire, structurally considered as the desire for recognition or *désir du désir de l'autre*, was accepted by Lacan, who followed Kojève's seminars, interpreting as he did human history as the story of "desired desires," and placed at the centre of his theorisation. As François Dosse explains, this theory of desire would constitute the centre of Lacan's theorisation.⁴⁰ Ricœur subsumed this dialectic re-addressing of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. It is in *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis*, particularly, that he explicitly makes reference to this theory of desire. He reads:

The analytic situation offers desire what Freud, in one of his technical texts, calls "a playground in which [the patient's compulsion to repeat] is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom." Now why does the analytic situation have this virtue of reorienting repetition toward remembrance? Because it offers desire an imaginary face-to-face relation in the process of transference. Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice, too, does not lack theoretical

implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel's expression, the desire of another's desire and finally for recognition.⁴¹

The reference to Kojève's interpretation is clear, as is the centrality accorded to Hegel, or even to the Freud-Hegel dialectic. Ricœur's reference to Hegel represents a third way compared to that of Hyppolite (psychoanalysis re-absorbed by philosophy) and of Lacan (philosophy reabsorbed by psychoanalysis); in fact, he would consider the relationship between these two disciplines as mutual and dialectical, finally reconfiguring it theoretically, as a dialectic of opposing forces, dynamics, and hermeneutics. However, in his last dialogue on psychoanalysis with the Italian psychiatrist Giuseppe Martini, in 2003, Ricœur declared he would be inclined to evaluate his opposition between archaeology and teleology as the weaker part of his book on Freud. The reasons for this are different and must be considered closely, even if they are not realised in an essay or academic conference but in the context of a dialogue-interview. Beyond any doubt, it proves that the theoretical strength and productiveness of Hegelo-Freudianism was largely due to the cultural tendencies of the time; exactly as was the case with Lévi-Strauss and Lacan's structuralism.

From the Question of Proof as an Answer to Grünbaum's Epistemic Critiques to a New Epistemological Paradigm in a Linguistic-Aesthetic Key

Between the nineteen seventies and eighties, Ricœur developed a model of critical hermeneutics, methodologically and epistemologically structured, for the most part by following the theory of the *arc herméneutique*, which was structured around the theory of text and action, the epistemology of historical knowledge, and a reinterpretation of Freud's psychoanalysis. A particular character of Freud's psychoanalysis was the critical and difficult position of a double epistemic and procedural register, which in the seventies and eighties was progressively transformed into one of the first theoretical and disciplinary bases for this hermeneutical theory. In fact, there is a direct parallel between the "dialectic" of energetics and hermeneutics on the one side, and on the other this new methodological model for the human and social sciences, which coordinates *explanation* and *understanding* under the rule of interpretation. However, if this is the metamorphosis in Ricœur's approach to psychoanalysis and his philosophical use, a second, progressive, metamorphosis occurs in his re-meditation on the epistemological problem of psychoanalysis itself. It is true that *The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytic Writings* (1977) is substantially elaborated by following and reproducing the interpretative line of the 1965 essay. However, with a certain degree of evidence it seems that, in the end, it has an inclination to hermeneutics.⁴² This inclination is evident in *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis* and in the subsequent passage on the philosophy of psychoanalysis, which focuses more on clinical experience than theory. Ricœur re-used *The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytic Writings* on another occasion – in the 1982 symposium of Louvain in memory of Alphonse de Waelhens – without making many modifications. After Grünbaum's attack of his *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, the argument developed in this article became the answer to Grünbaum's criticism. This is demonstrated by another article – *La psychanalyse confrontée à l'épistémologie*, published in 1986 – where he, after quoting Grünbaum's book, began to re-present his

interpretation of the epistemic problem of Freud's psychoanalysis from the perspective of the question of fact and proof in psychoanalysis.⁴³ He writes:

Le récent livre d'Adolf Grünbaum, *Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, confirme le malentendu qui règne entre psychanalystes et épistémologistes formés à l'école du Cercle de Vienne, prolongée par le positivisme logique. Ce relatif insuccès de la psychanalyse à se faire reconnaître pour science résulte de la négligence de tous, dans les deux camps également, à poser certaines questions préliminaires. // La première question concerne ce qui vaut comme *fait* en psychanalyse. La seconde concerne le type de *relation* qui existe entre la théorie et l'expérience analytique, sous son double aspect de méthode d'investigation et de traitement thérapeutique, enfin de la sorte de *validation* qu'on est en droit d'attendre dans le domaine de la psychanalyse: d'où la question de la *preuve* en psychanalyse.⁴⁴

A stronger perspective of epistemological and theoretical change has *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis*, because its theme presents Ricœur with the opportunity to re-actualise and reconsider some of the linguistic and theoretical aspects examined in his 1965 essay, going back to Lacan.

The explicit goal of this article is to evaluate some reformulations of psychoanalysis "in terms of linguistic models borrowed either from structural linguistics, from Saussure to Jacobson, or from the transformational and generative linguistics coming from Chomsky."⁴⁵

Ricœur refers again to Lacan's article *Fonction et champ de la parole* in the first part of this work, where he presents "the reasons favouring such a linguistic reinterpretation, principally by dwelling upon analytic practice and more generally speaking on the analytic experience."⁴⁶ It is true that in the second part of the article he discusses the reasons for considering this reformulation as "a partial failure." To him, in fact, "the universe of discourse appropriate to the analytic experience is not that of language, but that of the image."⁴⁷ However, at least two things suggest that Ricœur moves towards more closely following a linguistic and structuralist perspective. The first is the fact that he focuses on psychoanalysis from the perspective of the analytic experience, which is more strongly related to the communicative and narrative dimension of psychoanalysis; this was Ricœur's tendency in the nineteen eighties and nineties when he develops his theory of the *narrative identity*. The secondly is that this new *semiotic* alternative counterpoised to the *linguistic* one is less strong in terms of contrast, compared to the contrast between hermeneutics and energetics. Definitely, in terms of philosophical uses, semiotics falls within the hermeneutical sphere.

This theoretical-critical evolution is interesting in itself, as it could be deepened that perhaps Lacan's influence played much more significant role in Ricœur's interpretation of Freud and in his philosophical use of psychoanalysis than had a contingent effect of some temporal-factual and provisional causes. Even reasoning from a larger general perspective on hermeneutics and epistemology, it seems that the article *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis* is significantly harmonisable with Ricœur's hermeneutisation of psychoanalysis from the nineteen eighties, in which energetics as well as linguistics are subsumed within the hermeneutical reality. This larger perspective needs to consider Ricœur's article *Qu'est-ce qu'un texte?* (1970) as a main reference, as the centre of this (quasi) radical hermeneutics turn. Actually, the function of interpretation must be predominant and pivotal in a new epistemological theory (the *arc herménèutique* theory) where

explanation and understanding are ruled by *interpretation*, as Ricœur affirms and explains. It is clear that in order to realise this project, the concepts of both explanation and understanding must firstly be reorganised under a linguistic-hermeneutic domain. This is precisely what takes place in Ricœur's reflection on what is a text.

Analogous to the theory of action, Ricœur's theory of text is developed under the general coordinates of hermeneutics; but, differently from the theory of action, it is destined to constitute the hub of his hermeneutical approach, generally speaking, as a methodological approach with multiple applications, as a new epistemological perspective, as a new theory of hermeneutics. This remains as a theoretical basis even passing *from text to action*. The theory of text is the core of Ricœur's *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (1986). In this book Ricœur explains that, today, the concept of explanation is a non concept lent from the natural sciences and applied to scriptures, but it is generated from the sphere of language, transferring the minimal units of language (phonemes and lexemes) to the bigger and superior units of a phrase, like a story, folklore, or myth. Under this point of view, interpretation can better be compared to a model of intelligibility, in the sphere of linguistics, rather than other models extraneous for the human sciences.⁴⁸ Ricœur overcomes in this way the antinomy of explanation and understanding. At an epistemological level, there is no separation or gap between explanation and understanding. Rigorously speaking, only explanation is methodical, whereas understanding is a non-methodical moment which in the human sciences runs parallel to explanation. Understanding precedes, follows, and closes explanation, wrapping it; on the contrary, explanation unwraps understanding analytically. It is clear that a similar conception is sustainable by a specific operation of centralisation of the role of language and hermeneutics in epistemology.

In Ricœur's *arc herméneutique* theory, explanation and understanding are harmonised with the work of interpretation because of a certain conception of the role of language; and if it is true, then forcibly there is a direct debt to linguistic theory and, indirectly, to Lacan's re-determination of Freud's psychoanalysis. Why? Because if, on the one hand, it is true that the role of language and linguistic theory was reconsidered and limited by Ricœur in his 1965 essay, then on the other it is true that Ricœur, re-modulating his interpretation of Freud for a new general epistemology and methodology for the human sciences accentuated its hermeneutical and linguistic flexion. And this cannot be without consequences for his interpretation of Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis. In fact, in a parallel movement, *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis* proves to be a sort of process of renewal, re-actualisation, and re-thinking of Lacan's lesson. It is a double process, because it is in connection to a new problematisation of the epistemology of psychoanalysis and (indirectly) to a new epistemological theory, where a certain structural conception of language (in human understanding) constitutes its basis.

- ¹ See Domenico Jervolino, *Il cogito e l'ermeneutica. La questione del soggetto in Ricœur*, pref. of P. Ricœur, present. of Th. F. Geraets (Genova: Marietti, 1993), 20.
- ² Paul Ricœur, *Le conscient et l'inconscient*, in AA. VV., *L'inconscient*. VIe Colloque de Bonneval (Bibliothèque Neuro-Psychiatrique de Langue Française), sous la direction de H. Ey (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), 409-22.
- ³ Paul Ricœur, *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 101-21.
- ⁴ See Paul Ricœur, *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Esprit, 1995), 33.
- ⁵ See Ricœur, *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, 33.
- ⁶ See Ricœur, *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique*, 15.
- ⁷ See Ricœur, *Réflexion faite. Autobiographie intellectuelle*, 37.
- ⁸ See Jervolino, *Il cogito e l'ermeneutica*, 15 sq.
- ⁹ Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by D. Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 3-4.
- ¹⁰ Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. by K. Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 68 ff.
- ¹¹ See Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, 70.
- ¹² See Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, 68.
- ¹³ Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, 69.
- ¹⁴ Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, 69.
- ¹⁵ François Châtelet, "Freud est-il chrétien?", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 juillet 1965, 24.
- ¹⁶ Schérer writes: "On sera frappé souvent par une très forte parenté entre cette méthode et celle par laquelle J. Lacan a imposé à la psychanalyse contemporaine un nouveau style" (René Schérer, "L'homme du soupçon et l'homme de foi," *Critique* 21, 223 (1965): [1052-1067] 1063-1064). For Beirnaert, the *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud* "constitue la réflexion la plus poussée qu'un philosophe ait jamais consacrée à l'ouvrage du fondateur de la psychanalyse," but "pose-t-elle en énigme le débat de Ricœur avec Lacan, qu'on lit en filigrane dans tout le livre" (L. Beirnaert, "Un essai sur Freud," *Études* 323, 7 (1965): [49-52] 51).
- ¹⁷ Michel Tort, "De l'interprétation ou la machine herméneutique," *Les Temps modernes*, 237 (1966): 1461-1493; 238 (1966): 1629-1652.
- ¹⁸ Jean-Paul Valabrega, "Comment survivre à Freud? Contribution à l'histoire du mouvement psychanalytique français contemporaine," *Critique*, 224 (1966): 68-78
- ¹⁹ André Schlemmer, "Réflexions sur l'interprétation," *Les cahiers de la méthode naturelle* 37 (1966): 1-11. He writes: "La revue de J.-P. Sartre *Les Temps Modernes* a publié un article de Michel Tort fort

intelligent, mais hargneux et systématiquement méprisant, qui est trop impertinent pour être pertinent: 'ce qui est exagéré est insignifiant.' Une des plus injustes critiques est de reprocher à Paul Ricœur ce qu'il doit à Jacques Lacan alors que lui-même le reconnaît." (6 n. 4.)

²⁰ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 6.

²¹ John Gasperoni, "The Unconscious is Structured Like a Language," *Qui Parle* (Special Issue on Lacan), 9, 2 (1996): [77-104], 80.

²² Jacques Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," J. L., *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: W.W. Norton &Co., 1977), 49.

²³ This question is thematised in Karl Simms' (Ricœurian) book: *Ricœur and Lacan* (London/New York: Continuum, 2007).

²⁴ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 396.

²⁵ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 397 and 398.

²⁶ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 399.

²⁷ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 400.

²⁸ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 405-06.

²⁹ See Paul Ricœur, "Technique et non-technique dans l'interprétation," P. R., *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 186-87.

³⁰ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 363 ff.

³¹ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 367.

³² Jacques Lacan, "Du trieb de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste [résumé]," *Archivio di Filosofia*, 34 (1964): 51-53; *Discussione*, 55-60.

³³ See Lacan, "Du trieb de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste [résumé]," 56-57.

³⁴ Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, 401.

³⁵ See Vinicio Busacchi, *Habermas and Ricœur's Depth Hermeneutics* (Cham [Switzerland]: Springer, 2016).

³⁶ See Jean Hyppolite, "Psychoanalyse et philosophie," J. H., *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, t. I (Paris: PUF, 1971), 374.

³⁷ Hyppolite, "Psychoanalyse et philosophie," 375.

³⁸ See Vincent Descombes, *Les enjeux philosophiques des années cinquante* (Paris: Ed. du Centre Pompidou, 1989), 155.

³⁹ Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. by A. Bloom, trans. by J. H. Nichols Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), 7.

⁴⁰ See François Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme. Tome 1: Le champ du signe, 1945-1966* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), 122.

⁴¹ Paul Ricœur, "Image and Language in Psychoanalysis," P. R., *On Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge [UK]/Malden [MA]: Polity Press, 2012), 96.

⁴² In fact, he emphasizes that the psychoanalytic reconstructed scenario tends to (and must be a) "coherent story" in order to be therapeutic, where the causal dimension and the explanatory segments (the aetiologic elements) are implemented and re-configured as a dimension which is connected to this (and under this) "coherent story." At the end, it is this narrative work of recreating coherence by harmonising interpretative and explanatory elements that seems to give to psychoanalysis persuasive, truthful and therapeutic power in Ricœur's understanding (see Adolf Grünbaum, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis. A Philosophical Critique* [Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1984], 47 f.).

⁴³ A similar re-use may be found in Paul Ricœur, "Psychanalyse et herméneutique," *Nichifutsu Bunka*, 36 (1979): 21-41; now in P. R., *On Psychoanalysis*, 50-72.

⁴⁴ Paul Ricœur, "La psychanalyse confrontée à l'épistémologie," *Psychiatrie française* (Entre théorie et pratique – Fonctions de la pensée théorique), n. spécial, (mai 1986): [211-223] 211.

⁴⁵ Paul Ricœur, "Image and Language in Psychoanalysis," P. R., *On Psychoanalysis*, [94-118] 94.

⁴⁶ Ricœur, "Image and Language in Psychoanalysis," 94.

⁴⁷ Ricœur, "Image and Language in Psychoanalysis," 94.

⁴⁸ See Paul Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 137 and 151.