

IS THERE ONE UNCONSCIOUS, OR SEVERAL? (Abridged version)

Dr. Miguel Kolteniuk Krauze
Mexico City

In *The Ego and the Id*, by introducing a conceptual transformation of the 'unconscious', from 'system' to 'psychic quality', Freud created two meanings of the term which are not analogous.

This difference enables us to explain the coexistence of so many theories which make use of and presuppose the concept of the unconscious in mutually exclusive and sometimes incompatible ways.

Is it the same concept of 'unconscious' that is used by Freudian and Kleinian theory? Or by ego psychology, self-psychology, intersubjectivists and followers of Winnicott, Bion, Lacan, Meltzer, Laplanche, Green, Bollas, Mitchell, Aron, Hoffman, Benjamin, Ogden and Civitarese, for example?

Needless to say, this author thinks not. Each author and above all each school gradually introduces semantic variants into the concept of unconscious in order to adapt it to their needs for consistency and thus delineate an increasingly dispersed spectrum of meanings. To name but a few examples, from the 'ontological realism' of Laplanche, to its complete disappearance in the phenomenological language of Schaeffer, with social constructivism, field theory, enactment and narratology all somewhere in between.

The author considers that different theories and authors use a combination of the two conceptions of the 'unconscious' introduced by Freud as a means of compromise. Only in such a way can one speak of 'unconscious object relations', of 'unconscious structuring functions', of 'unconscious projective identifications', of 'knowing, not thinking', of 'beta elements', of the 'unconscious as intersubjective construct' or of the 'unconscious as unipersonal, bipersonal or third-person phenomenon'.

The author believes that contemporary French psychoanalysis has responded to this dilution of the concept of unconscious. The "Return to Freud" movement attempts to recapture, among other things, the richness, density and originality of the Freudian 'unconscious' of the first topic.

From this followed Lacan's proposition that "the unconscious is structured like a language". Laplanche's proposal to differentiate two levels in the systematic unconscious: the primary repressed, characterized by fixedness and symbolic disarticulation and the secondary repressed, characterized by the primary process and its vicissitudes, and Andree Green's proposal based on the recovery of the drive dimension.

The debate over these two meanings of the concept of 'unconscious' introduced by Freud underlies the diverse theories that put forward arguments on this subject.

It is the author's belief that we must 'revisit' the 'systemic' concept of the unconscious of the first topic and compare it to developments of the concept of the unconscious as 'psychic quality' in an attempt to elucidate this issue.

The author therefore proposes a reformulation of this distinction. It is the author's opinion that we must distinguish firstly the concept of unconscious as place of inscribing and registering experience: 'the unconscious as **Text**' (Derrida, 1967), from the concept of the unconscious as intrusion upon, emergence and appearance in the here and now: 'the unconscious as **Staging**'. The first is a metapsychological concept, the second, a clinical concept which, by definition, presupposes the first. Indeed, if there is nothing written down, then there is nothing to stage.

The unconscious text is atemporal, is it not directly knowable and it can only be staged by means of its symptomatic forms, especially in the analytic situation and specifically in the transference. It is within this privileged experiential space where unconscious text can be re-signified and temporalized by the a posteriori effect of the analytic act. This action encourages new processes of symbolization, of working through trauma and of historical reconstruction, which come together to result in psychic change.

I believe that both the structuring and the transformative processes of the psychic apparatus are the result of the symbolizing or disorganizing action of the experience of the Other. From the outset, these experiences gradually imprint their traces upon this system of transcription, thus constituting the unconscious text. Little by little the experience becomes increasingly complex. New elements begin to recombine with subsequent ones via experiences of learning and re-staging, which in turn will re-symbolize the text, triggering processes of re-translation and re-inscription of subjective experience.

It is this process of learning and re-inscribing of experience which makes possible the formation of representations, fantasies, internal objects,

identifications, structures, the construction of the self, the intersubjective encounter and the tertiary processes as described by the various theories put forward from Freud to the present day.

It is this interaction between the text and its re-staging in the organizing-disorganizing experience with the Other that defines the author's theoretical conception of the unconscious. This can be contrasted with those theories which do not recognize this distinction and which do not accept the difference between the metapsychological and clinical concepts of the unconscious.

Lastly, the author supports the theoretical movement postulating the existence of a register of primitive semiotization prior even to the unconscious system. The author makes reference to the proposals of Derrida (1967), Castoriadis-Aulagnier (1975), Laplanche (1999) and Bion (1962).

In spite of their differences, which on certain points are irreconcilable, these authors all posit the existence of a primitive system which registers and processes perceptual and emotional experience which is unknowable in itself. This system precedes and makes possible the primary process of the unconscious function, as well as the symbolic products that derive from it: representations, fantasies, desire and its drives, dreams, symptoms, along with all the other formations of the unconscious. Castoriadis-Aulagnier called it 'the original process', which gave rise to the pictogram formation. Derrida conceived of the unconscious text as "a weave of pure traces" that will always already be re-translations. Laplanche introduced it as 'the original unconscious' made up of 'enigmatic signifiers' that are characterized by their fixedness and their symbolic disarticulation and that come before the primary process belonging to the secondary unconscious. Bion postulated the necessity to transform proto-emotions, through the alpha function, into oneiric thoughts. These then create the 'contact barrier' and the distinction between conscious and unconscious. As Ferro and Civitarese described, "... conscious and unconscious are situated along a continuum, just as the two surfaces of a Mobius strip ..." (Civitarese, 2011).

Looking beyond the differences, it is the author's belief that the conception of the unconscious as original text is presupposed in this set of questions and that its place in the various levels of theoretical re-signification cannot be ignored.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Amati-Mehler, Argentieri y Canestri (1993); *The Babel of the Unconscious*. Madison, Int. Univ. Press.
2. Bion, W. R. (1962) *Aprendiendo de la Experiencia [Learning from Experience]*. Paidós, Barcelona, 1997.
3. Castoriadis-Aulagnier, P. (1975) *La Violencia de la Interpretación [The Violence of Interpretation]*. Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 2001.
4. Civitarese, G. (2011) *Resumen de la Ponencia Prepublicada para el Congreso [Summary of the Paper Prepublished for the Congress]*. Int. J. Psychoanal. (2011) 92, p. 277-280.
5. Derrida, J. (1967) *La Escritura y la Diferencia [Writing and Difference]*. Anthropos, Barcelona, 1989.
6. Ferro, A. Civitarese, G. Collová, M. Foresti, G. Molinari, E. Mazzacane, F. Politi, P. *Soñar el Análisis [Dreaming Analysis]*. Lumen, Buenos Aires, 2010.
7. Freud, S. (1923). *El Yo y el Ello [The Ego and the Id]*. Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 1976.
8. Green, A. (2003). *Ideas Directrices para un Psicoanálisis Contemporáneo [Key Ideas for a Contemporary Psychoanalysis]*. Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 2005.
9. Laplanche, J. (1999). *Entre Seducción e Inspiración: El Hombre [Man: Between Seduction and Inspiration]*. Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 2001.