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DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

*The Phenomenological Problem of the Unconscious*

**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS**

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### **Keywords:**

other, Other, *Körper*, *ego*, feral essences (*Wesen sauvage*), I, non-symbolic phenomenology, language phenomena, world phenomena, phenomenon as phenomenon, *Gestell*, imaginary, unconscious, phenomenological unconscious, real unconscious, symbolic unconscious, symbolical institution, language, speech, *phantasia*, presence without assignable present, Lacanian psychoanalysis, real, reality, sense-in-the-making (*sens se faisant*), symbolic, ontological simulacrum, the mirror stage, sublime, *Leib*, virtual.

A title like this one proposed for our doctoral thesis comprises the promise of a well determined meaning and it sets by itself the direction followed in the development of its content. In our case the promised meaning would be the one of identifying a problem and, eventually, solving it, because pursuing the well-known tradition of the positivism of the western thought, any problem has its specific solution. But, what happens when the purpose of a research is not finding a solution, the goal being the problem itself? Then, as already mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, things become...problematic.

In our paper, we started from the hypothesis that the unconscious, as a concept, which was used not only from the very birth of psychoanalysis, but existed long before this event, can thus be problematic to phenomenology. This happens because it compels phenomenology to deal with another long-ignored question, that of the body. Thus, in a first acceptance, *The Phenomenological Problem of the Unconscious* is the very question that the unconscious rises to phenomenology.

There is also a second acceptance, both being taken into account in the construction of the thesis, the one offered by the perspective of the psychoanalysis for which unconscious approached phenomenologically raises difficulties regarding the symbolic functioning. In other words, unconscious, the way it is dealt with by phenomenology (non-symbolic phenomenology to be more precise), represents a problem for psychoanalysis as long as it does not limit itself to the strictly symbolic function it plays. Therefore, if in psychoanalysis (at least, the Lacanian one), unconscious is found in language, the difficulty appears when it is demonstrated (phenomenologically) that it surpasses language. Under the circumstances, unconscious needs to be thematized and the first who does it is Maurice Merleau-Ponty through what he called phenomenological unconscious. Marc Richir adds the symbolic unconscious, which he preserves for the psychoanalysis, in order to explain what symbolic foundation is through the appeal to these two concepts. But this symbolic foundation cannot be understood entirely without the element that runs through it (thus it is the exception), that is, the sublime.

The hypothesis from which we started does not do anything but open the path towards a common ground belonging to the phenomenological freedom in which, eventually, a phenomenology and psychoanalysis, both transformed, can meet. This possibility has been spotted by Marc Richir in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in which, the transformation is the result of body thematization, as well as, unconscious thematization, and in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, in which he does not avoid talking about the unconscious as a "pre-

ontological opening” so that, eventually, he gets to thematize a real unconscious.

But the attribute Marc Richir conveys to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology may just as well fit his own phenomenology. Not only does he make a clearer distinction between speech (*langue*) and language (*langage*), *Körper* and *Leib*, imagination and *phantasia*, but by developing a new theory of the meaning, perceived as sense-in-the-making (*sens se faisant*), Marc Richir’s phenomenology, which we call non-symbolic phenomenology, is transformed. Its transformation takes place to such a degree that by getting closer to the Lacanian psychoanalysis it allows the indication of an aspect, which is ignored in psychoanalysis in general.

This aspect is the real unconscious. About it, Lacan speaks only in the last part of his teaching and only to place it in relation with the ‘significance’ of the Names of the Father (*Noms-du-Père*), along with the invention he calls *lalangue*. If it is said that Sigmund Freud invented the unconscious, about Lacan it may be said that he reinvented the concept in connection to these associations. Therefore, we can formulate a new working hypothesis, which encompasses the development of the chapters in our doctoral thesis, that is, Lacan’s reinvention of the unconscious as the real unconscious. Thus, a new thematization of the unconscious, made by psychoanalysis this time, gains consistency.

Having these thematizations in the background, our research paper pursues not only the simple concept of unconscious, but also the phenomenological unconscious (along with the symbolic one), and the real unconscious, on the path of supporting the thesis that it is possible to reach a relation of equivalence between the phenomenological unconscious and the real one. In order to attain the chosen goal we made use of the entire conceptual system of Marc Richir’s phenomenology, with specific points related to key problems from Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis. With the establishment of this working ‘method’ we moved on to the construction of six chapters which are about to be presented briefly below.

**Chapter I** is meant to introduce in the historical route of the western thought the Richirian phenomenology. This can be achieved by identifying the common notion that traverses the diverse philosophical approaches of the epoch. This notion is the *meaning*. The novel element, and the aspect that transforms Richir’s phenomenology in a non-symbolic phenomenology is the conception of meaning as sense-in-the-making.

**Chapter II** is based on this idea so that it may sketch the method involved by such a phenomenology of the meaning. Likewise nonsense is not simply negation, privation of meaning, non-symbolic phenomenology does not indicate a phenomenology that denies the

symbolic, but, on the contrary, it draws attention to the important role that it plays (or that it can play, at least) in the relation with the phenomenological, when, by means of language innovations, something new may be awakened from the phenomenological field.

**Chapter III** develops the relation between the phenomenological and the symbolic, process leading to the crystallization of the relation between non-symbolic phenomenology and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The point where this relation is best evidenced regards the automatism of repetition. On both sides, it is understood not so much as a mechanical thinking, but as *autonomous* thinking. In this meaning, the automatism of repetition corresponds in the Richirian phenomenology to an attempt of Reason to cope with the symbolic tautology and to accept and assimilate it, in which case, it is brought to light, not the key for decoding thinking, but the fact that thinking is decoding and recoding following a 'key' that remains forbidden (*inter-dit*) to us.

**Chapter IV** proves among other things that the horizontalness of language is far from being taken as such by Lacan. The importance he gives to the symbolic in the mirror stage points out to another report with language than the one that transforms language into a simple instrument of exchange between subjects. In his case, language has the crucial role of dividing the subject, simultaneously constituting him as such. The double role of language is similar to the double role of the body, that of being *Körper* and *Leib*. In both cases, the subject is constituted between its appearance and emergence which, in terms of non-symbolic phenomenology corresponds to the phenomenon as phenomenon.

**Chapter V** deals in a more direct manner with unconscious together with its thematizations. Before Freud, unconscious simply did not exist, says Lacan in *Position de l'inconscient*. It did not exist *purely* and it did not exist simply because it had an attribute, particularly the attribute of the obscure, excluded by science and repressed by religion.

**Chapter VI** pursues the transition of unconscious from symbolic unconscious to phenomenological unconscious and real unconscious. There are more passage paths as the chapter reveals, one of them, and the most relevant, being that of the subject as phenomenon as phenomenon.

The conclusions of the current research are the following:

- Lacanian (symbolic) unconscious cannot resemble a Thinker who pulls the strings despite having a structure like language;
- unconscious opens the phenomenological field through an awakening *from a distance* made possible by the migration of wild essences between symbolic and phenomenological, which

would have been impossible in the absence of the concept of *phantasia* developed a long time ago, by Husserl;

- we know how to speak unconsciously, if by speech we understand full speech, and also unconsciously we *know* an experience that links us to the others, that is, it *makes them known* to us. The first one belongs to the symbolic unconscious and involves the foundation of language in speech, the second one, belonging to the phenomenological unconscious, involves the existence of the sublime. The two *events* take our conclusion a step further, reaching the point of stating a similitude (even if in the negative) between the symbolic foundation of language into speech and the experience of the sublime – experimental similitude in the ‘speaking’ silence.

- what Lacan understands through body in his psychoanalysis is very close to *Leib*;

- posing the problem of unconscious, phenomenology sees itself confronted with the problem of the body;

- in fact, the real unconscious is present from the beginnings in the Lacanian theory. However, Marc Richir and his distinction between symbolic unconscious and phenomenological unconscious, distinction began by M. Merleau-Ponty, were necessary for this presence to be brought to surface;

- the subject who recognizes himself as divided subject is not only the subject submissive (*assujetti*) to the unconscious, but, simultaneously, it is an (un)subjective (*asubjective*) subject ‘submitted’ only to the phenomenological freedom;

- psychoanalysis can recognize this freedom and, along with it, the real unconscious, integrating in its conceptual system the experience of the sublime.

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