

Hermeneutic of a Complementarity Between Energy and Meaning in Freud

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The hermeneutics to which Paul Ricoeur is giving birth is justified by and grounded in belongingness, the Heideggerian primordial condition of Being in the World. Here then, surprisingly, does this hermeneutical phenomenology reveal itself as a more radical approach in the search for self-knowledge than the idealistic phenomenology of the late Husserl. At first this foundation of belonging appears to limit rather than open the relative possibilities for understanding of hermeneutics. Since belonging is also one way of, say, finiteness. Belonging to the world, one never escapes from or transcends that world. There is no possible escape - that is, no privileged vantage as is offered by Husserl whose "ego belongs to itself." If inescapability is what gives finiteness a bad name, there is also a positive side to belonging in the world which opens rather than closes possibilities for jointly understanding self/world. There is no inherent separation between the two. Indeed, then it is possible within ourselves and even especially through that finite vantage to gain understanding of what we are, we and that to which we belong. This podium has eight corners - each one of which, by identity, is condemned (we can say) to never escape its location or vantage vis a vis the rest of the podium. Yet by being a finite corner of this podium, the wood grain, texture, overall quality of the podium, runs through it as through each other corner and all between. Were this corner to be aware of itself, it could also - by virtue of its belonging - be aware in perhaps a different way from the other corners themselves, of the rest of the podium to which it belongs.

When we say be aware in perhaps a different way, we bring to the forefront another condition which finitude or belonging makes possible and necessary. This is called distantiation. This corner of the podium belongs to, but by virtue of that fact is distanced from all other corners of the podium. Again, to personalize the podium, the distance is not only marked spatially but, also by strangeness - i.e., by a sense of relative alienation from other corners. What hermeneutics describes as a condition, the modern scientific attitude presumes at the outset as the unbreachable basis for its method: alienation between the physical scientist and the natural world he explores and, for the experimental psychologist, alienation even from the human subject or experience he is studying. Hermeneutics does not move from this alienation, taking it as bedrock but starts with it in a movement which is the reduction of the alienation while maintaining the distance. For this end of decreasing alienation while respecting identity and distance, hermeneutics is more potentially appropriate than other approaches. For unlike much science, it leads towards more than explanation, and unlike much phenomenology, it leads towards more than understanding. Indeed, the radical character of hermeneutics, as Ricoeur sees this, is to traverse the irreconcilability of the polarity between explanation and understanding but also, more radical still between approaches which are either epistemologically or

ontologically reductive. Ricoeur's hermeneutic incorporates not only the phenomenological critique of science but incorporates, as well, a critique of both Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies - the former his idealism; the latter his overly ontological vantage.

HERMENEUTICS AND PSYCHOLOGY

Ricoeur has yet to specifically take on psychology, though he has been drawing out some of the implications for the human sciences in general. In fact, even in the work we shall concentrate on here, *Freud and Philosophy*, the direct enrichment of psychology was not the goal. Yet nothing which is both as radical and as rigorous as Ricoeur's work can remain for long unheeded by a field whose both subject matter and method remain controversial. It is likely that the field of psychology is just at the threshold of acquaintanceship with Professor Ricoeur. But that is also essentially the starting position of hermeneutics - a movement from estrangement towards intimacy by which the nature of knowledge (epistemology) itself changes in the process just as in the same process the status of one's being (ontology) is altered with gain on integrity for both. The broader message here is that psychology cannot remain psychology in its encounter with hermeneutics - a terrifying thought no doubt, but by the same token, psychology regains what it lost and more. At least this is the experience Freudian psychoanalysis undergoes in Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy*, but so also do phenomenology and hermeneutics undergo a like transformation in the same process.

FREUD AND PHILOSOPHY

It is a special point of Ricoeur's thinking that a work is not defined by or exhausted in the intention of the author. Yet this is hardly an invitation to ignore the author and impose interpretations from the outside. Freud himself sets the tone by listening to his patients and, even more than listening, hearing what is said beyond the words and manifest symbols. Ricoeur, with Heidegger, puts fundamental importance on "hearing it out" - put differently, letting it "say itself." So Freud's approach is itself a hermeneutic in the sense of seeking meaning through meaning. But we begin to see what Ricoeur means when he speaks of the autonomy of a work beyond its author's intentions when we recognize that both Marx and Nietzsche share with Freud at least a form of hermeneutic which Ricoeur characterizes as a demystifying hermeneutic. That the intention of a text does not exhaust its meaning reveals itself in several ways by what Freud shares beyond the evident differences with Marx and Nietzsche. The phenomena and experiences which the three thinkers interpreted evidently lend themselves to alternative interpretations. But also, the works themselves of these three thinkers, recognized as demystifying hermeneutics, lend themselves to - indeed engender - competing hermeneutics and a dialectic of hermeneutics through which each is enriched by fuller meaning. This fuller meaning - that is, the meaning which becomes evident in the dialectic itself - is explicitly and perhaps implicitly alien to the author's own intentions.

Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy* is a competing hermeneutic engendered by Freud's own demystifying hermeneutic. *Freud and Philosophy* is a hermeneutic of faith. How is it possible to hear what is said in the texts of Freud, recognized as a demystifying hermeneutic, and that hearing end up a communication which informs a hermeneutic of faith? The text "is par excellence the basis for communication in and through distance." The text, on a grand scale, has all the qualities of the symbol for "mediating between what is near and what is far (temporally, geographically, culturally, spiritually)" just as the symbol in psychoanalysis mediates

between the lands of the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. The text like the symbol is polysemic: in Freudian terms, multi- or overdetermined. Through symbols, Freud hears not only what is spoken by his patient but what is said unspoken; not only what is revealed, but what is hidden.

Yet Ricoeur's project is not simply a psychoanalysis of Freud through his works. "The hermeneutical task is to discern the matter of the text and not the psychology of the author." Nor is the project a psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis in that sense of finding the hidden meaning behind the manifest meaning. The task is "genuinely creative" in the sense that meaning not only behind in the sense of "anterior" is discerned, but meaning reaching out towards the future is joined. Thus, does it become possible for a hermeneutic which reduces mystification to explained necessity to engender within itself the experience of a horizon beyond explanation - an interpreted experience of the sacred.

ENERGY AND MEANING

Freud and Philosophy, published in English in 1970, originates in the Terry lectures given by Ricoeur at Yale University in 1961 and his lectures at the Sorbonne over the following years. The great opposition between explanation and understanding which preoccupied Dilthey reveals itself across the entire battlefield of Freud's works. At the beginning there is almost nothing but explanation; at the end, a centering on understanding. The terms energy and meaning do not correspond as exact parallels to explanation and understanding though it is true that Freud's work starts almost purely with an explainable energetics, the "psychical apparatus" and ends not nearly so purely with a "talking cure" through understanding. "The Project" of 1895 presents itself as an energetics without a hermeneutics. Here terms such as "constancy principle," "neurons," "Q values," "energy: bound and stored," "cathexis," and so forth indicate a model which will place itself exclusively in the domain of scientific explanation. Yet this heavily determined model itself (nearly everything potentially held together by explanation) already engenders an incipient hermeneutics. Most of the bases for what is presented as potentially quantifiable derive from qualitative clinical observations. One speaks of intensity but intensity of "idea," or of quantity, but quantity of "anxiety." The model derives from experience with neurosis which is grasped by such notions as "defense," "resistance," "repression," and "transference." The hermeneutical field expands considerably at the level of dream analysis where a complementarity between energetics and meaning becomes evident. The forces (energetics) of condensation and displacement translate into meaning just as a political force edits old meaning to new meaning by these same operations. Furthermore, these forces give a polysemic or multiplicity of meanings to dream symbols. We are here in the joint domain of domination and communication and the effects of one on the other. Indeed, it is this mixed discourse which calls for interpretation.

Though the energetic model of instinct rests at the heart of the enterprise, the grasping of this energetics requires a topographical overlay, less a model of explanation than one of location and even jurisdiction. Thus do we know the expression of the instinct through what will be called the conscious. The conscious is where we hear the manifest dream thoughts and though that is our only access (i.e., that which we can know directly), to the latent it is also presumed unreliable; the truth resting immediately unhearable in the unconscious. Hence, in a reversal of phenomenology, Freud suspends the best known - the conscious - in order to grasp the least

known, but fundamental reality, of the unconscious. This reality hierarchy is evidence that instinct dominates, as it will to the end of the Freudian work. But understanding this domination of energy over meaning permits us to recognize the sources for a continued fueling of the dialectic between the two.

For example, the topography is not only a set of localities, with one - the unconscious - having a privileged claim over the other two, these locales are themselves divided by force of legalities. "The laws of unconscious activity differ widely, from those of conscious," but give meaning to each other; indeed, give each other their *raison d'être*.

The *raison d'être* - i.e., essential meaning - of the jurisdictional differences between topographical domains is more deeply grasped through development of the Id, Ego and Superego. As the conscious is an "other" to unconscious, an "other" beyond even conscious is now implied. Other is established as the original object cathected by Id, towards which the Ego functions in terms of utility and through and in the interest of which the original energies are diverted. Yet, due to the primacy of instinct and the locality of the unconscious, "other's" status remains other in the fullest most alienated sense of the word, unknown for itself. Here, at this point in the reading of Freud we recognize in his solipsistic subject the essential problem of hermeneutics itself, that condition of distantiation. But we see also the essential difference in grounding between the Freudian subject at this point and the subject of Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Freud's subject is not in a state of belonging, either at its origins - an impersonal instinct - or in his relationship to "other" - which is always merely instrumental relative to the instinct. The social other, in fact all reality that is not explained as regressive vicissitudes of instinct, remains an impersonal other. Indeed, this Freudian subject which appears so autonomous, is recognized as a slave both to the impersonal instinct and to the impersonal external forces which require a diverting of that instinct via a threat to pleasure.

A slave, yes, reminiscent of the slave in the famous Hegelian master-slave relationship?!? Yet, what kind of kinship could there be between the slave of Freud and the slave of Hegel, when the inquiries of these two thinkers run in such opposing directions? The direction in Freud is archeological - that is, back to the origins of the instinct. The direction in Hegel is teleological - that is, out towards future meanings. Yet this opposition is an apt condition for a new dialectic between Freud and Hegel, between "arche" and "telos" - a dialectic which can only be fruitful, however, if there is a presumed ground in common. That common ground emerges in the dialectic. Through this, no longer is teleology exclusively on the side of Hegel, archeology exclusively on the side of Freud. What is explicit in Hegel's teleology is revealed as implicit in Freud's archeology. The analytic situation itself provides one poignant example at the operative level - of the struggle towards self-consciousness through the consciousness of other. While the thematized topography of psychoanalysis is solipsistic, the analytic situation is inter-subjective. Both the slaves of Hegel and Freud trade security for dependence which ultimately leads to independence.

This reference to slavery and the implication of freedom brings to the fore that demystifying theme which ties Freud to Marx and Nietzsche. For all three, consciousness is a lie and, with Spinoza, one is freed from slavery by rediscovering self within understood necessity. In Freud, the source and end of necessity is the instincts. There is an apparent contradiction between freedom arrived at through acceptance of one's instinctual limits and first, the notion of Freud's

subject as slave to these instincts and second, the notion of freedom arrived at through self-consciousness of reality gained in inter-subjective dialogue opening towards the world as future. Though an implicit teleology, supporting this latter notion of freedom is found to rest within the explicit Freudian archeology (the bases for a desire which is humanized through consciousness of other art and death) this does not imply that the hardest realities of the instincts have been surpassed. It is here at the unsurpassable level of desire that we would find an irreducible Freud, and support for Spinozian freedom. It is here that the power of hermeneutics to find fuller meaning across irreconcilables - the ability to communicate over distance - to put to its challenge. This challenge will be taken up by Ricoeur in a dialectic between psychoanalysis and phenomenology.

While relative to most scientific psychology psychoanalysis shares some things in common with phenomenology, there is one crucial point at which phenomenology and psychoanalysis appear to be irreconcilable - this is in their basis for grounding reality. Phenomenology begins and ends with the objects of consciousness. On the contrary, the conscious for psychoanalysis is always tenuous, a mere by-product of the unconscious. In Ricoeur's dialectic between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis emerges the winner. There is a reality more fundamental than consciousness and this, Ricoeur concedes, is the unsurpassable reality of the instincts. This concedes to Freud the liberation by demystification. But since it is the task of both phenomenology and hermeneutics to hear the object - be led by it - Ricoeur pursues the path of desire from its origins. If instinct is the fundamental reality, where does it lead? It leads to consciousness. The instincts in the form of desire seek expression through symbols in consciousness. Ironically, then, although Freud doesn't explicitly take consciousness seriously, those instincts which to him are unsurpassable, most certainly do. The movement of the instincts is progressive, out towards the world, both as desire for gratification but, therefore, desire to transcend the slavery of desire and death. The symbols of these mixed discourses are by this fact multi- or overdetermined. They speak to the frustration with reality and yet, also, to the possibility of transcendence through reality - not only in terms of substitute gratification but in terms of self-consciousness through the consciousness of other, including that absolute other to the life instinct: Death.

Art and the works of man, then, are like texts which gain autonomy beyond their author's intentions through this participating in the deeper human reality, a mixed discourse, a discourse of energy and meaning, one which is not exhausted in explanation nor in understanding alone.