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Meditations About the Implications of the Seventh Wittgensteinian Aphorism in the Associative Speech of the Psychoanalytical Subject: whereof one cannot speak thereof one must (Really) be silent?

Abstract: *This essay aims to reflect, specifically, about the statement “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, seventh aphorism of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, and its implications on the symbolic capacity of the speaking subject who is concerned in psychoanalytic theory. The fact of having psychism, fruit of a structured language, is the item that makes the human being unique in nature and differentiates us from other animals. What is the price we pay for not speaking about some things?*

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, Subject, Speech, Language, Freud, Wittgenstein, Lacan, Unconscious.*

Resumen: *Este ensayo pretende reflexionar, específicamente, sobre la afirmación «De lo que no se puede hablar, hay que callar», séptimo aforismo de Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus de Ludwig Wittgenstein y sus implicaciones en la capacidad simbólica del sujeto hablante a quien se refiere la teoría psicoanalítica. El hecho de tener un psiquismo, fruto de un lenguaje estructurado, es el elemento que hace al ser humano único en la naturaleza y diferencia nosotros de otros animales. ¿Pero cuál es el precio que pagamos por no hablar de algunas cosas?*

Palabras clave: *Psicoanálisis, Filosofía, Sujeto, Habla, Lenguaje, Freud, Wittgenstein, Lacan, Inconsciente.*

“L’inconscient se déploie dans les effets de langage¹”.
“L’analyse a pour but l’avènement d’une parole vraie²”.

Jacques Lacan

Sigmund Freud³ revolutionized the way of understanding the human psyche and left his legacy: the psychoanalysis as we know. Subsequently, the post-Freudians would leave their own collaboration. In the course of his lifetime, Freud worked with many people, as such: Josef Breuer, in the early days of experimentation, Wilhelm Fliess, in extensive correspondence by letter mail, Carl Gustav Jung, considered by Freud as his “heir”, Anna Freud, his daughter, Sandor Ferenczi, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Ernest Jones, Stefan Zweig, Marie Bonaparte and others (Roudinesco e Plon, 1998, 272). As a clinical physician and neurologist by formation, he dealt especially with wealthy women of Vienna high society, “[...] qualified as ‘nervous patients’ and suffering hysterical disorders” (Roudinesco e Plon, 1998, 274).

Freud himself (1996f) will define psychoanalysis as:

(1) a procedure for the investigation of mental processes that are almost inaccessible by any other means, (2) a method (based on this research) for the treatment of neurotic



disorders and (3) a collection of psychological information obtained along these lines, and which gradually accumulates into a new scientific discipline. (287)

From this tripartition of psychoanalysis as a procedure, a method of treatment and a theory, Dunker (2011) defines this method as being a science about the *subject*. In response to the argument raised by methodologists, he points out that the object that psychoanalysis has at its summit is the subject and it is understood that this subject who psychoanalysis deals with, is not born ready, but gradually constituted through the first relations with its first caregivers. When this subject is observed, he is seen as an individual inserted in a culture, which has manifestations and in which the belonging members occupy certain positions.

Psychoanalysis is a philosophical rupture in determining that the process of psychoanalytic investigation is a process that starts from the effects, it determines a philosophical rupture as philosophy speaks of the production of knowledge. Therefore, psychoanalysis may be one of the pilot sciences for the redefinition of philosophy. If I start from the effect and go through rebuilding operations, then I interpret the cause. I have the manifest dream, the free association determined technically and then, I make the construction of operators and say, displacement and condensation, put on the scene, symbolization. With this I construct, I interpret the existence of a force capable of acting without showing itself. A force that comes from a place different from where the fact happens, but that has the capacity to produce it. *I construct, interpret a force I call unconscious desire.* (Menassa, 2007, 41)

It is said that Freud, along with Nicolaus Copernicus and Charles Darwin; the first with the heliocentric theory, stating that the earth was not the center of the universe and the second affirming that the human being was not conceived as said by creationism, gave the third the narcissistic wound of mankind, saying that our process of free will is conditioned by an

instance that we do not know and do not master: *the unconscious*.

Such postulation is fundamental for a proper understanding of the dynamics of Freudian presuppositions. The notion of the unconscious already existed, in a disconnected and diffused way, prior to the invention of psychoanalysis; especially in poetry, literature and philosophy. It should be noted, however, that the psychoanalytic definition of this concept is not to be confused with the “non-conscious” of modern cognitive psychology, nor with the vague notions of the “subconscious” from popular imagination; nor should it be confused with Jung’s archetypal collective unconscious in analytic psychology.

As preliminary considerations, some points indicated by Freud (see 1923b, 239, cited by Frangiotti, 2003) are pertinent to the relations between psychoanalysis and philosophy and show their relations of difficulty or cooperation:

By pointing to the conceptual difficulties of the central principles and assumptions of psychoanalysis as well as the internal coherence of Freudian metapsychology, philosophers would be neglecting an essential aspect of psychoanalysis, namely, clinical experience that they do not possess. In this sense, *they cannot prove the effectiveness of Freudian theses in practice*; therefore, they must either stay away from psychoanalysis, or approach it as apprentices and not as judges (...) the coherence of Freudian theory takes place in the session of analysis and not in the reflection of the philosopher. Freud himself points out that, because they [the philosophers] do not have the experience of clinical phenomena, philosophy is incapable of solving problems such as dreams and hypnosis, and thus erroneously concludes that the hypothesis of the unconscious is absurd and easily refuted through logical rules. (60)

With the twentieth-century work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud revolutionized the basis of the conception of the unconscious by presenting it as a psychic structure that completely escapes conscious access and whose processes govern the life of the subject. This structure,

guided by the pleasure principle, is characterized by not being subject to time and objective rationality, by being neither linear nor moral, by not giving to the contradiction and, perhaps, mainly, by not being object of physical and anatomical location. It is in this work, concluded in 1899 and published in 1900 to mark the new millennium, that Freud conceptualizes the unconscious and establishes a new field of knowledge different from those produced up to that time and that continues to produce transformations in the subjects that allow themselves to be crossed by this speech (the psychoanalytical speech, that is).

Following the line of Karl Marx's reasoning that work produces the worker, it can be said that Freud was not "the father of Psychoanalysis," but its first child. In German, the title of this work is *Die Traumdeutung*, word composed by *Traum*, translated to English as dream, and *Deutung*, noun derived from the verb *deuten* which refers to deciphering, seeking an enigmatic meaning, unveiling a hidden meaning.

According to Frangiotti (2003, 65) "[...] the superiority of psychoanalysis to traditional psychologies comes from the hypothesis of the unconscious, which is established, in turn, from observations of clinical data".

The well-known first Freudian topic, also known as topographic theory, states that the psychic apparatus is structured in three instances, each with a specific function, being: the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. Considering these three propositions, psychoanalysis deals, in a significant way, with the latter. According to Freud, the unconscious is the gateway of the psychic apparatus, and also its most primitive and archaic part. Their laws are their own and they completely escape the understanding of the objective world rationality. Eventually, this mysterious instance is revealed through dreams, faulty acts and wits.⁴

Freud states that the dream processes are subject to condensations and displacements, and are capable of revealing contents related to the intrapsychic experience of individuals. For analyzing its contents, after some experiments with methods in force at the time, Freud proposes the technique of free association; where the patient speaks lying on a divan, uncensored, whatever

comes to mind. He also realizes that the dream has meaning and that its sense is relative and destined to the fulfillment of some desires. With the perception of the dream meanings and the proposition of his listening through speech, he concludes that the psychic apparatus is symbolic, operates through language, is a constituent of the human being and, although not physical, is capable of producing effects on the body, as we can see in the symptoms.

It is pertinent to recapitulate at this point that Freud mentions the word instinct (*Instinkt* in German) to designate more explicit, fixed and hereditary patterns of animal behavior, typical of each species. He also uses the word pulsion⁵ (*Trieb* in German) in order to refer to something more comprehensive and inherent, coming from an innate and profound instance and differentiating them: pulsion is the force that comes from the body and acts on the core.

Badinter (1980) points out that instinct is the set of innate characteristics, belonging to a set of animals of the same species and variable among the others. Therefore, an instinct would be common to a whole species, and there is no possibility of one member manifesting some effect of this instinct and not others. Any attempts to justify or equate the behavior of human beings (as subjects, like the psychoanalysis conceives) with the behavior of irrational animals, makes the understanding of this concept erroneous.

Within the psychoanalytic understanding, the human subject is not endowed with instinct, because the exit from the condition of animalism and barbarism is marked by the acquisition of language and this, in turn, institutes the entrance of the human being in the civilizing process. Thus, the Freudian pulsion can be understood as a libidinal impulse that guides the behavior of the human being. Being driven by unconscious forces, they are alienated of decision processes; it is a concept in the borders of the psychic and the somatic.

The post-freudian French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan⁶ would later revise this (and many others) concept of the unconscious by affirming that it is constituted of language and constituted by this language. In addition, he said that psychoanalysis is also an ethic. Lacan would seek in

Lévi-Strauss, Jakobson and Saussure the bases for his understanding of psychoanalysis, with the main focus on the importance of linguistics as constitutional. The speech is a properly human attribute, it is what sets us apart from other animals. According to Menassa (2007), “[...] just as in 1900 there is a definitive separation between the unconscious and the conscience; in 1906/7, linguistics produces a definitive separation between the *word* and the *thing* (39).

Entering the field of language, we see the Austrian Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century and one of those responsible for the linguistic turn of philosophy, putting the theme of language at the heart of philosophical reflections. In the field of analytical philosophy and philosophy of language, he is known for having criticisms and contributions to psychoanalysis, as well as being contemporary with Freud and a reader of him. Like Socrates, and a few others, Wittgenstein was a philosopher who sought to live in consistency with the principles he believed in philosophically. Unlike Freud, he came from a wealthy family and refused to use that fortune in order to perform simpler tasks in his life.

His work is commonly divided into two parts: the first Wittgenstein, composed by the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and the second Wittgenstein, with the work called *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which was published posthumously. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein structures his work in order to articulate two spheres: “[...] the essential structure of the world and the essential structure of language. All arguments revolve around the establishment of these structures” (Carmo, 2009, 12), and he also aims to identify the boundaries between language and reality, along with defining the limits of science. For Wittgenstein, in the 4.116 aphorism, whatever “can be thought at all can be thought clearly. All that can be said can be said clearly” (Wittgenstein, 1921, 77).

There is a distinction in the philosophy of mind between the point of view of the third person (the scientist who makes images of the brain, describes it and explains them) and the subject’s view of the first person (he who experiences

and describes his experiences). This difference depends on a distinctiveness between languages and technical terms. Furthermore, Wittgenstein showed that it is difficult in any context to claim that we linguistically refer to mental events (states or mental processes) or to brain states or processes. Both linguistic attempts would be a kind of semantic illusion.

At this point, psychoanalysis can undraw the curtain to the symbolic events’ argument. Stein (2015) emphasizes:

[...] it is obvious that access to one’s own perceptions or sensations is still exclusively in the first person. [...] it is also obvious that the search for the causal network that leads from objects to their perception does not dispense with the investigation of what we call “representation,” a concept still extremely controversial both in philosophy and in neuroscience. And so, methods and tests have to take into account the first-person account of representational “subjective” experiences. [...] one of the main questions of the philosophy of mind are the other minds. The problem is to question whether it is possible to achieve a reliable state of knowledge about what other people feel, think, and want. (159-167)

According to Carmo (2009):

[...] In the course of his argument about the linkage of these structures (*the essential structure of the world and the essential structure of language*) Wittgenstein intends to solve all philosophical problems, showing that they are really pseudoproblems and that, as such, they do not deserve attention which is customary for them. The task does not seem easy since there are several philosophical problems and for a long time even the most audacious minds have failed to solve even a third of them. (12)

As described by Frangiotti (2003):

The central idea of Wittgenstein’s critique of psychoanalysis is the attempt to challenge Freud’s idea of the supposed scientific character of his deep psychology.

In different ways, Wittgenstein seeks to examine psychoanalytic explanations by comparing them with those of science. Thus, it raises *three crucial problems* that call into question the coherence and validity of Freud's general strategy. First, the mythological-and therefore non-scientific-character of psychoanalytic explanations. Second, the claim that the validity of the analyst's explanations ultimately depends on the consent of the patient, which makes it incompatible with the supposed objectivity of scientific approaches. And third, the Freudian confusion between reasons and causes or between explanations based on causal motives and explanations. (60)

It is important to recapitulate at this point, that this essay aims only at an analysis of the statement of the seventh aphorism of the *Tractatus*, in the light of aspects of psychoanalytic theory. Of the three Wittgenstein's criticisms, raised by Frangiotti (2003), we will focus our attention only on the last statement. The first two, although intrinsically linked to the third, can be worked independently and will receive my proper attention in separate works. So, at this point, I do lay the foundations for the probable continuation of this theme.

Among other arguments, Wittgenstein criticizes psychoanalysis, based on his reading of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and based on the weak argument that psychoanalytic interpretations are not true interpretations, but creations approximate to aesthetic interpretations. Would this make psychoanalysis less credible or less scientific, (as initially proposed by Freud with his ambition of a *Naturwissenschaft*⁷), by operating through explanations that are not meant to be explanatory?

No, it wouldn't. This was an inaccurate reading of the psychoanalytic method, which goes back to the quarrel of methods that occurred in Germany in the twentieth century. Wittgenstein mistakenly understands that in psychoanalysis, an interpretation is an explanation, which is not true. The analyst does not provide logical and clear explanations aiming that the analyzed relearns aspects about himself. The analyst also does not tell the patient what is 'inside' his mind

without his knowing; this is not how the subject transforms and repositions himself in his life and in his history.

As said before in this text, the process of language is a fundamental factor for our development and our organization as human beings endowed with speech and symbolic language, which differentiates us from other animals. Our speech structures our unconscious. This unconscious is not anatomically located and is not observable through measuring instruments; is a *concept*.

[...] Because they do not have a theoretical framework from which to conceive an *unconscious behind consciousness* or because they consider this absurd idea, the psychologies of consciousness are limited to describing the psychic phenomena as they are presented to us, without ever being able to explain the interruptions of conscious processes. They, in fact, do not succeed "in the sense of revealing what is unconscious to the patient. Rather, [they make this patient] ... incapable of overcoming their deepest resistances, and, in more serious cases, they invariably fail. (Freud 1912, page 384, cited by Frangiotti, 2003, 65)

Returning to the focus of this work: *if the unconscious is structured as a language, as Lacan points out, and this unconscious is not subject to the same rules which govern the objective reality of time and space, as Freud points out, is it then subject to the same methods of uniform inquiry and research as the positivist sciences propose? Furthermore, is the unconscious consequently implied in the same linearity of objective discourse, and therefore, if the speech is one of the ways to access this unconscious, should we shut out something we suppose we do not know, or should we talk about this unknown even without knowing?*

The psychoanalysis does not work by inferring pre-made explanations about causes, motives, or reasons for people's behavior. In the psychoanalytic investigation, no behavior, fact or dreams can be observed from the direct observation of these phenomena, but from the free associations of the patient; it is about what a person

talks about what he does, how he stands, how he justifies himself in an extensive and complex chain of connections that each subject is propitiating to themselves. Such a *modus operandi* described above refers to what we conceive as contemporary psychology, not as psychoanalysis. The latter is not aimed at psychoeducation and does not have professorial characteristics.

Therefore, being the subject of which psychoanalysis occupies a speaking subject and being through this speech it is possible to reveal aspects of the unconscious of each subject, *it is necessary to speak even about what is not known, according to the principle of free association, where the patient speaks, lying on a couch and uncensored, whatever comes to mind.*

Freud first tried to appease pain and mitigate the psychological suffering of his patients by working with the methods available at the time, some considered to be *avant-garde* and others which were already in obscurity, always observing and recording the effectiveness (or not) of these treatment methods. Moura (2003) notes that:

In 1896, in the case of Anna O., the germ of the psychoanalytic method arose when the suggestive treatment for the cathartic method occurred. In the first type of treatment, the patient was hypnotized and the hypnotist influenced her through speech, intending to modify the affective state of the patient, without investigating what would be producing the pathogenic effect. Distinctively, the cathartic method was the procedure in which the hypnotist intended for the patient to eliminate his pathogenic affective states through the ab-reaction, that is, the hypnotist searched, through questions, the traumatic element in the memory of the patient, so that, through speech, could be able to effect the discharge of the affection retained by the traumatic representation. (Moura, 2003, 14)

Working together with Breuer, Freud and the first progressively abandon hypnosis by the cathartic method and institute the free association: at last comes the psychoanalysis. In 1893-1895, they published together the book *Studies*

on hysteria containing clinical reports of the two colleagues (Roudinesco e Plon, 1997, 275).

The unique experience of the psychoanalytic clinic shows that words leave the body lighter. This last sentence becomes even more pressing when we examine cases of hysterical and psychosomatic conversion.

In the case of psychosomatic illness, an organic commitment occurs, whereas the biological body is the scene of the original occurrences in the psychism, or in the absence of them. In these psychosomatic cases, there is a body that is not invested with words; an incomplete operation is given.

When describing the characteristics of the psychosomatic diseases, we perceive fragile subjects, who present the most diverse symptoms that affect and threaten their physical integrity: vascular disorders, ulcerative retrocolitis, alopecia, psoriasis and high blood pressure, just to name a few. These symptoms are forms of a psiquism which does not triumph in elaborating crises and causes the organism to turn some mechanisms against itself, including mechanisms dedicated to mediating the relations of the organism with the outside world. For purposes of illustration, a psychoanalyst may claim that a psychosomatic patient does not cry, but is afflicted with an asthma attack; in the same line of reasoning, another patient does not express his anger, but becomes a hypertensive and that a gastric ulcer patient prefers the burning wound to the narcissistic wound of the castration, the cut.

They do not trace the path of anguish to neurosis, from anguish to annihilation, to death.

Psychoanalysis works so that the subject is able to enclose this moment from others, modifying their 'impression' that this state is fulminant to the subject. The phrases spoken by these patients demonstrate this, because they are loose phrases that do not bind to anything; they express in themselves the moment on which the subject transits and the opening generated by these phrases, intertwined with others, directing the treatment to the cure. In this sense, the same operant forces that generate the disease, are those that can operate the cure.

A patient's speech reveals a double meaning: a manifest, concrete and sometimes prone

to objective sense and a latent sense, which is subtle and subjective. The fluctuating attention to the patient's free association, constitutes the meanderings of the psychoanalytic method. *The unconscious and the drives have their expression in the body as scenery*. In the neurotic, the disease is a kind of toll paid for feeling that we escape law enforcement.

In cases of hysterical conversion (or hysteria), there is an attempt to symbolize the imaginary body. There is a symbolic memory that 'forgot' its function and memory; it is a mnemonic symbol. It is said that this body in question is imaginary because it represents a fragmented body, corresponding to the first image of the body that we had before the formation of the I, the body of the polymorphous perverse baby, as referred by Freud.

Freud (1919, 327; 1914a, 91; and 1914b, 165 cited by Frangiotti, 2003, 61) points out critically that:

The abyss that seems to separate philosophy from psychoanalysis increases when we take into account that Freud comes to compare philosophers with paranoids - by focusing their reflections on self-observation and for producing illusions -and with the schizophrenics- for resorting to verbal representations and for their own realities by proposing hermetic and self-sufficient speculative systems.

In all cases, the psychoanalytic experience shows empirically that associating freely, that is, to speak even about things that are not known, has effects that operate the relief and even the cure of psychological issues, culminating in well-being.

Psychoanalysis takes the mythical perspective to explain what is common to all subjects: the prohibition of incest, universal law that separates the "order of culture" from that which is the "order of nature". This law, when instituted in each subject, produces access to the register of the symbolic, that is, it constitutes the talking subject, the subject of the unconscious: the barred subject, through the operation of the paternal metaphor and its correlative mechanism, the original repression.

In the logical time of the unconscious, a transformed idea can change the course of an illness, and even of life. Since speech is such an efficient mechanism and so accessible and free to all, should we really not use it? Should we really shut up in the face of our suffering, having the ability to speak about what afflicts us? *It is precisely about what we do not know, that we should speak!*

The fact of having psychism, fruit of a structured language, is the element that makes the human being unique in nature and differentiates it from other animals. Psychoanalysis proposes a rupture to the traditional model of thought, linear and rational, by postulating that the unconscious is an instance in all of us and that it is structured as language, being the fruit of a construction work. All our civilizing process, as social organization and culture, were impacted by the effects of speech and suffered its repercussions. In everyday clinical practice, we observe in many of our patients that various illnesses come from non-symbolization and from the "lack" of words to define our malaise. In addition, the artistic expressions, in their varied forms, have their function in acting where, eventually, the word does not find expression; this because words are limited, as same as we are. The psychoanalytic investigation works with the patient's speech; how he expresses himself, how he describes himself and how he stands. In view of the above expressed, should we really shut up before what we do not know or what we suppose we do not know?

Given the already marked sickness, due to the constrictions of culture, should we be silent about what we are not sure? What is the price that we pay for non-speak about some things?

Notes

1. "The unconscious unfolds in language effects", quoted by Lacan, in French.
2. "The goal of the analysis is the advent of a true word", quoted by Lacan, in French.
3. Originally registered Scholomo Sigismund Freud, born in Freiberg, Moravia (present-day

Czech Republic), in May 6 1856. Son of Amalia and Jacob Freud.

4. More properly referred as “chistes”, as said in Portuguese and Spanish.
5. Or “drive” as some translations.
6. Registered as Jacques Marie Émile Lacan, was born in 13 April 1901, in Paris.
7. In German: Natural science based on empirical evidence from observation and experimentation.

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