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The journal of *Language and Psychoanalysis* is a fully peer reviewed online journal that publishes twice a year. It is the only interdisciplinary journal with a strong focus on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of language and psychoanalysis. The journal is also inclusive and not narrowly confined to the Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

We welcome a wide range of original contributions that further the understanding of the interaction between Linguistic Analysis and Theory & Psychoanalytic Theories and Techniques. Any relevant manuscripts with an emphasis on language and psychoanalysis will be considered, including papers on methodology, theory, philosophy, child development, psychopathology, psychotherapy, embodied cognition, cognitive science, applied dynamical system theory, consciousness studies, cross-cultural research, and case studies. The journal also publishes short research reports, book reviews, interviews, obituaries, and readers' comments.

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All manuscripts will be peer reviewed by the editors, a member of the editorial advisory board, or another qualified person appointed by the editors.

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- Authors need to confirm with a cover letter that the manuscript has not been published previously and is not being submitted currently to another journal.
- Manuscripts are only published in the English language.

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- Submissions for main articles should be approximately 3,000-10,000 words in length and include an abstract of about 200 words and up to seven keywords.
- Short research reports, book reviews, and readers' comments should be approximately 500-2,500 words in length.
- Interviews and obituaries should not exceed 4,000 words in length.

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- Manuscripts should be double-spaced, in Times 12-point font, and in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.
- Manuscripts should follow the style conventions as outlined by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition.

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Core Conflictual Relationship: Text Mining to Discover What and When

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Abstract

Following detailed presentation of the Core Conflictual Relationship Theme (CCRT), there is the objective of relevant methods for what has been described as verbalization and visualization of data. Such is also termed data mining and text mining, and knowledge discovery in data. The Correspondence Analysis methodology, also termed Geometric Data Analysis, is shown in a case study to be comprehensive and revealing. Quite innovative here is how the analysis process is structured. For both illustrative and revealing aspects of the case study here, relatively extensive dream reports are used. The dream reports are from an open source repository of dream reports, and the current study proposes a possible framework for the analysis of dream report narratives, and further, how such an analysis could be relevant within the psychotherapeutic context. This Geometric Data Analysis here confirms the validity of CCRT method.

Introduction

The CCRT method, i.e., the Core Conflictual Relationship Theme method, is based on the text analysis of the single narratives coming from an analytical setting. The Core Conflictual Relationship Theme is quite essential in psychotherapy. There are individual's relationships with his or her parents, and with other established personages, all of these relationships can and will be carried over into other relationships and also into other behavioural patterns. In Aylward (2012), terrible social violence is described and related to the perpetrator's youth and other relations and behaviours arising from that. Murtagh and Iurato (2016) also relate behaviours, self-development and socialization, with therapy. The related themes involved in these interpersonal relationships have been ascertained to be almost universal and commonly shared among all humans, and this is conferring objectivity to the attempts to identify them for instance either qualitatively via CCRT method and quantitatively via Geometric Data Analysis, as just we have done in this work. A similar methodology has been already performed in Murtagh and Iurato (2017).

A lot of what we are dealing with in this work is the quantitative (by Geometric Data Analysis) as well as qualitative (by CCRT approach) analytical methods. In the next section there is a description of CCRT and how it may quantify, using Geometric Data Analysis, various aspects of psychotherapy processes and procedures. In the section entitled '*Implementation and Objectives*', there is outlining of the textual, hence

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descriptive, data used in this work. The analysis work starts in the section entitled '*Analytical Focus on Selected Names*', with dream reports of views and relationships with parents, children, friends, brothers, and a person who had been a husband and after divorce, he died. That is general analytical processing. In the sections entitled '*Associating with a Named Individual*', and '*Study of Mother*', there is a further mapping out of emotional relationships, described in the dream reports.

This approach enables a transposition of the concept of *transference*, that is, one of the chief notions of Freudian psychoanalysis, from the level of understanding, i.e., the epistemological key of human sciences methodology, to the level of explaining, i.e., the epistemological key of natural sciences. This can get the epistemological transformation of a concept of humanities into a concept of natural sciences, as it becomes liable to be measurable and assessable according to the usual methodology of the latter disciplines. Expressed alternatively, we relate both qualitative and quantitative analysis by integrating both Correspondence Analysis and CCRT method.

Core Conflictual Relationship Theme, and Data Mining Analysis

The CCRT method is based on the assumption that transference patterns are structurally rooted in every human being, moulded in infancy either by primary identifications with caregivers (usually, parents) and by innate factors, a pattern which is generally deemed as almost persistent as such in time, along the whole life's course of every human being, from which alternativeness (or otherness), i.e., the primary sense of the other, which goes beyond one's own individuality and self-love, arises, as well as almost the entire personality (Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990, p. 18).

The CCRT method basically springs out from the observation of the recurrence of three main *leitmotifs* or themes during each analytical setting: what the patient wishes from others, how other persons accordingly react, and how the patient replies to these latter reactions. Therefore, Lester Luborsky (1920-2009), in the 1970s, identified the three main categories corresponding to these three recurrent themes, that is to say: the intentions, needs and desires toward another person, the corresponding responses of the other person, the consequent answers of the own Self. The final CCRT is to be given by the suitable combination of the most pervasive components present (and identified by means of Geometric Data Analysis) in each of these categories, retrieved from the various stories stemming from analytical setting.

The attention directed at these three main recurrent themes, is then supported by the previous psychoanalytic researches and studies which have shown that, in almost every human being, the fantasies are regrouped around some chief basic desires and the related intrapsychic conflicts. These fantasies take place early, since childhood, with their associated themes remaining the same for the whole life cycle, at most changing only their scene or the personages therein involved, just like in the CCRT (Luborsky, 1984; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990).

Resulting from all at issue here, there is the assumption that there exist deep and rooted unconscious fantasies which are almost universal and commonly shared by all human beings, outcomes of ancestral models of relationships deeply ingrained into human psyche which become active when one encounters the other. See above all, Laplanche (1985), by Jean Laplanche (1924-2012, associate of Jacques Lacan), who in

an interview (Laplanche, 1999, p. 36) states this: “primary symbolic identification, is not ‘I identify myself’ but an identification by the other. The other identifies me”. Already in his early works, from 1912 Freud anticipated that recurrent thematic units were identified in the transference settings, made by dominant needs into reciprocal relationships established during childhood, along which these are taking, or not, a conflictual nature, and they are destined to be repeated again, during the next, whole life course, characterizing the related psychic development.

Luborsky considers a comprehensive set of other psychological studies which confirm, by analogy, his model, which historically sprung out from various, previous attempts to measure transference. From these, Luborsky and co-workers noted the occurrence of certain pervasive or recurrent themes during the analytical setting and related therefore with interactions between Self/Other. For these reasons, the method was named Core Conflictual Relationship Theme, as it has to do with central (i.e., Core) recurrent themes emerging from the various psychodynamic conflicts (i.e., Conflictual) established by the possible relations (i.e., Relationship) between the Self (patient in psychotherapy) and the Others (analyst, as well as other persons). Continuing from the CCRT method, an operative evaluation of transference phenomena has been then pursued (Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990).

From the operational stance, the CCRT method starts with the identification of narrative units, said to be *relational episodes* (expressed as, RE), in which the patient is particularly involved in relationships with others (analyst, parents, friends, etc.) in a typical and primary manner, until putting into action the episode itself during the psychotherapy being undertaken. The RE should be described in a complete manner, above all in respect to the various situations related to the relations involved in such an RE. Once an RE has been identified, the next step is to identify, in a given RE, the various *thought units* composing such an RE, that is, the principal propositions present therein, hence the analyst proceeds with the identification of the major components of an RE, that is: wishes, desires, needs and intentions (W); responses of the others (RO); responses of the Self (RS), oneself. Afterwards, one proceeds to identify the various (implicit or explicit) meanings of the thought units, as, for example, the possible affective states involved there, as well as to classify all the possible responses of either the others (RO) and oneself (RS), classifying them as positive or negative, attended (i.e., not realized) or actuated (i.e., realized). Each of these items is then classified with a related score assigned by the examiner (supporting the therapist) who then should identify too the related recurrence (Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990).

What is important in the compilation of CCRT, is the identification of the components W, RO and RS in each RE, to count these, to classify these as ‘positive or negative’ for RO and RS, as well as to classify RO as ‘expressed in action or simply attended’. Hence, the examiner goes on to assign, to each component, a score in dependence on the frequency of its occurrence, in such a manner that, after this, one is able to describe what type of components (usually, of W type, but not limited only to this) are more frequent than others in the whole set of RE, with the principal aim to identify the final CCRT around which the main psychodynamic conflicts take place. Therefore, the final CCRT is provided by the most frequent themes of the type W, RO and RS as detected into the whole series of RE. As regards, then, W type themes, these should be previously determined in dependence on their degree of inference, which may be explicit (We) or more or less implicit (Wi), the latter being more frequent than the

former, hence much more important from a psychoanalytic standpoint for the latent meanings brought by them. For this, the examiner should identify as many as possible W type items, in that they are (as unsatisfied) the main centres around which revolve psychic conflicts. Much easier is the identification of RO and RS types, as they are usually expressed directly and are consequence of desires in that they are closely related to the satisfaction or not of desires and needs, or rather to their alleged satisfaction (whence, their classification as positive or negative). Finally, the themes of the components W, RO and RS are also classified in dependence on their intensity (Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990).

The pivotal linking point between CCRT method and Freudian transference is just the parallel that should hold respectively between, on the one hand, the conflictual pair desires/needs/intentions (W) versus responses (RO/RS) and, on the other hand, the conflictual (Freudian) pair Es' pushes (impulses/drives/desires) versus Ego's responses (for example, as outcomes of the defence's mechanisms), and this congruence should need a validation on the basis of the assessment of CCRT method by therapeutic outcomes coming just from the clinical applications of CCRT method, which has shown that the components W, RO/RS have a high frequency of association and that such association has just a conflictual nature. So, having seen the high degree of objectivity of CCRT method, from this last result should follow that also Freudian transference should have or gain the same degree of objectivity if one were able to show the subsistence of the above crucial congruence between Freudian model of transference and CCRT method. The main aim of this article is how data mining analysis, such as the most coherent geometric data analysis and semantic mapping provided by Correspondence Analysis might bring aid or shed light to solve this last question or, at least, make more explicit such a fundamental link between Freudian transference model and CCRT method (Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1990).

Our Implementation and Objectives

The core analytical method used here is Correspondence Analysis, that is well expressed as Geometric Data Analysis (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2004). Our data to be analyzed can encompass qualitative, i.e., categorical, attributes as well as quantitative, and maps the data into a factor space that can be referred to as a latent semantic space. From display of data relationships, possibly proceeding to hierarchically cluster the data, and other interpretative tasks, our data analysis can be considered as inductive reasoning (Murtagh, 2017). The factor space can be generated from selected active variables, and then other variables are mapped into the factor space, where the latter are termed supplementary variables, and, in practical settings, the latter might well be contextual variables.

On account of the private or confidential nature of psychotherapy sessions, here we use the following data to explore the analytical processing and the potential for obtaining outcomes that will be relevant and important for the objectives described in the previous section (intentions, needs and desires towards another person, with the consequences and related responses). Used are much more data comprising dream reports where previous analysis carried out was in regard to individual relationships, Murtagh (2014a, 2014b). This data from Barbara (mostly written as Barb) Sanders is from DreamBank (2004), see also Domhoff (2003, 2006). Related analysis work on this textual expressing of dreams by this individual, Barb Sanders, is extensively covered in much of Domhoff (2003) and, in particular, in chapter 5. In chapter 4 (p.

99), the frequency of occurrence of naming pet animals leads to Barb Sanders being a “cat lover” rather than a “dog lover”.

A point about our Correspondence Analysis methodology is that semantic similarity or identity is very supported through such terms being semantically mapped close to each other, or even potentially, superimposed in the factor space mapping. In Domhoff (2003), there is the noting that a cat lover may be using these terms: “cat”, “kitten”, “kitty”, “kittie”, “feline”; and a dog lover uses these terms: “dog”, “doggy”, “doggie”, “puppy”, “puppies”, “canine”. Opposite to this semantic commonality is supporting disambiguation, i.e., that identical or very similar spelling could be the case for quite distinct words, so their semantic mapping must have them distinct in the factor space. In Murtagh (2015) it is shown how misspellings are likely to be closely related in their locations in the factor space, and also singulars and plurals of words. The reason why lemmatization is not applied here (as it often is in the textual analytical processing, such as having the singular and plural of a noun being the one word, and such as having different “has”, “will”, etc., or “I”, “you”, “we”, “they” verbal expressions all being the basic form of the verb) is that it may be the case that variations in such grammar can be revealing in its distinctiveness.

In Domhoff (2006, p. 1) there is the following description “Dreams are dramatizations, or enactments, if you will, or our thoughts”. Another quotation (p. 2) is: “She had several boyfriends after her divorce and never remarried”. Born in the 1940s, she “did not start a dream journal until a few years after her divorce”. There is description of the great importance for her of her mother, the importance also of her father, and how her “middle daughter”, at 4.5 years of age, reacted to her divorce; then, “By contrast, Sanders dreams only half as often as her oldest and youngest daughters, who adjusted to the divorce better”; and there is description of the brother closest in age to her, and friends. Close friends include Ginny and Lucy. Discussion includes brother, Dwight, friend, Darryl.

In Domhoff and Schneider (2008), reference is made to the 22,000 dream reports available at DreamBank.net, of which 16,000 are in English. Characters in dreams are noted as being described by power laws (i.e., exponential distributions, and what is referred to as Zipf’s law in information retrieval). Figure 1 relates to Barb Sanders. In analysis, used here are dream reports with the highest rank, in the dream contents, relating to the mother, then the father, then the oldest daughter, and next the following: middle daughter, youngest daughter, favourite brother, friend Ginny and friend Lucy. There is further discussion of religion, and sexual activity in dreams. A great deal more discussion is in regard to the substance and consistency of dreams. Also discussed are expressions of emotion from: “anger, apprehension, sadness, confusion, and happiness”. Reference is also made (Domhoff & Schneider, 2008, p. 1244) to the appearance of these expressions in dream reports: “my dad” and “my mom”. For Barb Sanders there is this (p. 1245): “Sander’s rather perfunctory conversion to the Episcopal church when she married her husband, many years before she began to write down her dreams”. It is stated in their conclusion that, for quantitative analysis, 125 or more dream reports are usually necessary.

Our objective is to map out what can be of central analytical importance using the Barbara Sanders dream reports. Note that the name Barb is more the case in the references (and in some of the dream texts, there is the self-reference by this individual

that just uses the letter, B). From DreamBank (2004), dream reports were obtained. In all there are 3116 dream reports available, from the years 1960 to 1997. Using a listing from DreamBank (2004) entitled “*The ‘Cast of Characters’ in the Barb Sanders Dream Series*”, that listed 125 names, each with their gender and their ‘*Relationship to Barb Sanders*’, the following names were selected here: Darryl, boyfriend; Derek, male friend; Dovre, daughter (oldest); Dwight, brother; Lucy, female friend; my father, father; my mother, mother; Paulina, daughter (youngest); Ellie, daughter (middle); Ginny, female friend (married to Ernie); Howard, ex-husband; Jake, brother. Our motivation for this selection was to have mother and father, ex-husband, all daughters (she had no sons); her brothers (her one sister was not included here), two friends (quite a few others not included), and a boyfriend (and eight others not included here). The ex-husband, Howard, died in 1997.

Taken for this analysis from the 1106 dream reports relating to the above listed names, were 421 of these. The 421 dream reports here are from index number 4, from 2 December 1960 to index number 1264, from 17 February 1989. Each dream report varies from a few words to about 900 words. In total, the 421 dream reports, in succession between 2 December 1960 to 17 February 1989 have 3789 words. Our aim here is to have a general approach for this analysis, and this can always be complemented with specific and derived procedures, such as using statistical modelling or machine learning, if tasks such as hypothesis testing or specific predictions are wanted. In the referenced Barb Sanders, ‘*Dreams and Waking Life: Interview Information ...*’, much information is included about her personal life and relations.

Analytical Focus on Selected Names

The data consists of frequency of occurrence values, encompassing presence or absence where the latter have frequency of occurrence values of 1 or 0. For the 421 dream reports, and the initial word corpus of 6376 words, we require each word to be used at least five times. That is so as to exclude exceptionally used words from consideration, and rather to have a requirement for some degree of commonality of word use. These result in a word corpus of 1568 words, for the 421 dream reports. The crossing (i.e., a frequency of occurrence matrix, including especially presence and absence values), of 421 dream reports by 1568 words, this has 37344 non-zero (i.e., non-absent) values, which is 5.66% of all values. Some of the dream reports thereby have their few words deleted, sixteen dream reports, so therefore our analysis on dream reports of sufficient length is to be on 405 dream reports, with frequencies of occurrence for the 1568 word set. From this word set, the selected names are to be main focus: mother, father, Ellie, Howard, Dwight, Paulina, Ginny, Dovre, Darryl, Lucy, Jake.

For the orientation of the analysis, or what we might term the focus of the analysis, these names are selected from the set of words. They constitute the active variables (i.e., selected words, cf. the brief description at the beginning of section 3), in the semantic mapping. Figure 1 displays the principal factor plane. The eigenvalues that express inertia of the factors, in percentage terms are: 11.8, 11.6, 11.3, 11.0, 10.7, 9.8, 9.6, 8.6, 8.1 and 7.7. In order to look further at the words expressing the dream content, just the dots represent the word locations in the principal factor plane, displayed in Figure 2. The changes over time are also to be looked at further, at the end of section 6 below, and these can also be simply displayed as in Figure 3. Here, as

follows, are the contributions by the selected names to inertia of the five factors. It is seen that factor 1 is most essentially relating to ex-husband Howard, and friends Ginny and Lucy. Factor 2 is most essentially relating to Ginny and Lucy. Factor 3 is most essentially relating to friend Ginny, daughter Ellie and ex-husband Howard. Factor 4 is essentially relating to daughters Dovre and Ellie, boyfriend Darryl and father. Finally here, as follows, factor 5 is essentially relating to Darryl and father.

Contributions of the selected names to the five factors:

	Dim 1	Dim 2	Dim 3	Dim 4	Dim 5
mother	0.4	0.3	1.7	7.0	2.7
father	0.5	0.1	1.8	16.2	23.3
Ellie	0.0	2.3	19.9	15.3	0.1
Howard	61.7	1.3	21.6	0.0	0.3
Dwight	2.3	0.2	0.1	1.7	0.0
Paulina	0.1	0.1	9.7	3.6	2.3
Ginny	16.7	27.6	37.5	2.9	1.5
Dovre	2.8	0.1	1.0	27.4	1.1
Darryl	0.2	0.9	0.5	19.3	68.2
Lucy	12.2	65.0	4.9	6.6	0.1
Jake	3.3	2.0	1.2	0.0	0.2

Here are the coordinates on the five factors of the selected names:

	Dim 1	Dim 2	Dim 3	Dim 4	Dim 5
mother	0.1	-0.1	-0.3	-0.6	-0.3
father	0.2	0.1	-0.3	-0.9	-1.0
Ellie	0.0	-0.4	-1.2	1.0	0.1
Howard	-2.3	0.3	1.3	0.1	-0.2
Dwight	0.4	-0.1	0.1	-0.4	0.0
Paulina	-0.1	-0.1	-1.0	0.6	0.5
Ginny	1.4	-1.8	2.0	0.6	0.4
Dovre	-0.7	-0.1	-0.4	2.0	0.4
Darryl	-0.2	0.4	-0.3	-1.9	3.5
Lucy	1.7	3.9	1.1	1.2	0.1
Jake	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.0	-0.2

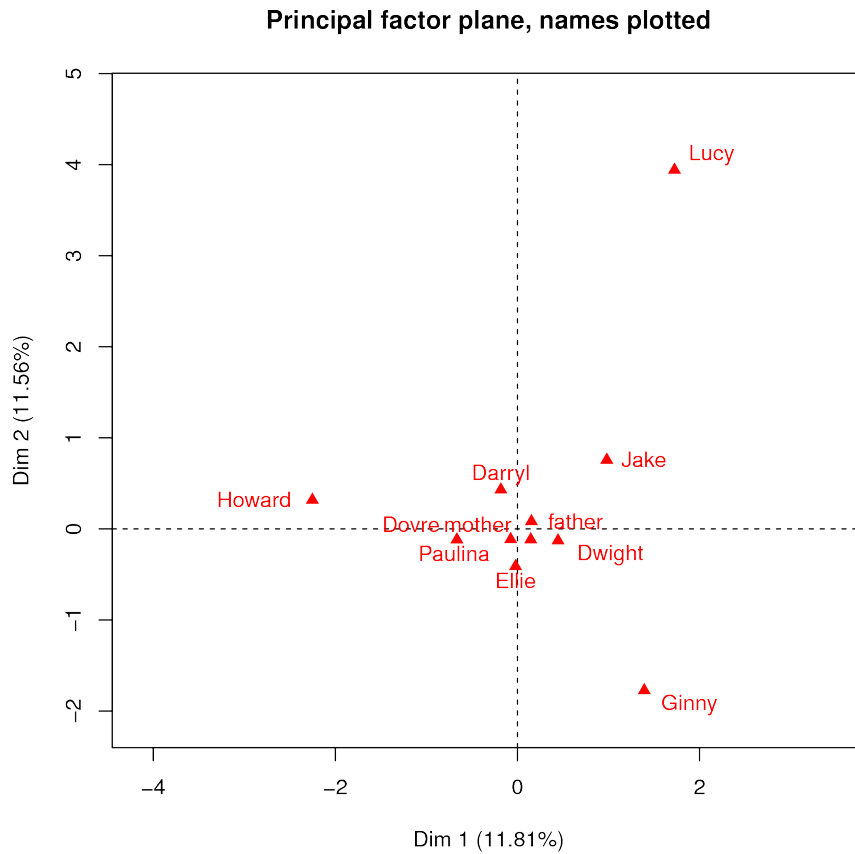


Figure 1

Factors 1 and 2, displaying just the names here. These are the active variables in the analysis.

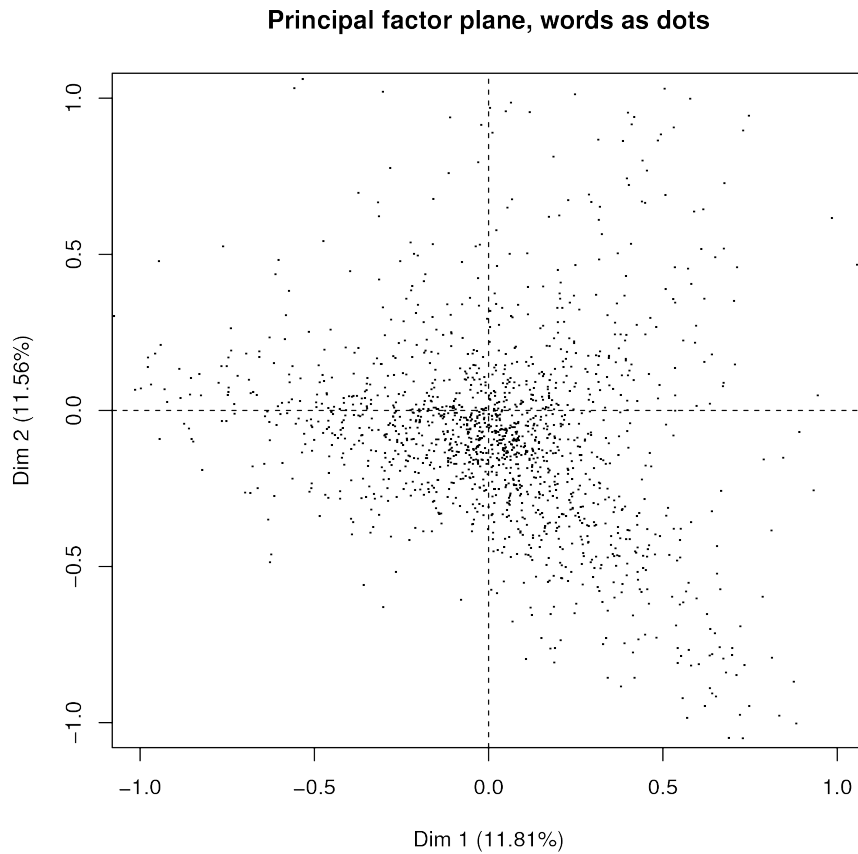


Figure 2

Displaying the 1557 words. Relative to Figure 1 and the scaling displayed for factors 1 and 2, i.e., the horizontal and vertical axes, here there is more concentration.

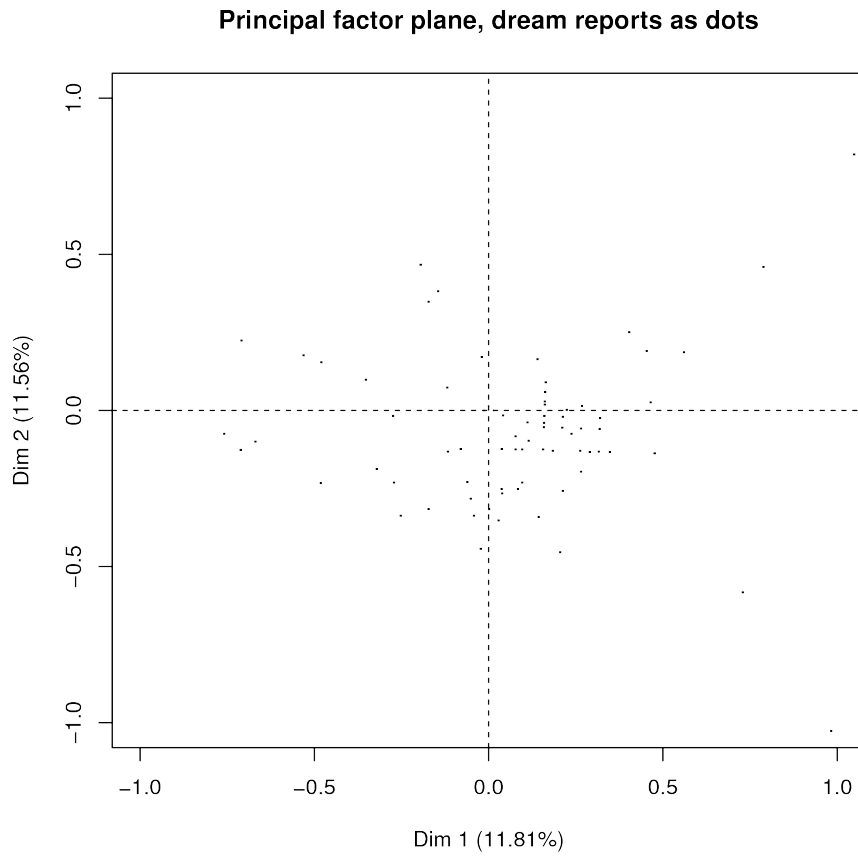


Figure 3

Displaying the 405 dream reports.

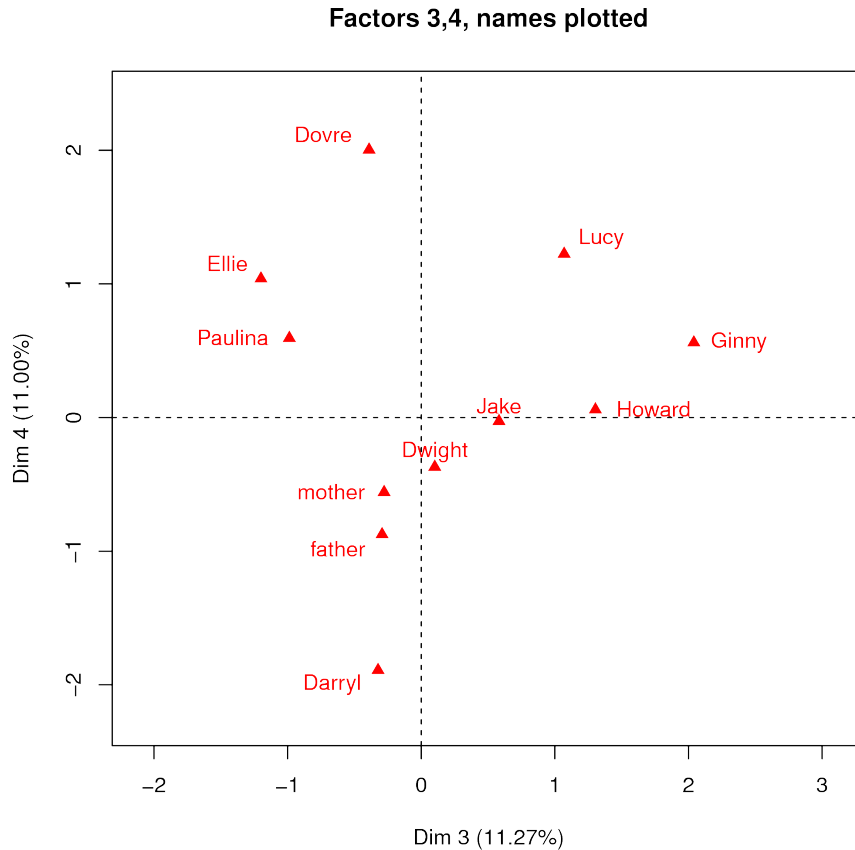


Figure 4

The names in the factor plane of factors 3 and 4.

Figure 4 shows the next factorial plane, the plane of factors, or principal component axes, 3 and 4.

Let us look now at what is most dominant for all of the factors. Since the active analysis is on eleven names, crossed in terms of frequency of occurrence (with 0 frequency of occurrence implying absence of this word in the dream report) with 405 dream reports. The supplementary variables are the 1557 other words here. We can term supplementary variables, like here, as contextual variables, i.e., providing the context for the names (the set of eleven names that are the active variables here). Active variables are, effectively, the primary focus of the analysis. Therefore the active, focussed analysis is for 405 dream reports crossed by 11 names; and the supplementary mapping is for the 405 dream reports crossed by the 1557 other word corpus members.

Here are the contributions by all eleven names to the entire set of factors.

	Dim 1	Dim 2	Dim 3	Dim 4	Dim 5	Dim 6	Dim 7	Dim 8	Dim 9	Dim 10
mother	0.4	0.3	1.7	7.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.1	18.6	50.9
father	0.5	0.1	1.8	16.2	23.3	0.0	16.7	0.6	15.2	8.5
Ellie	0.0	2.3	19.9	15.3	0.1	13.5	7.3	28.7	0.2	1.0
Howard	61.7	1.3	21.6	0.0	0.3	2.0	2.3	0.0	0.1	0.1
Dwight	2.3	0.2	0.1	1.7	0.0	6.8	8.5	1.6	32.7	36.2
Paulina	0.1	0.1	9.7	3.6	2.3	2.9	1.6	64.5	6.8	0.0
Ginny	16.7	27.6	37.5	2.9	1.5	3.3	1.5	0.0	1.4	0.1
Dovre	2.8	0.1	1.0	27.4	1.1	34.8	26.4	0.2	0.6	0.1
Darryl	0.2	0.9	0.5	19.3	68.2	0.0	2.1	2.8	1.5	0.0
Lucy	12.2	65.0	4.9	6.6	0.1	5.7	1.2	0.0	0.7	0.0
Jake	3.3	2.0	1.2	0.0	0.2	31.0	32.3	1.5	22.4	3.0

Briefly, we see that factor 1 is predominantly related to Howard; factor 2 is predominantly related to Lucy; factor 5 is predominantly related to Darryl; factor 8 is predominantly related to Paulina; and factor 10 is predominantly related to mother.

We can seek to find the association and relevant informative relationships, as displayed for Factors 1 and 2 in Figures 5 and 6. Figure 5 displays this for the ten most contributing (to inertia of the factors, i.e., the axes) dream reports. Regarding the mapped locations of these dream reports, it can be good to see what names are at issue, and these are displayed in Figure 1; and it can be checked as to how relevant other, less contributing to the factors, dream reports might be, as displayed in Figure 3 for the mapping of all dream reports here. Figure 6 displays the ten words from the word corpus derived from the data, with the highest squared cosines, and thereby what is in effect the correlations with the axes. Figure 6, as a display with the selected ten most important words, is more useful to interpret, compared to Figure 2, with all of these words mapped into the same factor 1 and factor 2 plane. From Figures 5 and 6, there may be help for interpretation or discovery of some associations, and the following can be noted: first, by having such displays of highest contributing dream reports or, in effect, highest correlation words, this will help to have the displays, in the figures here, not having superimposed labels of dream reports, or words. Also, from such displays, this may lead to perspectives on what or where to have more detailed inspection, or also even reading the original dream reports. After all, here at issue might well be therapeutic practical perspectives, and expressed in a very general manner, cognition or inductive reasoning.

We may note that in Figures 5 and 6, and Figure 1 and Figures 2 and 3, these are the factors 1 and 2 planar representation and they are related to, respectively for factors 1 and 2, 11.81% and 11.56% of the overall information content. Examining the most important factors can be informative and revealing. Of course, also, a visual display as in these figures, is best when planar, i.e., two-dimensional. Figures 5 and 6 provide some potential interpretation when compared, respectively, to Figures 3 and 2. It can be the case, that rather than the selection of ten mapped entities in Figures 5 and 6, we may try twenty or even more, but we may well find that the labels used become superimposed in the display because there are a lot of them, mapped quite close to each other. In the section to follow, at issue will be some study based on the full dimensional factor space, and therefore, with the full information content of the data.

10 highest contributing dream reports

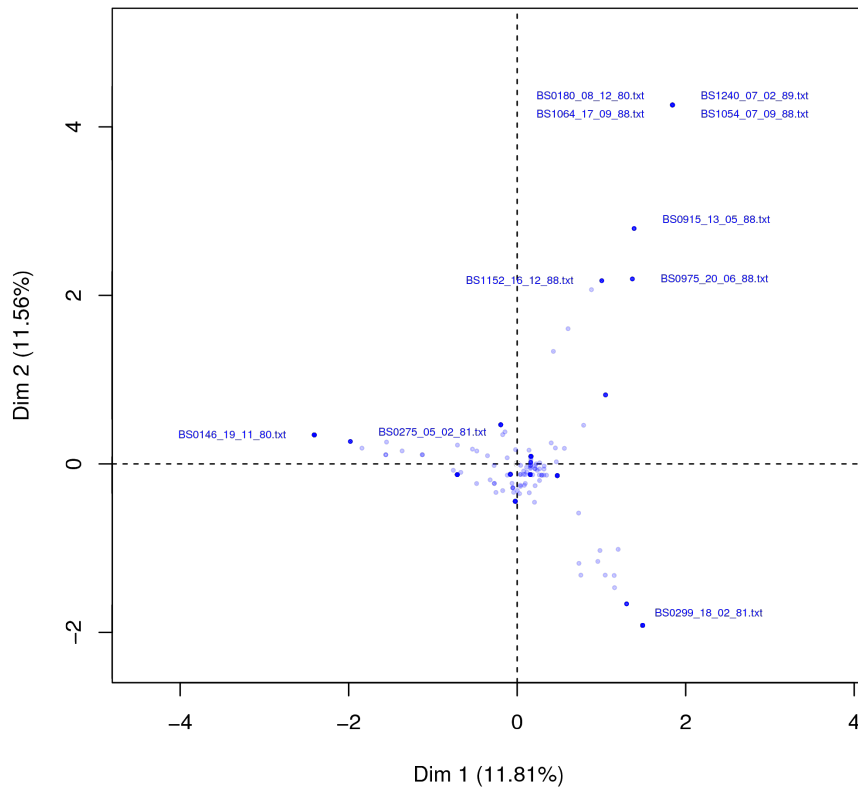


Figure 5

The ten highest contributing (to the inertia of factors 1 and 2) dream reports in the factor 1, factor 2 space. These names have the letters BS, then a sequence number, and then the data (with format: day, month, last two digits of the year).

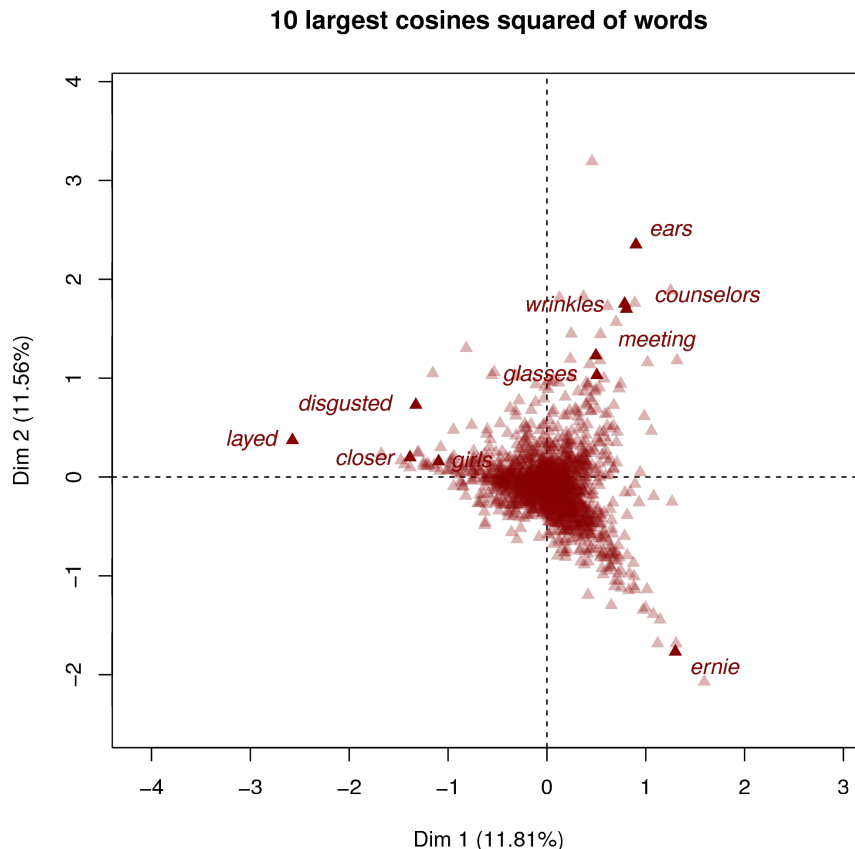


Figure 6

The ten highest contributing words from the word corpus (in this analysis, taken as supplementary variables, relative to the active variables comprising the eleven names).

Associating with a Named Individual: Verbal Expression – What and When

While referring to verbal expression, this can and will be always put into text, through being digitally recorded or digitally stored. Verbal expressions here are single words, members of the word corpus that is derived from the set of texts that comprise the data under analysis. As noted above, semantic proximity or near identity is well handled. Semantics here is the entirety of relationships: for words, what dream reports they are in; for dream reports, what words they have; yielding here the factor space mapping of word interrelationships, dream report interrelationships, and the combined and contrasted interrelationships of all.

We seek here to derive the most salient, the most informative and the most revealing expressions relating to the selected set of individuals. Again it is noted that these eleven individual names are: “mother”, “father”, “Ellie”, “Howard”, “Dwight”, “Paulina”, “Ginny”, “Dovre”, “Darryl”, “Lucy”, “Jake”. Section 3 explained these individuals, as follows. The third onwards here are: daughter, ex husband, brother, daughter, friend, daughter, boyfriend, friend, and brother. We select the ten semantically closest words to the name. These are closest to the name but clearly they can possibly be used also with other names. So for each of the words, we seek the use of the word for that name; and list the dream record dates when they are being used.

That will allow us, firstly, to determine what are the most associated words relating to dream reporting for that name. Secondly, the pattern of word use over time can be followed. To some extent, this may help to know if such patterns in word usage can be associated with emotional expressions, or the nature of the relationship with the individual of that name.

For the processing carried out, all words have their upper case letters set here to lower case. The distances, between each of these words and the name, are shown in order to quantify the ranking of their semantic importance for the name. Note that such calculations are carried out in the full dimensional factor space. The dream report dates are to consider any variation over time. (For general interest, a statistical hypothesis test was carried out of the distances, overall, being of normal distribution. This was tested for the unique distances, i.e., for the dream reports, 81,810 distances; for the eleven names, 55 distances; and for the supplementary columns that comprised the word corpus, 1,211,346 distances. Also tested were all unique distances here, i.e., 194,626,585 distances. The mean distances, respectively, are, in two decimal places of precision: 3.91, 4.67, 1.70 and 0.56. The Shapiro-Wilks test of normal distribution gave a p-value in all cases of 2.2e-16. That being near zero means that the distances are not of normal distribution. This is not surprising, since an enormous number of values, like these here, are likely to follow an exponential distribution.)

Name: mother

The ten closest words in the semantic, full-dimensional factor space, with their distances, here rounded to two decimal places, are:

```
doors sleepy stood nose nurse invisible clearly
0.54 0.43 0.48 0.49 0.53 0.53 0.46
engagement king mid
0.53 0.53 0.53
```

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 108. In fact, 24 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: father

```
paul counter shoe tom hardly josh harrison bricks
0.28 0.61 0.76 0.45 0.75 0.47 0.80 0.76
salesman ship
0.80 0.48
```

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 85. In fact, 39 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Ellie, daughter

Although ten closest words are at issue, here there is one distance repeated so this leads to eleven closest words at issue here.

```
tyler hers kathleen jungle reluctantly beads cereal scarf
0.61 0.64 1.04 0.71 1.18 0.81 1.21 1.08
snuck scream captain
1.21 0.88 0.67
```

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 55. In fact, 23 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Howard, ex-husband

closer trapped relieved disgusted wanting forward layed
1.25 1.31 1.50 1.10 1.51 1.44 0.47
accidentally please bob
1.16 1.42 1.43

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 61. In fact, 24 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Dwight, brother

brother teach beat teaching bartender monkey xmas plate
1.21 1.19 1.05 1.21 1.10 0.94 1.02 0.60
surgery marry
1.02 1.02

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 53. In fact, 39 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Paulina, youngest daughter

fletcher mad listening manager journey rope catches
0.76 1.03 1.33 0.63 1.29 0.91 0.76
cross branch button
1.08 0.46 0.75

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 49. In fact, 23 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Ginny, friend, female

ball disabled ernie raul repair deaf signs actors shore
1.54 1.51 0.37 0.90 1.13 0.98 1.48 0.57 1.25
diane
0.67

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 35. In fact, 18 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Dovre, oldest daughter

air gathering opened kittens rail spanish interest esther 1.92 1.75
1.61 1.96 1.36 2.03 1.99 1.90
works chute
1.71 1.67

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 37. In fact, 17 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Darryl, boyfriend

train course bleachers dive hidden arthur easy supportive
2.45 0.85 2.00 2.21 2.21 0.60 2.49 1.47
numbers tracks
1.12 1.84

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 21. In fact, 8 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Lucy, friend (female)

boyfriend song offers andrea leader ears rehearsal
3.10 3.13 2.94 2.61 1.54 2.22 2.96
wrinkles counselors elizabeth
2.68 2.78 3.11

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 22. In fact, 9 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

Name: Jake, brother

shower age valerie parade shampoo ex fur program
2.75 2.83 2.02 2.65 1.60 2.39 1.83 2.35
meaning curls
2.84 2.85

The number of dream report texts with this name, from the 405 dream reports, is 15. In fact, 11 of the dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words.

For name “mother”, the succession of dream report texts

The name “mother” is in 108 dream reports. As noted above, just 24 of these dream reports contain one or more of the ten semantically closest words, in an overall sense. These words here, for this name, “mother”, are: “doors”, “sleepy”, “stood”, “nose”, “nurse”, “invisible”, “clearly”, “engagement”, “king”, and “mid”. These were determined as the closest words to “mother”, from our word corpus other than the 11 names, consisting of 1557 words.

The following lists the dream report, by its stated sequence number, followed by the day, month and last two digits of the year. (Note that the first date here, is as stated on the original data. I.e., day and month are unspecified, and the year is 1977). Then the values, 0 and otherwise, these are the number of occurrences, including non-occurrence = 0, of the word in the dream report.

Seq. no.	Day-month-year	Ten semantically closest words to "mother"									
		king	mid	doors	sleepy	stood	nose	nurse	invisible	clearly	engagement
0052	xx_xx_77	0	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
0107	29_09_80	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0129	08_11_80	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
0243	19_01_81	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0269	01_02_81	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0288	14_02_81	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0322	27_02_81	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
0339	07_03_81	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0348	12_03_81	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
0370	23_03_81	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0376	27_03_81	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
0412	17_04_81	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0440	05_05_81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
0442	06_05_81	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
0497	14_10_82	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0507	01_11_82	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
0576	21_10_84	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0715	15_03_85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
0843	22_09_86	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0920	17_05_88	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0946	03_06_88	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1020	21_07_88	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
1081	25_10_88	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1262	16_02_89	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

While there is not a great deal of presence of words here, nonetheless it may be relevant in practice to avail of the relatively general expressions. Some words could become useful to seek trends with. Here the word "nurse" was only used early in this context. Words such as "doors", "sleepy" recur. All in all, this analysis is based on very general and overall context. Hence the most general objective is to check out the balance of all that is relevant, to map out some of the most salient issues, and pursue general issues and themes.

Study of Mother

We take the 108 dream reports relating to the name “mother”, that had, initially, a word corpus of 1568 words. The number of non-zero frequency of occurrence values was 6.27%. Some of these words, collected from all of the dream reports under consideration here, had not got entries in dream reports relating to “mother”. That reduced the number of words to 1433. To have relevance, words that were at least occurring five times or more were determined and, so, the analysis is to be carried out on the 108 dream reports, relating to the word “mother”, and with frequencies of occurrence for 662 words.

The Correspondence Analysis, with the full dimensionality of the semantic, factor space being 107, the cumulative percentages of inertia for the initial factors are: 3.27, 5.33, 7.31, 9.25, 11.13, 12.99, 14.81, 16.59, 18.32, 20.05, and so on. In Figure 7, on the positive half axis of factor 1, there are these words: “were”, “looked”, “said”, “was”, “felt”. Near the origin there it the word “he”. For factor 2, on the positive half axis, there are the words “tea”, “cup”, and on the negative half axis, there are the words “paul” and “guy”.

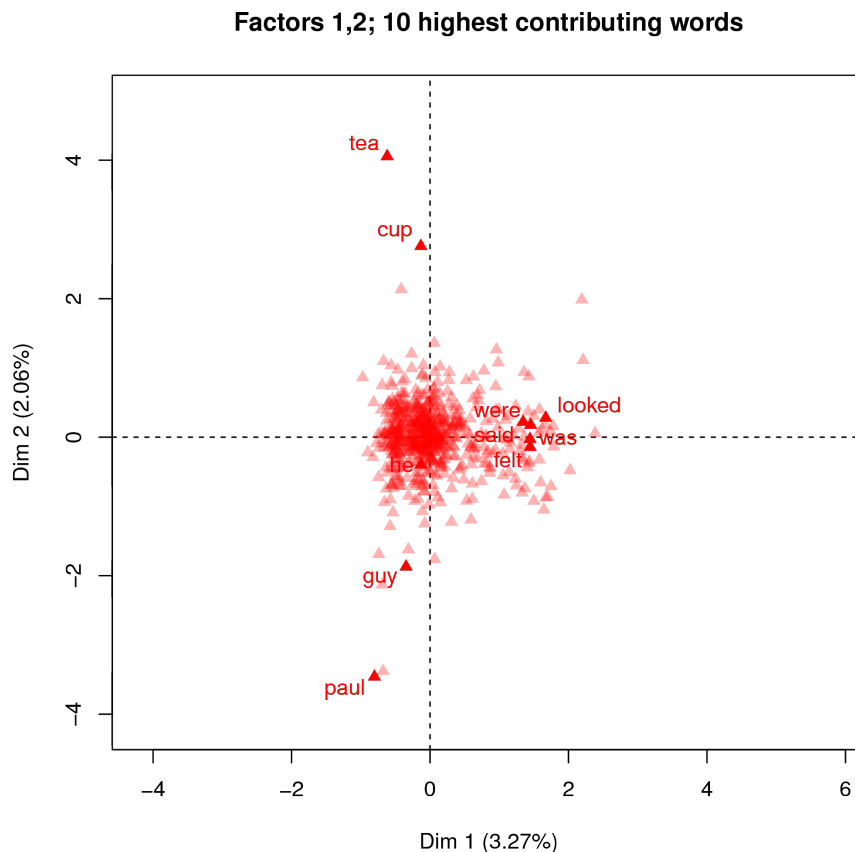


Figure 7

The ten highest contributing words are displayed in the principal factor plane.

Figure 8 displays the 14 highest contributing words for factors 3 and 4. Near the origin, on the positive side of factor 4, “they”, “one”; and on the negative side of factor 4, “me”. For factor 3, on the positive side, “edge”, “xxx” (a word used in quite a few of the dream reports), “pickup”, “parking”, “park”, and the latter three are negative on factor 4. The lower left quadrant has “ellie”, “nate”, “cards”, “abner”. The upper right quadrant has “nurse”, “child”. Just for information about these words, all upper cases have been put to lower case, in the analysis, and this expression is in this dream report (identifier number 0038, with the date, 23 September 1976), “cousin Abner or Nate”.

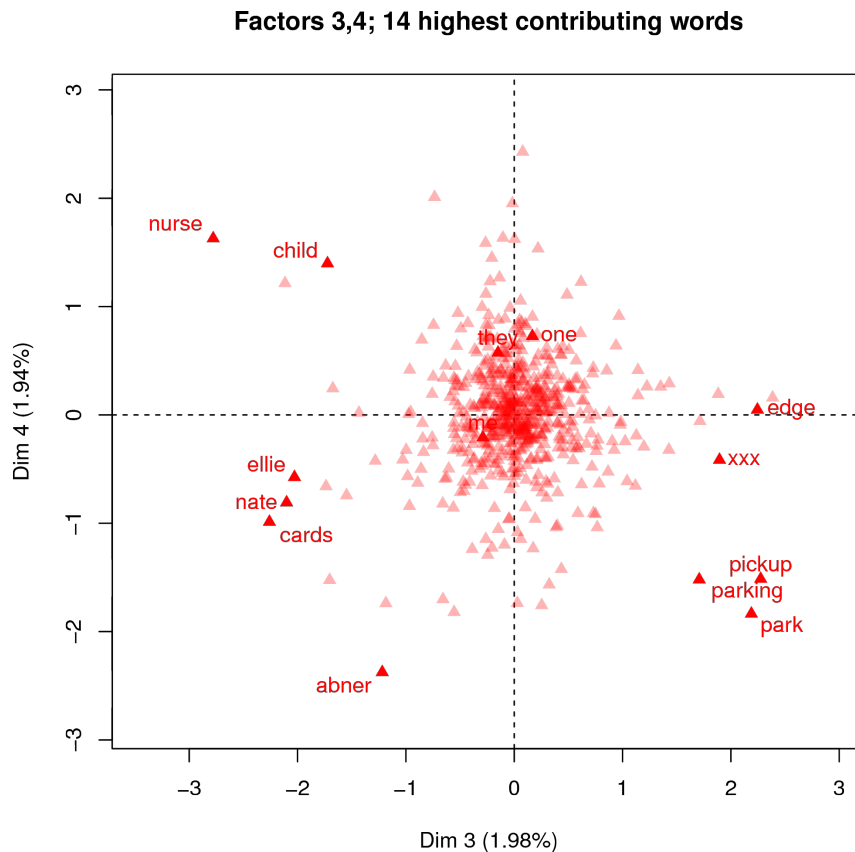


Figure 8

The fourteen highest contributing words are displayed in the factor plane of factors 3 and 4.

Figure 9 displays the principal factor plane with the highest contributing dream reports. The labelling is the letter “BS”, then the sequence number of the dream report, followed then by its date, expressed as day, month and final two digits of the year.

Factors 1,2; 14 highest contributing dream reports

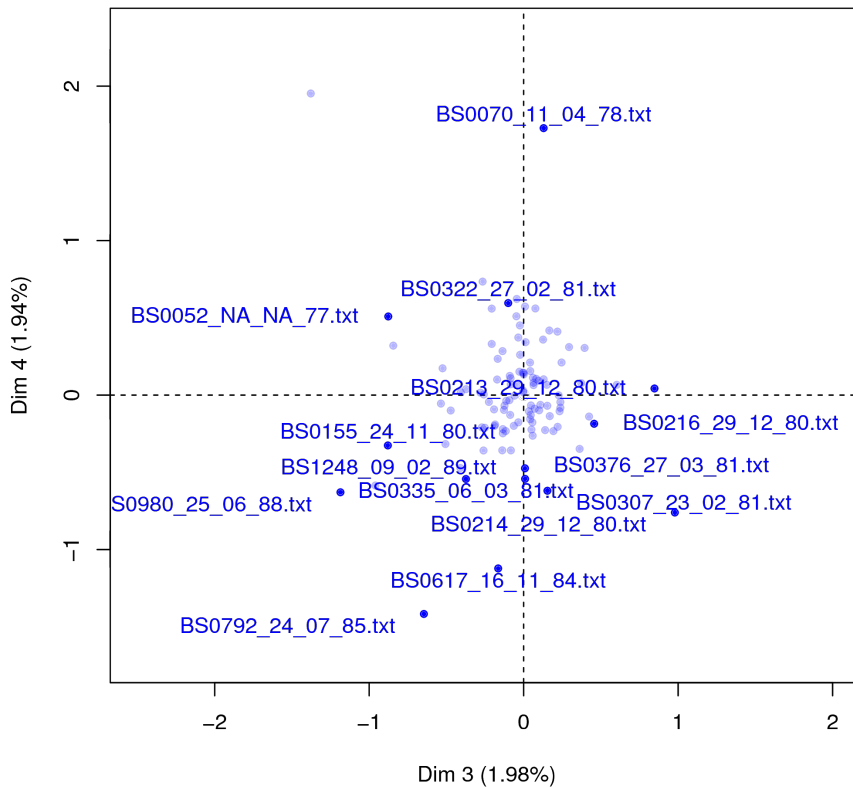


Figure 9

The fourteen highest contributing dream reports are displayed in the principal factor plane.

Hierarchical clustering of the dream reports, subject to their sequencing, which is chronological, this is displayed in Figure 10. For CCRT relevance, the role here of the hierarchical clustering is to have an overall framework for evolution over time. This is a manner of displaying similarity and stability versus differences and changes over time, in the therapy or general narrative. In this paper, for the dream reports that are the subject of the analysis here, the dream reports were selected using presence of the personal names. If it were the case of all dream reports, then such a hierarchical clustering would display well the overall narrative evolution. In Murtagh (2017) there is discussion of, and references to, such chronological hierarchical clustering studies of film scripts for movies, and of forensic speeches in court cases. Beyond what is now discussed, regarding Figure 10, it can be relevant to segment the narrative by deriving a partition from the hierarchy, hence clusters that are chronologically sequenced.

A very interesting aspect of the dendrogram (i.e., hierarchy) here is how different the first dream report is from the 2nd to the 39th. Then comes a very major discontinuity, for the 42nd. The preceding and the following dream reports, relative to the 42nd are (showing sequence number and day, month, year): 0392, 05_04_81; 0402, 11_04_81; 0408, 15_04_81. The 40th dream report is very limited in its small number of words:

“Somebody wore her mother’s wedding gown”. The previous dream report has 40 words and the one after it has 282 words. Sometimes successive dream reports are for the same date, but not here. Again to note that for CCRT relevance, the role of hierarchical clustering could well be to analyze the narratives in the successive therapy sessions, or pattern of evolution over time.

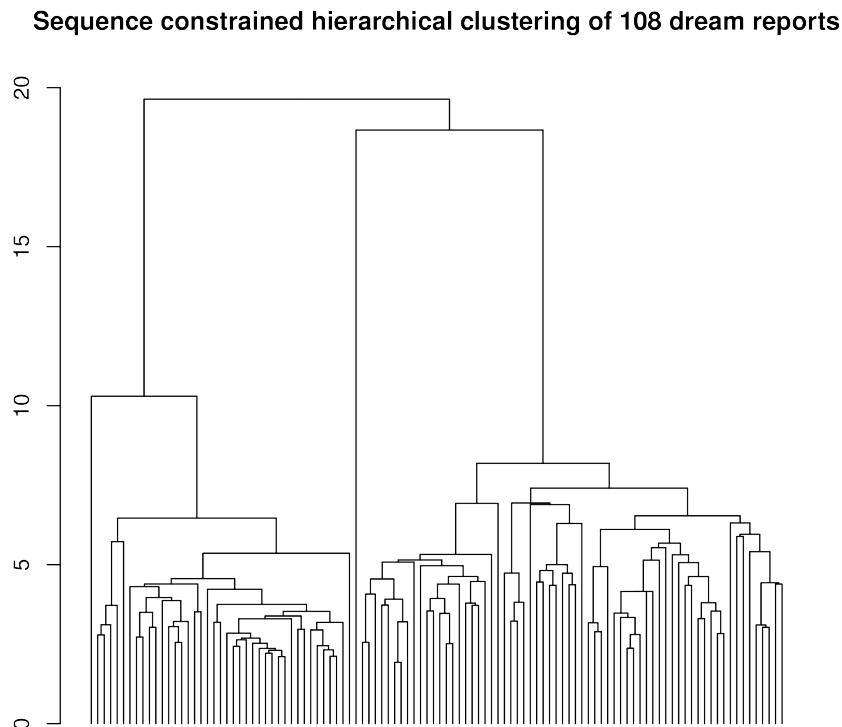


Figure 10

Hierarchical clustering of the 108 dream reports, using the full dimensional factor space, and having the chronological constraint.

Conclusion

In this paper, we seek to transpose Freudian transference to the level of explaining, and the level, or extent, of understanding and hermeneutics results from the objectifying approach used, arising from the data sources. Here, the proposed objectifying approach can support qualitative research that, for example, interprets certain important dreams as derived from statistical analysis. Our proposed approach is to be very useful for (i) analytical research, and potentially (ii) therapeutical practice. In section 2, mentioned was what may be “almost universal and commonly shared”, such as every child’s relationship with mother, father and then siblings. For both science and therapy it would be interesting to identify relatively stable and relatively shared patterns over a large population. One small point in regard to future research is to further study the issue of conflictual relationships, and how this is expressed, in a revealing (discovery) way and in an informative (predictive) manner, in the interpretation of the findings. For therapeutical practice, while this paper is quite

theoretical, and using dream reports, two outcomes can be emphasized: firstly, how quantitative as well as qualitative assessment and evaluation can be carried out; secondly, names and relationships can be what are best to be selected, for the analytical focus. In Cariola (2011), there is hierarchical clustering for analysis in dream narratives of selected words that linguistically express emotion, and sensory and perceptual characteristics.

A traditional approach to addressing issues such as a CCRT theme would be the use of questionnaire-based surveying. This could well include both scale-based question responses and also free-text responses. But better methodology, along the lines of all that is in this paper, is to use narratives and accounting for a patient's or anyone's behavioural practices, and, quite possibly also, for mental health. While very much that is involved in the data here is categorical, also termed qualitative data, then mapping into the factor space, that fully takes care of semantics, in effect is quantifying or quantification of our data.

In this paper, there was demonstration of determining the most relevant words, or derived terms, in the text source for analysis. The focus of the analysis, and studying balance and dominance of the data's contents, and very possibly, contextual description, all are at issue here. Certain words or terms may be of importance, for example because they may express underpinning emotions (hence related with responses of the type W, in agreement with CCRTs), but also the semantics, that are at issue in this article, these may be very helpful in their application in a general context. Also it was noted how hierarchical clustering very well displays continuity or major change in the chronology of the narrative. Once the input data has been well formatted for the analysis to be carried out on it, all that has been used in this paper has been computational efficient and, we may note, all was implemented and used in the R software environment.

The final conclusion is to note the potentially great benefit, relevance and importance of such analytics fitting CCRT method with Geometric Data Analysis which have shown that, from clustering semantics coming from the analysis of the various factor spaces, REs are centred just around responses of the type W, as well as of the type RO and RS, if one takes into account the social group of persons considered and investigated in the text and drawn from the Barbara Sanders archive.

Future research can include the possibilities for analyzing dream reports of a series of respondents; and that may provide important contributions to issues such as the collective unconscious, and sociological research on “structural psychology” (expressed by Pierre Bourdieu, see also Murtagh & Iurato, 2017, p. 28). For possible applications in therapeutical contexts, in the long run, such analyses may be quite instructive for practical issues, as follows: patients could be assigned to already established, stable classes and their treatment might become more efficient. A final point to make is that in psychotherapy, dream reports, as such, possibly could be relevant and important, in particular in how such dream reports might change in the course of psychotherapy, and hence represent, to some extent, unconscious processes and associations.

Acknowledgement

A range of issues and themes raised in the reviewing have been fully taken into the paper's content. The very final paragraph is nearly entirely from an anonymous review.

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‘Overcoming’ the ‘*Battlefield of the Mind*’: A Psycho-linguistic Examination of the Discourse of Digital-Televangelists Self-Help Texts

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Abstract

This article offers a psychoanalytically informed discursive analysis of the teachings of two leading Christian digital evangelists in the field of Christian ‘Self-help’ texts: Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen. Meyer and Osteen both have global popularity and multimedia presences.—Influenced by psychosocial theory, we combine linguistic analysis with the ideas of Kleinian and post-Kleinian object relations. Exploring Meyer’s and Osteen’s media usage, we argue that digital and online tools have enhanced their connective ability with their immense audiences. It is argued that such discursive spaces create new psychosocial possibilities and contradictions for their messages of emotional health and self-governance through a combination of scripture and psychological approaches common in secular self-help communication. Both preachers focus on changing ‘language’ and ‘thought’, employing techniques and scripture that require the believer to excessively self-focus, and this process revolves emotionally around the construction of images of an omnipotent, good God and the mind as a spiritual battleground between ‘good’ objects (God) and ‘bad’ (Satan).

Introduction

‘Digital religion’ (Campbell, 2012), is the study of contemporary religions’ use of and response to digital communication technologies: and has been largely sociological in its approach. Conversely, believers and their experiences have, for the most part, been understood through psychological approaches. Whilst a specific branch of media studies is devoted to the study of audiences, research into religious believers as a specific audience group has been limited (Webb, 2017), despite religious media being globally significant in cultural and economic terms. There has also been interest more broadly in the relationship between the digital and the role played by language and discourse in producing affect (Winslow, 2014; Massumi, 2015). Thus, we propose, a gap exists for a psycho-social approach to the engagement with and theorising of faith audiences in digital contexts. Our interest is on the possibilities the digital creates for new forms of engagement with traditional structures such as on-line churches and seeks to explore new ways of connecting with believers through various forms of e-communication such as social media, blogs, websites, apps and emails.

This project emerged initially out of the author’s viewing of prime-time evangelical ministry programming on traditional media: broadcast TV. Both authors were particularly fascinated by the teaching of two ministries, which later became the case-studies we outline below: Joyce Meyer Ministries (*JMM*) and Joel Osteen (Lakewood,

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America's largest church²). We were intrigued by the apparent connection made between faith, emotional health and wellbeing, which led us to then explore their extensive related digital outputs and equally vast use of traditional media (television, radio, print) where a variety of affective responses could be observed from what we have called *audience-believers*. This initial review of the outputs led us to begin to formulate two areas of interest: the first concerning the actual discourse and 'texts' and their effects; and the second, if and what role media technologies play in forms of articulating affect and meaning (as used by Hall, 1980 see Slack, 1996).

Thus, the project developed into a two-phase interdisciplinary study: consisting of a literature review and textual analysis followed by primary audience research. This article discusses what has been discovered in Phase One³ and provides a productive theoretical and methodological approach for the interdisciplinary study of religion and media. What was central here, was that we entered into data collection with the view that the emergent themes (*a la* grounded theory) would dictate the theoretical and analytical directions we took. Therefore, we had no assumptions of what we might or might not find other than our self-reflexivity on what had struck us in our initial encounter with the texts (Evans, 2013). However, this scoping process, and informal interactions with believers (generated by our interest in this material), had highlighted a perception that audience-believers found that these specific preachers 'helped you feel better', and we sought to investigate why. Our findings subsequently identified a particular theme: the supernatural, which was given particular momentum by media technologies. The findings therefore led us to realise that it was necessary to consider the *psychic* dimensions of contemporary religious discourse, as explored below.

American evangelism is big business in the USA and globally⁴, exemplified by the international syndication of American preachers' broadcasts on television. Most commentators (e.g., Lundby, 2002), would identify Meyer and Osteen as *televangelists*, but their digital presence makes this term too narrow to understand the pervasiveness of their ideas. Consequently, agreeing with Lundby's (2011) argument that online and offline structures should be considered in relative terms, we adopt the term *digital-televangelists* to acknowledge their use of both new and traditional media. Whilst Anglicanism and Catholicism are in decline, Meyer's and Osteen's evangelical non-denominational ministries (free from the demands of established church doctrine but well-situated in a non-conformist tradition as discussed by Ehrenreich, 2009) are witnessing significant global expansion and given momentum in relation to socio-

² Minnicks (2018).

³ Phase Two involves a survey of 473 audience-believers, focus groups, and participant observation - Whitehouse-Hart (2018) *Overcoming the Battlefield of the Mind: A Psycho-cultural approach to Digital-televangelists' Self-Help Communication*. Paper. *God and The Gogglebox* Conference Queen's Foundation Birmingham 6 June, 2018; Whitehouse-Hart & Claydon (2018), "My Bible which I love I sometimes sit there hugging it": Psycho-cultural approaches to audience-believers and Christian self-help texts. Paper. *4th International Conference on Media and Popular Culture*, Leeds January 16-17, 2018.

⁴ Where the faith economy is worth \$1.2trillion a year - more than Apple and Google combined (Sherwood, 2016); and televangelists rank higher than Protestantism in terms of global wealth (Said, 2013).

cultural and technological developments. The success of these ministries also raises questions about cross-cultural appeal and global media flows. Each are adept marketers of their message, utilising: TV, radio, websites, DVDs, social media sites, books, magazines, conferences and stadium lectures. They are best-selling authors and their media products and appearances have made them multi-millionaires in the Christian economic marketplace with huge *global*⁵ followings⁶, and are also seemingly popular with non-church attending believers and a secular audience⁷. *JMM* is worth an estimated \$95 million per year (Said, 2013; Cutrer, 2004) with Osteen worth in excess of \$40 million (Schladebeck, 2017). They are friends and regularly work together and there is intertextual evidence of their relationship⁸.

Meyer grew up in a white working-class context to which she frequently refers and claims an allegiance in her teaching. Thus, she is not conventional preacher material, as she frequently acknowledges. Her compelling testimony of Biblical deliverance from sexual abuse by her father and overcoming shame with God's 'Word' delivered through scripture and in a 'voice' of the Holy Spirit, played a key role in her recovery (Bryan & Albakry, 2015). By comparison, Osteen's testimony tells his story of his reluctant inheritance of his church from his father (who overcame poverty) to build America's largest church. His identity in part aligns with the 'gospel of prosperity' (Winslow, 2014; Henderson, 2013) and a populist version of the *American Dream* (Webb, 2017). Distinctively, both are controversial and significant figures in the field of Christian 'self-help' literature, a literature which seeks to bring about *positive* change in the emotional life of the reader (Baity, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2009; Truth & Fire, 2016; Winslow, 2014).

⁵ Meyer is particularly popular with both US white and African-American women, boasts an extensive global female following (Frederick, 2016).

⁶ Their publications have been translated into many languages, they have offices based in Europe, Asia and Africa *Joyce Meyer Ministries* has 9 offices strategically located around the world, in Australia, Canada, South Africa, Russia, Ukraine, India, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Germany, England, and the Middle East.' Retrieved from <http://www.joycemeyer.org/AboutUs/FAQ.aspx> and a global missions through its Hands of Hope' ranging from inmate support to disaster relief (retrieved from <http://joycemeyer.org/handsofhope/globalreach>). Lakewood, by comparison, will hold mission tours to Haiti and India in 2018. Both Meyer and Osteen's texts (in hardback, paperback, CD, audio-visual download and kindle-forms) are widely successful in Amazon sales in the sub-areas of Christian Living and Self-Help beyond the US (most highly in Australia and Germany, although Meyer sells very well in India too) (various Amazon Germany, Italy, France, India, Australia, UK and USA sites).

⁷ Based on users' self-identifications within media contexts and sales success categories on a variety of Amazon sites, such as Self-Help, rather than Christianity as well as attendances at conference events in Canada, Australia, Europe, Korea, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Namibia, Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁸ Demonstrating the mutual alignment between Lakewood and Joyce Meyer Ministries, Meyer regularly speaks at Lakewood Church (most recently on 7 July, 2018 — www.lakewoodchurch.com) and our content analysis found similarity of titles and subject matter.

In order to facilitate this change, most ministries have an online presence, using customised apps and a range of digital options enabling believers to connect to the centre (Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2002), e.g., through prayer request options, Twitter and Facebook comments. The use of social media reflects the ability of the internet to be always connected where individual use is (pseudo)personalised and increasing emphasis is placed on more individualised forms of address (Lundby, 2002) in religious communication. These forms of address have added significance in that the 'Word' is not only from the ministry but a direct communication from God. Daily communication, through digital means, consequently prompting the receiver to engage, providing links to the ministry website and phone lines.

To investigate these practices, and the audience-believers' engagement, we explore the following questions:

1. How does digital-televangelical communication, with a specific focus on 'self-help', function?
2. How is language used to construct and maintain relationships between audience-believers, God and ministries?
3. Are there any psychological models that can be recognised in the communications and how do these function?

Thus, we interrogate the discourse, as a case study, to examine what might be both evocative and problematic for audience-believers in the current media and historical moment. In addition, the following questions are addressed in Phase Two (see n. 2) of the empirical study of audiences.

4. What media tools (both traditional and digital) are people using, why and how?
5. Are the texts helpful, harmful or without affect?

This article, consequently, develops a theoretical and critical understanding of the materials analysed, arguing that there is textual evidence for a specific communicative model being employed by Meyer's and Osteen's ministries. This model maps onto the audience-believers' psychological and psychic processes, which we call a 'psycho-theological process' presented later in the article (see Figure 1). We have since tested this proposition and have found it supported through our primary audience research in Phase Two (see n. 2). The next section therefore discusses the research methodology, followed by a critical-theoretical analysis of the evidence, the presentation of the psycho-theological process and further discussion followed by the conclusion, in which we summarise our findings.

Method

The method used is a critical textual analysis, which focuses specifically on the language of the teachings and media communication from Meyer and Osteen. We have adopted a psycho-linguistic approach based on psychosocial principles that the 'outer' (social) and 'inner' (psychic) worlds as mutually constitutive (Redman, 2016). The role of language, in the construction of identities out of discourses circulating in society, is one feature of any discursive analysis. Reflecting the two stages of our process, we argue a text-based approach forms one important point of triangulation acknowledging that discourse is subject to internal processes and is transformed by the subject, which we explore further in Phase Two (Hollway et al, 2008, p. 2).

A fundamental approach for us was that the process should be bottom-up. As such, our work reflected the grounded theory technique which “offer[s] the greatest amount of freedom in the development of substantive theory” (Evans, 2013, p. 42). The fact the authors are a team means that our perspectives balance each other to ensure we do not read ‘into’ the texts but rather read evidence ‘out’ of the material. Our use of a grounded theory approach is pragmatic and loose in that it facilitates a psychosocial approach as outlined above: it “allows the researcher to explore all aspects of the theory” (Evans, 2013, p. 40) and opens up an analytical discourse concerned not only with present evidence but the possible psychosocial implications of that data.

Data collection for Phase One examined a roughly equal amount of content across two overlapping time frames in 2016, in conjunction with reviewing other writings to establish the consistency of messages. One researcher examined materials from Joyce Meyer’s ministry using a thematic analysis and one from Joel Osteen’s employing critical discourse analysis (via a content analysis) techniques and observed patterns independently but with the same guiding principles. The reason for using two techniques was to a) evaluate the efficacy of the different methods for analysing language in this media context and b) ensure that the bottom-up approach was not influenced by potential perspective bias. Results were, after collection, cross-compared and shared patterns identified to establish potential analytical priorities for answering our research questions. The findings are remarkably consistent across the two, emphasising the core linguistic structures in each pastor, which are evident in either method, are alike and utilise similar communicative tropes.

Our sample consisted of both traditional (books, magazines, television, radio) and digital media communication, including e-newsletters, blogs and the main app and e-communication *model* the ‘daily devotional’. The audient-believer (the singular term) receives a daily message connecting scripture to reflection to prayer (e.g., Meyer’s PTDA, *Enjoying Everyday Life* or Osteen’s *Today’s Word with Joel & Victoria*). In addition, we explored something that has not been extensively examined: official websites, Facebook and Twitter. These provide examples of audience responses to teaching. There is typically a relationship between all media modes, if only through repetition of themes, format and content.

As we started from the position that subjects are psychosocial we were always interested in both the social and psychic implications of religious discourse. However, we conducted the initial rounds of analysis to see if any particular conceptual or theoretical psychoanalytic models emerged from the texts. We also began analysis recognising that all religious discourse invariably presents the ‘Word’ of God as a transparent and unchanging truth. This recognition suggests the concomitant value with psychoanalysis of Foucauldian discourse analysis (for example in Foucault, 1990), which considers “how discourses make available particular truths about the world and how Language, as an explicit and implicit concept, influences people’s subjectivities” (Wiggins, 2016, p.33).

From the initial round of analysis, as we discuss below, we determined that Kleinian and post-Kleinian objects relations were relevant because of the extensive discourse in Meyer and Osteen that focussed on two significant objects: God and the devil. An object relations-informed approach generated a number of categories for analysis such as ‘relationships with God and Satan’, ‘evidence of spiritual warfare’ and ‘role of the

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supernatural in everyday life and thought'. Also, this first stage of analysis saw 'language' and 'psychology' emerge as analytical categories. Explicit discourse about 'language' underpins large portions of the teaching of Meyer and Osteen. 'Language', linked to speech and thought, is a key communication theme underpinning their scriptural prescription for wellbeing and successful faith-based living. *Implicitly*, discourses from various psychological schools were detected within the texts: playing a specific role in how that scriptural prescription functioned, which further confirmed that a psychosocial approach was apposite.

Emergent Discursive Themes in Meyer and Osteen

Much of non-theological literature's engagement with religion has been largely critical, drawing on Marxist and Freudian approaches, which suggest religion is an 'illusion' with believers lacking psychological maturity (Freud, 2008 — originally 1927; Wright, 2006). Such an assumption we find problematic, at least in part, because studies of faith are often highly subjective. Meanwhile, those on discourse are typically decontextualized from theological content and context. As such, representational discourses miss out key cultural and analytical components (Klassen, 2013; Mizruchi, 2001). In addition to these issues, with regard to our focus on Christian media, recent studies have focussed on the production of 'prosperity gospel', neo-liberal ideology and patriarchal rhetoric (Baity, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2009; Winslow, 2014; Bryan & Albakry, 2015). When viewed through an anti-dogmatic, psychoanalytically-informed lens, drawing particularly on object relations, we argue that what can seem like simplistic ideologically-riven discourse of its time, linking Christianity with neo-liberal rhetoric (Baity, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2009; Winslow, 2014; Bryan & Albakry, 2015), is more complex in its communicative tropes and theoretical implications regarding affect and identity.

Language

'Language' and its relationship to thought are core concepts, repeatedly appearing in large amounts of the teaching of both pastors: Meyer and Osteen have a significant and particular focus on 'Mind Mouth and Mood' (see Meyer, 2013; Meyer PTDA, 2016a⁹). Teaching distinctively echoes a variety of popular psychological models that link behavioural change to language and thought. For example, Cognitive Psychology (applied through CBT¹⁰), Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and mindfulness. Approaches from these models, combined with the use of scripture, *direct* the audience-believer to actively construct a 'strong' and 'stable' Christian self-identity (e.g., *Power Words: What You Say Can Change Your Life*, Meyer, 2015; "God [He] creates with His words, and you do too [...] Use your words to change your situation", Osteen & Osteen, 2018).

Discipline

Also distinctive to these ministries is the combination of a message of 'death to the self' (interest and motivation) and negative feelings e.g. self-pity (Meyer, 2018;

⁹ PTDA stands for *Power Thoughts Daily App* available for smart phone systems. The most recent edition is from 2016.

¹⁰ Kaspar (2015), writing from within Lakewood's congregation, argues that Osteen's use of CBT techniques does not compromise theology.

Osteen, 2008b)¹¹ whilst excessively focussing on self-monitoring. Fundamentally, audience-believers are offered specific techniques for understanding identity and creating new ways of practicing faith which explicitly focus on the self: “Study your boss, study your manager [...] What steps are you taking to improve? If you’re not improving, you’re falling behind” (Osteen, 2016b). Urging believers to actively engage in reflexive projects of the self (Giddens, 1991) also has implications in terms of neo-liberal self-governance, in particular the disciplining of thought processes advocating forms of anxiety management through a narrowing and disciplining of thought¹². Meyer (2006, p. 874), for example, argues that “stability releases ability”: “By disciplining our emotions, our moods, and our mouths, we become stable enough to remain peaceful whatever our situation [...] so that we can walk in the fruit of the Spirit” (Meyer, 2006, p. 874). That is, through encompassing contemporary discourses on self-discipline, thought-governance, ‘managed emotions’ (Hochschild, 1979), the confessional and eclectic pop-psychology, audience-believers are enabled to actively create the identity of an ‘Overcomer’ (the name of Osteen’s edited Lakewood talks for Bible TV).

Testimony

Both ministries also manifest the rise of ‘confessional’ therapy culture (Rose, 2010; Furedi, 2002), which sits alongside the evangelical narrative tradition of the ‘testimony’¹³. Frank Furedi, perhaps the strongest critic of the therapeutic ethos, argues that ultimately this confessional trait creates a society which encourages individuals to imagine themselves as victims, with low expectations and a diminished sense of themselves (Furedi, 2002). Contrasting Furedi, Meyer and Osteen promote emotionally stable, powerful, self-reliant, resilient selves with high expectations for their lives. Ministry *slogans* such as “Enjoying Everyday Life” (*JMM*) and “Your Best Life Now” (Lakewood), capture the essence of their teaching based on John 10:10: “I came that they may have and enjoy life and have it in abundance to the full until it overflows¹⁴”. This stability, power, self-reliance and resilience supposes and *directs* that Christians *should* be prosperous, happy, free from negative thoughts and feelings and emotionally stable. To achieve this state, the Christian must develop a ‘new’ identity based on the idea that they are ‘in’ but not ‘of the world’ (John 17: 14-15¹⁵).

¹¹ Osteen has been criticised for his equation of ‘grief’ with self-pity see: <https://www.charismanews.com/culture/50246-in-open-letter-this-woman-demands-joel-osteen-apologize-to-millions-of-people-around-the-world>

¹² For example, Meyer’s, 2014 *Managing Your Emotions* and Osteen’s 2015 *You Can, You Will*. The latter uses “undeniable qualities of a winner” (the subtitle of the book) to shape self-conceptualisation

¹³ This is where the believer shares personal experience and makes a public declaration about the role of God in their life. Osteen’s Lakewood services regularly appear on the Oprah Winfrey Network who is a significant figure in the development of therapy confessional discourse in the media (Illouz, 2003). For example, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kjSK-PcU9o *The Power of I Am* on Oprah Network.

¹⁴ This verse is frequently used most recently Osteen’s Daily Devotional July 17, 2018

¹⁵ John 17: 14-15 (Jesus to God) “I have given *and* delivered to them Your word (message) and the world has hated them, because they are not of the work, just Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56. 35
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The Supernatural

The therapeutic acts encouraged within the teachings have a supernatural component in order to facilitate self-actualisation, for example, “I look at words as a way to reach into the spiritual realm and bring those words into reality [...]. Negative words make us feel negative about ourselves [...]. Thankfully, we can speak positive, life-filled words” (Meyer, Power Thoughts Daily App, January 26¹⁶). The assumption being that what you say about yourself is one of the central *causes* of emotional distress. For example, this article on Osteen’s ministry website (no date) concerning people who speak negatively about themselves (we note the similarity to Furedi’s disquiet about low expectations, as mentioned above):

They may not realise it but they are *cursing* (our emphasis) their future. Those words sink into their minds, before long they develop a defeated mentality, low self-esteem and diminished confidence, worse yet, those negative mind-sets can interfere with God’s plan for their lives.¹⁷

Faith is therefore proposed as an active process involving the performance of agency in areas of language and thought. The supernatural, we would argue, is a distinctive and dynamic linguistic-theological component because of its employment of fantasy-based imagery and hence affective potential, which psychoanalysis is well-placed to explore.

The trials of everyday life are shaped and understood with a particular cause and effect theological logic, which extensively forms their teaching, and is captured in the various titles, such as Meyer’s *The Battlefield of the Mind* (1995) and Osteen’s *30 Thoughts for Victorious Living* (2008a), both bestsellers. Examples of sermons with themes covered in daily e-devotionals, blogs, social media, include (from Meyer’s overlapping sources): Lies of the Devil, Ways to Defeat the Devil, Satan Comes at Once, Satan Loves to Attack Your Mind, and Dealing with the Devil. Osteen has also issued these: Give No Place to the Enemy, Don’t Give the Devil a Place, Victory Over the Devil, Don’t let the Devil Keep You Down and Satan Attacks When You Are Close to Destiny¹⁸.

as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You will take them out of the world, but that You will keep *and* protect them from the evil one” (Meyer, 2006, p. 1720). In the Bible, the definition of ‘world’ slides but is often society as ruled by Satan and is not the neutral concept we configure it as in normative speech. ‘Satan, who is the god of this world’ (Bible Gateway – <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4%3A4&version=NLT>).

¹⁶ Remembering that the Power Thoughts Daily App cycles around the same days, repeating the year.

¹⁷ <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Article.aspx?articleid=6505>

¹⁸ Over a five-year period 2013-2018 there are huge numbers of talks, blogs, book titles, social media posts with similar titles.

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Mental Health

In raising the spectre of the supernatural as a means to self-actualisation and wellbeing, our findings concur in part with and develop Webb, Stetz & Hedden's (2008) content analysis of Christian self-help bestsellers, which showed that Biblical teaching frequently refers directly and indirectly to what can be considered 'psychological disorders' (Webb, 2017) – specifically mood disorders: anxiety, depression, post-traumatic disorders, bi-polar. Indeed, Meyer frequently using the word 'epidemic' to refer the prevalence to these disorders across the population.¹⁹ There is little *hard* evidence (beyond the observation that language is echoed) that Meyer and Osteen have consulted the specific psychological ideas we suggest are apparent in their teaching. It is, however, fair to say that both exist in a theological culture which, since the 1950s, has developed theology which incorporates psychological ideas: for example, televangelist Robert Schuller's theology of self-esteem (Voskuil, 1983, p. 94-115)²⁰. We link this context to our findings that show crises for those with faith are frequently understood in terms of psychological disorder, with a distinctive psycho-neo-liberal direct 'solution'. For example, Meyer's (2006, p. 951) teaching on Psalm 143²¹ is designated as:

...a biblical prescription for *depression*' (our emphasis) with a significant aspect of the 'cure' being 'not to meditate on his problem [...] in other words he thought about something good and it helped him overcome his *battle* (our emphasis) of depression. Never forget this, *your mind plays an important role in your victory* (Meyer's emphasis) [...]. We will win if we *discipline* (our emphasis) ourselves to meditate on the good things God has done.

Significantly, despite it being known that psychological disorders are caused by a variety of biological, social and experiential causes (Webb, 2017), these causes are seldom recognised in Biblical self-help teaching. Although emotions are recognised and validated, priority is given to the 'supernatural' to explain and understand the *cause* of emotional difficulties faced by believers. Indeed, it is rare to hear talk in evangelical discourse of treating depression with medication or professional

¹⁹ For example, Meyer's 2014d *Making Good Habits, Breaking Bad Habits*.

²⁰ That said, in Meyer's *Managing Your Emotions* (1997) chapters 9 and 10 explicitly use psychoanalytical terminology ('co-dependence' and 'the inner child'). Additionally, most seminary training institutions now offer courses in pastoral psychology and counselling skills e.g., <https://www.bu.edu/academics/sth/courses/pastoral-psychology-and-psychology-of-religion/>. Schuller developed his theology from a critical evaluation of Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Abraham Maslow and Viktor Frankl, placing human needs for positive self-reinforcement above biblical instruction.

²¹ Psalm 143 (A Psalm of David) – verses 3 and 4 speak specifically to pursuit by 'the enemy' and persecution of the soul: "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed *and* faints within me [wrapped in gloom]; my heart within my bosom grows numb" (Meyer, 2006, p. 950, her parentheses).

psychotherapy. We therefore note that the discourse focusses *disproportionally* on ‘spiritual’ warfare with the believer’s thought patterns implicated, for example, on the audio CD for Meyer’s *Battlefield of the Mind Action Plan*: “The devil wants us to think we’re in a trap [and] it all begins in your mind” (Meyer, 2013, n.p.) and “Faith activates God—Fear activates the Enemy” (Osteen, widely cited but not widely sourced)²². Again, this discursive style positions Meyer and Osteen within the Pentecostal non-conformist practises noted earlier (Ehrenreich, 2009).

Imagoes and Object Relations

For Freudian and post-Freudian theorists, God is an ‘illusion’ (see Forster & Karveth, 1999; McDargh, 1983). For some object relations theorists, however, this concept is seen less negatively, with religion being linked positively to illusion as a form of creativity as in the case of transitional phenomenon (Winnicott, 1971), or as defence against envy (Klein, 1957, 1959). It has also been suggested that people of faith generally represent themselves as happier than non-believers and enjoy greater wellbeing (Wilkins, 2008; Emerson & Frosh, 2009; Spencer et al, 2016). Other clinical studies suggest this process may in part be due to the universal propensity to formulate relationships with personalised ‘God images’ (Rizzuto, 1979; McDargh, 1983), that are also psychological ‘resources’. The idea of God as a parent, which does feature in religious teaching, is significant therapeutically in terms of creating forms of secure ‘attachment’. Bowlby (1988, cited by Gurney & Rogers 2007, p. 5) proposed that “the child develops an internal working model that contains beliefs and expectations about whether the caregiver is trustworthy and caring and as a result, whether the self is worthy of care”. As Gurney and Rogers (2007, p. 966) comment, one who “feels loved by a higher power will, to use object relations language, develop a secure internal working model”. Both ministries construct through their discourse a set of images about the character of ‘God’ to promote a ‘strong’ and ‘stable’ Christian identity to whom the believer ostensibly securely ‘attaches’. Explicitly presenting reassuring images of a reliable and trustworthy God:

The subject of trust- or rather lack of trust- fills the headlines these days ... How do we know who is trustworthy? [...] When I don’t trust God I am filled with doubt, fear, worry, and anxiety [...] But when I trust Him believing His Word and promises I have peace and enjoy life [...] We can trust God at all times, in every way, with ourselves and with everything.²³

A number of significant studies of religious subjectivity state the psychological importance of these ‘God images’, which believers perceive as ‘alive’ in their inner

²² Phrase found on a variety of merchandise see:

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/296884-faith-activates-god---fear-activates-the-enemy>

²³ <https://joycemeyer.org/everydayanswers/ea-teachings/who-can-i-trust> (no date).

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world and with whom the believer has a dynamic and ‘personal relationship’ (Rizzuto, 1979). This perceived relationship combined with religious teaching is said to provide what Swinton (2001, p. 30) calls “a meaning-endowing framework” (for instance the role of the supernatural) that the believer uses to “interpret and understand” life experiences (see also Allport & Ross, 1967). Rizzuto (1979) noted that work is needed on understanding the ‘secondary’ role played by religious teachings and texts that ‘actively attempt’ to shape images of an omnipotent God image which, for us, suggests the need for more critical textual analysis studies. As we noted earlier, a significant proportion of the teaching refers the audience-believer back to ideas of spiritual warfare and it is this that makes the discourse affectively incongruous. Large portions of their teaching (implicitly and explicitly) invoke the terrain of the inner world as a ‘spiritual battleground’ between ‘good’ (God) and ‘bad’ (devilish) objects. This is exemplified by sermon titles for each such as Satan loves to attack your mind (Meyer, 2017²⁴); and The battle for your destiny (Osteen, 2013a²⁵), offering a particular perspective on ‘reality’, for example:

In this world you will have trouble” (John 16: 33) [...] Everyday, things come against us in life to steal our joy and rob us of our victory. In fact, throughout your whole life, the enemy has had one mission – to kill, steal and destroy your hope, vision and happiness. (Osteen, J., 2016a: March 23)

Osteen, in what is a typical example, has posted a biblical passage to which he and Meyer return repeatedly clearly summoning the ideas of threats and risk to the self, which we will argue below has implications for psychological equilibrium, for example:

Maintaining balance in all things is so important! If we do not, we open a door to Satan, who roams around hungrily seeking to devour us (see 1 Peter 5: 8) ... [I]f we do not maintain balance in our lives, Satan will take advantage of the door you have opened. Check your life and if you find areas out of balance, ask God to help you make whatever adjustments are necessary. (Meyer, 2006, p. 2085²⁶)

²⁴ Satan loves to attack your mind is a sermon from Meyer’s Enjoying Everyday Life television programme that can be found in a number of locations and in a number of versions.

For example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_A8oH2FrCA

²⁵ The Battle for your destiny is a blog posting on the Joel Osteen Ministries website. See: <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Blog.aspx?blogid=7591>

²⁶ Meyer also uses this text on Twitter on May 11 2013, demonstrating how Meyer’s text is replicated across media.

Melanie Klein's concept of the imago is pertinent: "denot[ing] an unconscious experience or phantasy of a concrete object physically located internal to the ego (body) which has its own motives and intentions' (both benign and malevolent) 'towards the ego and other objects'" (Hinshelwood, 1989, p. 68). Klein (1946) focussed on the psychic and emotional distress generated by internal conflicts between objects, particularly at times when the self feels threatened and prioritised the dynamic role of unconscious phantasy, present in all conscious and unconscious mental activity and perception (Isaacs, 1952). Klein proposed the use of 'primitive' defence mechanisms, such as 'splitting' ('good' from 'bad' objects²⁷) to deal with persecutory and paranoid forms of anxiety associated with the 'paranoid-schizoid position' (Klein, 1946). For Klein, the subject imagines him/herself being able to do things to his/her internal objects which may be beneficial, loving or harmful and destructive (Dawson, 1994, p. 33). For example, Meyer's teaching on Ephesians 4:30²⁸, such as by Meyer (2006, p. 1940): "The Holy Spirit lives inside of us [...] and show us the things we should [...] and [...] shouldn't do. [...]B]y understanding that He has emotions and He can be grieved. Because He lives in us, when He feels grieved, we will feel it too" and "Some people believe when they have problems in life it is because God is angry with them for a past sin and wonder [...] is God punishing me?"²⁹, and also "remember [...] God is in you. If the thought is reasonable and right do it! [...] Trust Him because He will teach you to hear His still small voice" (Osteen & Osteen, 2014, para. 3).

In the "depressive position" identified by Segal (1992, p.38), the ability to tolerate 'good' and 'bad' objects without feeling that safety is compromised is replaced by feelings of ambivalence and guilt for the damage done to loved objects through aggression and malevolence in phantasy and reality (e.g., grieving the Holy Spirit). This replacement of feelings represents a more mature position, less marked by omnipotent phantasies and maximising the loving aspect of the relationship with *both* the self and object whose imperfections can be tolerated (Ogden, 1989; Winnicott, 1971). For example, seen on Osteen and Meyer's daily devotional apps: "God knows everything about us. Even on your worst day, in the most shameful situation, God knows and still loves you" (Osteen, 2016a), and "God is trying our faith to bring out patience but it brought [...] a lot of other junk to the surface such as pride, anger, rebellion, self-pity, complaining [...] these ungodly traits need to be faced [t]o eventually help us to mature" (Meyer, 2016a). These are not merely *developmental* stages but 'positions' we oscillate between throughout life (Ogden, 1989), and which

²⁷ Note the shift from scare quotes for the broad concept to quotation marks for the specifically Kleinian term.

²⁸ Ephesians 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [do no offend or vex or sadden Him], by whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God's own, secured) for the day of redemption (or final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin" (Meyer, 2006, p. 1940 – square brackets are Meyer's addition to the Amplified Bible, which forms the basis of the *Everyday Life Bible* from her ministry).

²⁹ No date is provided for the article but this is from paragraph 11. Retrieved from <https://www.joycemeyer.org/everydayanswers/ea-teachings/god-is-mad-at-me-and-other-myths-part-2>

ministry discourse evokes. This discourse is linked to spiritual ‘maturity’ and offers positive, negative thinking and declarations³⁰ as solutions.

Klein also posits the quality of experience as relating to “libido and destructive tendencies” or ‘life’ and ‘death’ instincts, (Klein, 1997, p. 156), with the struggle between the two reflecting a foundational Biblical meta-narrative, a staple of ministry theology discourse. One feature can be the child’s relationships to unreal imagoes as both “excessively good and excessively bad” (Klein, 1957, p. 158) with emotional effects correspondingly: ‘experience interpreted in accord with the death instinct will be attributed aggressive and dangerous meanings, whereas experiences organized in terms of the life instinct will be understood in terms of nurturing, loving meanings’ (Ogden, 1984, p. 504). For example, Meyer argues, “Proverbs 18:21³¹ [...] teaches us that our words are so awesome, they are containers of power; they carry either a life-giving force or a destructive force” (*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*, in both Meyer 2006; Osteen 2017b; Osteen & Osteen, 2016). Thus, there are implications for emotional experience by thinking and saying ‘the wrong thing’; and Meyer frequently advocates ‘thinking about what you are thinking about’ in her media, for example on the *Power Thoughts* app: “God taught me I can *choose* my thoughts and control the way I think and speak [...]. I can think things on purpose that will positively affect my life. [...]. I can overcome negative thinking by setting my mind [...] on things above and you can too” (Meyer, 2016a).

Connecting this provocation once again back to the particularly American form of non-conformist faith practices and the implications for emotional experience are two-fold. One implication is that thinking and saying the ‘wrong’ thing will open the door to a spiritual attack as well as potentially ‘displeasing’ God and jeopardising the promised ‘blessings’. The second is the anxiety generated by constant monitoring of thought and speech and the uncertainty of what qualifies as ‘wrong’. Hence the need for the ministries to step in and guide arises.

Ostensibly, Meyer and Osteen attempt to strengthen the libido and promote connection with good and loving objects. Utilising ideas echoing self-psychology’s (Kohut, 1977) attempt to create and reinforce robust self-esteem, Meyer and Osteen often provide variations upon the ideas ‘God loves and approves of you’ (e.g., Meyer’s August 8, 2017 daily devotional on Romans 8:31³² and Osteen’s on May 27, 2015). The subject, who is ‘in Christ’ is seen as “perfect and approved child who is the gleam in the parents’ [in this case God’s] eyes” (Lessem, 2005, p. 40). The parents’ delighted, approving responses and pride are essential for healthy emotional development as these reflect “back to the child a sense of self-worth and value” (Lessem, 2005, p. 40). This valuation can be seen in Meyer’s daily devotional post: “You are so valuable to God! You’re worth celebrating [...] You are awesome []. I hope you also know how

³⁰ Weekly Lakewood membership declaration: “This is my Bible I am what it says I am. I can do what it says I can do” Osteen /Lakewood 2018 (www.joelosteen.com).

³¹ Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life]” (Meyer, 2006, p. 992 – parentheses her edit).

³² Romans 8:31 “What then shall we say to [all] this? If God is for us who [can be] against us?” (Meyer, 2006, p. 1882 – parentheses her edit).

pleased and delighted God is with you [...] God is pleased with me and He delights in me” (Meyer, January 14, 2014c).

Meyer and Osteen also recognize the significance of past hurts that can be healed supernaturally and through the recognition of a non-judgemental God/ parent. As Meyer (2011) argues in a podcast: “Some of you, because you have been hurt in the past, you don’t see yourself the way you are at all [...] the way God sees you. You have a warped perception and you don’t see the value, the worth, the preciousness that you have to God”, and supernaturally: “I declare that any curse or negative word that’s ever been spoken over you, in the name of Jesus, that curse is broken right now” (Osteen & Osteen, 2009, p. xii).

Secure attachment to diminish forms of anxiety and emotional distress is strongly promoted. Both preachers produce communications attempting to support the believer in processes of what Dawson calls “subjective composure” (1994, p. 34). A temporary psychic resting place, subjective composure comes from helping the audience-believer to construct, through thought and word, an identity for oneself in the tradition of the testimony narrative (here as a valued child of God and ‘overcomer’). ‘Peace’ is consequently promised if the believer makes the right thought choices to increase faith. Using their own powerful testimonies (telling and speaking particularly about being ‘changed’ by faith), Meyer and Osteen profile behavioural models that the audience-believer is encouraged to adopt. These models are in keeping with what Dawson sees as the state of being calm and obtaining psychic reassurance (Dawson, 1994). This state reached, in turn, will provide another benefit, of a form of socio-religious recognition of the audience-believer as a *successful* ‘intrinsic’ Christian, where their faith extends to *all* aspects of their life (Allport & Ross, 1967; Mickley et al, 1995). In contrast, ‘extrinsics’ only compartmentalise religion for defensive use against anxiety (Allport & Ross, 1967; Mickley et al, 1995). Thus, psychological disorder, e.g., anxiety, rests with the audience-believers’ inability to put God first in everything – see Victoria Osteen’s 2018a podcast and Joel Osteen’s Twitter posting: “If you keep putting God first place, His blessings will chase you down” (Osteen, August 4, 2013). In addition, as Meyer writes (n.d.-a, para. 12), “It’s not about having a program to follow—it’s simply about forming a habit of putting God first in everything we do. If we will seek first His Kingdom, He has promised to add everything else that we need (see Matthew 6:33³³)”.

Summerfield (2004, p. 69), however, notes that subjective composure may not always be achieved. The constant difficulty of being unable to gain control of thought, speech and destructive impulses, as we found in Phase Two of our research, is a particularly challenging terrain shaped by memory and self-ideation. This challenge may in fact produce dis-composure, personal dis-equilibrium, discomfort and anxiety. For example, this exchange on Meyer’s Facebook ‘wall’ concerning viewing pornography:

Post: I have an addiction problem, where the enemy has sneaked in through the back door via my loneliness; [...] I feel ashamed of myself, and I felt The Holy Spirit yelling at me to not do it, [...] I knew that I had done wrong, and I did feel

³³ Matthew 6:33 “But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides” (Meyer, 2006, p. 1491).

badly about it. I need prayer, but even though my place of worship is wonderful [...] the enemy is telling me not to go there for prayer.

Reply from JMM: Hi [X]! God must become your strength! To break the cycle of addiction-Depend on Him! Fill your mind with God's Word. We are praying for you!

Hyperlinked Ad underneath for Meyer's *You Can Win the Battle in Your Mind*

Reply from Congregant-User: I pray for your release from bondage... remember... the closer you draw to the devine [sic] nature in you... the harder the underworld will pull you... lie to you... decieve [sic] you, with negative internal self-talk. Train Yourself Not to be convinced of such doubts. (JMM Facebook, September 29, 2014)

We note here a circular process, which typifies much of the ministries' engagement with audience-believers, explored below.

The Psycho-Theological Process

As observed, biblical teaching frequently links God and Satan with spiritual life and death. Klein's concepts of the life and death instincts capture the emotional tone of the audience-believers' struggles, which the ministries, as seen above, hermeneutically translate as spiritual attack. The style of teaching evokes experience dominated by "the death instinct, in which aggression, gives rise to anxiety and anxiety reinforces aggression" (Klein, 1997, p. 156). However, as Klein noted, this aggression can be broken and the life instinct can "maintain itself against the death instinct' once 'libidinal forces [have] gained in strength:" (Klein, 1997). The life instinct is ostensibly strengthened, in this case, through a relationship with a living God and supplemented by ministry support. Klein therefore provides a useful touchstone to illuminate the circular process identified in the ministries' materials.

In part, this conflict between instincts maps onto the affordances of the digital technologies. If the ministries did not personalise (in the case of Facebook) or provide motivational stimuli (as in the daily devotionals and Twitter feeds), the audience-believer would fail to feel embraced by the ministries they have followed. In addition to this, the tone of the ministries' print literature is also both sympathetic and empathetic, emphasising that what believers feel are not isolated emotions beyond a society within faith. As such, the way in which, for example, both Meyer's and Osteen's bibles are written, is based upon regular encountering and working through developmental concepts (such as Osteen's 'Hope for Today' pages on the ministry website³⁴). Digital media, however and specifically, has created a contested space filled with a discourse of trust and distrust, of followers and followed – its immediacy, linguistic informality and virtual environment permitted dialogue can enable those who might find more difficulty in a face-to-face encounter. Figure 1 demonstrates the psycho-theological process.

³⁴ <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Articles.aspx>
Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1588>

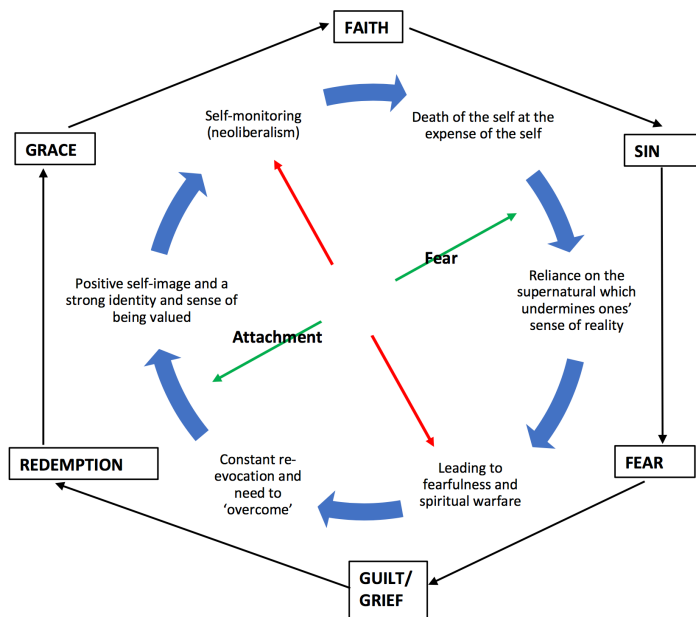


Figure 1

The psycho-theological process

Assuming an entry point that responds to teaching that focusses on sin, fear, and grief, the subject feels initially under attack by the devil (Romans 7, 17-19³⁵), who is prowling both inside and outside. The “sudden appearance of [a] persecuting bad object” Hinshelwood (1989, p. 312), creates paranoia and can be frightening, particularly to those suffering psychological disorders (Webb, 2017). This “sudden appearance” is also associated with the failure of good objects to live up to expectations and therefore the ministries need to promote a supernatural God as an ‘ideal’ rather than as a good object (Hinshelwood, 1989). For example, using categories we have identified and which map onto the chart above:

1: Sin: “I do not do the good I want to do but the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing [...] if I do what I do not want to do it is no longer I who do it but it is sin living in me” (Osteen & Osteen, 2009, p. 1269). Thus, audience-believers are taught that their own destructive impulses are being influenced by the devil (sin) who is residing a persecuting object in the world.

³⁵ Romans 7:17-19 “So now [if that is the case, then] it is no longer I who do it [the disobedient thing that I despise], but the sin [nature] which lives in me. For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh [my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity]. For the willingness [to do good] is present in me, but the doing of good is not”.

(<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+7%2C+17-19&version=AMP> – their square parentheses)

Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1588>

2: *Fear*: “Satan is looking for someone to devour. You have to be on your guard at all times” (Lakewood Church, 2014, n.p. This warning emphasises that there is something to be overpowered through faith but which leads to -

3: *Guilt/Grief* (resulting from sin and fear of the sin):

JMM post ‘Don’t Grieve the Holy Spirit’^ Carol [Link to Ephesians 4:30, see n.21]
Post: How and why would you grieve the Holy Spirit??: I’m confused.

JMM reply: [...] Anything that saddens the heart of God, grieves the Holy Spirit. God bless!

User Reply: [...] To grieve the spirit is to act out in a sinful manner, whether it is thought only or in both thought and deed.
September 29, 2014 Facebook JMM³⁶

Clearly, primitive, phantastic object relations associated with split ‘good’ and ‘bad’ objects are connoted. The perceived ‘sin’ grieves the Holy Spirit (imago), generating guilt that suggests the subject’s recognition of the flaws of self (not putting God first, not having enough faith) within the depressive position. This constant need to re-voke (repeatedly coming back to the same issues) leads the audient-believer towards a position of watchfulness, seeking to overcome that grief and its connotations.

4: *Redemption*: God comes forgivingly, e.g., “[Y]ou know what justified means? Made just as if we have never sinned — Romans 3: 23-24³⁷” (Meyer’s Twitter account, November 11, 2013). Consequently, the believer is given a ‘new’ identity, as loved and perfect, potentially creating a (temporary) equilibrium associated with subjective composure.

5: *Grace/Faith*: Here, as well as a new and perfect identity, the subject *also* acquires, through faith, supernatural powers and can then *recognise/ interpret* life events as spiritual ‘attacks’. Meyer (2014b) advises on video: “your war is not with people, it is with the devil and he works through people” and “Satan assigns people to assault you all the time”, so that there are constant internal and external attacks (social) from the devil, that Osteen frequently cites in his daily devotional. For both, a key supernatural power acquired through faith is the recognition that thought is seen as is under attack. As Osteen’s ministry blog put it in 2013:

The Enemy [...] will show up in your thoughts. As the Bible says, the battle in your life is not against flesh and blood; it’s against the forces of darkness and the

³⁶ The ^ is within the text online and resembles a partial title formatting style sometimes seen by international writers on the internet.

³⁷ Romans 3:23-24 “Since all have sinned are falling short of the honor *and* glory which God bestows *and* receives. [All] are justified *and* made upright *and* in right standing with God freely *and* gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favour and mercy), though the redemption which is [provided] in Christ Jesus” (Meyer, 2006, p. 1805 – her square parentheses).

battlefield is your mind [our emphasis, note the similarity with Meyer’s seminal *The Battlefield of the Mind*]. The Enemy will try to get you off course in your thinking [...]. God’s word is your spiritual sword... use it to win your battle!³⁸

However, reminded in further teachings of his/her weakness and their inability to prevent ‘attacks’ (i.e., stop negative thoughts and feelings), the subject is returned to feelings of paranoia and sinful guilt (combining paranoid-schizoid and depressive anxieties), hence the need to re-engage with the ministry for reassurance.

Magical Thinking

In the ideal promoted by Osteen and Meyer’s language, the individual is gifted the *supernatural* agency to *reject* negative events and circumstances and become more resilient (Osteen, 2017c, pp. 241-244). However, as outlined above, this is a fragile agency, that threatens subjective composure because its supernatural evocation of the ‘bad’ object. In various ministry communications, the audient-believer is driven to anxiously *return* to the ministries. Rearmament and reassurance are offered through processes of consumption (see Figures 2-4) and within self-help teaching products.



Figure 2

Webpage

³⁸ <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Blog.aspx?blogid=7591>
Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1588>



Figure 3

Facebook



Figure 4

Twitter

All of the ‘gifts’ God bestows upon the believer (e.g., the ‘authority’ to cast out demons, to perform miracles, to heal or to speak in tongues), can be seen as forms of ‘magical thinking’ (Ogden, 2010). This is because they encourage the believer to “rel[y] on omnipotent phantasy [about God internally] to create a psychic experience that the individual experiences as ‘more real’ than external reality” (Ogden, 2010, p. Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1588>

319). In magical thinking, like ministry theology, “the illusion [is encouraged that] one is not subject to the laws that apply to others, including the laws of nature, the inescapability of time, the role of chance, the irreversibility of death and so on” (Ogden, 2010, p. 319).³⁹ Osteen frequently tells the story of his mother’s supernatural healing from terminal cancer (2018a, p. 321) but other examples typify the language put to work: “If God can overrule death, the grave and the forces of darkness, He can overrule anything that comes against you” (Osteen, April 1, 2018, Twitter), and “I give unto you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19⁴⁰, Meyer PTDA), and also “If you’re battling unhealthy behaviours [...] the Holy Spirit can give you the ability to resist the devil and make healthy choices. [...] On your own, it would be impossible. But when you operate in the Spirit, you have a supernatural ability to overcome”. (Meyer, J. n.d.-b – this link to an undated Everyday Answers teaching no longer opens)

And concerning the relationship of the subject to reality:

If we don’t know the Word, we won’t have anything against which to measure theories and arguments that rise up in our thoughts. The enemy can present wild ideas that make sense to us. The fact that thoughts are logical doesn’t mean they are from God. We may like what we hear, but the fact that something appeals to us doesn’t mean it is from God. (Meyer, June 15, 2018 *Stay Safe in God’s Word JMM blog*)

Whilst Victoria Osteen writes:

The strongest part of you is not your physical body or your emotional or soulish realm. The strongest part of you, the eternal part of you, is your spirit man. And when you connect the strongest part of you with the strongest force in the universe, there’s an exchange that takes place. There’s a powerful transformation that takes place! (Osteen, V., 2018b, blog posting)

³⁹ Whilst we do not present a detailed account of the results of the audience-believer study here, it is worth indicating here that we found some concerns around sufferers of particular disorders such as bipolar and manic depression that omnipotent thoughts and phantasies of the supernatural can sometimes lead to an increase in sufferers’ manic behaviour and pronouncements (see n. 2).

⁴⁰ Luke 10: 19 (also see Meyer, 2006, p. 1632).
Language and Psychoanalysis, 2018, 7 (2), 29-56.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1588>

Another feature to help the subject achieve composure involves divorcing thought from feeling. There is agreement in clinical practice that the articulation and recognition of feelings, in all their complexity, is “good for us [...T]here are occasions where it might be necessary temporarily to defend ourselves against them” (Frosh, 2011, p. 21). As Frosh further observes, “the general mental health rule is be in touch with your feelings” (Frosh, 2011, p21). Meyer (2014a) states in an Enjoying Everyday Life sermon that we live in an *illusory* state: “our feelings don’t tell us the truth”. She rejects feeling in favour of thought discipline and later berates her audience: “I think, I feel, I want: I’m so tired of hearing people say this over and over and over” (Meyer, 2014a). Satan, she argues, “uses our feelings to manipulate us and we have to learn what the Word says to overcome our feelings” (Meyer, 2014b, p. 55). For theorists like Bion (1962) and Ogden (2010) thinking and feeling are inextricably linked: our feelings are central to knowledge — and thought is not possible without feeling. From the outset, it is possible to see that Meyer’s and Osteen’s call to divorce thought and feeling, across their publications, is problematic for these reasons. Paradoxically, whilst drawing on therapeutic language, they then dismiss therapeutic approaches that encourage individuals to share and explore thought and experience, in favour of cognitive selection of the ‘right’ kind of thoughts from which, they propose, *only positive* feelings will follow. This dismissal is a denial of the complexity of emotional experience. As noted, the level of thought disciplining that Meyer and Osteen propose, is inherently impossible. It predisposes the subject to perceptual continual failing, creating anxiety and internal conflict, which is due to the presence of ambivalent affect towards God as the ideal object who disappoints (Hinshelwood, 1989), hostile impulses in relation to internal objects (i.e., the Holy Spirit) and external objects in the social world that believers encouraged to love.

Conclusion

In 2016, religious think tank THEOS⁴¹ conducted a meta-analysis of research on faith and wellbeing, concluding that generally faith is good for wellbeing. However, they note that the overall findings must be tentative, as it is recognised that religion may not support wellbeing equally. How faith does or doesn’t support wellbeing it not fully understood: we need to “delineate the ways in which different aspects of religion are correlated with different types of wellbeing” (Spencer *et al*, 2016, p. 10). We note that this review does not include analyses of media texts, communication and linguistics or the role of media technologies (see Rizzuto, 1979). Responding to this gap in research from a particular theoretical and methodological perspective, we examined digital and other media outputs, whilst utilising insights from psychoanalytical theory and media textual analytical approaches. Exploring the evocative psychosocial potential of the discourse of digital-teleevangelist’s teaching, we argue that the discourse is potentially positive, with the digital providing an instant Biblical first-aid kit: “God’s Word contains an answer to every problem ... [...] apply God’s Word to situations in your life as you would apply medicine to an injury” (Meyer, 2006, p. iii). Yet it is also contradictory and ambivalent. We recognise that Meyer’s and Osteen’s discourse, exemplifying this contemporary form of evangelical-neo-liberal religious teaching, has potential unconscious consequences that require further empirical examination. We have argued that the discourse attempts to create strong guilt-free attachments between

⁴¹ THEOS www.theosthinktank.co.uk – also see Evans, 2017.

‘good’ objects and the identity of an ‘overcomer’, creating periods of subjective composure, albeit transient, that have the potential to help ‘feel better’. This betterment is to be done, however, in the context of behavioural self-monitoring, emotional management denying feelings, monitoring thoughts and advocating only positive thinking. As Meyer says in one of her Enjoying Everyday Life television spots (on YouTube) “To have a good life you have to learn how to die to self – it is through control of thoughts which keep you in tune with God’s word” (Meyer, 2016b). At the same time the significance of spiritual warfare and engaging with reality ‘magically’, through the lens of the supernatural, creates a circular anxiety and (re)solution: a persistent *recherché* of ‘fundamental factor[s] in the dynamic processes of the mind’ (Klein, 1997, p. 157). Anxiety generated in this process, during which one constantly attempts to align thoughts and feelings and attain composure, is physically and emotionally exhausting for audient-believer. Anxiety of spiritual attack is potentially generated with each ‘failure’ to align thoughts and feelings with ‘the Word’. Our second phase of research found clear indications that this feature of discourse can create anxiety for audience-believers. This anxiety ranges from frustration due to excessive digital address (often interpreted as spiritual attack) to hermeneutic anxiety around conflicting issues of Biblical certainties and truth. We also found evidence in Phase Two that ideas of spiritual warfare generate fear and paranoia for those with mental health problems, leading to our shared concerns for the production of ‘responsible’ theology (Webb, 2017; Mind and Soul Foundation website, 2018), which we explore further in forthcoming papers.

If you are struggling with thoughts and feelings the ministries urge engagement through their communication prompts. Whether it be the ease of clicking from one page to another and finding near-instantaneous support or through the real-time process of post, reply, read, think, act and return. Consequently, the structure of the communication is key to the effectiveness of the discourse and the logic of the connections are central to the *affectiveness* of the text: Believers should cast “all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns” (digitally) onto God (I Peter 5:7; Meyer, 2006, p. 2086). We are not proposing that audience-believers are more predisposed to ‘primitive thought’, as clearly they are not (Frosh, 2011; THEOS, 2016), but we are highlighting that this particular theological approach, in the current epoch, is particularly suited to the reiterative nature of online communication and ongoing engagement and re-engagement by users. It would be unlikely for other media audiences to be repeatedly addressed and encouraged to assess their experience through this particular construction of reality, which also serves an economic function creating a relationship with the ministry to which audience-believers return and often support financially (partnering⁴²) and through consumption of merchandise.

We recognise that religion has *always* been mediated (Campbell, 2012). Following Morgan’s (2013 p. 350) argument that “mediation is how feelings are packaged and deposited, remembered, rehearsed, shared and broadcast, transmitted and ritualized”, we note that developments in new media have created specific linguistic and performative methods to fulfil these functions in psychosocial ways. Thus, the specific contribution of the digital is largely a reflection of the temporal qualities of online engagement, providing a form of holding (Winnicott, 1971) and a possible containing space for projections (Bion, 1962). This digital context, as a space for projections

⁴² Regular financial support and tithing for the ministry.

itself, is a marker of contemporary communication which provides an inexorable set of connections through which the digital-televangelist is able to instinctively grasp the power of psychic life and the therapeutic zeitgeist and provide forms of 'holding', at a time when other branches of Christianity are in decline with global cross-cultural resonance. In particular, as Mahan (2012, p. 14) observed of digital media cultures and religion, "authority shifts from the traditional locations such as sacred writings, traditions and religious authorities to the individual internal authority of religious consumers involved in religious self-construction" in which digital-televangelists have intervened. Thus, this work contributes to understanding the role of religious discourse and media forms in religious experience and subjectivity.

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***Selfer*, personality in a virtual paradigm. An Ethnomethodological study on the Subject of the Selfie**

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Abstract

In view of the emerging behaviors facilitated by digital innovations, this article proposes an insight of the development of identity in the virtual paradigm. The task is to inscribe the *selfie* phenomenon in an exploratory manner within a pertinent theoretical framework that allows apprehending its aspects in terms of value and relationships. Using a qualitative ethnomethodology (Semantic Analysis Based on Images), it's sought to locate certain narrative of the body in a context of interdisciplinary exchange in relation to a hypothetical category; namely the *Selfer*. Compiled sources derived from psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, cybernetics etc. offer to inscribe these new phenomena into theories of mediation and the Subject. The ethnomethodology employed here considers selfie-narrative as a deployment of the body image. The interest lies in understanding motivations and consequences as individuals and societies through discursive consciousness. A group of three components were derived from the collected data: *Self*, *The Ideal Virtual Collective Self (IVCS)* and the *Symptom*. The results are presented as a narrative analysis of the participants' discourse. This study considers selfies as trans-aesthetic objects with notable elicitation of self-impressions, based on a critical analysis of the participants' testimonies. The findings of this study are relevant in a social context in terms of exploring the effect of selfies on mental health, psycho-dynamics and semiology.

Introduction

The wide dissemination of personal mobile devices has brought about the widespread phenomena of taking *selfies*. Selfie is defined as a "photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a webcam or a smartphone". A person that takes selfies with the purpose of making them public, or a *Selfer*, is constructing a positive continuous self-presentation to a wider audience allocated in a digital ecosystem. As it can be easily inferred, this is not without consequences in the subjectivity of the individuals. Attending critically to the symbolic meanings evolved, makes it necessary to abound with the *trans-formations* of our media and the aspects of desire.

Social science research is yet incapable to catch up with the pace of development within social media, as far as communication and identity issues are concerned (Warfield, 2015). Profiling, imaging and social network interaction are new topics in cybernetics, defined by Kolmogorov (1958, p. 149) as the "science concerned with the

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study of systems of any nature which are capable of receiving, storing and processing information so as to use it for control". However, they have been widely studied in non-virtual grounds, that is to say society or interpersonal *real* dynamics within traditional psychology. The first advance of the new *technoself* studies, TSS, was coined in 2013 by Luppicini. In view of this context, studies on *selfies* appear to be beneficial for the purpose of understanding profiling, imaging and interaction in social networks.

As it has been pointed out by McLuhan (1995, p. 23) in his famous axiom "The Medium is the message"; it is thus important to examine the subjectified technological extension that allows selfies to exist. Information locally transmitted from technological platforms such as mobile devices have been considered in different addresses as "instantaneous, representative, appealing, egocentric, normative, hysteric, dysmorphic, sociopathic, hedonistic, artsy, intimate and conspicuous". Personal data in this aspect can be seen as a bundle of self-referred on-line content, or later named *egoteca*, into which *selfies* recollections find place. Hence the above mentioned adjectives elicited by this format are referential to well defined registers and operations studied by psychoanalysis, that is to say: it responds to the devaluating-idealizing logic of narcissism imaginary.

The *Selfer* directs a narrative to an *Other* which is consolidated by means of images while also refers to a fantasized identity. Bearing that in mind, one ought to question the emotional and perceptual responses that *Selfers* evoke in their *real* audience in order to evaluate the symbolic status of the exchange. The cultural flow of trans-aesthetic products which central value is established through a visual appeal, such as selfies, through social networks, creates an implicit intersubjectivity established by users. Therefore; the code that circumscribes the relationship of *Selfers* and audience implies a specific iconicity, or even language, as shown by selfies. Are we expecting to see, as other studies have shown, a relation with the aggression inherited to secondary narcissism as J. Lacan portrays, where imitation, admiration, identification, provocation, competition and consumption or closeness² assumes the form of the operation?

The *Subject* presented by Lacan received a great amount of influence from the modern intellectual and political panorama of his time (namely; the world wars, the artistic vanguards and structuralism). Similarly, the phenomenology of the *Selfer* may prove useful in comprehending contemporary subjectivities. This article will thus aim to contribute with an analytical framework to apprehend the actuality of body schemes in relationship with personality and the way they are represented in digital profiles through selfies. If the Lacanian psychoanalytical topology has managed to demonstrate something, it is that the imaginary and symbolic registers anchoring within the real register of the body leads to precise consequences within our fundamental conceptions of the unconscious, repetition, transference and drive.

In December 1968, the Apollo Space Mission transmitted an image of the Earth on TV back from the moon. As McLuhan (1995, p. 21) remarked on this beautiful

² This notion appeared in clarity for the first time in *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938).

historical event: “We *outured* and *innered* at the same time, we were on earth and the moon simultaneously. And it was our individual recognition of that event that gave it meaning”. This statement is compelling in the sense that the image can be seen as a universal selfie where everyone becomes the *Selfer* and the audience simultaneously. Furthermore, it also indicates the forthcoming of an epistemic revolution since people became irrevocably connected in the *global village*, as McLuhan famously coined the term. This development gave birth to the *mediation theory* which also provides the theoretical foundation of the qualitative technique used in this paper.

Objective

By using different interdisciplinary backgrounds and empirical observation, the aim will be to elucidate the latent discourse concerning photographic instantaneous and public self-portraits; or *selfies*. The main objective is to achieve an assemblage of informed and heterogenous opinions on selfies. Further, the intention of this study is to avoid performing any value judgement, because to label selfies simply as ‘postmodern narcissism’ would be to apprehend a narrow vision of a cultural symptom (Senft & Baym, 2015). Therefore, part of the objective is to explore whether selfies signify wider implications of possible perspectives concerning human welfare.

Methodology

Study Design

This study used qualitative, non-experimental transversal design. The insights of the participants from the collected samples were gathered in accordance with ethnomethodological approaches and grounded theory. The *Image Based Semantic Analysis* technique developed by Reginald Clifford (Galindo, 1998) was used in this study.

Participants

An intentional non-probabilistic sample of seven subjects (four women and three men) from *Universidad Anáhuac* in Mexico City was used. Inclusion criteria were the enrollment in the private institution above mentioned and to respond to all the topics in a comprehensive manner. The participants were primarily scholars, therapists and students from humanities and social studies. This study subserved the qualitative characteristics of the population and their specialized discourses that favored the process of in-depth interviews and the textual testimony in the narratives presented as the results, hence the small number of participants.

Sites

A classroom in *Universidad Anáhuac* was employed for the core of the study, where the participants were shown *selfies* via projector. Later, a focus group discussion and individual interviews were conducted in various settings, all of which were enclosed comfortable environments in order to optimize participant disclosure.

Measures

Observation and discussion of a collection of 2,789 *selfies* from randomly selected users under the hashtag #*Selfie* on *Instagram*. The study was conducted on the 8th of August 2017 and lasted seven hours in total. The participants were briefed that the

study was carried by a bachelor degree student. Two initial participants (other than the seven listed above) withdrew from the study due to timing difficulties.

Procedure

Initially the pictures were shown to the sample. In this stage the analytical categories began to be displayed and expanded. The main aspects of the images reflected where selected to constitute the core of the analysis, these consisted primarily of the visual aspects in terms of elements in the compositions, emotional aura permeating the image and social and cultural contextualization in terms of preferences, affiliations and relations between preexisting literature to understand the iconic aspects of *Self*.

Further, individual interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with each of the seven participants, where raw data were gathered using audio recordings and notes. The data were processed into the form of interview charts, category charts and analytic charts in accordance with the adopted methodology (Clifford, 1998). The processed data in the form of charts were then analyzed and divided into five sub-categories. These sub-categories were refined and constructed into three specific metaphoric components. Lastly, the narrative of the components was adjusted into the format of a case study of the metaphoric Subject-of-the-Selfie, the *Selfer*.

This technique systematically analyzes the probes of the cultural material, social discourse, and expands on the narratives of the symbolic capital of each individual testimony. The participants were purposely selected in hopes that their testimonies might indicate the opinions from their fields, namely the humanities, psychoanalysis and social studies.

Analysis

The narratives thus presented constitute an amplification of the discourse signifiers expressed by the participant testimonies and their correlations with the grounded concepts of the methodology. The author of this methodology (Clifford, 1998) is associated with the mediation theory, basic concepts such as 'discursive consciousness' and 'indexicality', while also recognizing the founder of ethnomethodology Harold Garfinkel. The final analysis is consistent with this style of narrative construction; adhering the textual phrasing used in depth interviews, where, at the same time, indexing the statements to their authors. The Lacanian psychoanalysis with its approach on linguistics as well as theory of informatics was utilized throughout the discursive interpretation, considering that the core of this analysis is the dialectic of the self-image.

Ethical Considerations

The heuristic value of this method comes from creating an allegiance with a subject-object of study, hence expressing a mediated *doxa*. The study is built inside a paradigm in which daily-life language creates and describes actions within the social ground, and these verbalizations are sought to be taken into consideration and indexed for further elaboration in research. The nature of the statements and the phenomena they refer take place in a specific time, place and actors, hence its limitation: the findings are non-generalizable. The anonymity of the participants was granted by the methodology. The participants provided ethical consent and were aware of their

ethical rights to withdraw from the study. The study was subjected to an ethical approval by the institution before it was carried out.

Results

Meta-categories were developed as a result of the most common topics in the participant discourse. Firstly, the statements were distributed into five sub-categories: a) values and properties, b) functions, actions and consequences, c) signs or appearance, d) cultural meaning and e) affects. Each significant word, concept or signifier were taken into account for each and every one of them. These meta-categories were further developed into a trinomial group of components, namely the *Self*, *The Ideal Virtual Collective Self (IVCS)* and the *Symptom*. These three components reflect a progressive extension of the consequences and values of selfies; from a constitutive stage to a social and clinical elaboration.

The trinomial group component was selected due to the extension of the arguments built upon three main concerns: a) the constitutive aspects of identity as the incorporation of the psychosocial spheres from the outside world into the interiorized figures of self-representation. b) the normative aspects of the subjective identification and the contemporary embodiment of the image and c) the possible discomforts related to the dynamics of the publicity of the self-profiles in digital media. The final material constitutes the processed analysis of the three components presented in the structure of narrative constructs that include some participants' quotes.

The Self

“There is no better way to account for selfies than through the idea of coagulation of the Ideal-self image that Lacan theorizes in the mirror stage” (Participant #3).

Our species is not organically self-sufficient from the early stages such as other mammals; instead, *Homo sapiens* relies in the cares of the mother until very advanced age (Corte, 2015). This ontogenetic evidence is contingent to the materialistic explanation of the Lacanian subject as presented in the canonic article *The Mirror Stage* (1937), where Lacan described the antagonism of the environment for the fragmented and uncoordinated new subject-to-be. In this adversity, the child fixates his desires of completeness in the image reflected in the mirror, which contrasts with the primitive feelings of fragmentation and constitutes the matrix of reality perception³.

As the development goes further, the personality begins to consolidate. The further inscription to an established language will define all the extension of *Self*. This definition includes, the gratifying or dissatisfying relationships, the interiorized figures that are identified with oneself and the way to solve problems. The nature of

³ The development of the imaginary register, which occupied the majority of Lacan's early work, found its culminating point in the mirror stage. However, it is of the utmost importance to follow through the transformations of this notion throughout his elaborations. For instance, in the 1964 seminar *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* Lacan articulates these findings with the function of the gaze in relation with the cause of desire, making use of the optical scheme to account for the symbolic intertwining of the self-image.

the inscription to the social reality sets the beginnings of the unconscious dialectics and eventual identification in relation with the *Other*. One participant accounted for the shift of paradigm in relation to identity in the virtual representability with the following statement: “adaptation in digital ecosystems is a new modality of identification” (Participant #3 in accordance with Zepeda and Herrera, 1995). However, with Lacan, self-consolidation involves the intertwining of the human registers, namely the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, within the identification to a signifying chain.

Personality does perform as a “non-biologic membrane” (Participant #5) that mediates between the interior and exterior world, the Self and the *Other*. At this point a distinction is made to contrast the Latin signifier ‘*persona, personae: mask*’ from which the word has found etymology. This contrast is made upon the fact that a mask is unidirectional whereas a membrane “permeates and exchanges information to balance the environment” (Participant #3), since there are antagonist forces going in and out the interior world. To thrive is to be adapted, to be able to love and work; reaching the minimum friction or opposition with the *Other*: in that way “standardization is observed” (Participant #1). This inscription corresponds with the eccentric place related by Lacan (Lacan, & Fink, 2006, p. 6) in the opening paragraph of this famous seminar on the *Purloined Letter*:

My research has led me to the realization that repetition automatism (*Wiederholungszwang*) has its basis in what I have called the insistence of the signifying chain. I have isolated this notion as a correlate of the ex-sistence (that is, of the eccentric place) in which we must necessarily locate the subject of the unconscious, if we are to take Freud’s discovery seriously. As we know, it is in the experience inaugurated by psychoanalysis that we can grasp by what oblique imaginary means the symbolic takes hold in even the deepest recesses of the human organism.

One reason why it can be inferred that selfies constitute a subjective narrative of identity is due to their power as signifiers. “A selfie gallery represents the subject to another selfie gallery” (Participant #2, paraphrasing the famous Lacanian definition of Subject: a signifier that represents for other signifiers). Contemporary perception is importantly constituted by the predicate of the *Other*, which is represented by the dynamics in social networks.

“As I see that other, the specular image, i(a), I see me” (Participant #7)⁴.

⁴ This contribution allows us to trace back the function of the gaze as a mediated relation with the object of castration. This dimension is carefully elucidated in *Language and Psychoanalysis*, 2018, 7 (2), 57-71. 62
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i2.1587>

Insecurity originates from the primordial fear of death; what follows are the chains of necessities, demands and ultimately symbolic desires. From within the imaginary register we discover our desire to become an immortal omnipresence satisfied with selfies. Nevertheless: “is such imaginary fulfillment real or even healthy?” (Participant #2). We are led to deduce that what sustains this desire to be omnipresent comes from the reaches of mass media, which was later called micro-celebrity from within attention economy, as studied by Marwick (2015).

Ultimately, standardization as a consequence of society, contributes to a desire to be a “desirable, beautiful and intelligent merchandise” (Participant #1). That in turn is translated into repetition and imitation which are the basic processes of self-consolidation as seen in selfies. Through repetition a disguised continuum is established in which the whole Subject is implied (Nasio, 2013). “Selfies are facilitated by phone cameras whose technique is based on the function of repetition” (Participant #6). Repetition is thus reinforced via selfies where the imaginary content of the selfie-signifiers can be reproduced to gain symbolic sense; a public explanatory narrative of self.

Some participants took notice in the contemporary phenomena that the aesthetization of the media has brought about by the exercise of appeal in the interiorized logics of merchandise. “Selfies are a non-paid part of work produced by *prosumers*” (Participant #1) since they feedback to the commercial panoptic about ‘trendy lifestyles’. Technologies of the self, as coined by Foucault, far from only producing efficient consumers has proved to be a most valuable source of the immaterial profitable *qualia*.

The Symptom

It can be said that from this origin the ego retains the ambiguous structure of the spectacle clearly seen in the situations of despotism, seduction and parade described above and gives their form to the sado-masochistic and scopophilic drives (desire to see and to be seen), which are essentially destructive of the other.

Lacan in *The Family* (2002, p. 3)

As mentioned, Lacan in *The Mirror Stage* (2006) describes identification of the Subject with the specular image and therefore the importance of the body’s *Gestalt*. According to this reading, the register of that imago conforms the matrix of idealization-based introjections that constitute the Self ideal. But as it is shown in the dialectic opposition of the imaginary, this scheme can give birth to its complete opposite: the source of shame and guilt. It’s upon this imaginary ground in which the aesthetic narrative of the selfie, as a “*doppelganger*” (Participant #1), will be built upon: to obliterate the dimension of the lack, to obdurate castration and with that, desire. According to some of the participants, the process of reiteratively accumulating selfies in public profiles could create a deployment of identity, an object

The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis alongside with the poems of Aragon and Valery and the theories of Aristotle, Sartre and, most importantly: Merleau-Ponty.

scission that results in a polarization of cathexia in which the material body is diminished through castration fear or complex.

Put in topological consideration; something in the real fails to be aligned with the symbolic, as a consequence of imaginary turbulence concerning one's own public image. The imaginary register *reels*; it drifts along with the speculative feedback that the digital profiles receive from the super-public. Far from the *point de capiton* and from the father metaphor the subject cannot be taken as such by himself in a continuum. Hence we could have the result of self-objectification, allocating indefinitely the object a in the ever-perfecting egoteca.

One participant articulated the *phantom* of selfies as such: "I want (symbolic) to be-in-you (imaginary) but not with you because I am limited (real)" (Participant #3). Society in this track would lack empathy, complementarity of affection replaced by a competition paradigm. The empire of the ideal-Self in detriment of the self-Ideal; the speculative imaginary enhanced whereas the Self-with-the-body "weakened of perceived value" (Participant #4). "We are being constantly reinforced into the fantasy that we are in someone's thoughts" (Participant #4), which is the imaginary satisfaction of a common drive, that ought to be transcended to gain a non-regressive personality structure. Taken 'into scene' this phantom arises and functions in social dynamics.

Roland Barthes (1989) lists certain qualities: trickery, pose, objects, photogeny, aestheticism and syntax as elements of image coding. These qualities are exemplified in selfies as the management of the self-image in contemporary media. They are directly related to the semantics and iconicity of selfies that define the strength of the imaginary bindings being forged. From this standpoint, the notion of jouissance as the cyclic failed re-signification of trauma begins to be necessary. "There is a certain jouissance I've seen in some cases of addiction when people upload media content" (Participant #3). In words of Lacan (2002, p. 26) (regarding the scopophilic drive): "This interest confuses within itself identification and love, and though it only appears in a veiled form in the thinking of adults it confers an incorrigible quality on the passion it sustains, which makes it akin to an obsession".

Coquettish, callous, manipulative, self-absorbed, non-empathetic behaviors at the service of the ideal-Self are likely to be found, since, without the analogical observation of real face-to-face encounters, deviations of partial drives of infantile sexuality are provided with a scenario. "Power strategies" (Participant #7) could be reinforced since they have served the Self previously to adequate within society and the digital feedbacks allow to settle an adapting "code of response, comments, likes, etc." (Participant #3) often leading to agonist or symmetric-competitive ways of communication (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1981). These models of communication were also studied by Lacan (2002) in the chapter *Jealousy; Archetype of all Social Sentiments* in the early text *The Family*. He analyzed the reactions, namely parade, seduction and despotism, in the process of what he called 'mental identification' when two toddlers are left alone.

"Although repetition is made due to the parameters of adaptation, that does not necessarily imply that the content of the repetition is non-pathological, it deals with reiteration of a certain trait" (Participant #6). Some of the participants of the study

believed that the over-exposition of a managed impression of self could reinforce exhibitionistic, voyeuristic or even dimorphic internal representations of *Self*. “What happens in the screens is now the Real, virtuality has always been constitutive of our culture but never as it is today” (Participant #1). The dispositions of interpersonal surveillance, and the manner in which the distinct plugins and feedbacks are interpreted and interiorized (often in an obsessional or delusional scale) has brought about today’s *nomos*.

“The self is unstable and unfinished; the market speculation taken into personality”.
(Participant #2).

The Ideal Virtual Collective Self (IVCS)

Generally speaking, the relation between the gaze and what one wishes to see involves a lure. The subject is presented as other than he is, and what one shows him is not what he wishes to see. It is in this way that the eye may function as objet a, that is to say, at the level of the lack ($-\phi$).

Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*
(4 March 1964)

Since we are opening the present and last category, it seems especially important to consider the term ‘virtual’ from its Latin etymology *vir*, *virtus*; reference to a certain kind of potential. This potential could be referred, as the evolution of the word suggest, to the virtue that in antiquity accompanied virility. The meeting point of virility and virtuality is something that psychoanalysts cannot elude; the symbolic legislation which is, arguably, never fully accomplished. This legislation is installed by language from the beginning of every human life which creates a breach between essence and the inscription to the symbolic. It is with such inscription that we acquire a desire for differentiation as well as independence. This in turn reminds us of the implied oedipal triangulation which, if accomplished, would result in an interjection of the father and the admission of his prohibitions; the assumption of castration. What this order provides is, in the words of Olguín (2008, p. 5) “an unpayable debt and indelible blame”. Olguín (2008, p. 6) further argues, in regard to postmodernity and its subjectivity: “The unprecedented failure of the ideals of modernity implies provisionally, and without a positive prognosis of restitution, the fall of the self-Ideals that counterbalance the return of the ideal-Self”. The first aspect that Olguín makes clear is the decline of the meta-narratives that pretended to apprehend *essence* from within the symbolic, and that, as a common denominator, bequeathed an even deeper malaise on which postmodernity and its *ethos* was founded. The debt and guilt deepened and the media aligned with the voracity to alleviate the lack of being. This refers us to a second aspect; without spiritual expectations to be deposited in the social construction or in the innate betterment of the self-Ideals (sublimation), the contemporary subject turns his imaginary impetuosity into the construction of the prosthetic ideal-Self (idealization).

“The virtual *Self* can be understood as an ‘anesthetic-aesthetic’ construction that responds to the normative aspects of contemporary means of production” (Participant #1).

The views on the Lacanian ideals of self contrasts with Freud's Super-ego, as Braunstein states in Olguín (2008, p. 7): "The imperative is not to obey, but to enjoy (*jouissance*), precisely the thing that the Freudian Super-ego prohibits". The context on which both notions were described are self-explanatory; Freud analyzed a Victorian super-ego whereas Jacques Lacan lived the sexual revolution of the sixties, among other vast social and political transitions in which he actively engaged. "It would appear that the limits of society are progressively permissive" (Participant #4). In *Totem and Taboo* Freud (1950) hypothesizes how the primitive guilt or taboo would have destructive coercion that would even be able to self-destroy the individual, kill him in a matter of days out of a *sacred* coercion. "Within the elements of millennial Super-ego, assimilations or identifications are objectivized and seldom depicted in Selfies" (Participant #7). What we see nowadays is the exacerbation of sensuality, an aspiration for glamour, glory, fame, and above all attractiveness and personal success (Marwick, 2015). "The values introverted in selfies could be economic, moral, and emotional" (Participant #5). Maier (in Olguín, 2008, p. 8) says on this account: "Pleasure has become mandatory: exigencies of seduction, euphoria, dynamism; the body is exalted but, under a layer of permissiveness, it sits submitted". "Authenticity is pursued in a manner of approval of self, since the display of the intimate raises the illusion of affective identification with the fetishized image" (Participant #5).

We emphasize the reflection on the vassalage of the body in reference to the selfie from the point of view of Maier (in Olguín, 2008) while we consider the importance of the development that concerns the problem of authenticity. A paradox arises at the moment in which the supposed authenticity comes from a mandate that emerges from the *Other* in an imperative way. This environment can produce a fetishized social habit, denying castration by enhancing the mediums of self-management by means of seduction, euphoria or implanted statements. Testimonies recollected by Warfield (2015) conveyed they "sought an image that they felt was 'authentic', 'real', "not fake' and 'not forced'".

One can deduce that this is the response that the *Self* compulsory wants to address to the *Other*, responding to its desire, after the famous Lacanian *Che vuoi?* (What is it that you want from me? We ask the *Other*). It concerns the register of extimacy. The concept of extimacy, as studied by Byung C. H. (2017) after Lacan, denotes the progressive loss of freedom thus installing normativity. Byung (2017) explains this process in a fable; *The Mole and the Snake*, in contrast to the disciplinary and seclusion society studied by Foucault, the mechanism of coercion today is the snake moving in the extension of mediated intersubjectivity. It is about the neoliberal control that institutes a rivalry and a debt through the tyranny of the 'like'. The snake "wants to dominate trying to please and generating dependencies" (Byung, 2017, p. 34), while reading and fostering the expression of intimacy.

The immediacy between 'time/public' reach and 'space/private' image could be seen as an ontological invasion, with pathological consequences, since human faculties and nature are an abyss apart from a smartphone screen and internet superpublic. Immediacy as a value is evident even from the names of the mayor selfie display apps like *Snapchat*, *Instagram*, *Flickr*, and *Tumblr* which connotes just this, speed and urgency. One can mark the resemblance of the operations harnessed by colonization;

colonized by another time register and a new *real* based on interconnectivity without even noticing and accepting technology as *master*⁵.

The ritualistic features related to the user experience inhabits the disembodied *Selfer*, forming a collective diaspora exiled from the ancestral Real and ingathered in the Noeme. “This selfie mythology is from now on a common denominator, the non-delayed fulfillment of imaginary drives and the certainty that everything is on-line” (Participant #5). “Interconnection gives the illusion of facing a deity” (Participant #1), a unifying self-explaining power, that Kyriazis (2015, p. 22) has called Noeme:

...the Noeme is structurally coupled with its medium. As a self-organizing system, it adjusts to external influences and reinvents itself in order to adapt to its environment i.e. it reproduces (self-replicates) horizontally if successful, will lead to others copying it i.e. it is the total sum of all individual cognitive efforts and active information-sharing accomplishments of a person, the intellectual standing of a person within the Global brain.

Discussion

In Lacanian theory most of the aspects referred to the selfie correspond to the study of the imaginary register that occupied the early stages of his theoretical production. As Jiménez (2009) indicates, he was engaged in locating a subject that differed from the one studied from the standpoint of psychology and psychiatry. This subject then corresponded to a system regulated by the drives and the metabolism of *imagos*. It was influenced to a great extent by Alexander Kojève, Roger Caillois (1986), Georges Bataille and Salvador Dalí, since the I (*moi*) functioned as a platform of meaning, therefore imaginary, that glides on illusion, deception, imposture, vertigo, boldness and antagonism. Mimesis and paranoia occupied a central place in his dissertations. It seems to us that due to this sum of factors the study of subjectivity as a postmodern *Selfer* could not be more *ad hoc* to such a perspective since it was founded in a historical context that has much in common with ours. The image today regains its status of primacy and the truth falters in a weakening of the symbolic register.

In correspondence with a dialogue facilitated by the present journal, some details proved to be necessary to put in question, especially some concerning the applied methodology. It was previously stated that our approach aimed to contribute to a type of study that privileges empirical data while also harnessing a diversity on critical apparatus. This article sought to work through the findings within the analytic discourse (as accounted in *L'envers de la psychanalyse*), with the selfie in the position of the agent: as object a, cause of desire. In this regard we sustained our decision to

⁵ Viewed as in the four discourses accounted in *L'envers de la psychanalyse*. “The master, S1, is the agent who puts the slave, S2, to work: the result is a surplus, object a, that the master struggles to appropriate”.

incorporate different voices and addresses to this peculiar discursive agent. This procedure was sought to prevent the inclusion of one exclusive critical apparatus to translate the possible meanings. The Lacanian psychoanalytical approach was primordial; since it was firstly appointed by the participants own reading, specially referred to the *mirror stage* and its conceptual surroundings in the early works of Lacan. It was therefore our responsibility to ‘dialectize’ the dimension depicted in that particular writing with the elements that later on articulated with the object a, thus with the integrity of the topology. We say responsibility, since remaining in the logic of the specular image would create exactly the effect it aims to prevent, namely: a static fixation on a schematic lure. Hence our overview on the developments of virtuality in social bonds as accounted in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1964). Furthermore hereby we wish to suggest the reader to further review the status of the alienation through the image in correspondence with the signifier, primarily developed by Lacan (2006) in *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud*. This text would be a turning point to assimilate the sign as an anchor in the inter-subjective field. In this line, Rabaté (2007) argues that in the seminar of *The Symptom* there is a rethinking of the identification via a fourth consistency: the observation elicited by one participant (“a selfie gallery represents the subject for another selfie gallery”), might be propping towards this instance. However, due to the complexity of the problematic, the relation between this antecedent and the final consequences of it within a Lacanian chronological overview shall correspond to further research.

Selfies have been analyzed from different perspectives, some results indicated that selfies involved elements of self-objectification, demonstrating how people develop an objectified appearance consciousness, including appearance, surveillance and appearance dissatisfaction (Lyu, 2016). It has been stated that in Self objectification people tend to continually monitor their own bodies and subsequently have negative feelings of their appearance. As a result, women show their physical assets as more attractive to enhance and maintain their self-esteem, while men are willing to inflate their generosity and resources. Consistent with these findings, other results also demonstrated that young women try to find a balance between an image that presents them as a conventionally beautiful model, while also being an image that others would want to see, an image that somehow represents a felt connection to the body and ones’ authentic sense of self (Warfield, 2015). Her phenomenological studies have shown how imaginary audiences can be either persecutory or gratifying in a superlative way. The finding that people do not want to be seen when they are taking a selfie [Warfield (2015) uses the words *policed, chastised, ashamed, silly, vulnerable, exposed, and embarrassed*], advocate that the real of the body is constricted and subject to the primary feelings of fragmentation and incoordination of the body, previous to the final joy when they are able to “coagulate” the idealized specular image, in this, the findings are entirely compatible with the *mirror stage* in Lacan. With this testimony she made evident the game of “lost and found” that precedes the symbolic register. Even when people deny staging, in that study they stated that it is a very precise process. In consequence, it would appear that the value judgment of *narcissism* or *artificial* is a collective projection of the qualities we attribute to ourselves in this kind of acts. However, we must advert this phrase used by Warfield (2015, p. 6) for future studies: “It is important to mention that this research is not suggesting that the body holds the true/a more true/ or transcendental subjectivity than the other subjectivities mentioned in this paper”. If the Lacanian

framework is used to future studies focusing on the disembodied ontologies, one should take caution in neglecting a topological consideration, and in this manner the role of the *real* register to sustain coherency with the symbolic and the imaginary.

Other researchers have analyzed the texts accompanying posts on *Instagram* to develop an understanding of the types of narratives that *Selfers* use to communicate. They identified seven primary genres of selfie meta-narratives: autobiography, parody, propaganda, romance, self-help, travel diary and the coffee-table book (Eagar & Dann, 2016). This is relevant considering the functions of selfies and the nature of the sub-texts they wish to convey accompanied by the self-portrait. These statements have the potential to constitute a manifest inscription in the symbolic order and circumscribe the imaginary, which at the same time, from the name of the categories, reveal a *zeitgeist* reflecting today's state of globalized signifiers.

Very interesting contrasts emerge in respect to the nature of the interviewees since two selfie studies were conducted at the same university. We compiled, under different methodologies, the opinion on selfies by people from the field of humanities and psychoanalysis (the present) and marketing students (Barajas et al., 2017). The contrast demonstrates a very different approach between the two publics. "The most relevant findings were that the marketing students felt enthusiastic, free, comfortable, satisfied and relaxed when sharing emotions and feelings such as friendship, joy, happiness and love, among others" (Barajas et al., 2017, p. 8). This points out a peculiar breach apparently inherited to the two critical apparatus and/or subjective constitutions of both populations.

As far as the economical implications concern, it has also been proven that throughout anthropomorphism and familiarity, a *brand personality* can relate easily through affectivity with target consumers through specific kinds of brands (Barajas et al., 2017). The visual content, in this perspective, is added with fetishistic features that make the selfie a speculative merchandise. According to the definition of *branding* by Reynolds and Gutman (1984), it could be understood as a process that generates the image of a brand taking into account the synthesis of attributes of the product, the consequences in consumers and the personal values. As Murolo (2015) observes, painters such as Rembrandt, Kahlo and Van Gogh generated a brand identity around their self-portraits that endures, propagates and mythifies. This visibly correlates with the contemporary public character of the *influencer*. This was relevant to our analysis since 'the fetish' was analyzed in its rapport with castration and the erection of a public profile. A hashtag trend, a publicity campaign, contests and collectively organized dynamics and even art exhibitions concerning selfies could represent an important economical event (Canga, 2015).

Byung C. H. (2015) in *The Aroma of Time* Exhorts to retake the *vita contemplativa* in postmodernity since the cult of the *now* creates an *atomization* of life's temporality. These phenomena would carry a progressive loss of the narrative tension (vital to existence) between past and future and the reliance of a prosthetic digital memory in an *egoteca* as a denial of personal significant memory. This point was relevant to our analysis in regard of the ontological ground that inhabits the subject in digital media. It deals with aspects of 'belonging': what belongs to the superpublic, to memory, to privacy, to our social bonds or to self-identity.

To further explore the present topic, we propose the question: How can we conduct with accuracy the analysis of the relationships of cultural emblems and media aesthetic with the subjectivity of the individual?

Conclusion

Even though selfies carry the desire to reach the other as a *love demand*, it also carries the risk of being left trapped in the dream of the *Other* or being symbolically disembodied. The duck-face vestige of an unconscious kiss will remain whether to reach the other or our ideal of *Self*. But where does the analogical life reside in postmodernity, in the escape from memory or the fear of forgetting who we “are”?

It is here indeed that something else forces us to question ourselves about the fact that the punctuation in which this presence to the world manifests itself is not simply imaginary, namely that already it is not at all to the other that we refer ourselves here, but to this most intimate part of ourselves which we try to make the anchoring point, the root, the foundation of what we are as subjects.

The Identification (Lacan, 1961, p. 29)

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The Apres-Coup, Apres Coup: Concerning Jean Laplanche *Problématiques VI. L'Après-Coup*¹

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Abstract

Here the author examines the question of après-coup (afterwardsness) in psychoanalysis, commenting in particular on Jean Laplanche's book, *Après-Coup*. The author appreciates Laplanche's determination to avoid either a positivist interpretation of après-coup (as a "delay-action bomb", as simply a delayed psychic effect) or an hermeneutic interpretation that makes of it a post-factum re-signification of past events. Yet at the same time, the author shows that Laplanche's solution—which assumes an initial trauma to the subject, who must "translate" an ambiguous and enigmatic message originating from an adult other—ends up being, in effect, a clever combination of the two approaches, positivist and hermeneutic, that Laplanche was trying to avoid. Laplanche advances a much too linear theory, placing "the other" (that is, the desire of the adult) at the beginning of the process, while Lacan's approach to après-coup opens up far more complex and disturbing perspectives for psychoanalysis. The author, having shown the limitations of Laplanche's result ("the primacy of the other"), proposes his own interpretation of après-coup, wherein it would connect, in a unique way, the cause and the sense of the psychic world: a subsequent event in some way makes the *sense* of a preceding event to function as the cause of later psychic phenomena or symptoms.

Introduction

In time, later, we realize that the question of *nachträglich* – après-coup in French – is one of the central knots of psychoanalysis. And one – both in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis – hard to untangle. The après-coup is, I would say, one of the symptoms of psychoanalysis, a point in which it reveals itself and at the same time suffers itself. It suffers for what it is and endures itself as such. This is what I shall discuss here by commenting Jean Laplanche's 1989-1990² seminar *Problématiques VI* dedicated to the après-coup.

Après-coup is an Apres Coup Concept

Laplanche recognizes that it was Jacques Lacan who put the concept of *après-coup* (literally 'after the blow') back into play. Before him no one had identified it as a unitary concept. Though Freud coined the term *Nachträglichkeit* starting from common terms such as *nachträglich*, *nachtragen* and similar ones, the official translation of Freud into English (*The Standard Edition*) does not use a single term to convey its various occurrences: "understood later", "understood subsequently",

¹ English translation: Laplanche 2017.

² See the review by Hewitson 2017. We notice that Laplanche took up again the issue of après-coup in Laplanche & Pontalis, 1985, and in the entry "Après-coup" in Laplanche & Pontalis 1988; in Laplanche 1970, 1987.

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“deferred action”, “after-effect”, “subsequent”, and so on. Whereas the translator could have remained faithful to a single term, *afterwards*, as Laplanche suggests. Something I find quite significant is that the English translation of this seminar by Laplanche does not adopt the author’s suggestion and is not entitled *Afterwardsness*, but simply keeps the French title *Après-coup* (something that the Italian translation does too). I shall also stick to *après-coup*. It’s as if the English and Italian translators had subtly, and certainly unconsciously, belied Laplanche’s theory: by leaving the French term, they are somehow challenging the fact that it’s a genuinely Freudian concept.

I shall follow Laplanche in writing “*après coup*” without the hyphen when used as an adjective or adverb and “*après-coup*”, with the hyphen, when used as a noun. “In the case of *après-coup* the French discovery and the French translation are one and the same “*coup*”, Laplanche (1999a, p. 22) says. The point is that it is difficult in English and in other languages to render the sense of the French expression *après-coup*.

A sentence like “*Il a remanié son livre après coup*” (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 28, French original) is difficult to translate, because “He revised his book later” (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 22) does not convey the correct sense. The French sentence draws a wake of signification, something that is said and not said: it insinuates that the book seemed complete, but that then something undefined made the author realize that this completeness had not actually been accomplished; in other words, the revision was not simply an addition to improve the work, but something that hadn’t been captured or said in the first version but that now, with the *book completed*, can be captured and said. The previous version of the book already seemed to contain what would be added later, but in a sort of latency. In short, the meaning of *après-coup* in common French discourse already absorbs the (likely) sense of the Freudian concept, as for Freud something is *nachträglich* when it takes place in two stages; in the first it is something latent or potential, in the second this something comes out of latency. But we could even say that today, in common French discourse, at least among intellectuals, the Freudian sense of *après coup* has enriched the current usage of the term, which has become “Freudianized”.

Now, when we admit that a concept word is untranslatable, it means that we have come across a form of opacity, something that Lacan, to distinguish it from the sign, called *signifier*. We have a signifier when a term does not resolve itself in semantic transparency, when by translating it we misfire. Therefore, the use of the word *après-coup* adds to the *Nachträglichkeit* a surplus of sense that has opened the way to the profoundly problematic nature of *Nachträglichkeit*. In short, the French translation of the Freudian term, *après coup*, establishes itself as a detector of the sense of the Freudian concept itself: the translation of *après-coup* is in itself an *après-coup*.

Laplanche’s exegesis inquires above all on the pertinence of this concept: when Freud uses *nachtragen* and its derivatives, is he defining *one* general concept of psychoanalysis? Or is it merely a question of homonymy, of different concepts that give the impression of being a single concept only because Freud uses the same words? Or is it a question of polysemy, where a single term has several senses? Evidently Lacan, and Laplanche and Pontalis in his wake, by reaffirming the term *après-coup* have given an *après coup* sense to all the occurrences in which Freud used a derivative of *nachtragen*. The sense of the concept of “*après-coup*” expresses,

repeats and hence defines itself in the very history of its conception. In other words, the specific temporality the concept of *après-coup* designates reverberates in the time span within which the concept developed; the sense and the history of the concept tend to coincide. This text by Laplanche, therefore, wants to be an *après-coup* itself, not only in regard to Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, but also in regard to Lacan's *après-coup*. In other words, in this work Laplanche states – without saying so with explicit statements – that, thanks to his analysis, the true sense of both the Freudian *nachträglich* and the Lacanian *après-coup* emerge, albeit *après coup*, tardily³.

Later is Earlier

In this seminar Laplanche tries to avoid both Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla is a sort of deterministic positivism (which he sees in the English translation choices) and Charybdis an interpretation of the hermeneutic kind, which he thought is what prevailed among analysts (at least among International Psychoanalytic Association analysts) at the time. A discerning Lacanian would agree: avoid both positivism and hermeneutics.

Let's take one of the first examples of *Nachträglichkeit* in Freud, from 1895 (pp. 353-356), Emma's "two scenes". Here is the relevant passage from Freud:

Emma is at the present time under a compulsion not to go into shops alone. She explained this by a memory dating from the age of twelve (shortly before her puberty). She went into a shop to buy something, saw the two shop-assistants (one of whom she remembers) laughing together, and rushed out in some kind of fright. In this connection it was possible to elicit the idea that the two men had been laughing at her clothes and that one of them had attracted her sexually.

Both the relation of these fragments to one another and the effect of the experience are incomprehensible. If she felt unpleasure at her clothes, being laughed at, this should have been corrected long ago – ever since she began to dress as a lady. Nor does it make any difference to her clothes whether she goes into a shop alone or in company. It is not simply a question of being protected, as is shown by the fact that (as happens in cases of agoraphobia) the company of a small child is enough to make her feel safe. Then there is the totally disconnected fact that one of the men

³ As Laplanche himself stresses in "Notes sur l'après-coup", in Laplanche 1999a, pp. 57-66.

attracted her. Here again nothing would be changed if she had someone with her. Thus the memories aroused explain neither the compulsion nor the determination of the symptom.

Further investigation brought to light a second memory, which she denies having had in mind at the moment of Scene I. Nor is there any evidence to support its presence there. On two occasions, when she was a child of eight, she had gone into a shop to buy some sweets and the shopkeeper had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes. In spite of the first experience she had gone to the shop a second time, after which she had stayed away. Afterwards she reproached herself for having gone the second time, as though she had wanted to provoke the assault. And in fact a “bad conscience” by which she was oppressed could be traced back to this experience.

It has been noticed that Freud calls scene I not the older scene, but the more recent one; the older one is actually scene II. This choice corresponds to the rhetorical device of *hysteron próteron* (“later earlier”). In other words, we find here an inversion of the temporal order of events and what should logically be put forth first is put forth after. A famous example is from the *Aeneid*, “*Moriamur et in media arma ruamus*”, “let us die even as we rush into the battle”⁴. This inversion is a symptom of something Freud does not say, but that he shows. *What* does he actually *show* by inverting the numbers of the two scenes? The answer to this question will be crucial.

Meanwhile, this is how Laplanche (1999a, pp. 41-42) sums up Freud’s paragraphs on Emma:

Thus, Scene II, which occurs before Scene I, is the scene of sexual assault, a more-or-less obscene and sexual gesture toward the little girl (I will let you read details); in contrast, the second scene (“Scene I”), which also takes place in a shop, may be called “innocent” but has associative connections with the preceding scene.

⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid*, II 353.

In short, Scene II is apparently a clearly sexual scene, whilst Scene I has no sexual connotations. But a more careful observation proves this reconstruction wrong. Something sexual also emerges in Scene I, if only because Emma is attracted to one of the two shop clerks; going inside that shop therefore had erotic implications for her. We can suppose that she interpreted the clerks' laughter as a way to mock the fact that she was still dressed as a child (twelve years old) and not as a woman. In short, Scene I would seem linked to problems specific to puberty, therefore sexual issues, even though Freud doesn't tell us anything else about them. It is by no means an "innocent" scene. We could instead say that the childhood scene puts into play the sexuality of the (adult) other, whilst the puberty scene puts into play the sexuality of the subject. But this can't be said either, because the child, at the age of eight, goes back to that shop, a sign that, after all, she appreciated the man's touching (very often pedophilia moves on to the act thanks to the complicity of the children themselves). Freud hypothesized a phase of sexual latency in children, from the age of six to puberty, but we know that many children are never "latent", and that they react almost like adults to sexual solicitations and provocations. Ferenczi talked of "confusion of tongues" between children and adults (see Ferenczi, 1949, pp. 225-230), but ultimately I strongly doubt that children are so unfamiliar with the language of adult. They obviously speak it in their own way, but they do speak it. We can therefore say that on both occasions Emma responds sexually, even if in different ways.

In what sense is then Scene I an *après-coup* of Scene II? Should we surmise that Scene II is an *après-coup* of an even more primitive scene, one absent from Emma's memory? In any case, Freud's brilliant turn here is the way he reconstructs the signifier "shop" for this phobia: he relates it to two experiences that have to do with sexuality. In other words, Freud's true exploit is the way he digs up something of the sexual in a symptom that doesn't come across as particularly connected to sexuality. Because this is what the *après-coup* ultimately is: the revelation, once all has been said and done, so-to-speak, of the sexual sense of scenes or symptoms.

Now, according to Laplanche, it is thanks to the second scene, non-sexual (but we saw that this is not the case), that the first takes on a traumatic value. As Freud says, "a memory becomes traumatic *nachträglich*", in a second moment. The Scylla to avoid is seeing the *nachträglich* as a "time bomb": in other words, the first scene, the childhood scene, produces a traumatic effect, but only years later, when the girl had become a woman. The Charybdis to avoid is the vision according to which each one of us *re-signifies* – this is the term Laplanche dislikes – remembered events from the past. Scylla interprets the whole in terms of a classic linear causality: a childhood cause produces effects in adulthood. Instead, Charybdis reverses the arrow of time not in terms of causality but of signification: an event from the past changes its meaning according to the interests and desires of the man or woman of the present. Beyond a "cause and effect" vision or a "re-signifying the past" vision, between the primacy of the cause (explanation) and the primacy of sense (interpretation), Laplanche suggests a third way, which we shall look at soon.

Construction or Reconstruction

Laplanche only mentions in passing an issue that seems to me entirely analogous; to our eyes, which are already in Freud's *après-coup*. In his 1937 essay *Konstruktionen in der Analyse*, Freud (1937c) seems to shift the psychoanalytical conception from a

previous primacy of *Deutung*, interpretation, to a primacy of *Konstruktion*. Analysis becomes more a sort of historical *reconstruction* than an interpretation of dreams, symptoms, parapraxis, and so on. I spontaneously wrote “reconstruction” and not “construction” because the difference between the two terms is sometimes essential. In German *Konstruktion* is an ambiguous term that can be used in both senses of “construction” and “reconstruction”, but German also has the term *Rekonstruktion*. In English the difference is more marked: a historical event, for example a murder, is “reconstructed”, whereas a novel or film is “constructed”. *Reconstruction* is historiographical research, whilst *construction* is a purely creative activity. It’s true that in his article Freud seems to give *Konstruktion* the sense of a historical *Rekonstruktion*, but then why did he not choose that term? Psychoanalysis teaches to give weight to the choice of one signifier opposed to another as the sign of a non-explicit problem. It’s as if by choosing “*Konstruktion*” Freud were obliquely assuming that (historical) analytic reconstructions can only be (mythical) constructions. What emerges here is the most controversial question in psychoanalysis: the fact that its reconstruction of subjectivity always refers us to myths (Oedipus, primal scene, and so on). Now, the whole *après-coup* problem in Freud, as Laplanche re-constructs it, seems to me very similar. Causalistic interpretation corresponds to the idea of historical reconstruction, hermeneutic interpretation to the idea of *ex novo* construction.

Let’s take a look at Laplanche’s third way. He supposes a first scene, an original event he calls “of seduction”, not in the sense that the adult literally seduces the child, but in the sense that the adult expresses to the child something the latter finds enigmatic, something the child needs to “reconstruct”, or, as Laplanche says, “translate”. The adult will recognize this enigmatic something *après coup* as “sexual”. The child will have to translate into his or her own language something “sexual” in the adult. As Laplanche (1999a, p. 80) says:

As I see it, analysis cannot occur except in relation to the other because the little human being has emerged as sexual – and as neurotic in a primordial relation with the other [Laplanche’s italics]. Event plus recapitulation: for me, that evokes time in the form of a “spiral”, because “spiral time” is also the time of *après-coup*.

Because each turn of the spiral takes into account the previous turn.

This theory – of the *primacy of the other* – has rightly been put into relation with the so-called “relational” trend, very popular among many psychoanalysts. I.e., in any case *après-coup* refers us back to a sort of original message that makes the other (the adult) and the subject (the child) confront themselves; an enigmatic message that the subject will have to process in future, syncopated, times. Let’s see how Laplanche reaches this conclusive theory through Freud’s text.

The Enigma of the Wolf Man

Laplanche dwells on an anecdote by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He talks about a young philanderer who, when the beauty of the wet nurse who suckled him as a child is praised, comments that he is sorry did not take better advantage of his opportunities. This is the anecdote that Freud (1900, p. 211) quotes to illustrate *Nachträglichkeit*. Laplanche considers the story ambiguous and writes:

There are two symmetrical assertions he [Freud] could have proposed: “This is how the pleasure-taking in nursing precociously determines the sexuality of adults”. Or: “This is how a young adult retroactively puts himself back in and injects sexuality into an infantile situation, which in itself is absolutely innocent”.

In Fact, the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* leaves the choice between the two directions completely open. (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 105)⁵

The essential point is: the two directions *seem to always remain open* in psychoanalysis. But Laplanche has the urgency of closing them. And his third way would close them. This solution implies a criticism of Freud, who fails to consider the wet-nurse: “Even if she is physically present, she is absent as an interlocutor, as a subject sending a message in the direction of the child” (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 106).

Frankly quite an odd note, because what could Freud have known about this wet-nurse? Laplanche seems to forget that it was only a witticism, but treats the question as a “serious” clinical reconstruction. In fact, the first hypothesis (the child’s oral pleasure is the *cause* of successive adult sexuality) and the second (the adult sexually *re-signifies* childish oral enjoyment) correspond to the alternative between reconstruction and construction. The former, reconstruction, sees things within the perspective of causes, with these always coming before the effects (if a cause is simultaneous to the effect, it is in any case logically precedent). The latter, construction, sees things within the perspective of signs, with signification producing retroactive sense. Pontalis and Benvenuto (2018) used the ‘Storming of the Bastille’ in 1789 as an example of *après-coup*: those who took part could not have been aware of the historical significance of that struggle, or rather the mythical significance it would later take on. The sense of that event emerged later. The *après-coup* could then be described as a *construction of sense* given to the past, on the basis of successive effects.

Laplanche lingers extensively on the case of the Wolf Man, where Freud uses the concept of *nachträglich* most extensively. Freud (1918b) conjectures that at the age of one and a half the patient had witnessed a scene of intercourse from behind between

⁵ Note that in this case – actually only a quip – we have an inverted order compared to Emma’s case as Laplanche reconstructs it. In the case of the young philanderer Scene I, the childhood scene is entirely innocent, whilst Scene II, the adult witticism, sexualizes the original experience.

his parents. Freud tries to date that scene exactly, Christmas Day, and even give it a specific time, five in the afternoon. And he provides even more details: intercourse, he claims, occurred three times! According to Freud, this *Urszene*, original scene, only has a traumatic effect *après coup*, when the child is four years old and has the famous dream of the wolves sitting on a tree. This dream leads the patient to a childhood neurosis, which in adulthood results in the neurosis that brings him to Freud. In other words, we have an *après-coup* of the *après-coup*, insofar as the adult neurosis re-actualizes, so-to-speak, a childish neurosis that was in turn the traumatization of a previous experience.

Here too, the crucial question for Laplanche is whether we should consider the scene of coitus from behind a historical reality or a construction in itself. In this case Jung spoke of a “retrospective fantasy”, i.e., for him the primal scene is actually a fantasy of the adult (and I would say: more of the analyst than of the analysand) projected back in time as a childhood scene or fantasy. It’s important for Freud to confute the Jungian thesis and Laplanche follows him on this line. Even if his French reader makes a symptomatic terminological choice: “The observance of parental coitus – he writes (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 118) – is entirely a construction of the analyst” (“*construite dans l’analyse*”, in the original French version). He could have said *reconstruite*, but he prefers the “creative” term. However, this does not mean that Laplanche fully subscribes to the idea that the event in itself – the sight of adult coitus – is the primary cause of neurotic sequences. What counts for Laplanche is not the fact of the sexual act being seen, but the fact that the child is confronted with “messages” – in this case a message in the form of an act – that are difficult for him to interpret; and also the fact – that Laplanche insinuates – that it was *no coincidence* that the adults let the boy surprise them, that perhaps they wanted to be seen having sex... Their will to seduce or upset the boy may have been unconscious. In any case, for Laplanche the vicissitudes of the unconscious begin in the relation between at least two subjects (an adult and a child). Or, to put it more bluntly: we have an unconscious thanks to a mainly unwitting adult pedophilia.

Laplanche substantially rejects Freud’s vision, which he calls solipsistic, “*après-coup* is a phenomenon that is not played out within the *intrapersonal* but within the *interpersonal*” (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 156). Originally there’s an adult, with his or her unconscious and sexuality, and a child who receives messages from this adult. And “the messages sent by the adult are ‘enigmatic’ because ‘offshoots’ [i.e., the untranslated residues of failed/incomplete translations] contained in the adult’s unconscious creep into the message; without the adult’s awareness they insinuate themselves into the messages sent by the adult” (Laplanche, 1999a, p. 152). Our life is then entirely inscribed in the *après-coup* insofar as we try to understand – to “translate”, as Laplanche says – these original messages. But evidently every re-interpretation of these messages always leaves something out, always turns out incomplete, hence the need, in the course of life (and of analysis), to re-translate this “*coup d’avant*” according to the codes that are topical from time to time. Laplanche substantially accepts the underlying hermeneutic formulation (though criticizing it at the same time) according to which Freud’s analytical work, for example on the fantasies and original experiences of the Wolf Man, somehow repeats the work we are all required to carry out throughout our lives. Freud’s interpretative setbacks are an expression of the interpretative setbacks that make up the history, I would say, of our unconscious. Analysis, therefore, is the interpretation of interpretations – even if

Laplanche calls them ‘translations’ – and original interpretations are attempts to understand what the other (the adult) wants of me.

Laplanche rightly notes that the question of whether the original scene is a reality is a replay of the dilemma Freud posed himself years earlier in his correspondence with Fliess, when the question was whether the fantasies of hysteric women referred to a scene of *real seduction* by adults when the patients were children, or whether these scenes *were* fantastical *constructions*. In both cases the problem is: is the adult *après-coup* construction or return? Rehabilitating the theory of seduction, Laplanche seems to be saying: in a certain sense there was a seduction, but in the sense that adult action and adult saying come across as enigmatic to the child. It’s the enigma that seduces. There’s an original uncertainty on the sexual sense of the acting and saying of adults.

It would seem that for Laplanche the adults rarely want seduction to occur, but it’s as if they have made it happen *de facto*. For Laplanche the real trauma is always, somehow, a seduction. This third way of Laplanche doesn’t convince me. And I shall try to explain why.

The Freudian Axiom

Though a fascinating read, the case of the Wolf Man is the least convincing of Freud’s clinical cases, because, in contrast to all the others, here Freud attempts to use dreams and fantasies claiming to access a determined and datable historical reality. It doesn’t take an exceptional logical and analytical spirit to realize that the supposed reconstruction of the original scene is based practically on nothing. It is, as Laplanche lets slip, a pure *construction*. Today we can say that it was all a delusion of Freud’s in which he involved his patient, who, moreover, never accepted it as real (he kept repeating that in his stately home the children never slept in the same room as their parents)⁶. There’s not enough room here to explain why I’m convinced of what I’m saying, but it’s something I’ve developed it in other writings⁷. In fact, the text on the Wolf Man is full of acute observations and precious intuitions, but I think that what Freud meant to be the core of his essay is a failure: to prove – against Jung – that the bases of certain neuroses are *real*, let’s call them traumatic scenes or events, especially of a sexual nature (even if the traumatic effect is *après coup*). The prime mover, in this case, is having witnessed that coitus. Freud then concedes that it may not have been a coitus between his parents, that it may even have been one between animals, but that he must have in any case assisted to *a coitus scene*. Freud waters down the original scene *après coup*, but the core remains: witnessing coitus. The *sexual act* is a sort of dogma Freud feels compelled to insist upon.

The disappointing thing about Laplanche’s reconstruction on the other hand, is the fact that he never questions the reconstruction (which I think is pure construction) of the scene. Years earlier Laplanche had said, with Pontalis, “Freud’s demonstration [in the case of the Wolf Man] is facilitated by the very likely *reality* of the primitive

⁶ This forced Freud to develop an ad hoc hypothesis: that the child had *exceptionally* slept in his parents’ room because he was ill. See Obholzer, 1981. See the entry for “PANKEJEFF Serguei Costantinovitch (1887-1979), ‘cas de L’Homme aux loups’” in Roudinesco & Plon, 1997, pp. 753-8.

⁷ Benvenuto 2017.

scene in that case” (italics by Laplanche and Pontalis, 1985, p. 55), whilst I would have said: precisely because Freud finds it difficult to prove what he wants to prove, he fabricates a coitus scene that allows him to distinguish himself from Jung. Basically, the reality of the scene is on the contrary quite unlikely. There is in fact an ambiguity in Laplanche’s text. Because on the one hand he seems indirectly to raise doubts on the fact that Freud’s reconstruction can actually hold, but on the other he insists that *we must take Freud seriously*; i.e., that we must take the original scene seriously.

Laplanche describes Freud as someone “running in a cage”: the cage consists in the alternative between “the original traumatic scene is a real event” versus “the original traumatic scene is a fantasy”. According to Laplanche we can come out of this cell only by accepting his third possibility. But his solution also keeps as a staple the validity of the reconstruction of the scene, whilst it would need to be finally challenged as an explicative dogma. In this way Laplanche rejects the Jungian hypothesis of “retrospective fantasy”. Now, I think this is a necessary starting point if we really want to “take Freud seriously”: throwing out the dead weight of the original scene precisely to make the pure gold of his clinical intuition shine. I.e., that there are crucial childhood scenes is not something we should exclude, but the inability to ever re-construct them authentically is a more or less constant factor of analytical work.

In a sense, Laplanche’s “third way” does not really override the opposition between the positivist and hermeneutic interpretations of *après-coup*, but is an ingenious combination of the two. Because Laplanche does not deny that a *real event* somehow took place somewhere – even if only a ‘relational’ event, a message more than a vision or physical contact –, and this comes across as a *parti pris*, a bias; but at the same time he says that this real event is essentially a hermeneutic process, a translating effort that belongs to the order of interpretation on behalf of the child subject. The plasticity of the original scene is made to fade away – more important is that which the adults *wanted to show* off their sexuality to a child than *the sight* of the sexual act itself – but it still remains an original scene. An intersubjective ambiguous scene that requires interpretation, but still a foundational one.

Cause and Sense

I am not convinced by Laplanche’s interpersonal, or relational, solution. And not only because Laplanche doesn’t actually bring any clinical elements that could make his hypothesis more persuasive; he limits himself to an exegesis of the Freudian text, which, however, lacks precisely those interpersonal details that he thinks should be considered fundamental. He argues that, being the original scene of the Wolf Man a real event, we should take into consideration the “message” the adults give the child. But of course we can only conjecture this “signifying intention” of the adults. Yet for Laplanche this primacy, or antecedence, of the adult message is essential – it is *his* construction.

It is essential, because deep down Laplanche understood the explosive power that the concept of *après-coup* involves in the very moment Lacan isolated it as a specific concept, i.e., signaling the Freudian *après-coup* gave this notion an uncanny or embarrassing sense *après coup*. What’s uncanny and embarrassing is the fact that the

après-coup gives substance to a “coup” that wouldn’t exist without this après-coup. The game is becoming dangerous.

The fundamental point is the so-called arrow of time. For the physics of today, time is an illusion⁸, but in our concrete life it is by no means that: we know that we can’t go back in time. Now, we can come out of the alternative between deterministic causality and hermeneutic re-signification by describing après-coup as a form of magic or miracle. This is a road some are ready to take. In other words, the “before” is caused by the “after”; the after is the cause of the before. We can change the past starting from the present – not in the dull sense of re-signifying the past starting from the present, but in the sense that we can miraculously correct and change the past. As we see in Frank Capra’s film *It’s a Wonderful Life*, for example, or in some of the films of Robert Zemeckis’s *Back to the Future* series. A process of correction of the past that occurs, in the case of Capra’s film, thanks to divine intervention. But then we are completely in the domain of anti-science, or science fiction, a road Laplanche would never take.

There is, however, another way of conceiving the inversion of the arrow of time: seeing *nachträglich* as a process thanks to which *the sense* of a later event gives an earlier event a *causal power*. But the opposite is also possible: in the two Emma scenes, Scene I (the later one) acts as the cause of a phobia thanks to the sense of Scene II (the earlier one). The *hysteron proteron* form Freud adopts then expresses the following: there is a causal primacy of the later scene, in the sense that its sense makes an earlier scene the etiology of later symptoms. Now, this retroaction of the present on past is only possible in a humanized world⁹.

Let’s imagine a connection of this type. A subject crosses a bridge. Then he reads that the area has a high seismic risk and that years earlier that same bridge had collapsed; but the information doesn’t particularly trouble him. Years later he sees a house collapse because of an earthquake; and later he develops a phobia for... bridges. He can no longer cross them for fear that they will collapse. It’s an imaginary clinical case, but a plausible one. What happens here? Let’s leave out any symbolical interpretations of the phobia. What counts is that the first experience of crossing the bridge only becomes the cause of a phobia through the sense that the later event gives to the former: *collapsing*. A previous event becomes a cause thanks to a sense given après coup by Event II.

This is certainly an inversion of the arrow of time, but not of the magical or miraculous kind, because the reality of the earlier event isn’t modified: its *force* is modified. It will have the power to produce a phobia insofar as it will receive a different sense from the later event. Now, that a sense may be the cause of acts and facts is a basic fact of all stories and even of collective history. We know that

⁸ It is a subjective effect of the irreversibility of the thermodynamic processes.

⁹ This is not exact, because quantum mechanics leads to describing situations where in a certain sense the future conditions the past, as the famous paradox of Schrödinger’s cat aimed to prove. In any case, quantum mechanics deals with processes that take place in a microcosm very different from our biological world, where the arrow of time has no exceptions. We live on the earth, not in an atom.

discourses can change the course of history. For example, Christian, Islamic, Liberal and Marxist discourses... have produced quite concrete historical effects. Concepts produce enthusiasms, tears and blood. In the human world, sense causes events, and there's nothing magical about this, because human beings always act on the basis of discourses, i.e. of the schemes of sense they find in the world. But *après-coup* is a special case of sense because it produces a cause: it's not the sense of an event that is directly causal, but it works so as to make an earlier event, with a different sense, take on causal power. It is not the past itself that's modified, but its power. Hence Freud's *hysteron proteron*, the fact that it represents as earlier what comes later, *shows* that it is sense that produces a cause.

Of course, the *après-coup* effect is not specific to psychopathological processes, even if Freud did describe it in a context of neurosis. Instead, the *après-coup*, as we have described it, is something which determines many forms of life. Even an analytic cure might be considered an effect of *après coup*, in the sense that the analysis could give later a fresh significance to the past, and thus bring about a change in present life.

Why does Laplanche then not lean toward this interpretation – neither magical nor hermeneutic – of *après-coup*? Because turning retroactively an event into a cause is in any case a way of inverting the arrow of time. Now, we could suspect that this is what happens in analysis itself – or rather, it's the paradox analysis would seem to imply. It is usually thought that analytical elaboration works like medicine: a pathogenic cause ceases to be a cause thanks to the cure. But the suspicion is that analysis is based on a more artful postulate: it gives causal power to earlier events that had none before analysis. It is not therefore a process of sense that cancels out causes, but a process of sense that turns a past event into the cause of the present. Something difficult to accept for someone with a “positive” mentality.

Indeed, with *après-coup* the concept of an event as a *primary cause* falls through. Laplanche therefore wants to defuse all the conceptual dangers inherent to the idea that sense is a cause of the past. Hence his clutching to the axiom of a primary event, albeit an ambiguous one that needs to be entirely “translated”: seduction by the adult. Lacan's promotion of the concept of *après-coup* had something scandalous about it: the cause does not come before but after, through projection into the past. In this way there is no primacy of anything, in the sense that there is no absolute *before*. By betting on the “primacy of the other”, actually making it his banner, Laplanche indicates a reassuring *primum movens* indicated in the other with respect to the subject and in the adult with respect to the child. In this way we are reassured about what comes before, about what holds primacy, about what gives psychoanalysis itself its origins and consistency. Thus saving it, though a little at the last minute, from Lacanian subversion, from the dizzying ambiguity into which Lacan had pushed it.

Secondariness of the Original

Laplanche often repeats that psychoanalysis is a science and indeed accepts the Popperian method of falsification (see for example Laplanche, 1999b, pp. 173-189). He is convinced that psychoanalytical hypotheses are falsifiable. Yet Popper didn't limit himself to proving that psychoanalysis is not scientific because it is irrefutable, but went as far as declaring it the champion of false sciences. It's a real enterprise declaring to be at once Freudian and Popperian! In contrast to Lacan, who did not

consider psychoanalysis a science, Laplanche painstakingly reiterates the scientificity of psychoanalysis, evidently to safeguard its respectability. We live in an era in which only the scientific is intellectually respectable. In short, Laplanche realizes – even though perhaps only unconsciously – that Lacan’s *après-coup* operation undermines the scientificity and ultimately the seriousness of psychoanalysis.

Laplanche would have been more convincing had he said that psychoanalysis is not scientific in the Popperian sense but is rather a kind of historiography, that it is based on historical reconstructions (note that for Popper historiography is not a science as it does not necessarily construct theories). The comparison Freud often makes between psychoanalysis and archeology ought to have pushed Laplanche in this direction.

In fact, even if Lacan does not say so explicitly, *après-coup* reveals that every analytical reconstruction is left suspended on a fundamental uncertainty: with my analysand, have I, the analyst, reconstructed original experiences of the subject, or have I constructed them today, projecting them onto a history that *ipso facto* assumes the form of a myth? This is the uncertainty, or conditionality, that exists in every future perfect. I can say “...I will have studied well” only after having somehow made the premise “If I pass the exam, then...” I don’t know whether I studied well in the past, or whether I’m studying well now: only the future will tell me what I really did or am doing. The future perfect futurizes the present, it problematizes it, dis-identifies it. But if the sense of today or yesterday will only be given tomorrow, psychoanalysis is no longer founded on solid bases. Rather than say “like everyone I have had my Oedipus”, I should say “If I go into analysis, I will have had my Oedipus”. If, as Freud says, the Wolf Man falls into a childhood neurosis after the age of four because an experience reactivates itself *après coup* and is revealed to be traumatic, Freud’s entire reconstruction is left suspended on the reality of this scene, of which the dream and the neurosis are supposedly the *après-coup*. And we can’t get away by saying that the scene was only imaginary and not witnessed: because even just imagining a scene at a certain age is an event, which has its historical reality. Thoughts too are datable. The choice between reality and imagination, on which Laplanche insists so much, is a false dilemma: what counts is not whether the scene was actually seen or just fantasized, *what counts is whether there was a scene* at one point. In other words, the dream of the wolves and the childhood neurosis – and later the adult neurosis – are an *after* the coup, but without a *before*, the *après-* has no *avant-coup*. The entire interpretative system is threatened with becoming like Magritte’s Castle of the Pyrenees: the castle is firmly set in solid rock, but the rock rests on nothing.

Après-coup – insofar as it is always suspended between hermeneutics, history and magic – is a mine Laplanche had to defuse, not by ignoring the problem – as most analysts had done until then – but by riding the Lacanian tiger. Taking on *après-coup* as a fundamental notion of analysis. But at the condition of finding for it the safest ground possible. Even a swamp, if necessary – the swamp of “the enigmatic message from adults” – but a base in any case, not the void. In this way *après-coup* ceases to be the enigma of psychoanalysis and is reduced to being an enigma we could call common, or rather universal, the enigma that what adults do and say represents for us infants. *The ground has been found*: the adult unconscious and the primacy of the other. This primacy should therefore be taken not only as a coming before, but also as a being a source, an *arché*, as the ancient Greeks would have called it. *Après coup*, the mine of *après-coup* is no longer a threat. In this way Laplanche fixes the rift between

construction and reconstruction that besets every analytic utterance. For Laplanche, by interpreting the analyst and the analysand certainly construct, but their construction has something of the reconstructive as a backdrop: the reconstruction of the original message from the adults. Every analytic construction re-constructs, constructs again, something that had already been constructed on the basis of an “other” speech, and hence finds its support *outside the subject*. The honor of psychoanalysis is safe.

Instead, I believe psychoanalysis should be upset. It works, in our culture, even if it is *not founded*. Like the Castle of the Pyrenees, we can feel comfortable inside it even though we know it’s hanging in the void. The concept of après-coup is fundamental precisely because that of which après-coup is an *after* refers back to a *before* that remains suspended, an *x*, an unknown element. The paradox of après-coup is that at the beginning there’s an after, never a prima-cy. It’s an after without a before. It doesn’t lead us to the primacy of the other, but at the *primacy of the after*. Let’s try to see this in the case of the Wolf Man. What’s striking about the dream of the wolves is that it consists of an opening onto a scene, but the scene that the subject sees is other subjects, the wolves, watching. It’s as if in the theatre, when the curtain goes up, we saw not actors on the stage but another audience looking at us. An *unheimlich*, uncanny, unveiling. But which is the scene both audiences should be watching?

The gaze watches the watcher. The watchers are the white wolves, i.e. not the object of horror they could represent – wolves that jump on me, for example – but eyes watching me. *I* the watcher become the scene, perhaps one of horror, for the other’s gaze, which is the mirror of my own. Freud reduces this horror to a sex scene, which of course would be something enigmatic for a young child. But the enigma is even more radical: the dream *signifies* that there is an important dramatic scene to watch, but it doesn’t *show* it. And this perhaps not due to repression, because the scene is too perturbing, but to the fact that, particularly in childhood, we are confronted with scenes that we can’t watch, with unthinkable things, which however do appear. This scene, rather than an event outside the subject, could be the event that the subject himself is *before* seeing himself. A pure *Erlebnis*, a way the subject feels that has no name and cannot be described, and that for this very reason strikes us as *unheimlich*.

The real enigma in every psychoanalytical reconstruction is not whether we reach realities or primary fantasies, but of *which experience* a memory or fantasy is an elaboration of. In other words, we are always in après-coup, always in the conditionality of the future perfect. Laplanche would have us believe that there’s an absolute, original, first time: the time when the adult “seduces” the child by saying and doing things that this child finds equivocal. But this seduction scene, provided we can reconstruct it, is also in turn something constructed après coup.

Laplanche’s Oedipus

These Laplanche seminars should be read not only as a set of statements or utterances on *après-coup*, but also as enunciations. In the sense in which philosophy distinguishes between ‘statement’ (*énoncé*) and ‘enunciation’ (*énonciation*), i.e., between what words say and what is said in relation to who utters those words and where and when. In other words, these seminars should be read non with reference to the man Laplanche – who is not in question here – but with reference to Laplanche’s *operation*, to what he somehow wanted to say by writing about après-coup, i.e., what

this seminar/text reveals to us... après coup, over 25 years after it was held. Now, we've already talked about the enunciatinal dimension of Laplanche's utterances, which can be *translated* (using the word so dear to Laplanche) in the following terms: "Lacan attempted to upset psychoanalysis, with the risk of making it lose any scientific credibility. Instead, I shall show you how useful this mine is in order to refund, to give new foundations, to psychoanalysis: *the foundation is the seductive word or act of the other*. We can carry on working without worrying too much about any problems".

There is, however, another enunciatinal sense in Laplanche's utterances. All his works lack any references to his own clinical practice. All his writings are basically exegeses of Freud's texts, taking into account the exegeses of others. We should ask ourselves what this lack of clinical references could *reveal*. We can venture to say: in a certain sense Freud's text – obviously not Freud the man – is the only real great clinical case Laplanche has ever handled. Can a text be a "clinical case"? Yes, if we take a Laplanchean perspective. In fact, his theory of the unconscious consists of this: that all human beings question themselves about a primary enigmatic text pronounced by an adult and 'translate' in their own way the speech and actions of this adult. And it's no coincidence that his conclusion is that unconscious activity is a translating activity, as Laplanche dedicated such a large part of his active life to "translating" Freud and psychoanalysis; he translated the French standard edition of Freud's works and with Pontalis he compiled a *Language of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988), i.e., translations/definitions of fundamental psychoanalytic concepts. Laplanche seems "seduced" by Freud the father through an *Opus* that – as Laplanche untiringly tries to show – is deeply enigmatic. Laplanche has spent a lifetime questioning himself on the Freud enigma, hence the title of his seminar, *problématiques*.

For Laplanche every human being from the very beginning asks "What does the other want of me? What does the other want to say to me?" And he also seems to have asked himself: "What did Freud want to say (to me)?" Laplanche's interminable exegesis of Freud and of *written* psychoanalysis repeats, though on another level, the interminable interpretation every human makes of the original parental word/act. And it is evident that Laplanche has always been seduced by this Freudian enigma: his generalized theory of seduction repeats itself, expresses and expands itself, in his response as someone seduced by the Freudian text. His rehabilitation of the original theory of seduction is a set of statements (*énoncés*) that refers back to an enunciation (*énonciation*): Laplanche seems to have always wanted to tell us how seduced he was by the word of "father" Freud, precisely insofar as this word has always represented an enigma to him.

But Laplanche is unfaithful to this restoration of the text's enigma: he places all his bets on the solution of the enigma, in the same way as Oedipus solved the enigma of the Sphinx. In other words, Laplanche thinks he can get rid of the Sphinx, even if only elliptically, by saying that the true sense of the Freudian enigma is that everyone has to elaborate an original enigma. But in this way the original enigma itself is solved: every child, every subject, must understand *the sexual* that exists in the adult message. They must understand that they have been seduced. The Sphinx may die. In this way psychoanalysis is freed from the Freudian plague.

Author's Biographical Note

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Book Review

Review of *Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalysis: A Model for Theory and Practice*. By Lewis Kirshner. London, UK: Routledge, 2017, 160 pages, ISBN: 978-1138938083.

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Lewis Kirshner's recent study *Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalysis: A Model for Theory and Practice* presents a highly readable and long-needed synoptic account of the diverse meanings and conceptualizations of intersubjectivity informing current psychoanalytic practice. Kirshner notes that the term 'intersubjectivity' was not commonly invoked in psychoanalytic theorizing before 1980, yet from the 1980's onwards its use has increased dramatically. The concept of intersubjectivity within psychoanalysis is most closely associated with the interpersonal turn that has roots in Sandor Ferenczi's early critique of the analyst playing a neutral or objective role in interpreting the unconscious meaning of symptoms and Harry Stack Sullivan's critique of Freud's concept of anxiety as predominantly a signal anxiety to the ego indicating the imminent emergence of hitherto repressed ideas into conscious awareness. Sullivan emphasized that anxiety can also originate from concern about the social responses and approval of valued or important others, a point that accords with contemporary evolutionary accounts of anxiety and depression. Kirshner notes how Ferenczi's critique of the analyst's neutral/objective role is later echoed by Stanley Leavy, a less well-known American psychoanalyst influenced by his reading of Lacan during the late 60's / early 70's. Summarizing Leavy's position, Kirshner (2017, p. 54) states that for Leavy psychoanalysis involves,

the joint immersion of analyst and patient in language and the unfolding, changing meaning growing out of the exchange of words... [Leavy] anticipated the current formulations of the analytic relationship as primarily an interactive process of mutual influence rather than an applied science.

Kirshner systematically explores how notions of intersubjectivity from outside the field of psychoanalysis have influenced the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice, notably from phenomenological philosophy and the neuroscience of empathy, mirroring, and attachment. On the topic of the neuroscience of intersubjectivity, Kirshner emphasizes both the value and utility of biologically rooted approaches to social cognition in establishing the basic parameters of mutual influence and, in turn, the limitations of a reductionist-biological approach for the particular psychoanalytic purpose of understanding unique subjectivities which

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constitutively overlooks the idiosyncratic linguistic expressions of analysands emerging from their singular personal histories. While Kirshner notes that an evolutionary accounting of emotions is indispensable for a general understanding of the purpose and functioning of emotions, he adds that the unconscious and fantasy form a kind of ‘superstructure’ that necessarily modulates how emotions are experienced and expressed. Kirshner (2017, p. 85) states,

...the perceptions that ostensibly trigger core emotions are themselves active products of the subject’s expectations and history of social learning. The confirmation of Darwin’s hypotheses that our emotional lives are shared with other animals as inherited dispositions and that their overt manifestation follows a common biological program does not negate the crucial role of higher level cultural and personal experiences in shaping subjective feeling and expression of affects.

As such, Kirshner emphasizes both phylogenetic and ontogenetic contributions to the shaping and expression of affects, a process that incorporates universal human emotions, particular cultural conditioning, and idiosyncratic subjective perceptions of experience related to personal history and present context.

Considering phenomenology’s influence on the development of an intersubjective perspective in psychoanalysis, Kirshner recounts how Robert Stolorow’s work precipitated an ‘intersubjective’ turn in psychoanalysis during the early 1980’s. Stolorow, originally inspired by Kohut’s emphasis on empathy, increasingly espoused a vision of psychoanalysis that dispensed with any and all metapsychological theorizing in favor of acknowledging the primacy of the intersubjective experience of the analytic encounter. Stolorow’s radical emphasis on the primacy of intersubjectivity undoubtedly corrected for the tendency of psychoanalytic metapsychology to install the analyst in the role of a detached scientist-observer who could objectively interpret the analysand’s unconscious. However, Stolorow’s over-correction ineluctably led to the untenable position that an analysand’s unconscious is no longer central to psychoanalytic work. Kirshner (2017) thus wonders whether a form of psychoanalysis no longer oriented towards an analysand’s unrepresented desire could still be regarded as psychoanalytic.

Kirshner continues by considering the contributions of a distinctively American Relational Psychoanalysis that emerged during the 1980’s, focusing on the work of Jessica Benjamin and Lewis Aron. While Kirshner notes that Relational Psychoanalysis moved decidedly from a ‘1-person’ model of therapeutic action focused on the objective interpretation of an analysand’s intra-psychic drives to a ‘2-person’ model that highlighted the distinct ‘intersubjective field’ created between analyst and analysand, the updated 2-person model introduced a new and potentially intractable difficulty in the form of a Hegelian battle for mutual recognition. Kirshner here takes a nuanced position on this difficulty that usefully combines Relational with Lacanian perspectives, potentially addressing theoretical lacunae in each approach.

On the one hand, Kirshner notes that analysis *does* effectively involve mutual influence between analyst and analysand that leads to the creation of a distinct ‘intersubjective field’. On the other hand, the intersubjectivity created is by no means an equitable relationship involving a reasonable ‘balance of powers’ or a reciprocal relationship of ‘give and take’ between both parties. Rather, psychoanalysis is structurally asymmetrical in so far as one person is requesting analysis by another, the very fact of this indicating transference and the positioning of the analyst as a subject-supposed-to-know. Thus Kirshner (2017, p. 62) summarizes “while analytic therapists themselves may undergo significant psychological changes as a consequence of clinical interactions, the process remains inherently unequal and asymmetrical”. If analysis does in fact create an intersubjective field, it is one operating at conditions far from equilibrium.

The difficulties with a 2-person model eventually became evident to Relational theorists who subsequently developed various models of an ‘analytic third’ position to keep analysis moving in a productive direction rather than grinding to a halt in a stalemate of mutual admiration or antipathy. While Kirshner highlights that Lacanian theory expressly emphasizes such a ‘third’ dimension with its concept of the Name-of-the-Father that psychically separates mother from child and sets the nascent subject on a path marked by lack and desire, rather than a less desirable path of confronting a non-dialectical demand, Kirshner is also critical of Lacan’s rather impersonal notion of the Symbolic Other that would apparently negate an analyst’s own subjectivity and the influence of his or her subjectivity on analysands. Regarding this, Kirshner (2017, p. 127) writes,

Lacan repudiated intersubjectivity for supporting a pre-psychoanalytic conception of complete subjects and denying the asymmetry of transference. This change accompanied his turn from phenomenology towards more abstract and formal models of *mathemes* (algebraic formulae) and the theory of knots, which came to occupy his attention. Yet although some phenomenologists appear to hold conceptions incompatible with a psychoanalytic view of the unconscious (and divided subject), intersubjectivity does not necessarily imply a complete or coherent subject and can accommodate the inequality of the analytic (and other forms of) relationship. Something was lost in Lacan’s response to the riddle of the subject by moving the analyst from the interactive field portrayed in his 1953 paper to the impersonal place of the Other in the transference.

Kirshner maintains that erasing the analyst’s own subjectivity from the analytic situation, in Lacanian terms what might be said to be ‘real’ about the analyst—the

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analyst's own unsymbolized hopes, wishes, predilections, and impasses—fails to acknowledge the actuality of intersubjectivity *qua* mutual influence that does effectively transpire within the psychoanalytic encounter. Moreover, Kirshner (2017, p. 139) emphasizes that the “task of the therapist in his culturally designated role” involves humanistic ideals that do in fact form positive prescriptions influencing not only an analyst's role but also highlight the analyst's own desire in choosing this role. For Kirshner (2017), these humanistic ideals involve a combination of empathy, recognition, and responsiveness, which inform psychoanalysis beyond or in addition to Lacan's impersonal desire for difference.

Kirshner's inquiry into intersubjectivity opens up the space for a potentially productive dialogue between Relational and Lacanian perspectives that illuminates theoretical blindspots of each and contributes to the further development of psychoanalytic theory. However, one area of intersubjectivity that Kirshner leaves entirely unaddressed are the significant generational differences between most psychoanalysts and their younger analysands, leaving open questions about how psychoanalysis can adjust to address common symptoms prevalent in younger generations. According to Paul Verhaeghe (2008, p. 2), such symptoms include higher rates of “panic disorder, ADHD, somatization, eating disorders, difficulties in impulse control, self-mutilation, drug abuse, sexual and aggressive acting out, [and] an always vague combination of anxiety and depression”. Regarding the therapeutic alliance, Verhaeghe (2008, p. 1) notes that “the development of a useful therapeutic alliance is not forthcoming. Instead, we meet with an absent-minded, indifferent attitude, together with distrust and a generally negative transference. Indeed, such a patient would have been refused by Freud”. If both contemporary forms of transference and contemporary symptoms differ so markedly from the typical transference and symptoms encountered in times past, how might psychoanalytic notions of intersubjectivity acknowledging of difference yet informed by empathy, recognition, and responsiveness address the ‘new disorders’ of today? With this being said, Kirshner's *Intersubjectivity in Psychoanalysis: A Model for Theory and Practice* provides a thorough and indispensable guide to the various conceptions of intersubjectivity informing current psychoanalytic practice, and will be of particular relevance for those interested to pursue further dialogue between Relational and Lacanian perspectives.

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