

THE UNCONSCIOUS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY:
A METAPHOR FOR THEIR CRISES

EL INCONSCIENTE EN PSICOLOGÍA SOCIAL Y PSICOLOGÍA: UNA METÁFORA PARA SUS CRISES

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Abstract

This theoretical essay analyses critically a metaphor, advanced by Brown and Stenner (2009), for the crises in social psychology and psychology, their objects of study and related philosophical anthropologies: Moby-Dick. In interpreting it symbolically as a myth, we argue that the core question for the crises was the concept of unconscious. Thus we reassess the social history and origins of such concept, centered around Freudian Psychoanalysis and its myth, the “Freudian legend” – how its notion of a subject, model of psychology, and concept of unconscious impacted (social) psychology, culminating in an analysis of the unconscious in social psychology today. We conclude by advancing a proposal: a different philosophical anthropology based on the rescue of a humanist concept of the unconscious, and the symbolic realm, as foundation for both the social (culture) and the subject, and thus for a new social psychology that re-unites *Naturwissenschaft-* and *Geisteswissenschaft-*models.

Resumen

Este ensayo teórico hace un análisis crítico de una metáfora (Brown & Stenner, 2009) para las crisis en psicología y psicología social, sus objetos de estudio y antropologías filosóficas relacionadas: Moby-Dick. Al interpretarla simbólicamente como mito, planteamos que la cuestión central para las crisis ha sido el concepto de inconsciente. Así revaloramos la historia y orígenes sociales del concepto, centrándonos en el psicoanálisis freudiano y su mito, “la leyenda freudiana”: cómo su noción de sujeto, modelo de psicología, y concepto de inconsciente han impactado la psicología (social), culminando con un análisis del inconsciente en la psicología social hoy. Concluimos presentando una propuesta: una antropología filosófica distinta basada en el rescate de un concepto humanista de inconsciente, y del campo simbólico, como *fundamento* para el social (cultura) y el sujeto, y así para una nueva psicología social que re-une modelos de las ciencias naturales y humanas.

Palabras clave

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To explore the unconscious, to labour in the subsoil of mind with appropriate methods, will be the principal task of psychology in the century which is opening.

Henri Bergson (1901/1920, p. 103)

We have not understood yet that the discovery of the unconscious means an enormous spiritual task, which must be accomplished if we wish to preserve our civilization.

Carl G. Jung (Letter from 23 September 1949; Jung, 1973, p. 537)

Introduction

The 1970s are often considered to be the epoch that marked the so-called crisis in social psychology (Elms, 1975; Lubek, 1993; Rijsman & Stroebe, 1989; Rosnow, 1981): a period of strong self-criticism of the science's theoretical, ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundations, its relevance and scientific status. According to Christopher Fraser (2003), "A large number of papers in this period expressed concerns that social psychology was, among other things, trivial, reductionist, artificial, conceptually unsophisticated and immature in its theories, limited in generalizability, culture-bound, irrelevant for understanding social issues and problems" (p. 3). Henri Tajfel (1972) related such concerns with broader issues, namely, a conflictive questioning of social psychology's social, scientific, and philosophic assumptions:

The nature of theory in social psychology; the adequacy of the methods used for the analysis of 'natural' social phenomena; the nature of the unstated assumptions, values and presuppositions about Man and society determining theories and methods of research; the relevance and significance of the results of science; the relations of theories, problems and methods of research in social psychology to those in the physical and in the natural sciences. (pp. 2-3)

Such questioning was chiefly directed at what was seen as North American social psychology, roughly characterised by a *positivist paradigm* (i.e., mechanistic models, quantitative methods, experimental approaches, and individualism): Kenneth Gergen (1973) criticised its adoption of the natural sciences model, instead of a social sciences model; Rom Harré (1974) wrote a criticism of its use of positivist research methods; and John Shotter (1975) criticised its mechanistic models that deny free will.

More recently, Ian Parker (1989) discussed the alienation of a "sub-area of the human sciences" from the outside world (and, one might add, from other scientific disciplines) and its crystallisation "as a disciplinary apparatus" (p. 1). Moreover, some authors (e.g. Dowd, 1991; Estramiana, Luque, Gallo & Peris, 2007; Garrido & Álvaro, 2007; Stryker, 1977, 1988) point to a fragmentation of social psychology, seen as two distinct disciplines (sociological and psychological social psychologies), or a hybrid discipline (Ross, 1967) — which is interconnected to a questioning of social psychology's scientific *subject* itself (Apfelbaum, 1992).

Thus, one can see that, since the very beginning of the crisis, the criticisms and questions that constituted its bases were directly related to broader, meta-theoretical issues. Such issues may be summarised as follows: the old problem, pointed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1883/2006), of the distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and

Geisteswissenschaften; disparate theories on the subject, or *self*; assertion of free will and agency (as opposed to determinism); the relationship between individual and society (and a focus on either individual or society, or else on their relationship); and the opposition of essence and (radical) social constructionism. All such problems pertain to the order of *philosophical anthropology*.

Contemporary authors usually consider the crisis in social psychology to be specific to its field, or else related to the so-called “crisis in modernity”. However, we are of the opinion that the crisis in social psychology is part of a crisis in psychology as a whole, and in the human sciences in general. In that we agree with the view of Martin Roiser’s (1997): “The subject has been beset by a long-running series of controversies concerning psychoanalysis, introspection, group mind, humanism, the self, common sense and many others. The crisis in social psychology is thus not a recent seventies and eighties phenomenon; it has traversed the history of the discipline” (p. 105). Thus, the crisis of social psychology is coterminous not only with the “crisis in modernity”, but also with a crisis in psychology as a science. Or, as Corinne Squire (1990) has put it: “The antecedents of the problem can be traced much further back [than the 1950s], to the discipline’s nineteenth-century psychological and sociological precursors” (p. 33).

Such argument is clearly corroborated if one looks at the history of psychology. Indeed, as early as 1874 – the beginnings of psychology as a science on its own, emancipated from philosophy –, Franz Brentano (1874/1973) already complained that psychology had split between different approaches, a state of affairs that was characterised as a crisis by Rudolf Willy in 1899. In 1897, in a lecture entitled *Some thoughts on psychology* given when he was still a student of medicine, Carl Jung (1897/1983) strongly criticised the then pervading mechanicism and reductionism in psychology.

People will not even listen to Eduard von Hartmann ... and his theory of the *unconscious* ... What we hear from the rostrums of science is the thousand-fold echo of materialism ... A professor [Du Bois-Reymond, a strong influence on Freud] drowned in mechanistic psychology and nerve-and-muscle physics is sowing the poisonous seeds that fecundates confused minds. (p. 36)

Later the theme was reassessed by Hans Driesch (1925), who connected the crisis to a decision about “the road which psychology is to follow in the future” (a concern shared by many authors), which referred to five critical points or needs, of which the following three are relevant for our discussion: “(1) to develop the theory of psychic elements to a theory of *meaning* by phenomenological analysis, ... (3) to acknowledge that *the unconscious* is a fact and a ‘normal’ aspect of mental life, (4) to reject ‘psy-

chomechanical parallelism' or any other *epiphenomenalistic* solution of the mind-body problem [emphases added]" (Allesch, 2012, p. 1). Kurt Koffka (1926) further criticised the mechanistic theory and its atomism, and stressed the problem of *meaning* as the central issue for the crisis. Lev Vygostky (1927/1987) pointed to the same issues and defined the crisis in psychology as a lack of "(1) a unified theoretical basis, (2) a sound methodology, and (3) a strong connection between theory and practice" (Zavershneva, 2008, p. 1), proposing and building, as an answer to the crisis, a cultural-historical approach, which stressed a dialectics between individual and society as two aspects of a single science, and was embedded in a philosophical anthropology in which the human being was defined by the capacity for *free action*, language and thought (Zavershneva, 2008). Finally, Edmund Husserl (1936/1954) wrote that the crisis in European science (and in psychology) was basically related to the elimination of *subjectivity*; furthermore, "the history of psychology is actually only a history of crises" (p. 207).

Therefore, we can see clearly that a) there was ample consensus about the main roots of the crisis in psychology (especially regarding its meta-theoretical aspects), and b) such roots are more or less the *same* ones that have been discussed by contemporary authors as the roots of the crisis in social psychology.

There is, however, a possible *different interpretation* of such crisis in psychology and social psychology. In order to discuss that interpretation, we propose to analyse the metaphor Steven Brown and Paul Stenner (2009) used to illustrate and understand the crisis: the Moby-Dick metaphor. In that we follow Henry Minton (1992), who suggests the use of metaphor as an analytical tool in the study of social psychology and its history.

Our proposal can be summarised in two items: a) Brown and Stenner's metaphor is indeed suitable and meaningful to understand what happened to the projects of psychology and social psychology as sciences (and their crises); b) the metaphor should be interpreted not only analogically, but *symbolically* – a proposal that illustrates two of the main propositions of a different approach for social psychology (and the choice of possible *subjects* of inquiry) that are advanced here: to acknowledge the import – for psychology *and* its crisis – of the *symbolic* realm and the *unconscious* field (which, as we have seen, had already been stressed by Driesch and Vygotsky); and to interpret it with *symbolic hermeneutics*.

A meaningful metaphor for the crisis

In a very interesting book, Brown and Stenner (2009) addressed the crisis in psychology and social psychology, and the problem of their foundations and subject, using

the metaphor of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* to illustrate and comprehend such issues, and also to propose answers to them.

Basically, the metaphor is thus understood by the authors: the white whale represents the *subject* matter of psychology and social psychology (the authors stress both, alternately): the *psychological*. The journey of the whaling ship Pequod represents their *projects* as sciences, projects which were captained by one of the novel's main characters, Ahab, an obsessed, revengeful, ambitious individual — personifying the attitude or *spirit* of such projects. The catastrophic shipwreck betokens the *crisis* experienced by the discipline in the 1970s: a disaster. Ishmael, the other main character, stands for a different attitude or spirit.

Let us deal in more detail with these points. The psychological is seen as embodied by two elements: the novel itself, and the whale Moby-Dick. The novel stresses the *emotional* aspect of the psychological — passions, endeavours, and portentous ambitions: “Melville's classic is a novel which dwells at great length on ambitions, obsessions, on the drive to accomplish projects that seem perpetually just out of reach. As such, it is a psychological novel, a work that grapples with *what it means to be a person* [emphasis added]” (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 1), with the *nature* of the psychological. In other words, it is a novel that confronts one with the anthropological question. Moby-Dick manifests another aspect of the psychological: it is elusive and mysterious — so elusive, in fact, that Brown and Stenner doubt its very existence: “At the very end of the novel the whale itself — which has in any case only existed as, at best, a wake on the surface of the water, and, at worst, the object of Ahab's fevered vengeance — disappears entirely”¹ (p. 2).

The main characters, Ahab and Ishmael, represent the different *subject positions* in relation to the psychological and to the projects of psychology and social psychology. Ahab incarnates a perspective that firmly believes that the psychological is within reach and, through obsessed, revengeful determination, seeks to find and conquer it, to have it done with — i.e., a conviction that it is possible to be entirely clear about what it means to study the psychological, a certainty that the project is “clearly mapped and entirely realisable” (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 2). Moreover, Ahab feverishly wants to *kill* the whale — to dissect or disembody its subject matter. In this sense, the Ahab-perspective is seen as the basis of a positivist project for psychology, which struggles to explain, classify, and control the psychological.

¹ The authors seem to forget the encounter Ahab had had with Moby-Dick, which left him with a very concrete proof of the whale's existence — crippled, having lost a leg — and a more psychological proof — his manic desire for revenge. At any rate, it is possible to see Moby-Dick as the main *dramatis persona* in the novel — in the sense that it is the *vis motrix* of the entire drama (even if the whale did not appear concretely at all — which is not the case). This has to do with the *reality of the psychological*: even if Moby-Dick appeared solely as a myth or a hallucination, its psychological effects pervade the whole novel and all its characters.

Such project ends in catastrophe, the crisis or shipwreck. That is another reason Brown and Stenner (2010) gave for choosing Moby-Dick as metaphor: the *apocalyptic* tone felt in social psychology for a very long time, along with feelings of acrimony and disruption. Social psychologists felt like Ishmael: seeing the wreckage, a sunken project, confronted with a sea of sharks and choices, indecision, uncertainty. Ishmael represents a different subject position, a distinct project: he does not know what to do – how to deal with the psychological? what should social psychology be? “[A]ll post-crisis writing in social psychology necessarily begins from the perspective of Ishmael rather than Ahab” – floating in the sea, *lost* in the gaseous Fata Morgana, “confronted in a very literal way with the question of how to go on”² (Brown & Stenner, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Significantly, in Wendy Rogers and Rex Rogers (1997) we find that the sociologist Ann Game (1991) used an almost identical metaphor for the social sciences, its subject-matter, and the social analyst:

In the preface to her book *Undoing the social* (1991), Ann Game draws an analogy between the social analyst and a sea-captain, bustling around on the bridge, adjusting steering devices and shouting orders ‘below’, in the belief that all this frenetic activity is directing the ship – when, in fact, there is no crew, no engine room, no machinery at all. *The ship’s course is merely being buffeted by the sea itself* [emphasis added]. Attempts to analyse the social, she suggests, are similarly adrift: ‘There is no deep real (or engine-room) below the surface; there is no extra-textual ground for social analysis to cling on to. We, like the writers of fiction, are at sea’. (p. 68)

Even though here we do not have a catastrophe or a mythic whale, the image and the feeling are the same (and the analysis is typically postmodern: there is no underlying firm reality below or behind the mere surface of things).

Facing the situation of maelstrom and loss, or else of just being at sea, Brown and Stenner (2009) put forward an alternative: a “second order psychology” based on an “Ishmael-function” which sees the psychological as elusive, a subject-matter that precludes a hard, *Naturwissenschaften*-style project through which firm statements could be made about the nature of the psychological. Instead, psychology (and social psychology) should be content with attempting “to pursue the psychological across the complex cultural and material forms that it takes ... (follow the whale, wherever it takes us, endlessly)”, continually (re)creating its foundations, and producing altogether contextual, contingent knowledge. Such psychology is “broadly defined as the

² As we have seen above, that was *the* question posed by Driesch, Vygotsky, and other authors, regarding the crisis in psychology.

study of what it is to be a person” (p. 5), and thus it takes as its subject matter the “universal question of humanness”, or, in other words, “a membrane, across which the two questions — ‘*what is it to be a human?*’ [emphasis added] and ‘how in this time, at this place is the human subject constituted?’ — come into contact with [one] another” (p. 155).

A symbolic metaphor

It is our main contention here that, in order to deepen our understanding of the crises and the feeling of “being at sea”, and then answer the anthropological question and the problem of “how to go on”, one must look at the metaphor *symbolically*. However, our use of the metaphor does not presuppose that it may serve as anything like a “scientific proof” or even evidence for any conclusions we might reach. Rather, as in any true hermeneutic endeavour, interpretations ought to be always regarded as hypotheses, which are inherently speculative; their value rests on their *meaningfulness* and usefulness for understanding reality (and history). In other words, we are not seeking truth, but meaning.

Melville’s *Moby-Dick* is a most profound work of art; it has been deemed the Great American Novel by many authors (e.g., Bloom, 2007; Brodhead, 1986; Jung, 1931/1966). As such, it contains a plethora of meanings and insights into the human psyche. Yet, besides its outstanding literary quality, what really distinguishes it from other equally important psychological novels is its *mythological* character: Melville interweaves a profusion of mythological allusions, narratives, and motifs (i.e., mythologems) from distinct cultures and traditions, a fact that has puzzled interpreters and has been discussed in detail by a number of scholars (e.g. Edinger, 1995; Franklin, 1963; Pops, 1970; Sweeney, 1975).

Indeed, it might be argued that *Moby-Dick* represents a *literary form of a myth*. In that regard, what Jacob Burckhardt wrote about Johann von Goethe’s *Faust*, the greatest German novel, applies equally to *Moby-Dick*: “Faust is a genuine myth, i.e., a great primordial image, in which every man has to discover his own being and destiny in his own way” (quoted in Jung, 1952/1967, p. 32). Moreover, in what follows we shall argue that *Moby-Dick* epitomises symbolic literature: it is not merely a symbolic work, but also a deeply archetypal one.

Let us first discuss what the concepts of “symbolic work” and “archetypal work” mean, and their function. According to Jung, symbolic art always touches, in one way or another, the collective unconscious, source of the primeval images he termed archetypes:

Art is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to *the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and onesidedness of the present* [emphasis in the original]. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers. (Jung, 1931/1966, pp. 82-3)

Thus, it is impossible, by definition, to understand in depth such kind of art and literature using *only* “rational” or reductive means (i.e., discourse analysis, literary critique, concretistic interpretation and the like), metaphorical and allegorical analyses, or through considering only the author’s milieu and idiosyncrasies. How would one understand Goethe’s *Faust*, for instance, without considering symbolically the mythological motifs of the pact with the devil, the God-like creation of man by man (*homunculus*), and the *nekyia* (the descent to the kingdom of the mothers)? For true symbolic works are creative, elaborated expressions of that primordial spring Jung termed collective unconscious. In this sense, they always allude to “something suprapersonal that transcends our understanding”, and their essence is to be found in its “rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the mind and heart of mankind” (Jung, 1931/1966, pp. 75-76). Consequently, the genuine symbolic work of art is never merely a *reproduction* of the cultural ethos and/or pathos (although it usually depicts them); it also contains a confrontation (or compensation) of the *Zeitgeist*³, its unconscious prospective developments, and indications of possible future(s). That is the social meaning, or function, of symbolic art: a *cultural critique* reached through the elaboration and formulation of a symbolic, archetypal image (or images).

In this sense, *Moby-Dick*, as a genuine symbolic work, is analogous to a *collective dream* (Jung, 1928/1990, p. 178) – albeit one that has been elaborated and given form more or less consciously. Theoretically, the book ought to be seen as an expression of the abysses of the American psyche, and, to some extent, of Western culture – expression made possible by Melville’s profound connection with the unconscious⁴. Therefore, with *Moby-Dick* Melville does not merely “explicate brilliantly the nature of obsession and vengeance” (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 2); indeed, he depicts and understands deeply the unconscious roots of his culture, *Weltanschauung*, and *Zeitgeist* – and their main implication: the forthcoming catastrophe – precisely *because* of such

³ Such view is shared by Theodor Adorno (1970/1997), who defines art as necessarily having the character of a “social antithesis of society” (p. 8). Lev Vygotsky (1925/1971) places such confrontation in the individual.

⁴ In fact, Melville (1852/1996) voiced such connection (and his commitment to it) through Pierre: “I shall follow the endless, winding way – *the flowing river in the cave of man*” [emphasis added] (Bk. V, ch. 7).

connection, and his extreme ability to express it. In that regard, the value of his work is comparable to Dante's *La Divina Commedia* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and presents us with an inherent rich polysemy.

Literarily, *Moby-Dick*'s narrative is that of a traditional *quest romance*, characteristic of Romanticism:

It is a voyage or quest to slay a monster – the White Whale; to explore a distant place or underworld in search of a treasure or secret; and to use that secret to redeem common existence – in the book's terms to restore 'antique Adam' (Chap. 7) and his many descendants to their rights in a heartless universe (McIntosh, 1986, p. 29)

Such quest appears mythologically and/or concretely as an *inner quest* in Percy Shelley's Prometheus, William Blake's Los, Goethe's Faust, Edgar Allan Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, and Samuel T. Coleridge's ancient mariner (and also, in a different form, in Nietzsche's Zarathustra). As with Prometheus, Faust and Zarathustra, the mythological and symbolic character of the hero's quest is a distinct characteristic of *Moby-Dick*, a theme we shall address now. First we will look at the general symbolic meaning of the myth; then we shall proceed with particularities presented by *Moby-Dick* in relation to the myth.

A symbolic metaphor: interpretation

Our interpretation will be loosely based on Jung's hermeneutic method of *amplification* (Jung, 1917/2006). It basically consists in comparing the symbolic image (embedded in its symbolic narrative) with the historical symbolic production of humanity, in myths, rites, fairy tales, religions, and art – with the manners in which the symbol appeared across cultures – in order to establish parallels and understand it. Thus, amplification presupposes that the symbol – like its source, the unconscious – is historical.

The romantic quest that is the *leitmotiv* in *Moby-Dick* can be understood as a *hero myth*. According to Joseph Henderson (1964, p. 110), "The myth of the hero is the most common and the best-known myth in the world" and, as such, it appears in nearly all cultures. Although hero myths display considerable variations in details and contexts, there clearly is a common underlying basic structure or *pattern* in all of them across ages and cultures. The hero is characterised by his miraculous birth, extraordinary force/ability/cunning since childhood, civilising power (as creator of culture/consciousness), struggle with evil or dark forces, proneness to *hubris*, and precocious death (sometimes accompanied by sacrifice and followed by resurrection). Such characteristics are usually structured in a narrative form, the *quest* or *journey*, which also

follows certain patterns. Joseph Campbell (1949/2004) reduced such patterns to a basic structure which he termed the *monomyth cycle of the hero*.

The convoluted narrative of *Moby-Dick* fits in with some specific elements of such structure: Ishmael, pressed by a sort of suicidal depressive mood, decides to undertake a journey through the sea; he meets the helper, Queequeg; the crossing of the threshold is his decision to embark on the Pequod, which leads to the “test” – to kill Moby-Dick. Thus, his journey is a mixture of “dragon-battle”, “night-sea journey” (*nekyia*), and “whale’s belly” motifs. However, many elements deviate from the structure: there is an identification with another “hero” figure (Ahab); the “test” is not to be *swallowed* by the whale, endure it, strike *from within* and thus redeem the world, but rather to *annihilate* the whale; there is no return proper, for it ends in failure and tragedy.

Despite such deviations, *Moby-Dick*’s mythical narrative corresponds, more specifically, to a variation of the hero myth: the universal theme of the *hero and the dragon-whale monster* – seen, for instance, in the myths of Horus and Typhon [=Isis]; in Babilonian cosmogony, the sun-god Ea and Apsû, and Marduk and the mother-dragon; Heracles and the Hydra; and Jonah and the whale, which stands for the Leviathan. Melville himself establishes a fundamental analogy between Ishmael’s voyage and Jonah’s night-sea journey: before signing on the Pequod, Ishmael listens to a sermon on Jonah. The structure of this ever-recurring myth was given by Leo Frobenius (1904; cited by Jung, 1912/1949, p. 238), with its typical elements in parentheses:

A hero is devoured by a water-monster in the West (to devour) ... The animal carries him within him to the East (sea journey) ... Meanwhile, the hero kindles a fire in the belly of the monster (to set on fire) ... and since he feels hungry he cuts off a piece of the heart (to cut off the heart) ... Soon after he notices that the fish glides upon the dry land (to land); he immediately begins to cut open the animal from within outwards (to open) then he slides out (to slip out) ... In the fish's belly, it had been so hot that all his hair had fallen out (heat-hair) ... The hero frequently frees all who were previously devoured ... and all now slide out (slip out).

But what does the hero symbolise psychologically? According to Jung (1952/1967), the hero is a mythological motif (i.e., an archetype) that corresponds to man’s *unconscious self* (par. 516): “that *quasi-human* being who symbolizes the ideas, forms, and forces which grip and mould the soul” (par. 259). As such, it corresponds to a *model* of human being: it “is a most ideal image whose qualities change from age to age, but it has always embodied the things people value the most”; it “is the symbol of the greatest value recognized by us” (Jung, 1925/2012, p. 30, p. 62). The

hero's main challenge and feat is to overcome unconsciousness and be redeemed (and, in many cases, redeem the world or society) or to be reborn (an ontological mutation); "to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious" (Jung, 1968, par. 284). Thus it signifies the creation of consciousness (against the unconscious); the hero is at once the symbol and the archetypal model with prescribed actions for the emancipation from the unconscious world of childhood. This usually involves a journey to the underworld (*nekylia*) and sacrifice.

Its adversary, the unconscious, is symbolised by the sea and its dragon-whale monster: Moby-Dick. The sea is the most conspicuous symbol for the unconscious itself (Jung, 1952/1967), particularly the collective unconscious ("the infinite mother nature out of which all life comes", Edinger, 1995, p. 28); and is embodied by the Leviathan, i.e., the serpent-dragon-whale monster (par. 383-5). As Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (1969/1990) put it, "la baleine recèle toujours la polyvalence de *l'inconnu et de l'intérieur invisible* [emphasis added]; elle est la siège de tous les opposés, qui peuvent surgir à l'existence" (p. 103). It personifies the motif of "devouring" (related to sun myths and hero myths): a typical mother symbolism, representing the danger of being devoured by the unconscious, thus remaining infantile (and failing the test). The whale represents the "terrible mother" (Jung, 1952/1967, par. 369).

However, in our case, as with the Leviathan, the whale also represents the *divinity*. "There can be no doubt that the white whale symbolizes the deity. A definite effort is made to assimilate the god-images of many of the world's mythologies to Moby-Dick" (Edinger, 1995, p. 77). Thus Melville (1851/1920) calls Moby-Dick "Job's whale" (i.e. the Leviathan, as a manifestation of Yahweh); "the Shaker God incarnated"; Jupiter; ubiquitous and immortal; and finally "a grand god". Also, it represents what is *sacred*, which is indicated by its whiteness⁵. (In that sense, trying to kill Moby-Dick means trying to kill the sacred, an idea to which we shall return). That means that the hero (Ishmael), in confronting the quest, the sea and Moby-Dick — i.e., the unconscious —, is confronted with God: the central question here is a *religious* one. According to Jung (1946/1968), any "direct confrontation with the daemonic forces lurking in the darkness" (par. 375) is, by definition, a religious experience. In fact, religious experience itself is "an expression of the existence and function of the unconscious" (Jung, 1976, p. 271).

Such religious aspect is further amplified by the fact that hero and dragon-whale monster myths are symbolically connected with the sun (=consciousness), and thus with sun-gods: "The Sun floats over the sea like an immortal god, which every evening

⁵ "White or albino animals are typically considered sacred. Melville notes this fact" (Edinger, 1995, p. 78).

is immersed in the maternal water and is born again renewed in the morning” (Jung, 1912/1949, p. 237). Because the hero is devoured by the monster-whale, and travels in the depths of the sea, such journey can be seen as a *nekyia*, a descent into hell, i.e., into the underworld, the unconscious. “The night sea journey is a kind of *descensus ad inferos* — a descent into Hades and a journey to the land of ghosts somewhere beyond this world, beyond consciousness, hence an immersion in the unconscious” (Jung, 1946/1968, par. 455). The *nekyia* is also an archetypal motif, and as such appears in the most different cultures and times (e.g., in the Sumerian Gilgamesh; in Greek hero myths such as Heracles’, Dionysus’, Hermes’, and Odysseus’; in the apocryphal accounts of Christ’s descent into hell; in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Goethe’s *Walpurgisnacht* in *Faust*). The whole narrative of the solar hero, his *nekyia*, and the confrontation with the monster is also analogous to *rites of passage or initiation*. All these themes are connected symbolically.

The drama of the hero’s encounter with the monster expresses psychologically a dangerous situation for the individual: being swallowed by the unconscious. It illustrates the regressive movement of energy (libido) in an outbreak of neurosis or psychosis, its reversal to the archaic level and potential progression. In any case, the whole drama is about an archaic, mythic, archetypal *confrontation with the unconscious*.

However, in our Moby-Dick metaphor the situation is different: there are two “heroes”, or, strictly speaking, an (unconscious) identification of one (Ishmael) with the other, the tragic hero (Ahab). *Moby-Dick* begins with the renowned sentence, “Call me Ishmael”, introducing the whole drama. But what does Ishmael stand for? He is “the Biblical figure of the rejected outcast, the alienated man” (Edinger, 1995, p. 22); the illegitimate, despaired one. Psychologically, he represents an attitude of *regressive escapism*: he is going to sea to escape a mood of suicidal depression — to *avoid* confronting a *crisis* (a neurosis or psychosis). It is noteworthy that Melville follows this with a description of the fascination that water (=unconscious) holds for everyone. Thus, instead of facing his inner crisis, his unconscious, Ishmael flees the inner quest — and the unconscious becomes Moby-Dick, his fate, inescapable⁶: “when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate” (Jung, 1951/2006, par. 126). Therefore, he doesn’t quite fit Brown and Stenner’s (2009) interpretation of what his attitude (or subject position) represents: “Ishmael does not [know what to do]. He is confronted with choices” (p. 2). He is, but he does choose: to flee. In fact, he is representative of what Campbell (1949/2004) sees as one typical stage of the hero myth, the

⁶ In this, Ishmael also mirrors Jonah: “The Jonah myth is a story of vocation refused. Rejecting the call, Jonah encounters Yahweh in the negative aspect of a pursuing and devouring whale” (Edinger, 1995, p. 44).

“refusal of the call”, or “the folly of the flight from the god” (p. 28). In choosing to avoid the choices, he becomes alienated, incapable of deciding, a victim of fate.

Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative ... the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved. His flowering world becomes a wasteland of dry stones and his life feels meaningless—even though, like King Minos, he may through titanic effort succeed in building an empire of renown. Whatever house he builds, it will be a house of death: a labyrinth of cyclopean walls to hide from him his Minotaur. All he can do is create new problems for himself and await the gradual approach of his disintegration. (p. 49)

Therefore, the “hero”, Ishmael, is the one that *follows passively*. Then, in the second part of the book, Ahab becomes the central figure, the hero. What is important then is not Ishmael’s conscious actions, but Ahab’s, which lead the narrative action. Ahab is a tragic hero around whom is weaved a rich tapestry of symbolical and mythological allusions. “He is a giant enigmatic figure who contains aspects of all the world’s major myths and is himself a genuine and original myth” (Edinger, 1995, p. 53). Psychologically, he represents a tyrannical, mad, vengeful individual, possessed by a monomaniacal desire to revenge himself on the monster whale, who he sees as evil incarnated. A marked and scarred man, he had lost a leg in an encounter with Moby-Dick; it was replaced by an artificial leg carved from whalebone. That symbolises a split personality; he stands on one leg only — the unconscious side, Moby-Dick, had taken hold of the other leg (the scar crossing his body from head to toe is another symbol of schism). Not merely conviction: Ahab personifies ambition and obsession; he is almost blind to anything other than killing the whale. He prefigures the modern, tyrannical *dictator* (i.e. Hitler) who controls his mates as automata (Herd, 1999). Moreover, his name marks his fate: “in Judaic mythology, Ahab is an idolatrous backslider, a traitor to the covenant with Yahweh” (Edinger, 1995, p. 54). He doesn’t merely flee the confrontation with the deity (his unconscious, Nature, and the whale), his inner quest, like Ishmael; it becomes his sworn *enemy*. In Melville’s words, an “ungodly” man. That is the book’s secret motto, according to Melville: Ahab baptises his instrument of revenge, a harpoon, saying “Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!” (I baptize you not in the name of the father but in the name of the devil). As he sees the whale as the devil, he identifies with it: a blasphemous pact also seen in his alliance with Fedallah, a perversion of the primeval, savage man. In a sense, he is mad because he is his own enemy — but he projects that enemy unto the whale. Which, characteristically, makes him a study in the psychology of *resentment* and *bitterness*, which eventually lead to his own demise: he is killed by his own harpoon, i.e.,

symbolically, by his own obsession with revenge, carried into the depths of the sea, tied to Moby Dick.

Thus, far from representing just a “subject position” or attitude of conviction and certainty (Brown & Stenner, 2009), Ahab personifies a morbid, demonic, monomaniac attitude toward *nature* and the *unconscious*. He sees them as evil; they are his enemies. A parallel is his whale ship, the Pequod: it means *destroyer*. His story is a tragedy; Ahab is not a hero, but almost a suicidal figure; a *perversion* of the hero — his is a destructive, revengeful quest, not a quest for redemption. “In myths the hero is the one who conquers the dragon, not the one who is devoured by it” (Jung, 1955/2006, par. 756).

As Ishmael identifies passively with Ahab, it may be argued that he doesn't represent an “alternative attitude” (towards psychology and social psychology, and their objects of study) either. In fact, the characters who do are Starbuck and Queequeg. Starbuck is a thoughtful, sensible, godly man — the only one to object to Ahab's quest, proclaiming that it is mad and unnatural to want revenge on an animal, which would surely attract divine wrath. His is a pious, humble attitude, of connection with and respect for Nature, religion, and God (i.e., the irrational side of existence — the unconscious). It is the opposite attitude in relation to Ahab's; goodness, not revenge, thoughtfulness and respect instead of monomania. Queequeg, Starbuck's friend, is described as a “primitive”. He stands for the primitive shadow figure, the primeval man. He is also pious, although in a pagan way; he is the very opposite of Ishmael's civilized, Christian consciousness, and evokes in Ishmael a capacity for love and human feeling. “He is a piece of primeval nature itself, a personification of the original whole man at home with nature and himself” (Edinger, 1995, p. 33). Accordingly, he both fears and reveres Moby-Dick.

As a conclusion, we might re-approach our metaphor and ask: why should Moby-Dick (and the sea) be the psychological? Why that specific choice, and why choose Ishmael and Ahab as “subject positions” in relation to the psychological and to the projects of psychology and social psychology? We can summarise our answer by saying that, given all the mythological and symbolical elements studied above, both Ahab and Ishmael clearly represent a general attitude toward nature and the world (conquering, dissecting, killing); and, more to the point, a *specific* attitude towards the unconscious (and the symbolic, the irrational). Thus, if such motif is applied to the projects of psychology and social psychology not only metaphorically, but also symbolically, one can posit that the main problem for psychology was precisely the *unconscious*. However, as a science, psychology set about its project embracing an *Ahab-perspective*: Freudian psychoanalysis, which, through a reductionist, mechanistic and pos-

ivist *Weltanschauung*, saw the unconscious as selfish, cruel, destructive, a biological cauldron of impulses that can only desire (Freud, 1924/1974, p. 197); an unconscious “in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition” (Freud, 1921/1955, p. 74)⁷, and thus must be conquered, repressed, dominated. That is precisely how Ahab regards the whale — though he still acknowledges Moby-Dick is many other things, including the “transcendental reality”, “Job’s whale”, a grand god and a devil.

However, despite the claims of psychoanalysis that Freud “discovered the Unconscious” (Freud, 1916/1977; Jones, 1953⁸; Lacan, 1966/2005; Ricoeur, 1974), in fact the concept of unconscious finds its genesis way before. Gottfried Leibniz (1704/1996), with his notion of unconscious *petites perceptions*; Immanuel Kant (1798/1978) and his concept of unconscious ideas; Johann F. Herbart (1816/1886), with his notion of unconscious ideas that drive other ideas out of consciousness (which is the foundation of Freud’s theory of repression); Arthur Schopenhauer (1818/1969), with his concept of Will (*Wille zum Leben*), which amounts to a philosophy of the unconscious; and Hermann von Helmholtz (1867), with his theory that unconscious inferences determine perception — with the exception of the latter, all these well-known authors had already advanced concepts on the unconscious long before Freud was even born.

It is noteworthy that, after the aforementioned pioneers, the concept of the unconscious was developed in both “mothers” of psychology, so to speak: physiology, representing the *Naturwissenschaften*, and philosophy, representing the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Marcel Gauchet (1992) studied the concepts of *cerebral unconscious* in 19th century psychophysiology, through which, according to him, the traditional pre-eminence of the will, and of the psyche as equated with the conscious, were called into question and subverted (p. 24). On the other hand, the concept of unconscious also appeared in Idealist philosophy, following Kant and Schelling; an example would be the German philosopher Johannes Volkelt, who in 1875 produced a study entitled *The Dream Phantasy*, articulating dream, phantasy and imagination as products of the creative power of the unconscious mind⁹. Thus Michel Henry (1985/1993) came to the

⁷ We are aware that this is controversial, and that Freud wrote elsewhere that the unconscious impulses are “in themselves neither good nor evil” (Freud, 1915/1918). Nonetheless, we shall argue that the view that the unconscious is essentially evil and must be repressed (because it cannot be destroyed, or killed) is preponderant, and in fact that that was the view that was crystallised in collective consciousness. This will be done through discussing Freud’s “scientific *Weltanschauung*” (Freud, 1933), his concept of the unconscious, and his philosophical anthropology.

⁸ Ernest Jones (1953) crystallized this core dogma of the Freudian legend thusly: “It would not be a great exaggeration if we summed up in one phrase Freud’s contribution to knowledge: he discovered the Unconscious” (pp. 122-123).

⁹ Volkelt is quoted several times by Freud in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In fact, André Breton accused Freud of plagiarizing Volkelt (see Shamdasani, 2003, p. 121).

conclusion that the concept of the unconscious made its appearance in Western thought “*simultaneously with and as the exact consequence of the concept of consciousness*” (p. 2) – which is equivalent to a major breakthrough.

Nevertheless, it was with the German Romantics, and especially with a Romantic trend, the *Naturphilosophie*, that really complex theories on the unconscious, at times embedded in complete theories on the personality, find their genesis. In what follows we will explore such genesis, arguing that it presents us with a different concept of the unconscious, which is based on the humanist tradition and produces a humanist philosophical anthropology.

The origins of the concept of unconscious: German Romanticism

German Romanticism emerged towards the end of the 18th century and reached its peak as a movement in 1830, when it started to decline in cultural importance. During that period, it became the dominant cultural movement in German speaking countries. However, its influence permeated European culture throughout the 19th century, through authors such as Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich von Schelling, Novalis, Carl Gustav Carus, and Eduard von Hartmann (Ellenberger, 1970/1981). It is usually understood as a German reaction against the Enlightenment (especially in its French variant). Thus, many characteristics of its *Weltanschauung* may be comprehended as standing in opposition to the Enlightenment and its devotion to Reason.

German Romantics proposed a different approach to both nature and human nature – i.e. a distinct concept of *subject*. Against the view of nature as evil or amoral, as in Hobbes, and the importance given to man by the Enlightenment, German Romanticism held profound respect for nature and its study; its authors sought to penetrate nature’s secrets, so as to get to know the human being in depth, for the foundations of nature are also the foundations of the human soul. Nature thus emerges as “the locus of a great current of life” (Taylor, 1989, p. 349), “as the expression of a Subject. The ‘meaning’ of natural phenomena as they resonate within us reflects a meaning really expressed in them, by God or a world spirit” (p. 301). The path towards both God and nature (which is God’s expression) requires introspection: “Inward goes the way full of mystery” (Novalis, as cited in Taylor, 1989, p. 302). *Die Unbewussten*, the unconscious (the irrational side), considered as Nature within the depths of the human soul, was in this way elevated to a key concept to understand the subject: its manifestations, such as dreams, myths, and symbols, were revelations of the natural roots of women and men, the way mentioned by Novalis towards God and wholeness. It con-

tained universal symbols — its own symbolic language, an oneiric picture language (*Traumbildsprache*), in the concept of Gotthilf von Schubert — and the seeds of things to be (Ellenberger, 1970/1981), as well as the roots of each individual's own intimate emotional life. For Schelling, the unconscious was the matrix of consciousness; its symbols were a synthesis of what is abstract and concrete, universal and particular, rational and irrational.

C. G. Carus was credited by Jung (1968) with pointing “to the *unconscious* as the essential basis of the psyche” (par. 259). Truly, Carl Carus (1846/1989) begins his major opus, *Psyche*, with the words: “The key to an understanding of the nature of the conscious life of the soul lies in the sphere of the unconscious” (p. 1). It was simply “the first attempt to give a complete and objective theory on unconscious psychological life” (Ellenberger, 1970/1981, p. 207). Carus defined psychology (and its subject) as “the science of the soul's development from the unconscious to the conscious” (Ellenberger, 1970/1981, p. 207); consciousness emerges from the unconscious and is fed and enriched by the latter continuously (p. 15). For Carus, the unconscious “is basically sound and does not know disease; one of its functions is ‘the healing power of Nature’” through “an autonomous, creative, compensatory function” (Ellenberger, 1970/1981, p. 208). He was the main source of the later philosophers of the unconscious, thus responsible for “building the philosophical bridge to an empirical psychology of the future” (Jung, 1955/2006, par. 791).

Thus the unconscious mind's features — sensibility, inner and emotional life, imagination, intuition, and spontaneity (what Taylor calls “expressivism” and “nature as source”) — became crucial principles for the Romantics, in contradistinction to the primacy of Cartesian Reason. In lieu of regarding life in a static and mechanistic manner, the Romantics defended the concept of *werden*, or becoming, in the sense of development or unfolding toward an immanent life-goal (Cusack, 2008); life, in nature as well as in man, was understood as an eternal transformation. Therefore, change and metamorphoses carried a positive value — which marks a *philosophical anthropology* wherein creativity, growth, diversity, and health (as opposed to pathology) were recognised as important human qualities. The Romantics also sought to revive the spirit of past centuries, thus bringing a new feeling for *history*, as Henri Ellenberger (1970/1981) put it. Finally, before 1800 Romanticism already emphasised the value of the individual; each individual was seen as unique.

The movement of *Naturphilosophie* (Philosophy of Nature), connected to Romanticism, had a strong influence on the then nascent fields of psychiatry and psychology. Authors such as G. H. von Schubert, Schelling, and Carus underlined the idea of a *second centre* in the soul (i.e., psyche), which represents each individual's singularity

and totality. Amongst its most vivid examples are Johann Heinroth's concept of *Über-Uns* ("over-us"), and Ignaz Troxler's *Gemüt*, the living centre of the personality as a whole; in his words, "The true individuality of Man, by means of which he is in himself most authentically, the hearth of his selfhood, the most alive centrepoint of his existence" (as cited in Ellenberger, 1970/1981, p. 206). And lastly, Von Schubert's concept of *Selbstbewusstsein*, the second and most profound centre of the personality, which gradually emerges from the unconscious. Besides, it is in these philosophers of nature that we find the historical origin of the concept of *self* (*Selbst* – literally the "itself"), as an innermost psychic centre that transcends the individual human being and at the same time has to do with her/his singularity and humanity.

All these ideas are based on a view of the human being and nature as organisms – both interrelated, complex, and in constant transformation – thus criticising the metaphor of man (and cosmos) as machine, or automaton, originated in Hobbes and typical of the Cartesian *Weltanschauung*. Here, there is no rupture or war between nature and culture. Such humanist paradigm, allied to a corresponding humanist conception of the unconscious psyche, produced a theory on the subject – on "what it is to be a human" – whose characteristics may be summarised thusly: the Romantic subject emphasises the inner world of being, the irrational and unconscious, individuality and singularity, personal agency, expressivism and the emotional world (or passions). Nonetheless, it also highlights consciousness, which naturally evolves out of the metamorphoses originating in the unconscious. Therefore, the human being is a product of *history*, just like anything else in human life – an idea that precedes Pierre Janet's and Vygotsky's notion of a *social mind*. In sum, this humanist concept of unconscious is embedded in a humanist philosophical anthropology.

Freud and the unconscious

The Romantic *Weltanschauung* was a strong influence on the then developing European philosophy, medicine, and psychology. However, its core ideas were absorbed in quite different ways. The concept of the unconscious and the idea of humanism, for instance, were torn apart in Freudian psychoanalysis. Taking the concept of unconscious from Romanticism and subjecting it to a rather antithetical Cartesian paradigm, Freud ultimately denies human freedom, turning the unconscious into a biological determinism that generates an inescapable conflict. His Cartesian *Weltanschauung* (reductionism, biological materialism, mechanicism, determinism) has been studied by many authors (e.g. Grof, 1984; Hersch, 2003) and is summarized in his paper *The question of a Weltanschauung* (Freud, 1933). Furthermore, Freud's *anthropolo-*

gical philosophy can be understood as derived from Hobbes. Let us deal first with his Hobbesian conception of subject, and subsequently with his worldview.

The Freudian concept: A Hobbesian unconscious and a Hobbesian subject

Some authors (Freitas, 1991; Ribeiro, 2006; Webb, 2006) have pointed out that Freud's idea of subject (his philosophical anthropology) is Hobbesian. This idea is closely connected to his concept of the unconscious. Indeed, the unconscious and its drives are still seen by Freud — like the Romantics did — as *nature* in the human being. However, this nature, as in Hobbes, is valued in a rather negative way: “this unconscious, in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition” (Freud, 1933/1965, p. 221). In 1909, Freud (1909/2001) contrasts the conscious and the unconscious psyches: “the moral self was the conscious, the evil self the unconscious” (p. 177). Besides being evil, the unconscious is primitive and *infantile*: “what is unconscious in mental life is also what is infantile. (...) This *frightful evil* [emphasis added] is simply the initial, primitive, infantile part of mental life, which we can find in actual operation in children” (Freud, 1916/1977, p. 210). The unconscious, or id, always obeys the “inexorable pleasure principle” — “the one and only endeavour of these instincts is toward satisfaction” — which, if not checked, would be extremely destructive and “lead to perilous conflicts with the external world and to extinction” (Freud, 1938/1949, pp. 108-109). The unconscious, our basic nature, is therefore primarily amoral, selfish, cruel, evil.

Thus, if there is to be culture or civilization, the id or unconscious (nature) must be repressed by the superego, that is, the State (or bourgeois culture) and its values, which are psychologically introjected. In this Freud is even more radical than Hobbes: repression and coercion become that which structure the subject and monopolise an understanding of the unconscious psyche: “Thus we obtain our concept of the unconscious from the theory of repression” (Freud, 1923/1990, p. 5). Another quote: “our mind is no peacefully self-contained unity. It is rather to be compared with a modern State in which a mob, eager for enjoyment and destruction, has to be held down forcibly by a prudent superior class” (Freud, 1933/1965, p. 221). This quote formulates unequivocally the nature of the *subject*, reduced to hedonism and violence, and embodied by the concept of unconscious; the “modern State” corresponds to the superego, while the “mob”, the id or unconscious, is only driven by “enjoyment and destruction” (i.e., the biological drives, Eros and Thanatos, and the pleasure principle: Hobbes' *homo homini lupus*). In the same way that fear of and coercion by the Leviathan constitutes the essence of (political) life in Hobbes, “The theory of repression is the corner-stone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests” (Freud, 1914/1980, p. 14).

Another analogy may be seen in two fundamental principles of both Freud's and Hobbes' theories: corresponding to the principles of natural appetite and natural reason in Hobbes, in Freud we have the pleasure principle that must be restricted (or repressed) by the reality principle. In both authors nature and culture are always ontologically inimical; the fear of (violent) death, in Hobbes, and anxiety and "discontent", in Freud, are ineluctable. Freud's filiation to Hobbesian philosophy becomes even clearer with the later (Freud, 1920/1990) affirmation of a death drive (*Todestrieb*), whose derivatives are destruction and aggression, a sort of biological nihilism "inherent to organic life" (p. 43). "The inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man, and (...) *it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization* [emphasis added]" (p. 81). Against a human being whose biologically determined nature is hedonism and destruction, only a brutally repressive tyranny (the superego/Leviathan) can guarantee culture.

A totalitarian philosophy of life

Freud (1933) defines *Weltanschauung* as "an intellectual construction which gives a unified solution of *all* the problems of our existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a construction, therefore, in which *no question is left open* [emphasis added]" (p. 216). Such definition relies on the intellect (i.e., Reason) as a faculty that can answer all the questions, that is, it can provide *absolute* knowledge (Kant and his discoveries of the "scandal of reason" and the epistemological limitations of human knowledge notwithstanding). A *Weltanschauung* based on such a despotic intellect can only produce a science that leaves no room for the irrational, the surprises of the unknown, and to what is *new* — i.e., to what is contingent, creative, and irrational — for no question can be left open. This idea goes hand in hand with the ideology of eternal progress and produces a sort of boastful "scientific *hubris*": all the answers (knowledge) will eventually be found by rational natural science. Then, "when one *believes* in such a thing, one feels *secure* in life [emphasis added]" (Freud, 1933, p. 216): such faith in the intellect is a reaction against human insecurity regarding the unknown and the irrational data — the unconscious, the transcendent.

However — Freud proceeds —, psychoanalysis is unable to form this kind of *Weltanschauung* of its own; thus it must accept the *scientific Weltanschauung*. Its programme coincides with the main characteristics of the first definition: intellectual manipulation (research) is the only source of knowledge, which will eventually reach a unified *explanation* (not comprehension, i.e., *verstehen*) of the universe. "Intuition" and "inspiration" — irrational forms of knowledge — must be discarded as illusions. Their fulfilments, art, philosophy, and religion (that which is *symbolic* and cultural), repres-

ent a “pernicious unscientific *Weltanschauung*”. Art and philosophy are also illusions, but of a relatively harmless kind; science’s true serious enemy is religion. Religion and its cosmogonies, ethical demands, and whole *Weltanschauung* – the world of myths, dreams and symbol – are then reduced to an epiphenomenon of the “typical” infantile insecurity, need of protection, and father complex. It has therefore an infantile, pathological character; consequently, “the truth of religion may be altogether disregarded” (Freud, 1933, p. 229).

Thus, the scientific *Weltanschauung* that Freud proposes is coherent: the *belief* that it can do away with the irrational side of human life and its most powerful products (religions and their symbols) is expected to make one feel *secure* and to eventually reach *absolute* knowledge. It is curious indeed that Freud has no inkling of the fact that both objectives are precisely what he criticises and places at the origins of religion: the infantile need for security and protection, and the “omnipotence of thoughts”. In short, Freud remains unconscious of the fact that he is substituting the old religions for the new one, the religion of Reason – which is his “scientific *Weltanschauung*”. In this, Freud couldn’t possibly be more positivist.

Such positivist dogma is then applied to psychology (and all the *Geisteswissenschaften*): “the spirit [*Geist*] and the mind are the subject of scientific investigation in exactly the same way as any non-human entities” (Freud, 1933, p. 217), that is, they pertain to the domain of the positivist *Naturwissenschaften*. The dehumanisation of both spirit and mind (or psyche) is evident; not only the highest achievements of mankind (art, religion, philosophy) are regarded as illusions, but also *there is no relevant difference between non-human entities and the human spirit*. As we know from Hannah Arendt, dehumanisation always beckons totalitarianism (and vice versa). Freud (1933, p. 234) is rather clear in this regard: the intellect or:

Reason is among the forces which may be expected to exert a *unifying* influence upon men – creatures who can be held together only with the greatest difficulty, and whom it is therefore scarcely possible to *control* ... Our best hope for the future is that *the intellect* – the scientific spirit, reason – should in time establish a *dictatorship* over the human mind [all emphases added].

Freud’s lecture on psychoanalysis’ *Weltanschauung* repeats his metapsychology: there is the infantile, illusory world of the irrational (religion as *Weltanschauung*), or the *id*, the unconscious. It represents a menace, “a danger for the future of mankind” (or civilisation), and thus over it there must be established a dictatorship of thought (Reason), or the ego obeying the super-ego and repressing the *id*.

Thus, we can see that Freud's philosophical anthropology, *Weltanschauung*, and concept of the unconscious are all closely connected. His unconscious *had* to be seen as a biological determinism, in order to fit his *Naturwissenschaft*, positivist notion of science, and his Hobbesian idea of subject. Frank Sulloway (1979/1992) was the first author to point out that Freud always remained, despite his denials, a biologist of the mind; i.e., his psychology ultimately stems from, and is reduced to, outdated biological, mechanistic models. However, Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle had already voiced a critique of this point in 1927, underlying its relation with Freud's conception of subject, and expressed it through Valentin Voloshinov (1927/1976): Freudianism is denounced as an "ideological movement" (p. 9) with a "basic ideological motif": the person's personality or psyche — in fact, the whole of his life — is shaped not by his historical existence, "*but by his biological being, the main facet of which is sexuality*" [emphases in the original] (p. 10). The Freudian individual/subject is criticized as a-historical, a-social, and a-critical, thanks to "the monstrous overestimation on Freudianism's part of the sexual factor" (p. 89). Thus, it is through their critique of Freud that Bakhtin and his circle criticize the whole tendency of psychology to explain human creations solely through biology (Vieira, 2006). Thus, Freudian psychoanalysis, far from being "beyond the mechanistic metaphors of positivism" (Spears, 1997, p. 17), is ultimately based *exactly* on such metaphors — a fact that produces an aporia with its hermeneutic pretences, as pointed by Karl Jaspers (1913/1973), Paul Ricoeur (1969/1978), and Paul Laurent-Assoun (1981), among others.

Nonetheless, Freud's legacy cannot, and should not, be reduced to such problematic aspects only. It is unquestionable that Freud brought many valuable contributions to psychotherapy, the study of the psyche, and cultural criticism. For instance, he rescued dreams from the scientific limbo in which they were thrown after the decline of Romanticism and ascertained their value in psychotherapy and as a royal road to the unconscious. Freud "certainly showed a way to the unconscious and a definite possibility of investigating its contents" (Jung, 1950/1976, par. 1070). He systematized and synthesized many findings and ideas — including his predecessors' — into an original and, without a doubt, powerful theory.

Despite such accomplishments, however, the most important fact in the aforementioned legacy is that Freudian psychoanalysis absorbed epistemic methods and concepts — especially the concept of *unconscious* itself — from the *Geisteswissenschaften* (notably Romanticism), reneging on their specificities, though, in favour of a positivist *Weltanschauung*. Some antecedents to Freud (Brücke, Meynert, Haeckel, Exner, etc.) reprised Romanticism and its speculation, but under the aegis of positivism.

Freud's *Project for a scientific psychology* (1895/1966), and its patent *Hirnmythologie*¹⁰ (brain mythology), is the consummate illustration of this: it is at once mechanistic, speculative, and reductionist, and thus stands out as essential material to understand Freud's theoretical and epistemic edifice (Ellenberger, 1970/1981; Sulloway, 1979/1992). Its opening lines render our argument rather clear: "The intention is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science; that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles" (Freud, 1895/1966, p. 301).

Therefore, in starting from a notion of the unconscious as a biological, negative determinism, Psychoanalysis fundamentally misconstrues human psychology, obliterating all the possible different perspectives — already put forward decades before Freud — that would be especially enriching for psychology and social psychology. As Lev Vygotsky put it, the attempt at integrating Psychoanalysis with a sociohistorical approach to psychology is "a monstrous combination" (Yaroshevsky, 1989, p. 169).

The colonization of the unconscious

The impact of the unconscious on psychology and psychiatry, and their history

However, before being colonized by Psychoanalysis, the theories on the unconscious had a huge impact on both psychology and psychiatry (Ellenberger, 1970/1981; Kihlstrom, 1999; Whyte, 1960). Such impact is summarized in the title of Ellenberger's (1970/1981) *opus magnum*¹¹ itself: the history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry (and psychology) are entwined with, and correspond to, the "discovery of the unconscious". Thus dynamic psychiatry and psychology typically presented a dual model of the mind (or subject), divided fundamentally between conscious and unconscious realms. Ellenberger came to see the history of psychiatry as the history of the unconscious (Micale, 1994). Accordingly, far from starting with Freud, for Ellenberger:

¹⁰ *Hirnmythologie* was a distinct characteristic of the so-called *Somatiker*, the hegemonic psychiatric trend in the second half of the 19th century (Ellenberger, 1970/1981). Its main authors in German speaking countries were all Freud's masters: Theodor Meynert, Ernst Brücke and Carl Wernicke, who attributed mental diseases to physical causes and brain conditions. Thus psychological processes could only be understood through their reduction to an anatomical and physiological substratum. However, whilst defending the objectivity of their experimental findings, at the same time they based their theories on completely speculative hypotheses about such organic substratum.

¹¹ Ellenberger's "book is arguably the single most important text written to date in psychiatric history" (Micale, 1993b, p. 354).

The progressive discovery of the unconscious mind across the preceding two and a half centuries was part and parcel of the history of modern thought as a whole. It was a chapter in the history of the Western discovery of Self, in the collective growth of self-awareness and the quest for self-knowledge. (Micale, 1994, p. 127)

(In this, it mirrors the hero's quest against the dragon-monster that represents the unconscious, in our metaphor).

Such perspective mandates a thorough re-evaluation of the *history* of psychology and psychiatry. There is perhaps no other branch of the history of the sciences that is so beset by partisanship, distortions, fabrications, and mythologisation. "The historical literature on this topic, far more than that about other branches of medicine or science, is replete with tendentious and polemical formulations, to say nothing of simple factual errors" (Micale, 1994, p. 17).

It may be affirmed that the history of psychology and psychiatry is a clear example of what Walter Benjamin termed *history of the victors*: Freud and Psychoanalysis succeeded in what can only be seen as a Stalinist purging and rescripting of history¹², based on myth making. However, Ellenberger's book (1970/1981) opened the doors for much of the criticism of Freud that followed in the following decades (Cioffi, 1974/1998; Crews, 1986; Eysenck, 1985; Grünbaum, 1984; Holt, 1989; Macmillan, 1991/1997; Micale & Porter, 1994; Roazen, 1975; Robinson, 1993; Spurling, 1989; Sullo-way, 1979/1992; Van Rillaer, 1980). For Ellenberger, as for most of the aforementioned authors, the main element in this distortion and falsification of history was what he called "the Freudian legend", which we shall discuss next.

Freud and the colonisation of the unconscious

The Freudian legend

For much of the twentieth century, it was widely held that Freud discovered the unconscious, that he was the first to study dreams and sexuality scientifically and to disclose their psychological meanings to a startled public, and that he invented modern psychotherapy. Furthermore, it was maintained that these discoveries and innovations were based on his self-analysis and the analysis of his patients. Ellenberger dubbed this the 'Freudian legend' and demonstrated that these claims had less to do with historical actuality

¹² As Erich Fromm put it: "[This is a] typically Stalinist type of re-writing history" (letter to Izette de Forest, 31 October 1957; quoted in Falzeder, 1998, p. 133). The comparison with Stalinism is also used caustically by Frank Cioffi (2005).

than with how Freudians rescripted history in their favour. (Shamdasani, 2003, p. 12)

According to Ellenberger (1970/1981), the Freudian legend has two main aspects:

The first is the theme of the solitary hero struggling against a host of enemies, suffering ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’ but triumphing in the end. The legend considerably exaggerates the extent and role of anti-Semitism, of the hostility of the academic world, and of alleged Victorian prejudices. The second feature ... is the blotting out of the greatest part of the scientific and cultural context in which psychoanalysis developed, hence the theme of the absolute *originality* [emphasis added] of the achievements, in which the hero is credited with the achievements of his predecessors, associates, disciples, rivals, and contemporaries. (p. 547)

Two ways of expunging and negating *history*.

In other words, the Freudian legend is a *hero myth*, much like our metaphor. “A great deal in this Freud legend is pertinent to the formation of myths in general; ... the myths surrounding Freud’s life have patterned themselves after ‘origins’ and ‘hero’ myths with a universal content” (Suloway, 1979/1992, p. 6). It has mystified the formation of modern psychology and psychotherapy — and, most importantly, the way their *histories* are told. Through this myth, Freud remains as the sole, original “discoverer of the Unconscious”, erasing all the different perspectives, theories, and authors that came before him; Psychoanalysis thereby appropriated and colonized the concept of the unconscious. The end result is that *the unconscious has become the domain and property of Psychoanalysis*, which monopolised its understanding by the contemporary collective consciousness — for which “unconscious” can only refer (primarily) to the Freudian-Psychoanalytical concept.

Freud and the metaphor

Thus we can see that the Moby-Dick metaphor also fits astoundingly well Freud’s psychoanalysis, its history, and his “Ahab-position”. First, the Freudian legend is clearly a *hero myth*. The hero’s quest was, according to the Freudian legend, Freud’s self-analysis. Ernest Jones (1953) narrates: “In 1897 [Freud] embarked, *all alone* [emphasis added], on what was undoubtedly the greatest feat of his life” (p. 3).

Freud undertook his most heroic feat — a psychoanalysis of his own unconscious ... Yet the uniqueness of the feat remains. Once done it is done forever. For no one ever again can be the first to explore those depths ...

What indomitable courage, both intellectual and moral, must have been needed! (pp. 351-2)

Thus Freud's self-analysis became the seal of Freud's absolute originality, and of his role as the first discoverer of the unconscious. It is painted as the foundational event of Psychoanalysis itself. "Psychoanalysis proper is essentially the product of Freud's self-analysis" (Wells, 1960, p. 189). Through this *nekyia*, Freud, an isolated, rejected (=Ishmael) yet heroic character, passes his initiation, a superhuman ordeal.

The archetypal hero now emerges as a person transformed, possessing the power to bestow great benefits upon his fellow men. Upon his return home, however, the hero usually finds himself faced by nonunderstanding opposition to his new vision of the world. Finally, after a long struggle, the hero's teachings are accepted, and he receives his due reward and fame. (Sulloway, 1979/1992, pp. 447-8)

However, in fact Freud's self-analysis was nothing of the kind — in Freud's own account. In his letters to Wilhelm Fliess in 1897, Freud tells him that it lasted six weeks, then remained interrupted for months, and ended in disappointing failure. "True self-analysis is impossible" (Freud, 1985, p. 281). One may wonder whether it could have been any different: in seeing the unconscious as nothing more than a desiring, destructive machine, Freud remained stuck to an apotropaic theory devised to *escape* the confrontation, his inner quest. As we have seen, the whole drama in *Moby-Dick* starts with Ishmael's regressive escapism.

Such escapism leads to Ahab becoming the *vix motrix* of the story. To recall, in our metaphor Ahab stands as a personification of the project of psychology (and social psychology): driven by ambition, obsession, revenge, and bitterness. Freud's story, and his project for psychology — Psychoanalysis —, are impressively similar, which led us to assert that his was an Ahab-attitude. Indeed, Freud's "burning ambition" (the expression is his) for fortune and fame is well documented, especially in his letters (Ellenberger, 1970/1981). Ahab's monomania can thus be seen in Freud's obsession for finding the one golden key, "the source of the Nile", that would open all doors and give him success and fame: first his advocacy of cocaine as *the* "magical drug" that could heal virtually all maladies; then his *monocausal* theories — all kinds of hysteria and neurosis had a single cause, childhood sexual trauma (his "seduction theory"); the sexual monocausality of all psychological phenomena; and finally his biological theory of the unconscious, based essentially on desire and repression.

Yet this last point is the central one for our discussion: the way Freud saw the unconscious, and nature, is precisely the way Ahab saw *Moby-Dick* — a morbid, de-

monic, monomaniac attitude. If Ahab was obsessed with the whale, for Freud it was *sexuality*, his dragon-monster, that defined an amoral, evil unconscious. In Ahab's motivation for hunting Moby-Dick, and its undeniable psychological character, we may see reflected Freud's definition of the unconscious, already rendered explicit in several quotes above:

The White Whale swam before him as *the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them ... That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning ...* Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most *maddens* and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; ... all that cracks the sinews and cakes the *brain*; all the subtle demonisms of life and *thought* [all emphases added]; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick. (Melville, 1851/1920, p. 175)

In seeing the unconscious, our very nature, as an inner inferno thronged with primitive, repressed monsters, “some kind of pure bestiality crouched in the depths of man's being” (Maritain, 1964, p. 354), Freud grounds his whole psychology on a “radical denial of spirituality and freedom” (p. 353). Thus his project, like Ahab's, is a Luciferian attempt at *killing the sacred*. “[Freud] invariably sneered at spirituality as being nothing but repressed sexuality, and so I said if one were committed fully to the logic of that position, then one must say that our whole civilization is farcical, nothing but a morbid creation due to repressed sexuality” (Jung, 1925/2012, p. 20). According to Jung, Freud agreed with that assertion. Thus sexuality — the biological unconscious — became his God, just like the whale became Ahab's God, nay devil. “When Freud talked of sexuality it was as though he were talking of God — as a man would talk who had undergone a conversion. It was like the Indians talking of the sun with tears in their eyes” (Jung, 1925/2012, p. 20).

As the unconscious (just like Moby-Dick) and the sacred are seen as the *enemy* — of both the individual and civilisation —, the Freudian attitude is bound to be characterised by a pact and a psychological outlook that are very akin to Ahab's. If Ahab's pact with the devil and hell is inextricably connected to his manic revenge and bitterness, in the epigraph of Freud's magnum opus, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2010), we find the same element of bitterness and obsessive desire for revenge: *Si nequeo flectere superos, Acheronta movebo* — If heaven — the transcendental, the sacred, the gods — I can't bend, then *hell* I shall raise. Acheronta is the *river of hell* — which is analogous to the dragon-whale, and the *nekyia* that is evaded, in our metaphor. In this foundational book for Psychoanalysis, Freud also admitted that he saw himself as a modern Hannibal who would avenge himself on Rome, which symbolised

European culture (pp. 218ff.). Ahab mirrors Freud's epigraph during the final chase of Moby-Dick, when he hurls his final harpoon while screaming his vengeance: "to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (Melville, 1851/1920, p. 532). Bitterness as a defining characteristic of Freud's personality has been pointed out by many authors, but it was Jung (1925/2012) who voiced it most clearly:

One might say Freud consists of bitterness, every word being loaded with it. His attitude was the bitterness of the person who is entirely misunderstood, and his manner always seemed to say, 'If they don't understand they must be stamped into Hell'. His bitterness comes from this fact of constantly working against himself, for there is no bitterness worse than that of a man who is his own worst enemy. (p. 21)

That is inevitably coupled with Ahabian resentment: "at the bottom of Freudian metaphysics there is — the resentment, Freud himself has explained, of a soul insulted and humiliated since childhood, a resentment, as it seems, *against human nature itself* [emphasis added]" (Maritain, 1957, p. 253). As with Ishmael, such psychological outlook is the end result of Freud's profound need to "hide from his Minotaur" — from the unconscious and all that it implies.

Freud did that through his theory. His ambition (and accompanying fear, resentment, and revengefulness) mirrors Descartes' and Hobbes': to conquer and dominate Nature, the irrational, the unconscious forces, through coercion and repression. In that, both Nature and humanity are distorted and ultimately *lost*, deeply *dehumanising* the subject. In that sense, Ahab's attitude towards Moby-Dick, and Freud's attitude towards the unconscious, are symbolic of both the prevailing cultural attitude towards the unconscious after Freud, and the projects of psychology and social psychology.

The unconscious and philosophical anthropology

As we have seen, the notion of a *subject* — philosophical anthropology — has always been central to psychology and social psychology's endeavours as sciences, as pointed out by Brown and Stenner (2009) in relation to our metaphor as the question "*what is it to be a human?*" — the anthropological question. "The subject has always been the central puzzle of psychology — how is it that the biological, the social and the psychic come together in human thought, feeling and action?" (p. 175). Focusing on social psychology, Russell Spears (1997) stresses its necessity of "generating a theory of the subject" (pp. 16-17) and presents the suggestion that "we need a theory of the self". To fulfil that need, "A classical recourse for many critical theorists seeking a theory of the

subject beyond the mechanistic metaphors of positivism is psychoanalysis” (Spears, 1997, p. 17). As discussed above, psychoanalysis can be seen as precisely the main root of both psychology’s crisis and the insufficiency of its theory of the subject, or self.

What we propose here is that the answer to that question, “what is it to be human”, has to be centred upon a concept of the unconscious that encompasses *all* that makes us human. In this sense, we ought to return to the old holistic and humanist theories on the unconscious psyche, originated from German Romanticism and *Naturphilosophie* – and what derived from them: the dynamic psychologies of Pierre Janet, Auguste Forel, Théodore Flournoy, C. G. Jung, among others –; and, crucially, to the idea of a *social mind* or sociogenesis, the social development of the human personality, originated with Janet, which influenced Vygotsky to a large extent (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1988) – but in a *dialectics* with the unconscious mind.

Philosophical anthropology: a proposal

As an illustration of such proposal, we present a theory on the subject that fulfils the aforementioned requirements: C. G. Jung’s depth, complex psychology. Such philosophical anthropology can provide an innovative answer to that central question posed by Brown and Stenner (2009): how is it that the biological, the social and the psychic come together? Beyond seeing the subject as a social being – and the psyche as social and historical – we thus find that the unconscious psyche may be avowed the role of a *foundation* for both the social and the subject.

For Jung, the unconscious is essentially rooted in the biological (the instincts and the body); however, it cannot be *reduced* to the latter, for it has a *cultural*, symbolic-forming aspect. That idea is contained in the theory of the collective unconscious, which is composed of instincts and archetypes. They correspond to two sides of the same dynamics, the somatic and psychic poles of the psyche, indissolubly connected (Jung, 1954/1985, par.185). Both are collective regularities, or *universals*, that characterize our psychic constituency as *human*. The instincts correspond to the biological aspect of such constituency; they are patterns of behaviour, resulting from historical evolution. The archetypes represent their psychic counterpart, or *image*; if the instincts are typical, inherited patterns of behaviour, the archetypes correspond to typical, inherited *forms* of psychic expression – an equally transpersonal and unconscious factor that represents, apperceives, organizes, and gives meaning to instinct. As such, it represents a *formal* factor of psychic life: it organizes and arranges the psychic elements into certain images, representations, and later ideas, according to characteristic types, or motifs, which Jung called archetypal (Jung, 1938/1969, par. 222). These archetypal images appear empirically as typical *symbolic images* that can be seen

across cultures and ages; hence, they are also historical, likely resulting from evolution as well. They possess an archaic and mythological character (Jung, 1960/1975, par. 383), that is, they are characteristically numinous, originating religious and mythological phenomena.

As a perception or representation of the instinct, the archetype provides it with a *telos*, a direction manifested as *meaning*. Being a nucleus of meaning (Jung, 1968, par. 155) — which appears as a *symbolic motif*, e.g. “mother”, “hero”, “dragon-monster” — it organizes the material of experience, its representations, according to a specific meaningful configuration. Therefore, in relation to behavior, whereas the instinct corresponds to compulsion or impulse, the archetype represents intention, goal, and meaning. Being images of the instincts, archetypes signify and evoke them (Jung, 1960/1975). As such they represent the bridge, the necessary *connection* with the primitive, instinctual psyche — with Nature itself. “They are thus, essentially, the chthonic portion of the psyche (...) that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature” (Jung, 1964a, par. 53).

That is: the unconscious — our very nature — has two complementary sides: the physiological basis, instinctuality, and the properly psychological-spiritual side, the archetypes. To sum up, we possess in our unconscious psyche, on the one hand, an animal, primitive nature — what the Roman humanists called *barbaritas*; on the other hand, we have the *cultural* possibility, reached through the archetypal expression of such nature, and its refinement (*cultivation*) into cultural forms, which make us genuinely human. Such refinement is made possible by a dialectics with consciousness; inasmuch as one is conscious, one has freedom to choose, i.e. free will.

In Jung (1964a), that conception or *Weltanschauung* avows for bringing the unconscious and conscious minds to a “dialectical discussion” (par. 384) through the mediation of culture, i.e. the social world. That represents a typical *humanist* and *dialectical* position, which originates a humanist philosophical anthropology.

Nonetheless, in not considering the archetypal, cultural aspect in our psyches — i.e. only the animal instincts — one runs the risk of “being swallowed up in the primitivity and unconsciousness of sheer instinctuality. This fear is the eternal burden of the hero-myth” (Jung, 1960/1975, par. 415). This position, as discussed, can be seen in both Ahab and Freud, who end up swallowed by their own view of the unconscious as nothing but sheer destructive instinctuality.

Another corollary from that humanist conception of the unconscious is the enormous importance given to the *symbolic realm*, derived from the symbolic function of the unconscious, to understand both culture and the subject. In such conception,

the unconscious expresses itself through symbols: in culture, as its foundations (myths, rites, art etc.), and in the individual (as dreams, fantasies, reverie, symptoms, art, and so on). Following the Romantic conception, instead of being a *mask* for an unconscious content, Jung considers the symbol as the natural product and expression of the unconscious psyche: “As a plant produces its flower, so the psyche creates its symbols” (Jung, 1964b, p. 64). The symbol functions as a transformer of psychic energy — from the mere animal instinct to *cultural* activities.

In abstract form, symbols are religious ideas; in the form of action, they are rites or ceremonies. They are ... stepping-stones to new activities, which must be called cultural in order to distinguish them from the instinctual functions that run their regular course according to natural law. (Jung, 1960/1975, par. 91)

The symbol is therefore what renders possible the transcendence of our mere animality, mere nature, and its refinement (*cultivation*) into culture. Thus it defines what is *human* (*humanitas*). For both Jung and Ernst Cassirer, the symbol is thus *the* definer of our humanness (*homo symbolicum*)¹³; the symbol, or the symbolic capability, “transforms the whole of human life” (Cassirer, 1944, p. 40). Such central role for the symbol also indicates another possible contribution to psychology and social psychology (as illustrated by our interpretation of the Moby-Dick metaphor): the employment of *symbolic hermeneutics* — in fruitful dialogue with authors such as Vygotsky, Cassirer, Ricoeur, and Gadamer — to understand both the social world and the subject. The importance of *history* — that main characteristic of the *Geisteswissenschaften* — for such endeavour has been signalled throughout this work: the psyche, including the unconscious psyche, is historical; hence the subject is historical.

Thus, to summarise the role of the unconscious for social psychology in our proposal of a different philosophical anthropology: the collective unconscious underpins social thought (as the main source of collective representations, to use Durkheim’s concept); moreover, the collective unconscious is the root, or *rhizome*, of everything psychic. On the other hand, the personal unconscious represents the unconscious roots of subjectivity; it is historical and constructed in a dialectics with both the social world and the collective unconscious, mediated by individual consciousness. Therefore, the unconscious shall be seen as the interface for both the individual and the social, or, in other words, the unconscious is both within the individual and underlying the social; it unites the biological and the psychic spheres. As social psychology is mainly defined as the science which is at the intersection of society and the individual,

¹³ That is, the symbol would be the answer to Heidegger’s (1946/1976) central question for Humanism, “But what constitutes man’s humanity?” (p. 319).

it must consider the unconscious psyche, which is the primary answer to the question above: “how is it that the biological, the social and the psychic come together in human thought, feeling and action?”.

In this sense, Jungian depth psychology may be understood firstly as a re-union of paradigmatic tendencies, in a dialectical perspective that gives equal importance to both the structuring force of the social (viewed as collective consciousness) and the subjective (and *individual*) interpretative and meaning-creating capabilities for the construction of subjectivity. Secondly, and most importantly, what differentiates such perspective is its humanist concept of unconscious: within the dialectics between the subject and the sociocultural realm is inserted an *objective* factor, the unconscious psyche, which is seen as the original foundation and common denominator of both. Moreover, such foundation is the very historical matrix that produces symbols — and thus signification, *meaning* — autonomously in each person. Therefore, and to use a Bakhtinian term, such depth psychology postulates that the psyche is *dialogical*: in relation to both the social, “external” relationships (i.e. it is a social psyche), *and* to the inner psychic world, to the relations with one’s own unconscious contents — to the historical *Others*, as it were, within one’s own psyche. It represents a radical symbolic interactionism in which the *symbol* is the very definer of what is human.

The end result, in terms of a theory on the subject, is obviously a completely different philosophical anthropology: a relatively dissociated yet dialogical subject, a polyphonic (Bakhtin, 1929/1984), historical, cultural subjectivity — which stems primarily from the unconscious psyche. This represents a *Starbuck-position*, so to speak, with which both psychology and social psychology may answer the main questions related to their crises.

Reboarding the metaphorical whaler: The unconscious in social psychology today

After all that was discussed above, we may reboard our metaphorical whaler and ask ourselves: what is the situation in present-day psychology and social psychology regarding the concept of the unconscious? Do they still hold a Freudian Ahab-position?

Indeed, we might affirm that, in much the same way that Bakhtin and his circle contended in the 1920s, Freudian psychoanalysis can still be seen as the paradigm of contemporary psychological thought as regards the unconscious. A typical yet critical illustration would be the work of John Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella (2008).

Its pervading influence can also be seen in social psychology, which, when it speaks of the unconscious (if it speaks at all), always refers to Freud. Brown and Stenner (2009) themselves mention this phenomenon: “Finally, a return to psychoanalysis under the general rubric of ‘psychosocial’ research has placed the figure of the unconscious back in place as hidden centre of gravity of the psychological” (p. 174). Examples of this centrality of the Freudian unconscious in social psychology would be Janet Sayers (1990) and, through a Lacanian perspective, Antony Easthope (1990).

In Brazil, social psychology follows more or less the same pattern. For instance, Sueli Damergian (1991) proposes a valorisation of the concept of unconscious in the study of social interaction (seen as the premier object of study for social psychology), deriving from it a model of an epistemic *subject* for social psychology, but again following the hegemonic psychoanalytic (Freudian) theory. The other major current is to re-assess and employ the psychoanalytic concept of unconscious via the schizoanalysis of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze – which can, of course, be very fruitful. André Parente (2008) is a typical example of this trend. The unconscious, be it the Freudian or Lacanian one, is nothing but another mode of subjectivity production among others, a machinic unconscious. However, this theoretical approach tends to differ from the psychoanalytic one in various aspects and is closer to what we defend in this paper. Leonardo Danziato (2010) is another example that proposes a typical mixture: to read processes of subjectivation in the context of a Foucaultian “control society” employing psychoanalytic concepts (*jouissance* and unconscious). In any case, the starting point is almost always the Freudian concept of unconscious.

An exception (coming from European social psychology) that is very close to what we propose here is Ian Burkitt’s (2010a, 2010b) concept of dialogical unconscious, with which he tried “to wrest this concept back from Freudian psychology, posing instead the question of a dialogical and sociological understanding of unconsciousness” (2010b, p. 322). To a Bakhtinian (dialogical) understanding, he adds an existential and phenomenological dimension, defining the unconscious as “the influence that the voices and vocal intonations of others have in forming our own self and micro-dialogue, creating an ‘otherness’ within us – a voice or tone – that is not associated with speaking as ‘I’ or ‘me’” (Burkitt, 2010b, p. 323).

Corollary: the psychological as object of study

Given the analysis provided above, it is not surprising that the premier object of study for both psychology and social psychology, the psychological or the *psyche*, remains split between two antagonistic approaches: as psychology favours either a biological/positivist/experimental approach or a sociological one, social psychology persists on

the dichotomy between experimental, individualistic approaches, and sociocultural ones – which it has endured since its very beginnings, as seen, and is considered one of the major factors for its crisis.

We have tried to discuss such phenomena in their relationship with the concept of the unconscious – as the grand revolution that could be the bridge uniting different paradigmatic tendencies. “The discovery of the unconscious is the most significant discovery in the history of psychology and its greatest contribution to world culture” (Moscovici, 1993, p. 48). However, such discovery – and the deep theorisations on the unconscious developed across centuries – was sold, so to speak, to 19th century physicalism, materialism, and positivism by Freud, leaving both psychology and social psychology with a seemingly unsurmountable aporia.

Thus, we may advance the hypothesis that the Freudian colonization of the concept of unconscious – and its reduction to the biological – can be seen as being at the centre of the colonization of both psychology and psychiatry by organicism (Freitas, 1991), which has reached an almost uncontested position of hegemony. “In the West today, biological psychiatry has found a much greater confidence than earlier in the century and has decisively taken the lead within the mental sciences” (Micale, 1993a, p. 83). It is as if the psyche – which, since the Ancient Greeks, was seen as a winged, subtle, metamorphic creature, who needs to fly from place to place (Ψυχή = butterfly) – has been trapped, one of its wings hold by biology, the other by sociology. Thus it cannot help but wither away. No wonder that,

In some sense, psychology ends up killing – or at the very least simplifying – the phenomena of which it desires to speak, in the same way that Ahab’s search for Moby Dick strives to finish it off for good. But the psychological is no less elusive than the great white whale (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 4)

Conclusion: A (social) psychology with foundations

Finally, we may return to our main points of discussion and provide some tentative conclusions. First, Brown and Stenner (2009) introduced their Moby-Dick metaphor to discuss the crises in social psychology, advancing the view that they were due to their treatment of the psychological (an Ahab-position). In turn, we proposed that such crisis happened not only to social psychology, but rather to psychology as a whole – and that the Ahab-position could be equated with Freudian psychoanalysis, its colonization of the unconscious, and its legends. The tragedy for psychology and social psychology is the same: being crushed by the great white whale of the *unconscious*.

The answer proposed by Brown and Stenner (2009) is in their book title: *Psychology without foundations*, a thoroughly contingent, context-dependent psychology, without any solid basis. Instead, we put forward the idea that the unconscious should be regarded as the primeval basis of the psyche and the subject – and hence of both psychology and social psychology as sciences.

If Moscovici (1972) called for a reintegration of language and politics into social psychology as an answer to its crisis in the 1970s, we have argued herein that we need to call for a reintegration of the unconscious into social psychology – through rescuing theories on the unconscious that *differ* from the hegemonic Freudian/psychoanalytical perspective and sustain a concept of subjectivity that is social, historical, cultural, profound, polyphonic, non-reductionist, and non-mechanistic. Psychology might be lost at sea, but it has an incredible wealth underneath – which has been studied through different perspectives since the German Romantics.

It is not difficult to imagine the importance that the consideration and understanding of the unconscious mind (especially the collective unconscious) has for assessing and comprehending current contemporary phenomena (both in the social and in the individual). Utilising such perspective can provide answers to an old problem in social psychology: its social relevance. Indeed, it can generate “a social psychology that is dedicated to the systematic explanation of contemporary phenomena” (Rosés & Gabarrón, 1984, p. 94). Among the latter, one may mention both social change and ideology, most especially in this age of worldwide Islamist terrorism, religious and tribal wars in a collapsing Middle East and Africa, and the menace of a (global?) resurgence of fascism and totalitarianism – all these phenomena require social psychology to address the profound unconscious, mythic, irrational factors that lie at their roots.

Most importantly, such different perspective or paradigm would allow us to deal with a central human aspect: the symbolic realm. One of its most crucial expressions has nearly been forgotten by social psychology, since the latter’s inception with Wilhelm Wundt: *myth*. As argued above using our metaphor, myths are all-important elements for understanding both the social and the individual.

First of all, myths are the natural, autonomous expression of the unconscious psyche – most especially in cosmogonic myths, which describe symbolically the creation of consciousness. “Myths are descriptions of psychic processes and developments, therefore. Since these, so long and so far as they are still in the unconscious state, prove to be inaccessible to any arbitrary alteration, they exert a compelling influence on consciousness as pre-existent conditioning factors ... These new insights

enable us to gain a new understanding of mythology and of its importance as an expression of intrapsychic processes” (Jung, 1976, pp. 477-8).

Secondly, myths correspond to the symbolic foundations of culture, i.e. of the social world.

Studied alive, myth ... is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom ... These stories ... are to the natives a statement of a primeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, facts and activities of mankind are determined, the knowledge of which supplies man with the motive for ritual and moral actions, as well as with indications as to how to perform them. (Malinowski, 1926/1955, pp. 101, 108.)

In the primitives as well in our contemporary societies, myths — and all that is symbolic — form, therefore, the *basis of culture* itself, and also of its subjects. Clifford Geertz (1973) holds the same opinion: “Man depends upon symbols and symbolic systems with a dependence so great as to be decisive for his creatural viability” (p. 99) — without them, man faces chaos, a lack of “not just interpretations but interpretability” (p. 100), resulting in a deep disquiet, a metaphysical anxiety, turning man (and we would say, the *masses*) into “a kind of formless monster with neither sense of direction nor power of self-control, a chaos of spasmodic impulses and vague emotions” (p. 99).

According to Jung (1950/1976), culture just dissolves without numinous myths, the symbolic realm, the lively expression of our unconscious rhizome: “We could have seen long ago from primitive societies what the loss of numinosity means: they lose their *raison d’être*, the order of their social organizations, and then they dissolve and decay. We are now in the same condition. We have lost something we have never properly understood” (par. 582) — we have lost our very *foundations*.

Thus, such loss can be seen in both our western culture and the project of psychology as a science. If the symbol — and all its expressions — is what characterizes us as *human*, its loss can only lead to profound dehumanization. Thereby we proposed that the roots of the crises in psychology and social psychology are precisely the subjects that concern Brown and Stenner’s (2009) metaphor: the question of the unconscious

psyche, and its logical corollary, the question of *humanity*. Roiser (1997) shares that opinion: social psychologists should be able to “impart *humanity* to their endeavours ... We badly need a social psychology that is human, genuinely social and historical ... What is needed in the critical construction of a ‘new’ social psychology is the gathering together of several disparate strands of useful theory, and practice” (pp. 105-108).

That is precisely what we attempted to do here. To sum it up, we may re-approach our paragraph summarizing the main causes (i.e., meta-theoretical issues) of the crises in psychology and social psychology, and use it to render explicit our proposal. The rescuing of different, humanist theories on the unconscious, and their reintegration into both psychology and social psychology, may provide a re-union of the *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* paradigms into one psychological science; a holistic, humanist theory on the subject, or *self*, asserting free will and agency; as regards the relationship between individual and society, a focus on both individual and society, and on their relationship, seeing the unconscious psyche as mediator between them; and the consideration of both (a mutable) essence and social constructionism. That can produce a genuine *cultural* social psychology, while also affording the integration of biological and experimental approaches (as seen, the unconscious has both sides: the biological and the cultural).

In conclusion, we have argued that Brown and Stenner’s (2009) metaphor is indeed suitable and meaningful to understand what happened to the projects of psychology and social psychology as sciences, and that our interpretation of it is not only appropriate but possibly the most meaningful one. If that is so, then we must undertake the tasks of examining historically why such projects ended up in catastrophe and what can be done about them, and of offering some possible courses of theory-building and action. That entails a historical reassessment of the concept (and theory) of the unconscious in psychology, its usefulness and pertinence for understanding subjectivities and culture. In Brown and Stenner’s (2009) words, “Should the project be begun anew? Should it be revised and entirely rethought? Should it simply be abandoned?” (p. 18). What we propose here is that the problem is still the same: *to acknowledge Moby-Dick*, the unconscious, and then, how to deal with it? How to relate to it and consider it? “[W]hat is required is a new form of clarity. This involves a new start to the project, a clear sense of beginning again, or a new project altogether” (p. 3).

We couldn’t agree more.

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