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AFFECTIVITY AND DREAMING CONSCIOUSNESS IN PHENOMENOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Introduction

Although mental processes form a continuum, they were treated separately in the first century of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. According to Merleau-Ponty, “The accord of phenomenology and of psychoanalysis should not be understood to consist in phenomenology’s saying clearly what psychoanalysis said obscurely. On the contrary, it is by what phenomenology implies or unveils at its limits – by its latent content or its unconscious – that it is in consonance with psychoanalysis. /...”¹

In this study, we try to demonstrate that the Freudian psychoanalysis fits into the Husserlian phenomenology in an additional manner. We will focus on two significant differences between the Freudian and Husserlian approach. On the one hand, Freud is not concerned about experience as such but a *special kind* of experience that is, desire and satisfaction. Husserl, on the contrary, represents experience *per se*. On the other hand, whereas Husserl primarily describes mental functioning from the perspective of normal, waking consciousness, Freud delves deep into the study of dreams and other dissociative mental processes.

49

The Husserlian unconscious

At the end of the 19th century, when Freud elaborates the basic tenets of psychoanalysis, Husserl launches the movement of phenomenology. Husserl is a successor of the Cartesian-Kantian tradition and a direct adherent and, at the same time, a critic of Franz Brentano’s descriptive psychological program (Freud is a successor of the Romantic tradition; his direct predecessors are Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.). Husserl essentially remains within the anthropological framework formulated by Descartes and the British Empiricists, who reject unconscious mental processes. The mental acts specified by Husserl are psychological processes that typically occur in the normal state of consciousness (NSC), and can be reflected upon and controlled voluntarily. *Husserl’s subject* – as well as the

¹In: Hesnard, A. (1960). *L’Ouvre de Freud et son importance pour le monde moderne*, Paris: Payot, Pref: 71

Cartesian ego or the mind of the British Empiricists – *is a coherent entity undisturbed by dissociative functioning.*²

However, by writing the *Bernau manuscripts (Hua XXXIII)* in 1917-18, Husserl extends his *static-descriptive phenomenology* with the analyses of time-consciousness and starts to develop *genetic phenomenology*, which is considered to be the continuation of his analyses of time-consciousness.³ From then on, the periphery of attention, i.e. the perceptually confused background is interpreted as a constitutive layer of consciousness. So, as a result, the examination of conscious mental functioning has been completed with a non-conscious sphere, the activity of which cannot be grasped directly in its sensual reality, only inferred.⁴

Naturally, the concept of the unconscious in depth psychology and phenomenology differs considerably. Where do these differences derive from? First of all, affectivity receives less emphasis in phenomenology than in the Freudian and Jungian depth psychology. Freud focuses on a special kind of experience, namely wishing. The Freudian id never stops yearning for fulfilment. Because of this, the ego and the super-ego have to make significant and constant efforts to keep restraints on the id. As a consequence, Freud has to place a *structural division* between the unconscious and the conscious. On the other hand, for Husserl there is no *structural division* between the unconscious and the conscious. The reason for this is that the Husserlian unconscious is not engendered by the dynamics of the wish/repression conflict.

Furthermore, Freud puts more stress on emotions than Husserl. This, however, does not mean that Husserl did not recognize the importance of affectivity. For Husserl, in genetic phenomenology, affectivity becomes a basic constituent of intentionality. Intentionality cannot be separated from attention, a component of awareness. Without affectivity objects would not be able to engage the spotlight of attention and the vibrant dynamism of figure and background would cease to exist. For Husserl, just like Freud, affection has instinctive-sensory

²But Husserl significantly transcends both the epistemology of early modern philosophy and the theory of the association of ideas, the most salient aspect of 18th century British philosophy. Phenomenology is founded upon the declaration of the correlation thesis, the intertwining of subject and object in perception and thinking. This means that the subject and the object are primarily interdependent and can only be separated artificially.

³ Genetic phenomenology, on the contrary to static phenomenology, is capable of depicting the development of the self. In this development, i.e. in an infinite process with continuous corrections, a more or less coherent self is built up.

⁴ However, Nicholas Smith argues that the non-conscious sphere is also accessible to a specific self-reflection (Smith, 2010). For further research on the concept of the phenomenological unconscious see Torma 2013; Horváth 2018a,b.

roots. Neither affection is generated without sensory (*hyletic*) impulses, nor can the sensual *hyle* incite the mind without its kinaesthetic/somatic structure.⁵

In addition to the different emphasis placed on emotions, there is another major reason why the concept of the unconscious significantly differs in phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Freud examined mental acts in totally different states of consciousness than Husserl.

The neglect of altered states of consciousness in Husserl

William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was published two years before Husserl's Gottingen Lectures in 1904–05. In his work, James states:

[...] our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality, which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded (James 2009, 349).

51

What are these other forms of consciousness and what kind of stimuli should be applied to reach them? The answer is the altered states of consciousness. At the turn of the 1870s–1880s, a hallucinogenic gas (see James 1882; 2009/1902) was used as a self-experimenting tool to systematically induce altered states of consciousness (cf. Tymocko 1996).⁶ It is, of course, not by any means necessary

⁵According to several contemporary phenomenologists, Husserl does not exclude the possibility that phenomenology might address the question of the dynamic unconscious (see Kozyreva, 2018; Smith, 2010; Welsh, 2002).

⁶Both in psychology and philosophy, James (1882; 2009) was the one who acted as a pioneer in the research into psychedelics. His interest laid in how psychedelics could potentially intensify fantasy, especially religious imagination. In the 1920s, psychiatrists and Gestalt psychologists began to examine how mescaline could affect perception. During the 1930s, Walter Benjamin (1927-34/2006) (see Wolin, 1994) and Ernst Bloch (1954-1959/1986) made experiments with hashish and mescaline. In 1935, Jean-Paul Sartre (1978) also tried mescaline. Sartre's later friend, Maurice Merleau-Ponty used Sartre's notes about his psychedelic experience, besides, other examples of mescaline experience, too, in his main work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, a decade later. Henri Bergson (1896/1999), Herbert Marcuse (1969), Michel Foucault (1970), and Rush Rhees (see O'C. Drury, 1981) also suggested that psychedelics might expand the limits of the mind, albeit Bergson and Rhees never used them (See Sjöstedt, 2015). In the last two decades, a new

for a psychologist or philosopher to resort to hallucinogenic substances to get into altered states of consciousness. In our daily waking-sleeping cycle, for example, altered states of consciousness occur spontaneously. Distancing from the waking state of consciousness and approaching toward sleep we encounter psychological functions radically different and more loosely organized than our normal, waking mental activity. Freud was primarily interested in these kinds of mental phenomena. Between the middle of the 1880s and the end of the 1890s, Freud pioneers a previously uncharted path. He passes through a series of altered states of consciousness and corresponding mental phenomena: hypnosis (from 1886 to ca.1892), free association (from ca. 1892), dream (from 1895), and fantasy (from 1897). During this period, he continuously matures, refines his theories and practice to finally discover the theoretical and technical significance of dreams.⁷

The fact that Freud grounds his theoretical work – to a significant degree – in dreams has had profound theoretical consequences. The less control and reflexivity characteristic of NSC occur, the more probably dissociative, autonomous mental processes will appear, which are capable of freeing themselves from the unifying force of the waking subject. In our mind, Freud was prompted by the characteristics of dreaming so radically different from those of waking life that the mental realm was divided up into two levels of consciousness. On the other hand, the mental acts – with the important exception of fantasy and his sporadic dream analyses – pinned down by Husserl are mental phenomena emerging in, underlying or generating the normal, waking state of consciousness including the phenomena of falling asleep and awakening. Husserl splits mental life into a duality of waking and sleep states, and he is interested in the waking state only, which is organized around perception. In other words, Husserl takes consciousness affected by impressions from the environment as a starting point. As opposed to Husserl, for Freud, self-affection that occurs in the altered state of consciousness of dreaming is the baseline state. During dreaming, the stimulating objects of the mind are first, memory remnants second, actual somatic stimuli of the dreaming body.

wave of psychedelic research has begun in the field of philosophy. There is a handful of researchers analyzing psychedelic experiences using the frameworks of Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Shanon, 2002, 2003, 2010; Lundborg, 2012; Szabó et al., 2014; Szummer et al., 2017; Horváth et al., 2017; Horváth, & Szabó, 2012).

⁷ With respect to Jung, in his pre-psychoanalytic period, he was interested in trance states produced by spiritualist mediums. Later, psychotic hallucinations, dreams, and other dissociative mental phenomena were also studied (See Shamdasani 2003; and the existence of emotional complexes was empirically proven (see Jung, 1918). Immediately after breaking the professional relationship with Freud, Jung developed his so-called *active imagination* technique (see below), which also implies a kind of altered state of consciousness.

Phenomenological approaches of dreaming

In Husserl's vast *oeuvre*, dreams are only of peripheral significance. He deals with the dream phenomenon sporadically and to the extent of a couple of pages only.⁸ Husserl's neglect is not a surprise since the phenomenological analysis of dreams is hindered by numerous obstacles. Husserl basically uses the term "dreaming" in a negative sense, contrasting dreaming with the authentic field of research of phenomenology, i.e. the awake life of transcendental subjectivity states (Nicola Zippel, 2016. 181). Among contemporary phenomenologists, like Dieter Lohmar (2008.160) and Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) take a similar point of view to Husserl.⁹ Where does Husserl's aversion to dreams originate from? In Husserl's interpretation, though dreams are products of our own imagination, to the dreamer they appear as *perceptual reality*. Dreaming, along with hallucination and illusion, differs from fantasy mainly in that it seems to the dreamer as real and present. Fantasy, on the other hand, appears as illusory for the subject. According to Husserl, the everyday usage of this term, i.e. when it implies a close relation between quasi-perceptual experience of dreaming and fantasy (day-dreaming, *Tagtraum*), is misleading (Husserl 2005. 6-7). "The world of reality *almost* disappears when we abandon ourselves to these fantasies but it still subtly makes us conscious of its presence, mild awareness of its own illusory character always discolours fantasy." (Husserl 2005. 44 – emphasis in the original).

Classical authors of phenomenology after Husserl showed great concern about dreaming in spite of the difficulties mentioned above. Several followers of Husserl, namely Eugen Fink (1966), Theodor Conrad (1968), and Jean Héring (1947) attempted to analyse dreams, and as Sartre (1972) and Merleau-Ponty, (1968)¹⁰ they showed great interest in this notion.¹¹ At the same time, the different

⁸ According to Zippel (2016, 181), Husserl treats the dream phenomenon in the following four texts particularly: in *Husserliana* Vol. XXII; in his letter to Héring; in a manuscript dated in the spring of 1933; and, finally, in a text which was published in *Husserliana* Vol. XXXIX, App. XVII in 1920.

⁹ About the approach of the *daseinsanalysis* see Krékics and Kőváry, 2017.

¹⁰The authors listed above, in fact, do not respond to each other's writings, except for Héring, who regularly exchanged letters with Husserl about dreaming (Husserl, 1993). This correspondence was elaborated by Ferencz-Flatz (2011). Besides, Héring also referred to Sartre and Fink in connection with dreaming. Then again, Husserl was not willing to comment upon Fink's different opinion about dreaming that had been explained in Fink's thesis, though Husserl was Fink's supervisor.

¹¹Worth mentioning among the classics Patočka (1991) and Alfred Schütz (1969). J. Patočka, J. (1991). Die Frage des Solipsismus und das Argument des zusammenhängenden Traums, in: J. Patočka, Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. *Phänomenologische*

phenomenological conceptions of dreams do not converge, authors agree with each other only occasionally. After approaches of dreaming of classical phenomenology, in the last two decades, a certain renewed interest in dreams can be noticed.¹² However, we still cannot talk about a systematic phenomenological investigation of dreams, neither about coherent frameworks made of dreaming. The features of dreaming are defined by diverse authors in different ways. In spite of this, some kind of relative agreement has been taking shape in connection with the basic characteristics of dreaming. According to this, the dreaming subject splits into two: a dreaming self and an imaginary dream-self. The dream-self sinks into the dreamworld created by the dreaming self and believes that this imaginary world is real. The dream-self is passive, does not possess the organizing dynamism of the awake self, its relation to time and space changes radically. When I am dreaming, apart from lucid dreams, I do not have reflexive consciousness *about* my dreaming process, since at that moment I would wake up. Then again, I have a “pre-reflexive consciousness in the dream and this peculiar consciousness belongs to the dream-self.” (Warren 2012. 472). The dream-self is able to feel fear, joy, contentment or disappointment, etc.

Dreams are part of mental life and as such, should be subject to phenomenological examination. At the same time, the phenomenological analysis of dreams is hindered, without doubt, by numerous obstacles. A dreaming subject does not possess the reflexive consciousness as an awake one does. For this reason, the dream phenomenon cannot be grasped directly through phenomenological analysis, just through the prism of recollection. Though the ability of recalling dreams can be improved, it still falters, and the individual skills vary considerably, too. Secondly, during the recollection process, the waking consciousness faces the task of having to verbalize the non-linear, non-linguistic, non-discursive structure of dreams after awakening. As a consequence, it is very difficult to determine to what extent the dream being remembered is the product of the original experience and to what degree of Freud’s secondary elaboration process. Finally, it must also be taken into account that dream (dreaming) is an umbrella term for heterogeneous mental phenomena. When the mental processes responsible for dream induction are operational, the activity of the ego is reduced, moreover, it fluctuates significantly. As a result, our dreams vary considerably along the spectrum comprising misty, fuzzy dream fragments and elaborate dreams with a clear narrative structure. There are well-structured, perfectly elaborated dreams similar to waking imagination, sometimes to discursive thinking, even to works of art. Also, the strange phenomenon of *lucid dreaming* exists when the *hypnonaut* is capable – to a certain degree – of steering the dream process in a desired direction. The heterogeneity of

Schriften II, hrsg. von K. Nellen, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, pp. 43-60; A. Schutz, A. (1996). *Collected Papers*, IV, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

¹²cf. Morley (1999); Sepp (2010); Ferencz-Flatz (2011); De Warren (2012, 2016); Zipel (2017); Sepp (2010); Iribarne (2003).

dreams might be one of the reasons why dream concepts differ to such a great extent in classical and contemporary phenomenology.

Final conclusions

Two distinctions between the Husserlian and Freudian approaches have been highlighted. First, Freud dealt with a special kind of experiential reality, namely, the workings of wish and the dynamics of wish fulfilment. Secondly, the observations of Freud focus on states in which consciousness is cut off from the surrounding/environment (hypnosis, free association, sleep) or the subject suspends – to a certain degree – his/her interest in the outer world (slightly altered state of fantasy). These are phenomena generated in altered states of consciousness. Husserl, as it were, works his way inward and, with the exception of fantasy, attempts to comprehend memory, image consciousness, and further mental acts based on the perception theory. Freud takes the opposite path assuming that fantasy and psychological and psychosomatic symptoms, jokes, misdeeds, and other mental phenomena can be understood by dreams generated in the radically altered state of sleeping.

For Husserl, dreaming was not the subject of phenomenological investigation. However, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and other students of Husserl were concerned about dreaming. In the last decades, a new wave of phenomenological investigation of fantasy and dreaming has been emerging. The dialogue between phenomenology and psychoanalysis in the examination of dreaming holds out promises of mutual benefits. Psychoanalysis can lean on the fine-grained descriptions of the Husserlian phenomenology. Phenomenology, on the other hand, can make use of both the empirical material which has been collected by psychoanalysts and its theoretical recognitions in connection with dreaming.

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