

The Unconscious in Contemporary Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis

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Cristi Bodea, *Hiatus. Problema fenomenologică a inconștientului*, Eikon Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2018, 288 pp.

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Cristi Bodea's book entitled *Hiatus. Problema fenomenologică a inconștientului* (*Hiatus. The Phenomenological Problem of the Unconscious*), which stands as the edited version of the author's PhD dissertation, defended at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, under the supervision of Professor Virgil Ciomoș, focuses on the relationship between Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical approach and Marc Richir's phenomenology, pursuing the articulations of the theme of the unconscious in both theories.

In the phenomenological attempt of exhaustively conquering subjectivity as the ultimate source of meaning, the problem of the unconscious stands as a recent milestone, for it unveils an additional layer of subjectivity which seems to complete the scheme envisioned by an entire phenomenological tradition. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, was the one to discover, and, thereafter, to bring into discussion the unconscious as the core structure of subjectivity. Consequently, the inquiries of both contemporary phenomenology and

psychoanalysis differ from the type of knowledge aimed at by continental and analytical philosophy. Both Lacan's revised version of psychoanalytical theory and Richir's *non-standard* or non-symbolic phenomenology dismiss any type of epistemological inquiry for which knowledge and science are the main goals of every intellectual enterprise, by positing a type of knowledge closer to the meaning of the French *savoir*, which can no longer be designated as „justified true belief” and which cannot be grounded in the same way as in the case of scientific knowledge. According to Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, this *savoir* represents the type of (self)knowledge which can be gained by the subject throughout her/his own analysis. As a very personal type of knowledge, this *savoir* cannot be shared with the others within a scientific enterprise, yet it can be used by someone in the position of psychoanalyst. On the other hand, in Marc Richir's view, the goal of the phenomenological endeavor is a sort of artistic experience which could produce in the embodied subject some knowledge about the phenomenality of the world(s) and of herself /himself. In a thorough comparative analysis of the methods proposed by Jacques Lacan and Marc Richir, two of the most relevant representatives of contemporary psychoanalysis and phenomenology, Cristi Bodea reveals the conceptual difference between *savoir* and *connaître*, i.e., between knowing something by a personal experience and knowing something only by theoretical inquiry, thus succeeding to convincingly argue that both the psychoanalyst and the phenomenologist are rather practitioners than theoreticians. Moreover, Cristi Bodea's book gives proof that both of these methods are rather poetic than scientific and that they cover other „objects” of study than the ones envisaged by the mainstream philosophical tradition.

Despite their slight differences, the two methods also resemble, if examined from the perspective of the notion of the unconscious. In order to offer an account of these fine similarities, Cristi Bodea leads the reader towards the issue of the divided subject, i.e., of the subject *of* the unconscious. As the central point of this book, the unconscious is described in relation to the constitution and becoming of the human agent. The individual is seized not merely as a rational being, but

rather as subject of the unconscious. What we find interesting and very well highlighted in the book is that both Lacan and Richir have realized that the human being is not at all a *natural* being. In Richir's words, the human being does not ultimately have any nature, yet it is capable of symbolic institutions, meaning that it can appear as human to the others and that it can live within a culture understood in the anthropological sense. A similar idea, that of a human being affected in such a way by language that it loses any sort of *naturalité* and suffers a process of individuation is to be found before, in Lacan's writings. For it is fundamentally *divided* and affected by the unconscious, by the language and by its own symptom, thus being symbolically *instituted*, the Lacanian *instituted* psychoanalytical human subject cannot at all be related either to the transcendental ego of the Husserlian phenomenology or to the Cartesian modern ego. Yet, it finds an echo in Marc Richir's concept of symbolic institution of the individual as *human* subject, which due to this type of symbolic institution can live a life together with its peers. A memorable accomplishment of this comparative analysis of the human's symbolical individuation in both psychoanalytical and phenomenological traditions is to be found in the author's analysis of Lacan's famous *mirror stage* from a phenomenological perspective.

If both in Husserlian phenomenology and in philosophical epistemology, experience means constituting or making sense of something, in the case of the *instituted* subject from Lacanian psychoanalysis and from Richirian phenomenology, experience means rather to witness something. For Richir, this kind of experience of the *instituted* subject implies that outside or beyond the transcendental subjectivity there must be a multitude of senses or meanings in their making (*sens se faisant*). Yet, these meanings are neither intentional, nor constituted by the transcendental ego; they are rather experienced by the subject as something which is apart from it, is autonomous and which has its own *ipse*. Cristi Bodea explains how the Richirian concept of meanings in their making (*sens se faisant*) correspond to the Lacanian notion of signifiers,

which stand as singularities, and which are foreclosed in the case of psychosis.

The discussion of the issue of the instituted sense or meaning opens up Cristi Bodea's book and is developed throughout the second chapter by an analysis of Richir's non-symbolical phenomenology method. Then, by using a comparative approach, the third chapter of the book heralds the relationship between this Richirian phenomenology with psychoanalysis, whereas the fourth chapter raises the problem of the instituted subject in both phenomenological and psychoanalytical theories. If, before the publication of this book, the common point between psychoanalysis and phenomenology was thought to be the notion of the subject or, rather subjectivity, Cristi Bodea's book offers a new perspective upon the main passage between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. By analyzing, along the last two chapters of his book, the symbolical and the phenomenological meanings of the unconscious, the author succeeds to demonstrate that the unconscious encompasses the issue of the subject, of the meaning and of language. An unanticipated resemblance between the architectonics of Richir non-symbolical phenomenology resembles the one of Lacan's psychoanalysis is strongly proven by the Cristi Bodea's demonstration throughout his book. First of all, as Cristi Bodea well emphasizes, the concept of *symptom*, which is critical to Lacanian theory finds a correspondent in the fundamental difference, or in the *hiatus* placed by richirian philosophy between the phenomenological realm and the symbolical one. In Richir's view, the annulment of this hiatus is able to explain mental pathologies, for this hiatus gives the human subject the necessary freedom for not being trapped in a single one of these realms. Richir's concept of *phenomenon as phenomenon* is equivalent, according to Cristi Bodea, to the Lacanian concept of the real. Moreover, the subject experiences it in the cases of psychosis, yet it does in a negative way. Secondly, human experience expends way beyond the limits of knowledge, as every human subject is affected both by the symbolical and the phenomenological realm and, *moreover*, by both the symbolical unconscious and the phenomenological unconscious. If the symbolical unconscious relates to the psychoanalytical

unconscious and stands at the basis of any symbolical institution, thus making it function, the phenomenological unconscious corresponding to Lacan's real unconscious, represents a savage part of human experience, occurring under different forms in myths, art or, rarely, even in philosophy.

What Cristi Bodea's book brings forth is a new interpretation of mental illness, from a twofold perspective: that of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theory and that of Marc Richir's phenomenology. Thus, mental illness can be conceived, both psychoanalytically and phenomenologically, by using the same categories describing what is considered to be the „normal” experience of the subject. Described as such, mental illness is, ultimately, nothing but an extreme version of the normal experience of the human subject. This new perspective allows a more inclusive, fair and humane perspective upon the way contemporary society deals with mentally ill subjects.

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