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JOSÉ BRUNNER

“Every Path Will End in Darkness” or: Why Psychoanalysis Needs Metapsychology

The Argument

This article focuses on the dialectic of metapsychology and hermeneutics in psychoanalysis. By combining the causal language of the former with the intentional terminology of the latter, Freud's discourse continuously transgresses the narrowly conceived boundaries of scientific disciplines and places its stakes in both the humanities and the natural sciences. The argument is made that attempts to reduce psychoanalytic theory to either causal explanation or interpretation of meaning turn it into a closed thought system and rob it of its vitality. It is argued, moreover, that although Freud understood himself to be a scientist, by eschewing the dichotomous reductionism characteristic of both his orthodox followers and critics who tried and still try to turn psychoanalysis into either a natural-science-like discipline or a hermeneutics, Freud demonstrated that his self-understanding was far more sophisticated than admitted by either of these two groups. This argument is supported by a detailed discussion of Freud's epistemological premises, his conception of science and reality, and especially, the place he allocated to metapsychology in his interdisciplinary science. It is claimed that metapsychology served Freud as a double-edged sword, both enabling creative and metaphorical thought about the mind's hidden reality and revealing the necessary incompleteness of hermeneutics. The article concludes with the claim that psychoanalysis needs metapsychology in order to pursue this dual task.

Freud persistently refused to observe phenomena from only one point of view, to ask only one type of question. As is well known he always regarded individual action and social processes as “overdetermined.” For him they were inevitably the effect of many causes, carried a variety of often contradictory meanings, expressed several and sometimes incompatible intentions, and fulfilled multiple functions. To cope with the complexity of human conduct and its determinants, Freud developed a pluralistic and interdisciplinary science of the mind, which he organized around four interrelated but nevertheless distinct perspectives. Freud always discerned *meaning* in mental phenomena, taking them to be expressions similar to those of a language. He revealed hidden dynamic *forces* — drives and energies —

which were supposed to be akin to blind, impersonal physical entities and to occupy and propel ideas. He delineated the contours of psychic *structures* in and across which the flow of psychic energy was said to take place. Lastly, his inquiry led him to look for origins in early childhood — that is, for the *history* of observable phenomena as well for the developmental sequence of the forces and structures he could not approach directly.

However, the four types of inquiry in psychoanalysis form two basic languages. On the one hand there are references to intention, meaning, and history. These belong to what is commonly known as interpretive or hermeneutic discourse. On the other hand there are metapsychological hypotheses on causal connections, forces, and boundaries of psychic structures. These are characteristic of the mechanistic discourse that we know from the natural sciences. And though these latter hypotheses may not refer to observable entities, by their very existence they also point to the shortcomings of a “pure,” clinical hermeneutics and urge psychoanalysis to move beyond interpretive procedures to a causal level of explanation.

I wish to show in this paper that this uncomfortable duality of interpretation and explanation in psychoanalytic discourse generates a creative tension. Thus my claim is similar to that of Morris Eagle in his critical evaluation of recent developments in psychoanalysis:

It is this search for a deeper level of explanation rather than the specific content that I take to be the significance of Freud’s metapsychology. To limit psychoanalysis to the so-called clinical theory and reject *any* form of deeper theoretical account is to declare this central challenge irrelevant and . . . to accept an inadequate and truncated form of explanation as well as to isolate psychoanalysis from an enriching body of facts and perspectives. It is one thing to insist on the legitimacy, even centrality, of explanation by way of motives and aims, including unconscious motives and aims. It is another thing to declare such accounts as final. (Eagle 1984, 149)

In this sense, then, I argue that metapsychology is part of what Samuel Weber has described as Freud’s “willingness to negotiate with the unknown and to acknowledge uncertainty not merely as an impediment or defect, but as an integral part of thinking and writing” (Weber 1987, 73). Thus, I disagree with the subtitle of Patricia Kitcher’s (1992) book on psychoanalysis, which describes Freud’s program as “a complete interdisciplinary science of the mind.” For though she is right in claiming that Freud’s science was designed to be interdisciplinary, he was aware that its fate was to remain incomplete.

In the wake of this argument I criticize various reductionist narratives that either transform Freud’s work into a set of empiricist, operationalist claims or attempt to rephrase psychoanalytic discourse exclusively in intentionalist categories — that is, in terms of conscious and unconscious meanings, motives, and purposes. The effect of such reductionist readings is to remove the tension between

interpretation and explanation from Freudian discourse and thus to turn psychoanalysis into a self-contained, closed thought system. But as I shall show, Freud was well aware that such one-dimensional constructions of psychoanalysis rob it of its vitality. In his view, only religion and philosophy feigned completeness and certitude; he took it to be an essential characteristic of science to allow of tensions and contradictions and to admit to its own imperfections. Thus in this article I develop a narrative of my own, one opposed to that constructed by most influential figures in psychoanalysis, philosophy, and history of science, which presents them as engaged in repeated attempts to eliminate the subversive and creative role that metapsychology plays in Freud's work.

I

Let us start by joining Freud on a walk. In August 1899, while working on his magnum opus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud had written to Wilhelm Fliess that it was "planned on the model of an imaginary walk." "At the beginning the dark forest of authors (who do not see the trees), hopelessly lost on wrong tracks. Then a concealed pass through which I lead the reader — my specimen dream with its peculiarities, details, indiscretions, bad jokes — and then suddenly the high ground and the question: which way do you wish to go now?" (Freud 1985, 365). In the opening sentences of the book's third chapter Freud uses the same vocabulary, but this time he likens the process of dream interpretation itself to such an imaginary walk:

When, after passing through a narrow defile, we suddenly emerge up on a piece of high ground, where the path divides and the finest prospects open up on every side, we may pause for a moment and consider in which direction we shall first turn our steps. Such is the case with us, now that we have surmounted the first interpretation of a dream. We find ourselves in the full daylight of a sudden discovery. (Freud [1900], SE 4:122)

This passage is directly preceded by a declaration at the conclusion of the book's second chapter in which Freud states: "When the work of interpretation has been completed [*vollendet*], we perceive that a dream is the fulfillment of a wish [*lässt sich der Traum als eine Wunscherfüllung erkennen*]" (ibid., 4:121). In other words, at this stage Freud posits that dream interpretation can reach an end or a completion, and — in the original German — he claims that this endpoint is marked by the dream's readiness to give in to the interpreter's efforts and reveal itself as wish fulfillment.

At the beginning of the seventh chapter, some four hundred pages later, Freud formulates the basic principles underlying the production of dreams and of mental functioning in general. There he again takes up the metaphor of the journey into

the unconscious. But he describes as illusionary the sense of completion obtained by the sudden illumination of interpretation:

It is only after we have disposed of everything that has to do with the work of interpretation that we can begin to realize the incompleteness of our psychology of dreams. . . . For it must be clearly understood that the easy and agreeable portion of our journey lies behind us. Hitherto, unless I am greatly mistaken, all the paths along which we have travelled have led us towards the light — towards elucidation [*Aufklärung*] and fuller understanding [*zum vollen Verständnis*]. But as soon as we endeavor to penetrate more fully into the mental process involved in dreaming, every path will end in darkness. (Ibid., 5:511)

This, then, is the scientific journey on which Freud takes us: We leave the dark wood through a narrow, concealed pass, ascend to the open high ground — only to progress into darkness. At the end of the book we discover that *The Interpretation of Dreams* has been radically incomplete all along. After several hundred pages of detailed discussion of hermeneutic techniques, symbolism, associations, and censorship, we find that psychoanalysis cannot be reduced to an interpretive practice. Rather than writing a conclusion in the seventh and last chapter, Freud displaces hermeneutics — that is, the interpretation of meaning and its disguises — in order to insert causal hypotheses. By pointing to a new realm of causal speculation that lies beyond hermeneutics, he radically undermines hopes for hermeneutic completeness.

In the seventh chapter Freud's book is no longer concerned with the hidden meaning that the dreamer expresses in pictures and symbols. Instead Freud tries to establish the origins of the dream's signs — that is, he seeks to explain what causes them. For this purpose he refers to a different category of entities: to nonexperiential mechanisms and systems, currents of psychic energy and mental agencies. As his comment indicates, he is aware that the referents of these formulations lie in the dark and that hypotheses concerning their nature and functioning must remain speculative.

II

In Freud's parlance the term "metapsychology" denotes the ensemble of such speculative causal postulates. Metapsychological formulations serve to depict processes in an intrinsically inaccessible realm of the mind, which belongs neither to the domain of subjective experience nor to such physical entities as the brain or the nervous system. Thus metapsychological descriptions refer to forces, energies, and structures in a nonexperiential mental world, of which one can gain knowledge only indirectly by inference from clinical phenomena. Hence Freud's text presents metapsychology as exterior to the clinical practice of interpretation, which is

supposed to form the basis of all psychoanalytic endeavors. As Freud states in his *Introductory Lectures*, when one makes the transition from manifest phenomena such as symptoms and slips to metapsychological depictions of psychic processes and structures, “the phenomena that are perceived must yield to trends that are only hypothetical” (Freud [1916–17], SE 15:67). In his metapsychological conjectures Freud attempts to represent the elusive world of the mind from three perspectives. As he explains: “When we have succeeded in describing a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a metapsychological presentation [Darstellung]” (Freud [1915], SE 14:181). In his explanation of the dynamic aspect of metapsychology, Freud emphasizes that he seeks “not merely to describe and clarify phenomena, but to understand them as signs of an interplay of forces in the mind, as a manifestation of purposeful intentions working concurrently or in mutual opposition” (Freud [1916–17], SE 15:67). To this conflictual view of the mind, the economic point of view adds estimates of the magnitude or amount of psychic energy involved in the interplay (Freud [1915], SE 14:181). Finally, from a topographical angle, Freud postulates psychic systems or agencies — such as the unconscious, preconscious, or consciousness — in which, or between which, mental processes are supposed to take place (*ibid.*, 173, 175).

Thus although Freud’s metapsychological formulations remain on purely psychological ground and are not supposed to point to material substrates, they portray the mind as a spatial entity. However, Freud repeatedly cautions his readers not to take these quasi-physical descriptions literally. In fact, already in the early *Studies on Hysteria* Freud’s co-author, Josef Breuer, warns of the danger of mistaking metaphors of the mind for descriptions of the psyche’s reality:

It is only too easy to fall into a habit of thought which assumes that every substantive has a substance behind it — which gradually comes to regard “consciousness” as standing for the actual thing; and when we have become accustomed to make use metaphorically of spatial relations, as in the term “sub-consciousness”, we find, as time goes on that we have actually formed an idea which has lost its metaphorical nature and which we can manipulate easily as though it was real. Our mythology is then complete.

All our thinking tends to be accompanied and aided by spatial ideas, and we talk in spatial metaphors. . . . We almost inevitably form pictures . . . of a building with its dark underground cellars. . . . If however, we constantly bear in mind that all such spatial relations are metaphorical . . . we may nevertheless speak of a consciousness and a subconsciousness. But only on this condition. (Freud [1895], SE 2:227–28)

A few years later, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud both defends his analogical mode of thought and advises his readers not to reify these tropes. Of course he uses a metaphor to do so. As he puts it, “We are justified . . . in giving free rein to our speculations so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do

not mistake the scaffolding for the building” (Freud [1900], SE 5:536). In later writings, such as in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explains that topographical, dynamic, or economic descriptions of mental processes are not inferred from empirical observations. Rather, they are a priori categories, a “figurative language” without which one “could not have become aware” of the mental processes (Freud [1920], SE 18:60). In the beginning of the essay Freud admits that

the indefiniteness of all our discussions on what we describe as metapsychology is of course due to the fact that we know nothing of the nature of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of the psychological system, and that we do not feel justified in any hypothesis on the subject. We are consequently operating with a large unknown factor [*mit einem grossen x*] which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula. (Ibid., 30–31)

Similarly, in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” he refers to metapsychology as a “Witch,” declaring that “without metapsychological speculation and theorizing — I had almost said ‘phantasying’ — we shall not get another step forward. Unfortunately, here as elsewhere what our Witch reveals is neither very clear nor very detailed” (Freud [1937], SE 23:225).

Following Freud, I thus view metapsychological concepts both as welcome supplements to psychoanalytic theorizing, which undermine pretensions at closure, and as necessary constituents of imaginative thought about the psyche. As Morris Eagle has rightly pointed out, “The very idea of a purely clinical theory untainted by any trace of metapsychology is illusory. For example, the very notion of unconscious wishes and aims, so central to the clinical theory of psychoanalysis, inevitably entails metapsychological assumptions and considerations” (Eagle 1984, 149). I agree with Eagle that the problems of Freud’s metapsychology justify neither its wholesale denunciation nor its exclusion from psychoanalysis, and that there is no possibility of a psychoanalysis without implicit and explicit assumptions about causalities, quantities and hidden dynamics in the mind (For further defenses of metapsychology, see Meissner 1981; Modell 1981.)

For instance, even though one may acknowledge that Freud’s energy concept is vague and inconsistent and does not conform to natural-science criteria — as Yehuda Elkana has put it: “Physically it is total nonsense” (Elkana 1985, 229) — one can still go on to examine its logic more closely. Elkana, for one, has made the point that Freud uses the notion of psychic energy less in a scientific manner than as a loose metaphor, as an intuitively accessible image that is part of our culture and that we invoke “colloquially in talking about our limited mental energies or about conserving our psychic forces” (ibid.). Indeed, through the cracks in the mechanistic facade of Freud’s energy concepts there appears an underlying economic logic that reveals Freud’s use of imagery to be a statement on psychic resources of power and their scarcity (see Fromm 1973, 49). Thus on closer inspection Freud’s references to energy turn out to be related to what he calls “the

economic principle of saving expenditure” rather than to a physicalist frame of thought (Freud [1911], SE 12:222).¹

III

What conceptions of science and reality could allow Freud to construct unverifiable, imaginative metaphors as a legitimate part of his scientific project? The answer to this question lies in Freud’s intellectual background. As Erna Leski, the historian of the Viennese medical school, suggests, doctors of Freud’s era formed their image of science and human beings not only on the basis of their practical training in medicine but also through their education in the Kantian spirit of German humanism (Leski 1965, 314; see also Anderson 1962, 195). The German and Austrian intellectual tradition of the time was so imbued with Kantian heritage that the school of Helmholtz — to which Freud’s teachers belonged — developed a type of phenomenalism that, although antithetical to some of Kant’s premises, counted as scientific translation of his philosophy (Galaty 1974; Turner 1977; Leary 1980). The Helmholtz school justified the reduction of life to chemical-physical mechanics not by reference to the nature of the objects under scrutiny but by the translation of an epistemological argument into a sensualist one. According to its presuppositions, a “mechanical analysis of nature” was entailed by the structure of the human sensory apparatus, which did not allow human beings to conceive of change independent from mechanical movements of matter.

Freud alludes to such a quasi-Kantian phenomenalism by stating: “Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psychoanalysis warns us not to equate perception by means of consciousness with the unconscious processes which are their object. Like the physical, the psychical is not necessarily what it appears to be” (Freud [1915], SE 14:171). This is not the only comparison Freud makes between the impossibility of direct access to the mind’s internal world and the problems encountered in the investigation of the external reality. In fact, the influence of quasi-Kantian premises can be seen throughout his writings. It is evident, for example, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where he states that the unconscious “in its innermost nature is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and . . . as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communica-

¹ Elsewhere I have elaborated in detail on the advantages of such a commonsensical, metaphorical reading of Freud’s metapsychology and concluded that Freud’s metapsychological postulates depict the mind as a conflictual realm structured in analogy to the political world. In my view this political construction of the mind constitutes the core of psychoanalytic theorizing (Brunner n.d.). Here, however, I am not concerned with this aspect of Freud’s metapsychological metaphors and limit myself to a discussion of their role in relation to hermeneutics.

tions of our sense organs” (Freud [1900], SE 5:613). Almost four decades later, quasi-Kantian premises continue to underlie a passage in his *Outline of Psychoanalysis*, in which he compares hypotheses of psychoanalysis to those of physics and argues:

In our science as in the others the problem is the same: behind the attributes (qualities) of the object under examination which are presented directly to our perception, we have to discover something else which is more independent of the particular receptive capacity of our organs and which approximates more closely to what may be supposed to be the real state of affairs. We have no hope of reaching the latter itself, since it is evident that everything new that we have inferred must nevertheless be translated back into the language of our perceptions, from which it is simply impossible to free ourselves. But herein lies the very nature and limitation of our science. . . . Reality will always remain “unknowable.” (Freud [1940a], SE 23:196)

In this spirit Freud states that all that science can achieve are “approximations to certainty.” However, he asserts that such postulates nevertheless enable “constructive work in spite of the absence of final confirmation” (Freud [1916–17], SE 15:51). Again we note that for Freud uncertainty and openness are typical of scientific procedures in general, and that in this respect he sees no difference between psychoanalysis and any of the other sciences. In his words, “The processes with which it is concerned are in themselves just as unknowable as those dealt with by other sciences, by chemistry or physics, for example” (Freud [1940a], SE 23:158). Thus he claims that despite their vagueness, new hypotheses and concepts in psychoanalysis

are not to be despised as evidence of embarrassment on our part but deserve on the contrary to be appreciated as an enrichment of science. They can lay claim to the same value as approximations that belongs to the corresponding intellectual scaffolding found in other natural sciences, and we look forward to their being modified, corrected, and more precisely determined as further experience is accumulated and sifted. So too it be entirely in accordance with our expectations if the basic concepts and principles of the new science (instinct, nervous energy, etc.) remain for a considerable time no less indeterminate than those of older sciences (force, mass, attraction, etc.). (Ibid., 158–59)

Let me sum up. The epistemological premises of Freud’s phenomenism legitimize the vague, metaphorical abstractions typical of metapsychology as a feature common to all sciences, including physics. According to Freud, it is inevitable for *all* disciplines to have recourse to the construction of indeterminate basic concepts in order to represent an underlying reality of inaccessible processes, structures, and mechanisms. Thus his self-understanding as a scientist was far more creative, critical, and complex than most of his supporters and detractors allow for.

IV

However, in a field in which only little is left of Freud's adventurous spirit, metapsychology is continuously denied its role as a vehicle of reflection and transcendence. One is almost tempted to say — albeit with quite a bit of hyperbole — that the history of psychoanalytic theorizing since Freud's death is the history of the struggle to divest metapsychology of its subversive and creative role.

The first step was taken in the 1950s, when the American psychoanalytic school of "ego psychology" aimed to turn Freud's metapsychological conjectures into tame, empirically verifiable statements in order to systematize psychoanalytic theory and thus improve its scientific status. Heinz Hartmann and David Rapaport, the two most influential figures of this approach, maintained Freud's metapsychological formulations. However, they tried to adapt them to standards of logical empiricism, which in the 1940s and 1950s not only dominated the natural sciences, but also swayed the human sciences (Hartmann 1958, 1959; Rapaport and Gill 1959; Rapaport 1960).

The narrative they constructed and tried to live up to was the positivist one, which tells of scientific progress from philosophical speculation to the formulation of operational and verifiable statements. But as Joel Kovel and Martin Klein have shown in their historical accounts of the "antimetapsychology movement" in the United States, Rapaport's and Hartmann's efforts were counterproductive. Rather than entrenching the scientific reputation of psychoanalysis, the problematic nature of their undertaking made it glaringly obvious that metapsychology could not live up to empiricist standards (Kovel 1988; Klein 1989). Leading psychoanalysts of the next generation, such as Merton Gill, Robert Holt, George Klein, and Roy Schafer — who were Hartmann's and Rapaport's most prominent students — reacted to the failed scientism of the 1950s by adopting a different approach. The narrative of an increasingly scientific psychoanalysis, in the positivist sense of the word, gave way to a new line of thought.

Rather than scientizing metapsychology, they tried to get rid of it. Since the 1970s they have developed the now widely accepted argument that psychoanalysis can be split into two independent theories: "good," viable clinical theory on the one hand and "bad" — that is, superfluous — metapsychology on the other (Gill 1976; Holt 1976, 1981, 1985; Klein 1973; Schafer 1976). In this narrative Freud's metapsychological formulations have been widely denounced by eminent psychoanalysts and philosophers as a cumbersome or even pernicious theoretical ballast that Freud carried over into psychoanalysis from his medical education.

Roy Schafer is probably the contemporary American analyst who has undertaken the most sustained and sophisticated effort to reformulate psychoanalysis in a new language so as to provide "a clinically useful and systematic alternative to metapsychology" (Schafer 1976, ix). The keyword here is "systematic." The subtitle that Rapaport (1960) gave to what is probably his most influential book also describes it as "a systematizing attempt," which indicates an attempt at totalization

and closure. It seems appropriate to invoke here Freud's criticism of such systematization among his followers; for Freud took thinking that was enclosed in apparently complete systems to be necessarily opposed to scientific thought. Science, he wrote in the last of his *New Introductory Lectures*, "is not all-comprehensive, it is too incomplete and makes no claim to being self-contained and to the construction of systems" (Freud [1933], SE 22:181–82). Science's evident imperfection was for Freud one of its crucial characteristics and one that differentiated it from philosophy and religion, whose illusionary stability and coherence aimed to soothe their followers and lull them into a misleading sense of security (*ibid.*, 160–61). Criticizing their paralyzing influence on their believers, Freud referred to comprehensive thought systems as *Weltanschauungen*. For Freud, a *Weltanschauung* was "an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place" (*ibid.*, 158). And although Freud also referred to science as a *Weltanschauung*, he pointed out that contrary to its philosophical and religious counterparts it did not really deserve this title, since it did not pretend to be able to answer all questions.

V

These provisos and stipulations have to be kept in mind when one considers Freud's famous declarations that "psycho-analysis has a special right to speak for the scientific *Weltanschauung*" and that it "is part of science and can adhere to the scientific *Weltanschauung*" (Freud [1933], SE 22:158, 181; see also [1940a], SE 23:158; [1940b], SE 23:282). For by themselves such utterances do not explicate what Freud meant by the terms "science," "scientific," and *Weltanschauung*. Nevertheless they have been — and still are — widely quoted out of context and turned into part and parcel of what one might call the "official" narrative of psychoanalysis. Propagated by loyal followers and biographers such as Ernest Jones (1953–57), this narrative places origins and method of psychoanalysis within a natural-science type of discourse. Frank Sulloway (1979) has catalogued twenty-six different stories — he calls them "myths" — that together form a narrative of Freud as The Scientific Hero who started his task as a shunned outsider, a lonely warrior in the cause of truth, fighting against an evil medical establishment that rejected his ideas. As Sulloway presents it, the official psychoanalytic narrative tells of a long and complicated journey full of unexpected dangers and ordeals. It reports on trials, temptations, and wrong paths taken, temptresses (in the early seduction theory), a secret helper (Wilhelm Fliess), a daring and superhuman self-transformation (Freud's self-analysis), loneliness and rejection, an early group of devoted followers, conquests — and finally, success, victory, and fame (*ibid.*, chap. 13).

The self-conception of Freud's loyal followers as members of a movement struggling for scientific achievement and recognition in the natural-science sense of these terms affected their dissemination of Freud's texts and theories. Such effects can be discerned, for instance, in James Strachey's *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (SE), which until recently has been taken by psychoanalysts and lay readers in the Anglo-Saxon world as an authentic and faithful rendering of Freud's texts. Indeed, practically all English commentaries on Freud, including the present article, cite the authoritative *Standard Edition*. However, in order to enhance the scientific appearance of Freud's work by assimilating it to the natural sciences, Strachey's translation got rid of all instances in which Freud linked psychoanalysis to the *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities) or characterized it as a *Seelenkunde* (study of the soul). By rendering these German terms uniformly and wrongly as "mental sciences," Strachey obscured the significance of crucial statements in which Freud declared his aim to establish a new science through a synthesis of the natural sciences and the humanities. Thus the *Standard Edition* distorts the foundation declaration of 1910, in which the purpose of the International Psychoanalytic Association was declared to be "to foster and to further the science of psycho-analysis founded by Freud, both as pure psychology and in its application to medicine and the *Geisteswissenschaften* ['humanities,' mistranslated as 'mental sciences']" (Freud [1914], SE 14:44). Some years later Freud argued that the training most suitable for analysts was not available in the traditional university curriculum, since it would have to "include *geisteswissenschaftlichen Stoff* ['elements from the humanities,' mistranslated as 'elements from the mental sciences'], elements . . . from psychology, the history of civilization and sociology, as well as from anatomy, biology and the study of evolution" (Freud [1927], SE 20:252). In the same passage Freud maintained that as long as there were no independent psychoanalytic institutes in which such comprehensive training could be made possible, a "preliminary education in medicine" was recommended. He warned, however, that "it should not be forgotten . . . that this is not the whole of psycho-analysis, and that for its other aspects we can never do without the cooperation of people who have had preliminary education in the *Geisteswissenschaften* ['humanities,' again mistranslated as 'mental sciences']" (*ibid.*, 257). Darius Ornston's comment on the tendentiousness of Strachey's translation is pertinent here. As he points out, Strachey wanted not so much to place Freud in a specific scientific context or tradition as to make him speak "like a Victorian Englishman would think a scientist should sound like" (Ornston 1982, 411; for the contemporary debate on Strachey's translation see Bettelheim 1984, Brandt 1980; Ornston 1985, 1992; Timms and Segal 1988).

One widespread response to the official narrative has been to accept the image of Freud as an aspiring natural scientist of the mind but to debunk him as one who failed in his enterprise. In this counternarrative — contributions to which vary widely in terms of their vehemence, scholarship, and sophistication — Freud is

given the role of The Scientific Fumbler. Thus he is depicted as attempting to create a new scientific discipline in the natural-science mode but unable to live up to acceptable standards of theory construction and corroboration. Most bluntly, this argument has been put forward in books devoted to the demolition of psychoanalysis, whose titles speak for themselves, such as E. M. Thornton's *The Freudian Fallacy* (1986) and Hans Eysenck's *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (1986). Probably the most scholarly attempt to turn Freud into an aspiring — but ultimately misguided — natural scientist of the psyche is Sulloway's *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*, where Freud appears as an heir to Darwin and a "cryptobiologist," employing "a highly hypothetico-deductive methodology" (Sulloway 1979, 421). Since it aims to transpose psychoanalysis from psychology to biology, Sulloway's book hardly refers to Freud's clinical practice. Thus even though the bulk of Sulloway's book is devoted to the early years of Freud's work, such seminal concepts as the "talking-cure" are hardly touched upon and have found no place in the detailed 45-page index.

The contribution to this genre of literature that has been given the most serious attention in psychoanalytic and philosophical circles is Adolf Grünbaum's *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*. Grünbaum argues against readings of Freud's work that present it primarily as part of a hermeneutic tradition concerned with textual interpretation. Instead, he portrays Freud as a somewhat narrow-minded, falsifiable and falsified empiricist, who wanted psychoanalysis to be exclusively part of the natural sciences (Grünbaum 1984, 4–5). To support this claim, Grünbaum quotes Freud as saying for instance that "psychoanalysis is a part of the mental science of psychology. . . . Psychology, too, is a natural science. What else can it be?" (ibid., 2). However, citations such as this one reveal the problematic nature of Grünbaum's approach. For in the original German Freud said nothing that would have allowed Grünbaum to cite this short statement in support of a claim which aims to remove any trace of hermeneutics from Freud's work. In German, Freud pronounced psychoanalysis to be both "part of psychology's inquiry into the soul" (*ein Stück der Seelenkunde der Psychologie*) and of natural science (Freud [1940b], SE 23:282). Thus Grünbaum may possibly be seen as one of the victims of Strachey's translation. Moreover, as John Forrester has demonstrated, the quoted passage also acquires a meaning opposed to the one attributed to it by Grünbaum, when one continues reading on to the next sentence. For directly after saying that psychology is a natural science, Freud qualifies his statement by adding: "But its case is different" (ibid.; Forrester 1986, 671).

As we see, to turn Freud into a straightforward empiricist one has to recast some elements of his texts and remain silent about others. For as I have shown, Freud's work systematically transcends the boundaries of empiricism. For instance, in his *Introductory Lectures* Freud states that his insights into the unconscious meaning of dream symbols had many sources and that they were gained "from fairy tales and myths, from buffoonery and jokes, from folklore (that is from knowledge about popular manner and customs, sayings and songs) and from poetic and

colloquial linguistic usage" (Freud [1916-17], SE 15:159). Obviously, reliance on evidence from these fields brings psychoanalysis closer to textual and cultural disciplines such as philology or literature. Moreover, as is well known, Freud's writings include not only lectures, case studies, clinical guidelines and theoretical treatises on mental illness, dreams, sexuality, and mental processes in general, but also a confusing mixture of literary analysis, biographical comments on writers, and quasi-literary texts. He wrote a book on the structure of jokes, an essay analyzing the process of creative writing, a "historical novel" on Moses;² an interpretation of a fictional dream in Jensen's *Gradiva* and of a scene from *The Merchant of Venice*; reflections on Michelangelo's statue of Moses and on Dostoevski's character; an analysis of autobiographical passages by Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe; a discussion of a seventeenth-century manuscript on demonology; a full-length study of the memoirs of a mad German judge. Such publications can hardly be counted as contributions to medical or psychological discourse in the traditional sense. Thus even Strachey's scientized reconstruction of Freud's work cannot conceal the fact that unlike his orthodox successors Freud continuously undermined established conventions of scientific discourse in every possible way, spread the scope of psychoanalysis over all human endeavors, and explicitly staked claims not only in psychology but also in philology, philosophy, sociology, education, aesthetics and cultural history (Freud [1913], SE, 13:176–90). In other words, Freud aimed to establish an interdisciplinary science (see Kitcher 1992).

Aware of Freud's transgressions into the humanities, there are commentators who have spun Freud into a different narrative, one that is opposed to scientizing tendencies. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, agrees that Freud wanted to create a natural-science type of project but claims this to be a "scientistic self-misunderstanding" to which Freud succumbed. Thus in *Knowledge and Human Interest* he places his discussion of Freud between an interpretation of Kant and Fichte on the one hand and his reading of Nietzsche on the other hand (Habermas 1978). However, rather than simply debunking the scientific reputation of psychoanalysis, Habermas' aim is to construct a narrative in which Freud himself appears as The Great Debunker, on a par with Nietzsche and Marx. Similarly, in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, Paul Ricoeur places Freud alongside Marx and Nietzsche as one of three masters who dominate what he calls the "school of suspicion" in hermeneutics (Ricoeur 1970, 32). Moreover, both Ricoeur and Habermas consider Freud's work as being directed not only at unmasking false consciousness and deciphering the symbolic expressions of its distortions but also at liberating the individual from its oppressive power (ibid., 35; Wolfenstein 1990).

Without necessarily sharing the perspective from which psychoanalysis appears as an emancipatory praxis, other narratives also place Freud primarily in the history of hermeneutics and belittle Freud's debt to the natural sciences in compar-

² Freud's title of the first draft of *Moses and Monotheism* was *The Man Moses, a Historical Novel*.

ison to that which he owed to disciplines concerned with the study of language. John Forrester, for instance claims that "it was the field of philological sciences that acted as a source of inspiration for Freud's and psychoanalysis' preoccupation with language" (Forrester 1980, 167–68). Forrester seems to concur with Michel Foucault's claim that "Freud more than anyone else brought the knowledge of man closer to its philological and linguistic model" (Foucault 1970, 361). Jacques Lacan, too, conceives psychoanalysis primarily in linguistic or hermeneutic terms. In Lacan's words: "If psychoanalysis is to become instituted as the science of the unconscious, one must set out with the notion that the unconscious is structured like a language" (Lacan 1977, 160; Lacan 1978, 280).

Obviously, as a hermeneutics psychoanalysis has to be assessed according to different criteria from the ones that natural science brings into play. Thus such issues as narrative coherence and "fit," self-consistency and comprehensiveness, are brought into the foreground by these commentators. Paul Ricoeur, for instance, has formulated the truth criteria of psychoanalysis as those of a narrative by saying that its aim is "to reorganize facts in a meaningful whole which constitutes a single and continuous history" (Ricoeur 1977, 861; see also Spence 1982). Ricoeur holds this position even though he describes Freud's attempted union of hermeneutics and causal explanation as constituting not only the "central difficulty in psychoanalytic epistemology" but also as its *raison d'être* (Ricoeur 1970, 65). Throughout his discussion of Freud's writings Ricoeur refers to them as forming a "mixed discourse that falls outside the motive-cause alternative" (*ibid.*, 363; see also 394–95). He even seems to reach the conclusion that "we can neither be satisfied with the Freudian metapsychology, nor find another starting point to rectify and enrich the theoretical model" (Ricoeur 1977, 857; see also 852–56). But finally he argues that in terms of the procedures which can be used to establish their validity, psychoanalytic interpretations are located within the hermeneutic realm of meaning alone and are subject "to the same kind of questions as the validity of a historical or exegetical interpretation" (Ricoeur 1970, 374).

In his discussion of the cause-intention merger in psychoanalysis, Jürgen Habermas declares Freud's science to be "the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection," because it "joins hermeneutics with operations that genuinely seemed to be reserved to the natural sciences" (Habermas 1978, 214). However, Habermas criticizes Freud for failing to recognize psychoanalysis as the self-reflective depth hermeneutics which he, Habermas, proclaims it to be, and for undergirding it with misleading scientific models of energy distribution. In order to develop psychoanalysis in what he takes to be its proper direction, Habermas, too, suggests replacing causal aspects in Freud's discourse by a hermeneutics, "which explicates the conditions of the possibility of psychoanalytic knowledge" (*ibid.*, 254).

British ordinary-language philosophers, and psychoanalysts influenced by them, agree as a rule as regards this point with the comments made by Ricoeur and Habermas. Charles Rycroft articulates this position succinctly by stating: "If

dreams have meaning and can be interpreted they must be creations of a person or an agent who endows them with meaning, while, if they are phenomena with causes they must be explicable in terms of prior events without reference to an agent. One cannot really have it both ways and the attempt to do so leads only to confusion" (Rycroft 1981, 4). However, for more than a decade some of the criticism voiced against Freud by British ordinary-language philosophers has lost its edge, since the purpose-cause distinction has finally collapsed even in these circles (Davidson 1980, 3–19; see also Davidson 1982). But as the continuing controversy around Grünbaum's book shows, the interpretation-of-meaning versus causal-explanation debate still flourishes and continuously avoids engaging the challenge inherent in Freud's project: to develop a vision of the mind that eschews this dichotomy and instead creates a synthesis of explanation and understanding.

What is common to commentators on both sides of the science-hermeneutics divide is that they seek to restrict Freud's interdisciplinary work to one discursive dimension, which they make dominant as representing the "true" Freud. Moreover, essentially the same strategy of reading is pursued by those who try to rehabilitate Freud, to free him from a stigma — whatever it may be — and by those who try to discredit psychoanalysis and unmask its fallacies and errors. They all posit incompatibility where Freud refuses the very possibility of separation into two conceptual worlds, and they set up a dichotomy of two realms that Freud continuously intertwines. The first is a hermeneutic one referring to the language, reasons, and purposes or intentions of a subject, whose understanding demands interpretation and decoding. The other realm deals with the natural-scientific explanation of causal links and processes, for which mechanistic hypotheses and empirical corroboration are appropriate.

In opposition to these one-dimensional readings of Freud I contend that attempts to "discipline" psychoanalysis by reducing it to one of these two dimensions rob it of its vitality. For, in my view, the uneasy coexistence of interpretation and explanation in psychoanalytic discourse gives rise to a creative tension that is destroyed by relegating Freud to one or other side of the interpretation-explanation divide. I have thus attempted to criticize such narratives and in the process of this criticism to construct an alternative narrative on Freud's work that focuses on the dialectic of metapsychology and interpretation in psychoanalysis. Above all, I have examined the place that Freud allocated to metapsychology in his interdisciplinary science. Metapsychology, I have claimed, served him as a double-edged sword, both enabling creative and metaphorical thought about the mind's elusive reality and revealing the necessary incompleteness of hermeneutics. In order to pursue this critical, reflexive task, as well as to think creatively about the hidden world of the psyche, psychoanalysis still needs metapsychology. However, this does not mean that Freud's metapsychological concepts and categories are sacred and beyond criticism. On the contrary, it implies that they should provoke further thinking about the mind's hidden dynamics, forces, and structures, a thinking

which continues to intertwine the interpretation of meaning with causal explanation and is thus both critical and creative.

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