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# A psychoanalytic enquiry on symbolic function

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**Abstract.** In this contribution<sup>1</sup>, on the basis of the recent psychoanalytic clinic, we would like to deepen the underlying psychoanalytic bases to human symbolic function which might be considered as the outcome of the dialectic interplay between two concomitant and opposite Ego's subagencies always present in every human being which, in turn, would be the outcome of an Ego's splitting mainly according to the last 1938 Freudian thought based on disavowal mechanism<sup>2</sup> and supported by the thought's system of other post-Freudian authors, above all H. Nunberg, D. Lagache, J. Lacan, F. Dolto and M. Recalcati.

The main idea around which revolves this note is as follows<sup>3</sup>. Putting the disavowal mechanism as a general psychic process extended to all the possible painful perceptions, its outcomes are mainly two basic subagencies of Ego agency, partially opposed yet interrelated of each other, to be precise the Ideal Ego and the Ego's Ideal, from whose dialectic interaction, also with the involvement of the Super-Ego agency, takes place most of the subsequent psychic life<sup>4</sup>, including symbolic function as well as degenerative behaviours. In particular, disavowal mechanism is closely involved in the formation of *bodily image* (or *bodily schema*) which takes place during the pre-genital phases of human psychosexual development (mainly, from anal phase to Œdipal one) in the discovery of the primary sexual gender difference from which the child, when he or she gives pre-eminence to symbolic elaboration, is able to build up his or her personal bodily image, so instituting relationships between its component elements together with the assignment of the related meanings.

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<sup>1</sup> It is our custom, here as well as in all other our works, to itemize personal pronouns in alphabetic order, hence in a systematic way, without any intention to establish possible gender hierarchy, unless real psychoanalytic motifs suggest to do otherwise (like, for instance, in discussing Œdipal questions).

<sup>2</sup> It is a main defence psychic mechanism closely related to the Ego's splitting for which two opposite psychic attitudes, with respect to reality, coexist into the Ego: the one (roughly, bringing back to the pair Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego), takes into account external reality, in contraposition to the other (roughly, bringing back to Ideal Ego) which denies the latter, replacing this with a product of desire; these two attitudes persist always the one nears the other, without reciprocal influences. The Ego's splitting is a defence mechanism mainly due to the fact that, in any individual, coexist both the most impetuous drives (Es) and the Ego, so that unavoidable seem to be the occurrence of delirious experiences. The Ego uses such a mechanism as it tries to cope and face all the possible painful perceptions and anxiogenic experiences of external world, which threaten the internal psychic space of the subject. At the early basis of this psychic splitting, there is an *archaic* defence mechanism which tends to not tolerate and not suffer the contradictory tendencies of affective-emotive reality evolutionary aimed to the search of good and pleasant relationships without distressing the individual in front of any possible type of frustrating experience (Petrini et al. 2013). This basic psychic mechanism has been, wrongly in our view, quite underestimated in respect to Freudian work, as Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) have pointed out, who, inter alia, would want to consider it as a general psychic mechanism of the mental formation and development of every human being, from what transpires by the last Freud's work of 1938.

<sup>3</sup> This paper may be also considered as an updated excerpt of (Iurato 2013).

<sup>4</sup> In this regard, here we quote a sentence only, that of Ronald Britton (2003), according to which «in analysis, there is not a most central theme than that of the relationship among Ego, Super-Ego-Ego's Ideal and Ideal Ego» (Britton 2004, p. 95). Other authors then refer too this tern of agencies to a tripartite model of Super-Ego, as done in (Lis et al. 2003). To be precise, Super-Ego has three main components: the first one, has to do with the rising of norms and ideals; the second one is associated to the sense of guilt and shame; and, the third one comprehends the true nucleus of Super-Ego, that just related to the overcome of Œdipus complex and related interdicts.

This psychoanalytic pattern of Freud's theory, as also extended by other scholars who remained more or less faithful to Freudian orthodoxy, and mainly worked out with a historical methodology<sup>5</sup>, might explain a wide range of aspects of human psychic life and modern society phenomena, as confirmed by recent psychoanalytic clinic and sociological research<sup>6</sup>, which nevertheless have been well-known to the secular philosophical and theological reflection since the dawning of rational thought, and that therefore seem to be a kind of universal constants of human psyche and life.

### 1. A very brief sketch on symbolism in psychoanalysis

It is not possible to give here than the slightest survey on symbolism, so we will provide a very few outlines on it, just the needful for what follows. *Symbolism* is an indirect form of representation. *Symbolization* is a psychic function typical of human beings, through which a mental representation refers to another one according to a not well defined link. Differently from the *sign*, which ties together representations whose meanings are both conscious and related by a conventional but rigid link, the *symbol* is characterized by the fact that the meaning of one representation belongs to unconscious realm (*latent meaning*), the other to consciousness (*manifest meaning*). One of the main hypotheses is that symbolization is prior to any other form of sign function, like language (Moore and Fine 1990, 1993; Bottiroli 2006, p. 176).

In psychoanalysis, the first interest towards symbols dates back to Freud's work *The Interpretation of Dreams* of 1899, considered still valid by most of psychoanalysts (Fossi 1988, p. 41), and remained such throughout his life. Distinguishing, from C.S. Peirce onwards, symbol from sign, in that the link between signifier and signified in latter is arbitrary but rigid, symmetric and mainly belonging to consciousness, while, in the former, is more elusive, weaker, asymmetric, relying between unconscious and consciousness, and endowed of almost universal, ancestral features to be identified in the unconscious realm, maybe the remnants of a primordial and fundamental language forgotten by humanity, as Erich Fromm has pointed out in (Fromm 1951). From Freud onwards, the symbolism has been a central theme of many other psychoanalysts, like Jung, Melanie Klein, Hanna Segal, Lacan, and so forth (Barale et al. 2009).

Freud conceived symbols as all springing out from unconscious, as a result of primary process whose main aim is to reduce anguish, removing unacceptable ideas and desires. Symbolic formation, in its widest sense, allows the deferment (time delay) of the discharge of psychic tensions or conflicts produced by stimuli, interposing mental mediators (symbols) between stimuli and responses, so postponing the gratification, or else shifting desires from forbidden objects to

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, notwithstanding we have argued within Freudian theory, we also have homogeneously and coherently taken into account, at the occurrence, some other psychoanalytic models by those authors who have been, however, faithful to Freudian orthodoxy. This, in agreement with the basic historicist-epistemological nature of psychoanalytic theories (Carotenuto 1982, 1991; Britton 2000, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> See above all Recalcati (2010, 2012-16) and references therein, and Di Gregorio (2003), as well as the witness by Adriano Voltolin, reported in (Britton et al. 2014, Introduzione); further confirmations come as well from modern (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947, 1966, 2002) and contemporary (Donati 2015) sociology, above all from *Frankfurt School* (see also last section 9). In particular, Di Gregorio (2003) had already identified and discussed, no much time ago, those psychopathologies associated to the current phenomenology linked to mobile digital communications as mainly belonging to the class of fetishist disorders, and nowadays his considerations are even more current and still valid as many statistical data and surveys dramatically confirm, above all in regard to the prevalent incidence and the widespread growth of online perversions, in that just in online environment, for the more degree of impersonality and being easier to get anonymity, are therefore even more loosen inhibitions with a consequent (anonymous) externalization of those perennially present (hence unavoidable, but yet controllable) "dark" aspects of own personality (belonging to the Jungian *shadow*) which publically are (or should be) hidden or repressed thanks to social institutions and their right restraint rules (mainly belonging to Super-Ego).

their licit (often material) substitutes, so allowing an immediate gratification (Moore and Fine 1990, 1993). The main aim of the present paper is just to give a psychoanalytic pattern, worked out within Freudian theory, explaining these latter two aspects.

To be precise, the first result of symbolic formation meant as above, gives rise to sublimation, hence to civilization and (non-material) culture just in the Freudian sense<sup>7</sup>, while the second result of symbolic formation, reduces to (symbolic) reification at simple and immediate materiality (material culture<sup>8</sup>). Since at the basis of symbolic formation there is, anyway, a compromise between opposite tendencies (in accomplish pleasure and reality principles, as well as life and death principles), we have identified such a basic dialectic in the relationships between two main opposite structural parts of Ego agency arising from a certain division (*Ego's splitting*), namely the subagency Ideal Ego on the one hand, and the subagency system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego on the other hand<sup>9</sup>. Just from their dialectic opposition, springs out sublimation phenomena on the one side, and materialistic practices on the other side.

The pattern described herein, is mainly supported by the fact that symbolism, in psychoanalysis, is considered closely related to somatic components of Self experience (Fossi 1988, p. 101), as well as by the latest psychoanalytic clinic which has shown the emergence of new pathologies which may be laid out within this framework based on Ego's splitting.

## 2. On Ego, Ideal Ego, Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego: a first introductory overview

According to the last 1938 Freudian thought (Freud 1938, 1999), an Ego's splitting takes place with the formation of two subagencies which will be called *Ego's Ideal* and *Ideal Ego* (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973; Chasseguet-Smirgel 1975; Mancina 1990; see also Reich 1954; Lample-De-Groot 1962; Hartmann and Loewenstein 1962; Loewald 1962; Sandler et al. 1963; Hanly 1984; Levin 1996; Milrod 2002). Nevertheless, both these names are due to Hermann Nunberg (1932) and Daniel Lagache (1961), and not to Freud who explicitly introduced and used only the name Ego's Ideal in his 1914 *On Narcissism. An Introduction* to denote an autonomous intrapsychic formation, prior to Super-Ego, to which the Ego refers itself to evaluate its effective realizations or representations (Galimberti 2006). Nevertheless, Freud himself, in the 1914 *On Narcissism. An Introduction*, as well as in the 1922 *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and in the 1923 *The Ego and the Id*, speaks too of an Ideal Ego (*Idealich*) but identifies it with the Ego's Ideal (*Ichideal*) and this, on its turn, with the Super-Ego, even if, in some points of his discussion, a certain distinction between them seems already to be possible.

However, as pointed out in (Hanly 1984), Freud starts to use the term Ideal Ego since 1922, to refer to narcissistic phenomena, while Ego's Ideal was being gradually included into the Super-Ego, so C. Hanly suggests, on the basis of philosophical tradition as well as of his clinical experience, to use both terms but to be meant in a different manner as referring to different psychic aspects of personality: the former connotes a *state of being*, whereas the latter connotes a *state of becoming*. This is partially justified, for example, by distinguishing these three main cases: an individual may be honest in her or his dealing with others because she or he fears punishment by others (the

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<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, it is well-known that cultural work, according to Freud, comes from repression and conversion of pervert sexual elements (Petrini et al. 2013; Vattimo et al. 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Understood in its widest sense, beyond anthropological meaning. A further, in-depth discussion of what is said in this sentence, will be given in the last section 9.

<sup>9</sup> These agencies, however, warrant the needful links with unconscious realm.

primary narcissistic motives of self-interest or egoism – Ideal Ego pole), because she or he fears punishment by her or his own guilt (the moral motive or Super-Ego prohibition), or because she or he wishes to be, and to be seen, an honest person (the secondary narcissistic motive – Ego's Ideal pole) (Hanly 1984).

The Ideal Ego has in-depth narcissistic origins going back to the primary identification (of primary narcissism) and precedes all further object relations, as well as it is prior to Super-Ego; it was also called the *ein einziger Zug* (i.e., the *unary trait*) by Freud, the unavoidable and unchangeable basis upon which to build up all the next secondary identifications (of the Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego, in secondary narcissism stage). The Ideal Ego springs out from the fusional bodily relation with mother, and is the most archaic agency, which physiologically corresponds to the realization of the primary and secondary circular reactions according to J. Piaget (Petrini et al. 2013). Although the individual should leave such a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence and immediate satisfaction, he or she is however unable to renounce fully to that plain and unconditioned state of pleasure enjoyed in the childhood<sup>10</sup>. Such a first, infant narcissistic state, i.e., the *Idealich*, is afterwards overcome thanks to either parents and society criticisms in regard to the child and the internalization of idealized objects, towards Ego's Ideal (Lis et al. 2003).

To be precise, the next convergence of this primary narcissism with the interiorization of such criticisms and the consequent parental identifications, will give rise to the Ego's Ideal, that, in *On Narcissism. An Introduction* (1914), it was introduced, by Freud, to indicate an internal psychic formation that enables Ego to evaluate its own operate constantly comparing it with an already acquired ideal model, i.e., the Ego's Ideal. Therefore, it gives rise to agencies of self-observation as well as to other secondary identifications<sup>11</sup> (of secondary narcissism) which allow the rising of the first psychic components of subjectivity. Then, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* of 1922, Freud puts Ego's Ideal at the basis of the formation of collectivity which may exist only after a common object has been put as an ideal to be shared collectively, in such a manner different individuals may identify among them, having in common such an ideal in the own Ego; so, it is in the further convergence of the Ego's Ideal owned by many individuals, that Freud saw the early origin of social cohesion. Then, in *The Ego and the Id* of 1923, Freud overlaps Ego's Ideal with the notion of Super-Ego (explicitly mentioned, for the first time, just in this work), hence making a first distinction between them only in the<sup>12</sup> *New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis* of 1932, according to the chain of co-implications<sup>13</sup> «moral consciousness ↔ guilt ↔ Super Ego (feared) ↔ sense of inferiority ↔ ideality function ↔ Ego's Ideal (loved)».

Subsequently, on the basis of these last Freudian conceptions, other authors, such as Nunberg in 1932, Lacan in 1936 and Lagache in 1958, retook two such Ego's agencies as distinct from each other<sup>14</sup>, even if, as already said, in the last period of his work, Freud himself more or less implicitly started to distinguish between these two Ego's subagencies. Their interplay will play a key role in the following psychic behaviour of every human being. Lagache considers the above Freudian chain

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<sup>10</sup> Ant that it starts since prenatal phase, in the maternal womb, to which every human being unconsciously tends to return back, as pointed out by Franco Fornari (2016).

<sup>11</sup> Belonging to the Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego agencies, understood as distinct between them according to the next work of other post-Freudian scholars (e.g., Nunberg, Lagache, Lacan, Grunberger, Chasseguet-Smirgel, Hanly, and others). See the references quoted at the beginning of this section, as well as (Iurato 2013) for further bibliographical references.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. (Gay 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. (Gay 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Also important and valuable is the next work of J. Chasseguet-Smirgel (1975, 1985).

of equivalences, explicitly talking of a pair Ego's Ideal–Super Ego in which respectively ideality and prohibition permeates of each other, but always keeping their distinct and oppositional roles but with possible interchange's relations. This is a well-known fact, linked with the basic disaggregated nature of Ego and its components, often in opposition among them; this is also true for Super-Ego, as pointed out by J.A. Arlow (Moore and Fine 1990, 1993; Gay 2000).

Likewise, Nunberg deems that the obedience to Super-Ego is induced by the fear of punishment (as due to feared persons), while the affection to Ego's Ideal is motivated by the loving sentiment (felt in regard to loved persons), even if he supposes the two agencies of the pair Ego's Ideal–Super Ego, as sharply distinct and opposite of each other. Nevertheless, either Nunberg and Lagache do not exclude at all an relationship of exchange between them, like, for instance, in the relations of the type love-hatred in which possible reference persons there involved, may change their status in respect to the single individual to whom they contribute to form such agencies<sup>15</sup>. Finally, among others, B. Grunberger (1971) and Chasseguet-Smirgel (1975, 1985) (see also references cited at the beginning of this section) have stressed the need to consider distinct the two agencies of Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego, the former pointing out the main internal narcissistic origin of Ego's Ideal on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the dependence of Super-Ego on the external environment, whose origins are retraceable in the Œdipus phase, stating too, that these two agencies follow different pathways which may lead to reciprocal contrasts between them.

Anyway, we may say that all these last authors agree in identifying, just in the Ideal Ego<sup>16</sup>, an unconscious narcissistic formation, prior to Super-Ego, characterized by either an omnipotence's ideal bringing back to the early state of indistinctness of Ego from Es (death drive) or a primary identification with mother (child-mother bind) and experienced as omnipotent (narcissistic rigidity). In the Ideal Ego, reigns the symmetry, the indistinctness, so there is no dialectic, for its deep roots in the fusional and symbiotic tie child-mother. Instead, in the pair Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego, there is the fundamental dialectic between the *One* and the *Other*, that is, respectively, what one would like to be (the *One*) with respect to what already exists beyond own individuality (the *Other*). As we shall discuss later, the Ego and its development is closely related just to this dialectic<sup>17</sup> internal to the agency pair Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego.

Indeed, the notion of Ego's Ideal remains however implicit in almost all the Freud's work, until to begin object of his explicit study between 1914 and 1922, in concomitance with the passage from the first to the second topology of human psyche. From the Ego's Ideal, Freud goes to Super-Ego, but, before that, he however points out, as early in *On Narcissism. An Introduction*, the crucial importance played by the former for the development of the Ego itself, which, on its turn, is oriented towards the external reality and the establishment of object relations, so Ego needs to take *enough distance* from primary narcissism (of Ideal Ego) of child-mother tie, but, at the same time, trying to recover it, because of the fact that the immediate satisfaction and the infinite omnipotence of primary narcissism always exert their ascending influence, so they are always present (also due

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<sup>15</sup> See also (Gay 2000).

<sup>16</sup> See (Vattimo et al. 1993).

<sup>17</sup> In passing, we recall as well that this dialectic of the agency pair Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego explicates symbolically and represents that basic generational difference with which every individual may grow up. On the other hand, in his last work, Freud (1938) considers Super-Ego as a particular agency which forms into the Ego, above all under parental influences and by public institutions (schools, clubs, educational and recreational centres, and so forth) which, in turn, are moulded by traditions, uses, customs, and the general culture of the society in which they live. Furthermore, Es, Ego and Super-Ego are the bearers of, respectively, the deepest inherited ancestral past, the individual past (i.e., the own lived experiences) and the institutional past (i.e., that made by others).

to death drive and mainly acting through compulsion to repeat) just as a sedimentation of the Ego into an area hold by the Ego's Ideal (seen therefore as a kind of precipitate around the initial germ of the Ideal Ego) which runs as a kind of "propeller pole" of the Ego for its evolutive pathway, so first triggering then allowing the channelling of narcissistic libido (at first, polarized all around Ideal Ego) toward objects make available by Super-Ego, and whose related cathexed energy may then come back to the Ego itself and its energy reservoir (Jaffé 2009).

So, with the breaking of the child-mother bind<sup>18</sup>, which takes place along the Œdipal phase, arise Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego agencies, which have wide pieces of their lands in common with Ego where it may interact with them, without excluding possible conflicts between Ego, Super-Ego and Ego's Ideal, which may arise too. In any case, the key of this basic process is the dawning of the Ego's Ideal from the Ideal Ego by means of the intervention of the Œdipal triangulation<sup>19</sup>, so transforming primary needs (of Ideal Ego) to desires (of Ego's Ideal) to be accomplished in respect to Super-Ego, and in dependence on related Ego's instructions, even if, as Freud himself pointed out (Fodor and Gaynor 1950), either Ego and Super-Ego, most of the times, carry on together, being possible to distinguish them only when they enter into conflict of each other, and this mainly occurs in some chief cases.

For instance, out of these, one concerns the case in which a strong push of activation coming from primary narcissism, flattens the Ego on either the object and the Ego's Ideal, these latter being both identified between them in the desperate endeavour to restore the fusional tie child-mother, like in the cases of falling in love, so the Ego will turn out to be emptied of its own resources and at the mercy of the Ego's Ideal, a psychic state, this, that, if persistent, may lead to maniac-depressive disorders or to melancholia, until up possible Ego's fragments, still remained in the consciousness, may broke this idealized soap inside which the deceived subject lives.

We are interested, in particular, in the formation of Ego's Ideal. It starts from the primary nucleus of the Ideal Ego, acquiring, by internalization, various idealized objects, as bearers of secondary narcissism, from the moment in which the child becomes aware to live as a separate psychic entity detached from the child-mother tie, which takes place when he or she enters into the crucial Œdipal *triangular space* (Britton 2000, Ch. IV). With the breaking of such an embroiling symbiosis child-mother, mainly characterized by the Ideal Ego agency (and upon which a very weak Ego is still flattened), two different psychic agencies begin to stand out, namely the Ego's Ideal and the Super-Ego, which, as has been said above, should be deemed different, yet closely related, of each other. With this bifurcation, the Ego is allowed to issue over them, acquiring a metalevel of control integrating subjectivity (Ego's Ideal) with objectivity (Super-Ego) thanks to the conquer of a *third position* in a *triangular psychic space* springing out from Œdipal phase (Britton 2000, 2003; Jaffé 2009; Petrini et al. 2013).

So, Ego's Ideal is successive to Ideal Ego, it is its heir, as the outcome of the renunciation by child of her or his primary and predominant narcissistic position, replacing the love for herself or himself with other ideals to be reached, coming from various identifications with parental figures and others in accordance with her or his own previous Ideal Ego. Such identifications will be made possible thanks to the Ego, even if this latter often is not always able to carry forward such a role, as well as to make the right choices; these are taken from family considered in its social-cultural context and environment where child grows up and lives. Hence, Ego's Ideal is the result of a particular series

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<sup>18</sup> Which explicates along the imaginary relation axis a-a' of the well-known *Schema L* due to Lacan. For this breaking, see also (Iurato 2014).

<sup>19</sup> See also (Murtagh and Iurato 2016) and references therein.

of successive identifications with idealized objects<sup>20</sup>, so, according to Freud, the sense of inferiority comes from the comparison between Ego's evaluations and what the model provided by Ego's Ideal is able to furnish to the subject, an ideal model to which he or she always tends to conform herself or himself, but never reaching it, just because of the structural nature of such an agency (Jaffé 2009; Petrini et al. 2013).

Thus, Ego's Ideal is not only the yearned place of primary narcissism, now re-actualized as a multilayer shell of secondary narcissism built up on the primary narcissism nucleus of Ideal Ego, by means of various identifications with idealized objects drawn up from otherness, but comprehends too consciousness patterns, ethical and cultural conceptions, parental models, educational schemes, present at the junction point with Super-Ego, in that such features are also elements of the latter. So, Ego's Ideal is edified upon that empty space<sup>21</sup> which has come create by the forced abandonment<sup>22</sup> of primary narcissism, with the related consequences due to the losing of that blissful state<sup>23</sup> felt in the symbiosis child-mother in which every primary and secondary need (according to Piaget – see above) was immediately and fully satisfied. The coming of this agency, i.e., the Ego's Ideal, is crucial for the psychological development of the subject, as, in its complexity and peculiarity, it occupies a cardinal junction place between absolute narcissism and objectuality, between pleasure and reality principle (Jaffé 2009).

Freud himself changed his ideas on Ego's Ideal and Super-Ego: at first, in *The Ego and the Id* (of 1923), he gives pre-eminence to Super-Ego, a part of which is Ego's Ideal and respect to which the Ego compares itself and even tries to conform, while, then, in the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (of 1932), he inverts, in some sense, this perspective, giving major importance to narcissistic aspects of personality, upon which Super-Ego itself builds up. However, this change of perspective was mainly motivated and promoted by the change of topography of human psyche, after which Freud became aware of the impossibility to consider coincident these two agencies, a question inherited by post-Freudian authors who identified, within it, three main problematic themes: the polarity narcissism/Œdipus, the polarity pre-object structure/object relationship, and the polarity ideality/prohibition-guilt-punishment (Jaffé 2009). Anyway, an essential polarity's feature seems therefore to lie between these two main distinct agencies, that is to say, we may consider to hold a basic relationship of the following type: Ego's Ideal  $\overset{\text{polarity}}{\longleftrightarrow}$  Super-Ego.

Therefore, the rising of these two different agencies, is of fundamental importance for the psychic development of every human being, basically because, loosely speaking, the coming of Super-Ego, is associated to reality, to objectual world, to temporality (Loewald 1962), to separation, to the father's role, while the Ego's Ideal is related to narcissism, to perfection, to undifferentiation, to the desire to restore the child-mother symbiotic tie (Petrini et al. 2013). These two distinct poles gives rise to a primary dialectic just due to their essentially opposed nature, which lies at the basis of the inter-relationship between respectively *objectivity* (otherness) and *subjectivity*. Upon these, a third agency, the Ego, develops thanks to the intervention of the third position in the Œdipal triangular psychic space, which warrants the possible integration of subjectivity and objectivity. The main function of Ego is to produce *beliefs*, which may become *knowledge* only after a preliminary objective evaluation of them (Britton 2000, 2003).

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<sup>20</sup> Here, the term “object” is used in its widest sense.

<sup>21</sup> Giving rise something near to the Lacanian *lack of being* (*manque*), desire producing.

<sup>22</sup> Occurring during Œdipal phase, and needful to enter into the real life, with the acquisition of her or his own autonomy and personality.

<sup>23</sup> Similar to the so-called *béance* of Lacan.



Freud himself considered the *believing* as a judgement function giving a reality connotation<sup>24</sup>, to be ascribed to the Ego (located in the perceptive-conscious system) and explicable only by means of language, so reaching to the basic distinction between *psychic* (or *internal*) *reality* and *material* (or *external*) *reality*. Following Kant, Freud, just at the beginnings of his work, stated that beliefs and doubts belonged to the Ego, not to the unconscious (later, said to be *Es* or *Id*) which does not know the notions of reality, doubt, belief, contradiction, space, time, and all the other typical aspects of perceptive system (from which Ego springs out as a *bodily Ego*). Britton, besides, supposes that beliefs (much more than doubts) are so natural as other features of perceptive system, like feeling, breathing, etc., which are conform to the innate ideas of space and time. For us, events occur inside a three-dimensional space, according to a unidirectional time, in a certain place or in another one, and we cannot do otherwise. Just in such a way, consciousness runs, according to natural, innate (Kantian) forms of human mind, with which imagination<sup>25</sup> discloses (Britton 2000, 2003).

Therefore, the Ego regulates the interaction of the internal psychic experience with what comes from external reality by means of perception; the Ego nominates the experiences, assigns the status of certainty to selected ideas and certain fantasies, hence tests the degree of reality their assigned by means of the reality exam, that assigns them the judgement of truth or falsity. At the same time, it is the nucleus of subjective Self, the one receiving perception and accordingly promotes the action. It is the agency which makes us real. The subjective Self is, then, the observed Self, so Ego is also the place of self-consciousness, the awareness of ourselves. Britton, furthermore, points out that the self-observation and the judgement on themselves are preeminent functions of the Ego, not of the Super-Ego, even if these are often usurped by the latter. So, the reality judgement is competence of the Ego, while the moral judgement regards Super-Ego (Britton 2003).

What now urges, is to understand how Ego stands out from these other agencies, in particular how Ego emancipates from Super-Ego. On the other hand, Freud, as early in the paper *Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream-Interpretation* of 1922, had glimpsed a possible splitting of the Ego in re-analyzing his theory on dreams. He remarked that such a splitting could occur either in vigil and dreaming state, makes reference to Ego's Ideal as a psychic agency separated from Ego, which observes, criticizes and punishes. But, Britton observes that the Ego's functions are quite different from the ones of either Super-Ego and Ego's Ideal: to Ego are due the functions of self-observation and judgement of internal and external reality, while to Super-Ego and Ego's Ideal are respectively due the functions of moral-ethical evaluations and the choice of the models to follow (Britton 2003).

### 3. Further elementary considerations on symbolism

Continuing on the wake of what has already been said in the previous Section 1, according to Abbagnano (1998) and Galimberti (2006), the word *symbol* derives from the Greek noun σύμβολου (with Latin transliteration *symbolum*), this from σύμβάλλω, in turn derived from the verb συμβάλλειν (with Latin transliteration *sým bállein*) which, in composition, means “throw together”. It is characterized, like the *sign*, by an a priori *postponement* which, on the one hand, includes the

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<sup>24</sup> Which, in general, takes place by means of either an external perception or an internal correlation with some other already acquired objective datum, known fact or established belief (Britton 2004, Cap. 6, p. 93).

<sup>25</sup> In this regard, Britton refers cleverly to a right and well-fitting example drew from quantum mechanics. Indeed, he recalls that the typical case in which a particle may stay in two different places at the same time, in quantum mechanics may be described only formally, but cannot be imagined according to our usual thinking ways (Britton 2003, Ch. 6).

symbol in the sign's order as a specific case of it (as a conventional symbol), whereas, on the other hand, it is opposed to the sign itself because the latter has a predetermined relationship with what it denotes or connotes (*aliquid stat pro aliquo*<sup>26</sup>), whereas the *symbol*, instead, in evoking its corresponding part, refers to a given reality which is not decided by some form of convection but by the recomposition or assembling of a whole (in respect of its original etymological meaning, as a non-conventional symbol). Roughly speaking, there is no rigid link between a symbol and what it symbolizes.

Nevertheless, the relationships between sign and symbol are never well delineated in a clear manner. The psychoanalytic perspective might yet provide useful clarifications, above all that of the Kleinian trend and that of the British *middle group* headed by Donald W. Winnicott, if one takes into account the early etymological meaning of the term "symbol" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973), i.e., the one that refers to the "assembling of a set of things". Following Petocz (2004, Ch. 1), which quotes a Lévi-Strauss consideration, the concept of meaning is so difficult to define perhaps because of its intimate reciprocal connection with the notion of symbol. On the other hand, the noun *σύμβολον*, i.e., a "tally", originally referred to each of the two corresponding pieces of some small object which contracting parties broke between them and kept as proof of identity when rejoined together<sup>27</sup>. That meaning subsequently expanded to include a diversity of meaning such as other kinds of tokens, seal, contract, sign, code, and so forth (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973).

#### **4. A brief historiographical outline on *Verneinung* (negation), *Verleugnung* (disavowal), *Verdrängung* (repression) and *Verwerfung* (foreclosure)**

**4.1. *Verneinung*, *Verleugnung*, *Verdrängung* and *Verwerfung*: an introduction.** According to Roudinesco (1995, Part VI, Ch. V) and Petrini et al. (2013), Freud, for the first time, used the term *negation*<sup>28</sup> (*Verneinung*) in 1917 after a personal re-elaboration of the term *negative hallucination* due to H. Bernheim, following his 1914 reclassification of psychoses, neuroses and perversions, based on castration theory, as made in *On Narcissism. An Introduction*. The term was then explicitly used by Freud in 1925. By *Verneinung*, Freud meant a verbal mechanism through which the repressed material is recognized in a negative logical manner by the subject, but without being accepted. So, negation implies a contestation, that related to the recognition of a repressed thought by the patient. Freud says that every "not" comes from unconscious (Petrini et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, following Britton (2000, Ch. V), Freud, as early in the *Studies on Hysteria* (of 1892-95), claimed the attention on a particular state of the mind that he described summarily with the motto "the blindness of the eye which does not see", to refer to that mental disposition for which something is known and, at the same time, is not known. Later, he used the term *Verleugnung* to describe this particular form of negation without psychotic features, subsequently translated into *disavowal* by James Strachey, until up to consider it, in 1938, as a "middle measure in which the denegation is followed by an acknowledgement, with the establishment of two concomitant yet opposite settings, independent of each other, which de facto give rise to a splitting of the Ego".

Hence, Britton makes reference to other authors who have fruitfully retaken the last Freudian notion of disavowal, like M. Bash who considers disavowal, differently from psychotic denegation,

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<sup>26</sup> In other words, "something stands for something else".

<sup>27</sup> So that its meaning refers to something, like an object, and, through its fragmentation, to the idea of a link or bond. This will be coherent with what is pursued in this paper about bodily image formation in fetishism, Ego's splitting and their relations with symbolism.

<sup>28</sup> Or *denegation*, as called by J. Hyppolite in the 1950s. However, for a precise historical clarification about linguistic usage, meaning and related translation of the original Freudian terms of *Verneinung*, *Verleugnung*, *Verdrängung* and *Verwerfung*, we refer to (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973).

as a mechanism which nullifies only the sense of things but not their effective perception, that is to say, the external thing is however present in the internal psychic world of the subject. Then, J. Steiner speaks of the action of disavowal mechanism as “turning a blind eye”, linking it to the Oedipal complex (Britton 2006, Cap. V, p. 89). This in agreement with O. Mannoni<sup>29</sup>, according to whom Freud began to implicitly use the notion of disavowal after the 1890s in discussing the concept of splitting the Ego, both these notions being closely related to one another.

Likewise, following Conrotto (2009), the question of negation compared, in the Freudian work, since its beginnings. The first reflections on it, were done by Freud in relation to psychoses and exposed, in the letters to W. Fliess of the 1890s, in which he discusses of psychotic functioning, in particular of the characteristic elements of paranoid projection<sup>30</sup>, for which affects and contents of incompatible representations are however kept in consciousness but projected outside, together the rejection of the related judgements (reproofs, accusations, etc.). So, Freud already held the essence of what will be later called disavowal, since the late of 1890s. Nevertheless, he subsequently used a great variety of further terms to describe the many aspects of these psychic phenomena.

Indeed, in *On the Sexual Theories of Children* (of 1908) and in *The case of little Hans* (of 1908), Freud explicitly describes the disavowal (*Verleugnung*) as due to the penis’ lacking in the woman, hence he comes back to it in 1934, extending this painful perception from the specific case of penis’ envy to all the possible perceptions contrasting pleasure principle, denying the reality of the related negative perception so had. Then, Freud specifies that this defence mechanism is quite different from repression, relating it to psychoses rather than neuroses. Afterwards, in *Fetishism* (of 1927), in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (of 1938) and in *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (of 1938), Freud puts this mechanism in relation with a splitting of the Ego<sup>31</sup> into two independent yet contrasting of each other components giving rise different mental dispositions (Conrotto 2009).

Nevertheless, this mechanism does not entail the deletion of either a perception or a representation, but rather it entails the rejection of the meaning (signified) that this implies, namely, in the specific case of penis’s lacking, the rejection of the castration’s phantasm, so that, in general, what is really rejected is the attribution judgement. So, we should say that, while repression (*Verdrängung*) deals with affect, disavowal (*Verleugnung*) deals with representation, in the sense that, as the former does not cancel affect but shifts this to the unconscious, so the latter does not cancel the representation (*signifier*) but deletes its meaning (*signified*). Furthermore, disavowal is always the denegation of a “lack” (widely meant<sup>32</sup>), while negation (*Verneinung*) is the first step towards the preconscious recognition of something however present (Conrotto 2009).

The relationship between mind and reality has been a controversial theme in Freud’s work, debated between two main hypotheses about its functioning: on the one hand, the mind is passively considered to be the result of the reproduction of reality, while, on the other hand, we have a mind that actively creates and transforms reality. In *The Negation* (of 1925), Freud, contrasting a well-established philosophical tradition, considers the *judgement of attribution* prior to the *judgement of existence*, that is to say, we first judge<sup>33</sup>, on the basis of pleasure/displeasure principle, then we

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<sup>29</sup> See the Introduction to the Italian translation of Freud (1938), that is to say, Freud (1999, Foreword, pp. 7-12).

<sup>30</sup> Chianese (2009) points out the recurrence of the themes treated in these letters to Fliess (of the period 1887-1904) in the last Freudian work of the 1930s.

<sup>31</sup> As Cesare L. Musatti points out in the foreword to the Italian translation of *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (Freud 1979, p. 556), the Freudian notion of splitting of the Ego has a relevance wider than that given by Freud himself in the course of his work, which started from a particular yet crucial anguish experience felt by child in recognizing penis’ lacking in woman. Nevertheless, Freud himself, in the beginning of this last paper, talks about an Ego’s splitting arising from a general anguish experience not particularly due to a specific cause (Freud 1979, p. 557).

<sup>32</sup> From his clinical experience, Freud noted that “trauma” (just due to lacking) precedes always the “word” (Chianese 2009).

<sup>33</sup> So we may say that aesthetic moment precedes almost every other form of mental activity, basically due to the primary action of pleasure-displeasure principle. This besides had already been preached by ancient philosophy which gives precedence to the *aistheta* (the act of early perception) with respect to the *noemata* (the act of pure thinking), and in the middle of which there is located, as an intermediate moment between them, the *phainestai*, that is to say, the apparition, the appearance, hence the *phantasia*, the *phantasma*, the *phantaston*, and so on, to be meant, therefore, as

formulate an existence judgement of the real. Thus, reality would not be reproduced as such by the mind, in its perfect form, but it would be rather a construction resulting from a series of complex operations of assumption and rejection (Chianese 2009).

By means of negations (by *Verleugnung*) and denials (by *Verleugnung*), precociously included into the language, the child may manipulate and distort reality, so that the language just relies on the power of the primordial (as well as primitive) negations and denials, which therefore should be considered as primitive psychic mechanisms of human being. The Ego develops through language and, in turn, language develops by means of negations and denials so that the latter are constitutive acts of the Ego, which grows up just through these primary acceptances-registrations (by negation) and denials-cancellations (by disavowal). However, a fundamental importance has had the short paper *The Negation* (of 1925), in which Freud discusses the two main aspects of this basic defence mechanism, the second of which will gradually lead to *Verleugnung* (Chianese 2009).

Indeed, in his short yet fundamental paper *The Negation* (of 1925), Freud discusses the two main aspects of negation: the first one, is that related to the availability to make acceptable, by negation, an unpleasant content so repressed, bringing it at the consciousness level but with a content which is the negation of the repressed one (just by means of the symbol of negation), so that the repressed material is yes recognized but in a negative manner; the second one, instead, concerns the rising of a *judgement* in regard to the external reality in which the psyche of the individual does not find a satisfactory representation, so, in this case, negation deals with foundational bases of reality principle. It is, therefore, the basic ascertainment of an *absence* which leads to the recognition of an external reality independent of the individual, this entailing therefore first forms of separation between intellectual functions and affectivity components, as well as the dawning of judgements. All that is just typical of *Verleugnung* (Conrotto 2009).

However, the question of the Ego's splitting has always been more or less explicitly considered by Freud throughout his work, since the beginnings. Indeed, in *The Wolf Man* of 1914, Freud implicitly discusses such a mechanism in a case-study in which no judgement had been expressly given on the existence of castration, but it was only taken into account the non-existence of it, so that, there held, in the patient, two opposite tendencies: on the one hand, he abhorred the eviration, while, on the other hand, he was disposed to accept it, taking comfort by femininity as a compensation. But Freud says too that a third tendency still virtually persisted as well, that is to say, the most ancestral and deepest one, that which restricted to dismiss the eviration, without posing to himself the problem to express any judgement about the reality or not of such a painful perception (Conrotto 2009).

This last full rejection is terminologically expressed, by Freud, with the verb *Verwerfen*, that is, to dismiss in full, which led to consider a new psychic mechanism, said to be *Verwerfung*, and usually translated in *preclusion*, or *foreclosure* (from Lacan onwards), as the key of psychotic disorder, as discussed by Freud in *The Schreber Case* of 1910, by which what has been abolished inside us (precluded) will however turn back to us, for example in hallucinatory manner like in psychoses. This early abolishment was named, by Lacan, *foreclosure*, even if such a term has its origins in the definition of the so-called *negative hallucination*, given by H. Bernheim in<sup>34</sup> 1884, and meant as an

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precursors of mental representations (Napolitano 2009). Besides, also recent neuropsychology confirms the precedence of an aesthetic sense (of beauty) with respect to certain rational functions, like language, in that, for example, it has been discovered, in the children, an innate sense of colours before any linguistic abilities (Yang et al. 2016). Also Susanne Langer has then pointed out that, after her long research route, started with the investigation of different forms of symbolism and ended over twenty years later, beauty is experienced whenever deep feelings are truthfully expressed (Rayner, 1995, p. 16). Finally, to further support this, we may call into question the so-called *ugly duckling theorem* due to Satosi Watanabe, according to which every classification process (typical of consciousness, according to Ignacio Matte Blanco) is impossible without a previous, already established system of biases and prejudices (Watanabe 1969).

<sup>34</sup> Historically, Bernheim coined the expression of *negative hallucination* in 1884, and Freud used such a term from 1895 until 1917, when he discarded it. In the meanwhile, Freud put forward the concept of *disavowal* (as *Verleugnung*) in 1914, even if, in its wider meaning, it is basically equivalent to negative hallucination, but, in its more specific meaning, it designates the simultaneous acknowledgement and non-acknowledgement of a traumatic perception. *Scotomization*, instead, was introduced by E. Pichon-Rivière and R. Laforgue, but it is basically identical to negative hallucination. Freud and Laforgue had a long and polemical discussion just about it. However, from a psychological, a

absence of the perception of an object however present in the perceptive field. According to Lacan, foreclosure consists in the rejection of a signifier outside the symbolic universe of the individual, or else, in the refusal of the inscription of a signifier in the symbolic chain, so that the *Verwerfung* should be the inverse of the *Bejahung*, i.e., the admission, with which the attributive judgement takes place, as well as the primary process with which something of real is revealed to the being, so opening the way to the symbolic register (Conrotto 2009; Petrini et al. 2013).

Following (Britton 2000, Ch. V), Freud also used the term *Verleugnung* after 1923, to indicate, in the cases of perversions and obsessive neuroses the refusal, by the subject, to recognizing the reality of a negative or traumatic perception, like the lacking of a female penis; afterwards, in 1938, Freud extended that, to all the possible painful perceptions and experiences which, contrasting with pleasure principle, lead to not recognize reality or to transform it, in a hallucinatory manner, to fulfil desire. The *Verneinung* is connected to a mechanism typical of neuroses, whereas the *Verleugnung* is connected to a mechanism typical of perversions<sup>35</sup>. Finally, according to Freud, the *Verdrängung* is a term which indicates a mechanism related to *repression*. Thereafter, in the 1914 *Wolf Man*, Freud also used the term *Verwerfung* to indicate the *rejection* of a reality presented as non-existent, and to be meant as distinct from the previous ones.

So, Freud identified four main defence mechanisms, along his whole route of clinical work and theoretical investigation, processes which should be however more correct to name them *psychic transformations*: *Verdrängung* (repression) and *Verneinung* (negation) in the case of neuroses (and both mainly regarding the relations between Ego and Es), *Verleugnung* (disavowal) and *Verwerfung* (foreclosure) in the case of psychoses (and both mainly regarding Ego). The *Verneinung* allows the partial re-issue of repressed material by means of a linguistic transformation, the *negation*, so making admissible the coming in the consciousness of a content before deemed unacceptable, just considering its negation. The *Verdrängung* eliminates from consciousness field those affects and representations which are, in some way, incompatible either with the pleasure principle (for primary repression) and with the system of self-representations, values and moral-ethical norms which form her or his own conscious identity (for secondary repression); these transformations are mainly somatic as concern affects, while remain as such for the psychic ones (Riolo 2009).

In the *Verneinung*, there is no repression of neither affect or representation, but the negation of their belonging to the individual, that is to say, the transformation regards the reality judgement and takes place into the Ego field. It is closely related to another form of denial, the *Verleugnung*, in which there is not the negation of a verbal predicate (like in the *Verneinung*) but the negation of a reality object, so a splitting of the Ego occurs, in the sense that, two opposite tendencies – i.e., the denial of the perception of a some reality and, at the same time, its acknowledgement – are both present in the Ego, without any intervention of repression processes. Finally, a fourth psychic transformation, i.e., the *Verwerfung*, takes place when the Ego repudiates, in a stronger and more intense manner, a psychic representation together its affective charge, as if it were never reached to the Ego, so we have an incipit of psychosis. So, differently from *Verleugnung* (in which, as we have said above, the representation however holds in the Ego, although this is split, but not the related affect which is however not treated by this mechanism, as repressed), in the *Verwerfung* there is a

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metapsychological and a psychopathological standpoint, only the concepts of negative hallucination and disavowal, in their more specific meaning, ought to be considered. In their first three phases of action, both these processes run identically: the first phase is a “preliminary position”, a conception of the things just related to the wishes and the pleasure principle (attribution judgement), while the second phase is marked by a stimulus which is unconsciously perceived as “unbearable”; during the third phase, then, perception is suspended by various processes, whereas, it is only with the fourth phase that these two mechanisms basically differ: in the negative hallucination, the Ego keeps the perception unconsciously, whereas, in the disavowal (in its specific meaning), it is split (Ego’s splitting), one part acknowledges the perception, while the other disavows it (Bourguignon and Manus 1980).

<sup>35</sup> The *Verleugnung* has to do with external reality, but in an opposite manner with respect to repression. It is the first step towards psychosis. If neurotic is aimed to repress instinctual drives of *Id* (or *Es*), the psychotic refuses reality. After 1927, Freud started to consider *Verleugnung* as a psychic mechanism specifically related to fetishism, and perversions in general, until up 1938, when Freud settled up a theory of Ego’s splitting just based on this mechanism.

preventive expulsion (into the real register, following Lacan) of both affect and representation from the Ego, hence its exclusion, in full, from the symbolic register (again, following Lacan), whence psychosis. Nevertheless, the results of this expulsion will come back to the Ego, from the Real register, just in the form of delirious or hallucination (Riolo 2009).

These two main forms of negation, i.e., the *Verneinung* and the *Verleugnung*, are however brought back to the primary, irreducible duality pleasure/displeasure principle characterizing the qualitative functioning<sup>36</sup> of the dynamics of human psyche mainly based on the impulsive motion of primary drives, from which, then, all the other opposite pairs spring out, so featuring the intrinsic duality of consciousness (Conrotto 2009). For these reasons, the *Verneinung* seems to characterize basically the linguistic function of human being (with its symbol of negation), while the *Verleugnung* (which is however in close relation with *Verneinung*) seems rather to be the only psychic transformation, regarding the Ego, to be put in relation with symbolic function, in that the psychic representation<sup>37</sup> (*signifier*) is not repressed, differently from the affect<sup>38</sup> (*signified*), so it remains in the symbolic order, in a de-affectivized state, under the influence of the two opposed subagencies of the Ego as outcomes of the related splitting process undergone by Ego, just entailed by this transformation, so providing that basic opposition feature which is the key element of human symbolic function and its running. Furthermore, as said above, *Verleugnung* is just at the early basis of reality principle as well as of the judgement function. Due to this, we are of the opinion that this primary psychic mechanism is a founding process for the psyche of every human being, as it relies at the early basis of symbolic function. This is in agreement with<sup>39</sup> J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis (1973), as well as with respect to what Freud himself wished to allude in his last works of the late 1930s, not considering *Verleugnung* as fully and solely related to deep psychosis (in that it takes place for *Verwerfung*), but rather having to do with its incipit or with related limit cases or with its intrusions in the field of consciousness<sup>40</sup>.

**4.2. Other considerations, hints and remarks.** In France, there were some heated debates (in which Freud himself was involved) about the relations of the term *scotomization*, first proposed by E. Pichon-Rivière in 1928 to indicate an unconscious mechanism through which a subject makes disappear from the consciousness those facts which are unpleasant, with the previous terms. For instance, R. Laforgue proposed to consider scotomization as comprising either the *Verleugnung* and another repression mechanism typical of psychoses, whilst Freud considered it as distinct from both *Verleugnung* and *Verdrängung*. Laforgue wanted to indicate an annulment of a perception whilst Freud wished to keep the perception within a framework supported by negation, that is to say, not complete closure of a perception in front of a misunderstanding of reality, but rather activation of a perception put between a denegation and a repression. In a nutshell, the real problem consisted in the lack of a specific term to indicate the rejection mechanism typical of psychoses.

And, even Freud had a certain moment of uncertainty between all these terms, *Verleugnung* (disavowal), *Verdrängung* (repression) and *Verneinung* (negation), in relation to the psychosis' mechanisms. Finally, Freud opted for *Verleugnung* (i.e., denegation or disavowal, as it will be

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<sup>36</sup> That André Green defines as *primary symbolization*. Lacan, instead, brings back the negation to the primary act of contraposition between *Bejahung* (admission) and *Verwerfung* (denial), so giving precedence to the latter, also with respect to the language, therefore, if this last is considered to be based just on negation.

<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, representations have many featuring aspects in common with symbolism. Indeed, a *representation* (from a general standpoint) is something which stands for something else, real or imaginary, reproducing this in an approximate fashion and not in a bijective manner, within a certain universe (*representational universe*) inside which there exist those relations involving all the objects to be represented (Tabossi 2009).

<sup>38</sup> It is just the emotive-affective component to giving rise the meaning (*signified*) of a psychic representation (*signifier*) (Riolo 2009; Conrotto 2009).

<sup>39</sup> See the final part of their item on *Disavowal*.

<sup>40</sup> Seen too the vague and often sharply undefined bounds between normal and pathological psychic behaviour, this also in agreement with the relationships prescribed between the so-called *symmetric* and *asymmetric* thought according to Ignacio Matte Blanco.

called later by J. Strachey). *Verleugnung* (i.e., *disavowal*, or *denial*, of the reality), is a term that Freud began to explicitly use, in a specific sense, after the 1925 paper entitled *The Negation*, until it attained a more general sense in the last of his works, namely the 1938 *Abriß der Psychoanalyse*<sup>41</sup> (Freud 1938), even if such a primary notion did not have a definitive characterization, for which reason it will be retaken by his followers to be studied more deeply.

As stated above, disavowal (*Verleugnung*) is different both from negation (*Verneinung*) and from repression (*Verdrängung*). Following the last Freudian ideas exposed in Freud (1938, Part III, Chs. 8 and 9), as well as on the basis of the previous considerations, we may suppose disavowal as a fundamental psychic mechanism which relies on the primary basis of any other possible relation with the external reality. Indeed, in this his last works, Freud fully re-examined all his previous ideas about the Ego agency and its functions in the light of the fundamental psychic process of Ego's splitting. In this 1938 work, Freud also states that a certain degree of fetishism is also part of normality, particularly during romantic love<sup>42</sup>. The above-mentioned Freud work *The Negation* has therefore played a primary role in the subsequent studies on consciousness.

In fact, following De Mijolla (2005), negation dramatizes a situation of interpretative conflict and is related to a dialogical situation. Negation, unknown at the level of the unconscious, needs to be situated on a secondary level, and we can gain access to it only by way of the symbol (the symbol of negation). The study of the interrelation between oral instinctual motions and the establishment of negative and affirmative behaviour, has been further investigated in the works of R.A. Spitz (1957). Then, following Akhtar and O'Neil (2011), any elementary content, according to Freud, becomes conscious only in its inverted and negated forms. Subsequent epistemological analyses (Chemama and Vandermersch 1998) have shown that this 1925 Freudian paper dwells above all on with the disavowal mechanism and not only on with the negation one (as besides already mentioned above), so that his main theses were much more related to the former rather than to the latter.

On the other hand, with his notion of splitting of the Ego, Freud showed his 1938 last thoughts especially concerning fetishism and typical aspects of psychosis. It also enlightens his ideas on the basically non-unified structure of the Ego. He moreover focused on the question of the possible relationships between the Ego agency and the reality, introducing another model different from that of repression and of the re-emersion of the repressed content, just by establishing the notion of disavowal as a specific psychic mechanism regarding Ego agency in its relationships with reality (Bokanowski and Lewkowicz 2009). However, the initial motivations for the introduction of the disavowal mechanism were mainly due to attempts to give a satisfactory explanation of the main features of psychoses which remained until then out of the psychoanalytic theoretical framework which was mainly turned to explain neuroses.

Broadly speaking, disavowal is therefore a main defence mechanism through which the individual denies the recognition of general painful experiences, impulses, reality data or aspects of herself or himself which generate anguish. Such a notion however might be also understood as a first generalization of a particular initial denial, precisely the one experienced by the individual in recognizing that traumatic perception which consists in the occurred awareness of the lack of a female penis, with consequent supervention of the related castration anxiety due to the interdict of castration threat (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973). On the other hand, according to the initial 1924 Freudian conception, at the first impressions of this lack of a penis, the baby boy just disavows this absence or lack and *imagines* to see, in an equal manner, a penis which formerly there was but that afterwards has been cut off (castration).

And still according to Freud (1938), this process seems to be quite normal and widespread in children, but that it might become later dangerous in adult age, giving rise either to a psychotic

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<sup>41</sup> This last (partially unfinished) work may be considered as the Freud's spiritual testament of his doctrine, in which he almost axiomatically tried to delineate the main lines of his theory as it historically evolved from its first ideas to the final form, together with some of its unsolved questions to which the author was not able to give a relevant answer.

<sup>42</sup> This psychic phenomenon is almost ubiquitous in childhood if it is laid out in the Winnicott framework of transitional objects and their relations with fetish.

behaviours or a paraphilia, even if, in these last cases, it is yet quite unclear in what specific manner these take place (Petrini et al. 2011, 2013). Girls, instead, reject the acceptance of the *facto datum* of their own castration, persisting in the conviction of having a penis, being therefore forced, later, to behave as if they were males (penis' envy<sup>43</sup>).

Subsequently, as has already been said, this first disavowal conception was then extended to all the painful perceptions which, contrasting with the pleasure principle, lead to not recognizing the reality and to transforming it, for example through hallucinatory modalities, to fulfil desire. Fetishism, besides homosexuality, is the most frequent amongst the paraphilias (Greenacre 1971, Ch. XVII), although it is the most difficult one to be diagnosed due to the fact that it is mainly asymptomatic. In any event, fetish may be determined too by a symbolic unconscious association often dependent on the variegated range of multiform sexual experiences had in childhood (Petrini et al. 2011, 2013).

## 5. Towards the Ego's splitting

The 1927 Freudian paradigm of fetishism, which was initially laid down to explain the formation of fetishes by means of castration anxiety due to the observation of the lack of a female penis, has gone beyond the context of sexuality, due to the rigour with which it was formulated by Freud himself. Subsequently, such a paradigm underwent further improvements until a definitive 1938 model centred around the basic notion of Ego's splitting (Freud 1938). According to the latter, most people overcome such a castration complex through *symbolic elaboration*<sup>44</sup>, accepting the gender sexual differences (the basis of the sense of *otherness* or *alterity* (Gilliéron and Baldassarre 2012), whereas those who do not overcome such a complex will have neurotic developments with possible parafilic degeneration (Piscicelli 1994, Ch. IX).

In fetishism, the perception that disproves the infant's belief in a female penis is not rejected but is, as some say, displaced upon an object, the *fetish*. It therefore does not imply a hallucination or an alteration of the representation of reality (like in psychoses), but simply it repudiates the reality. After having detected the lack of a female penis, the child has, in a certain sense, modified its initial belief about the female penis, retaining it and, at the same time, abandoning it (*Aufgeben*). He or she believes that, despite everything, the female has a penis, even if this is no longer that of before, because something has taken its place or replaced it, that is to say, it has been named a "symbolic substitute" for it upon which it will be possible to cathexis the desire to avoid the strong anxiety's pressures due to the castration principle. But, in doing so, the child inevitably goes into a conflict created by the load of the real undesired perception of a penis lack against the force of a counter-desire opposed to this, thereby reaching a basic ambivalence whose resolute compromise will be possible only thanks to the action of the unconscious thought which dialectically operates through its own primary processes<sup>45</sup>.

In short, the fetish is, yes, a symbolic substitute for the phallus, not always an iconic reproduction, but rather a kind of reification of it. Such a fetish reflects, at the same time, the denial and the affirmation of the female castration, this also corresponding to the coexistence of two opposite attitudes in respect of the fetish, which Freud tries to explain by means of a particular psychic mechanism, called *Ego's splitting* (*Ichspaltung*). This splitting takes place when the child undergoes a conflict between the initial instinct's claim (*Anspruch*) and the objection made by reality

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<sup>43</sup> On this, Lacan will speak of the child as a prolongation of the mother penis.

<sup>44</sup> The degree of this is directly correlated with (and proportional to) the emotive content associated with it.

<sup>45</sup> See Smirnov (1970) and Khan Masud (1970, 1979).



(*Einsprunch*), but does not choose either one or the other, or else chooses both. In such a manner, the formation of the Ego's synthetic function is perturbed.

Thus, to sum up, a fundamental characteristic of fetishism is that it allows reality to be recognized and, at the same time, disclaimed. It gives rise to the fundamental creation of opposites whose separation, thanks to this splitting mechanism (if correctly operating), is at the basis of first consciousness formation<sup>46</sup>. Such a mechanism, however, is different from the psychotic one because the latter is a mere and simple repudiation of the reality<sup>47</sup> which is never recognized. Nevertheless, the (paraphilic) fetishist cannot avoid a degenerative Ego splitting when this splitting does not give rise to that compensative symbolic elaboration recalled above.

## 6. On Ego's splitting, fetishism and transitional phenomena

By means of the disavowal mechanism, Freud glimpses the origins of an intrasystemic Ego's splitting<sup>48</sup> (*Ichspaltung*) through which, within the Ego agency, two distinct and conflictual psychic attitudes take place of which one takes into account the reality denied by the other, and substitutes it with the content of a desire. Or else, following Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), through this intrapsychic division, an Ego's splitting takes place both into a part which observes and into a part which is observed.

This last perspective is widely but implicitly used by Freud in his final works, above all to denote a certain dichotomic or separated nature of human psyche. Throughout this paper, when we refer to the notion of Ego's splitting, we mean this last perspective, coherently with the Freudian work in which such a notion starts to be used with the celebrated works *Fetishism* (1927), *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (1938) and in *Abriß der Psychoanalyse* (1938). Above all, we will follow the Freudian thought of this last work. According to Freud, disavowal would allow us to explain the typical features of psychoses and fetishism.

On the wake of Freud's work on splitting, Otto Kernberg (1976) has built up a theory of object relations just centred on Ego's splitting, which arises from the attempt to face the great anguish that child experiences. To be precise, Kernberg assumes that early forms of Ego's nuclei spring out from the separation occurring among first primordial introjections – as primary identification systems – which, in turn, appear just to face anguish, so splitting of the Ego occurs as a defence mechanism, as the consequent outcome of the opposition (i.e., conflict) relying between these identification systems (coming from respectively positive – by good internal objects – and negative – by bad internal objects – introjections) which are opposed of each other; from these first stages, then, projection mechanisms follow. Accordingly, Ego is mainly made by positive introjections, thank to which rational thought gets on; afterwards, next to these first consolidations of the Ego, repression mechanism arises.

To support the above Kernberg's assumptions, are the results exposed in (Brody & Axelrad 1970), where a central hypothesis is that the rising of anguish and the formation of the Ego occur at the same time, i.e., simultaneously, being two phases of a same process which has deep physiological roots, so that anguish has a physiological basis as early presents since childhood (in agreement with

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<sup>46</sup> The constitution and separation of opposite pairs, as already said, is a fundamental and characterizing task for consciousness (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973). Here, we have discussed such psychodynamic processes from the Freudian perspective, but they also play a fundamental role in the Jungian theory of consciousness (Iurato 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Which has mainly external sources.

<sup>48</sup> Which should be kept distinct from the analogous notion related to schizophrenia in which it is preferable to use the term *dissociation*.

Freud that considered the Ego as the place of anguish) as well as is established by the net of social relationships in which he or she is embedded (otherness).

Following Galimberti (2006), as stated above, the original 1925 Freudian concept of disavowal was extended to all the painful perceptions that, being in contrast with the pleasure principle, lead to not recognizing the reality, transforming it in a hallucinatory manner to satisfy the desire. Hence, disavowal is a very fundamental psychic mechanism which has to do with the external reality, and whose main result is this Ego's splitting. It is the first psychic agency to form for detecting reality. The Ego's splitting is a basic psychic mechanism preliminary to others, like introjective and projective identification, etc.

Following Greenacre (1971, Ch. XI), in the formation of Ego's agency, a remarkable role is played by pre-Œdipus phases. In the 1930s, there was a considerable need for a deeper knowledge of Ego. In this regard, the author, thanks to her professional psychiatrist activity, had the opportunity to examine many clinical cases of psychosis which turned out to be of great usefulness just to study the Ego's function. After the studies of W. Hoffer, P. Schilder, M. Ribble, M.E. Fries, R.A. Spitz and M.S. Mahler, it had been possible to ascertain that the first formations of this agency (i.e., the Ego) are of a corporal or somatic nature (bodily Ego<sup>49</sup>).

Greenacre herself (and B. Lantos) pointed out a certain primitive predisposition to anxiety, mainly related to the elaboration of primal scenes, which will play a notable role in the Ego's formation, if properly cathected, together its next splitting. According to Greenacre, the classical 1927 and 1938 Freudian works on fetishism were the best ones on fetishism and perversions. In these works, Freud foregrounds the Ego's splitting which takes place in consequence of the strong castration anxiety when a child has recognized the gender sexual differences. Above all, the kid refuses to recognize the reality of this painful situation. Nevertheless, he assigns a penis to his mother, symbolically represented by the fetish (material<sup>50</sup> or merely symbolic) whose specific form is largely due to the displacement of that energetic amount which has been determined in concomitance with the appearance of castration anguish.

The fetish formation must therefore provide these incongruities in the corporal image formation through suitable surrogates. These may be physical parts of the body (material fetish) or may be abstract formations like more or less complex fantasies (Greenacre 1971, Ch. XVII). The pathological cases mainly take place during the passage from the normal childish fetish of three- to four-year-olds to the latency phase, characterized by the deterioration of the capacity to establish object relations. In Greenacre (1971, Ch. XII), the author contributed further interesting considerations on fetishism. According to her, the fetish has mainly a phallic meaning, but also a bisexual one.

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<sup>49</sup> In this regard, the work of Gisela Pankow has been very remarkable. Indeed, she has provided, among other, new insightful therapeutic views of psychosis and other psychical disorganisation forms (Pankow 1977, 1979). The E. Kretschmer legacy – whom she has been either a disciple and a collaborator at Tübingen – as well as phenomenology, have been unavoidable sources to understand her new concept of *bodily image* and the related process of symbolisation considered to be prior to any sign process as well as to language. This notion of bodily image is much more a dynamic organisation than a mirror picture which is nothing but its projection into space. The access to language and the genesis of the sign have precursors into an already-lived and an already-felt body, which will allow the access to the other, hence providing a possibility of symbolisation (Lacas 2007).

<sup>50</sup> In this case, the (material) fetish may be considered as a materialized effect of screen memory (related to implicit memory – cf. Mancina (2007)) or cover memory.

Fetishism is a disorder which is mainly due to an imperfect development of corporal image and of the bodily Ego, from which derive disorders of reality sense, of identity sense and of object relations. The adult's fetish has something in common with the Winnicott childhood's *transitional object* which, usually, has a certain role in the constitution and development of the reality and of the object relation, and concerns both sexes. The formation of a transitional object takes place within the so-called (Winnicott-Spitz) *transitional space*, which is the space around which the mother-child relationship and related *transitional* phenomenology take place (Vegetti Finzi 1976, Part II).

The persistence in adult age of the fetish reveals a chronic defect of psychosomatic structure, while the transitional object is usually abandoned with the dawning of genitality, at least in normal cases. In most cases, the fetish itself is something of a secret to the fetishist himself (or herself), which is strictly related to the primary meaning of the Oedipus complex, that is to say, the uncovering of the enigma sphinx, to confirm the basic relationships existing between fetish formation and pregenital phases. Following Greenacre (1971, Ch. XVI), in the phallic phase a consolidation of the recognition of genital organs takes place and, in the case of disorders and failures in the formation of corporal Ego, the fetish formation may cope with this, with a narcissistic reinforcement of Ego itself through it.

Finally, through a rapid analysis of the psychoanalytic literature on fetishism (Khan Masud 1970, 1979), it will turn out that in the fetish formation process the first forms of condensation and displacement mechanisms take place, which are the two main psychodynamic processes underlying any symbolic formation. Fetish formation and (D.W. Winnicott) transitional object, have pathways which meet frequently, starting from common origins in the childhood until they become different to each other with psychic maturation, distinguishing between two possible choices, namely normality and pathology (perversions<sup>51</sup>). These two entities, i.e., fetish and transitional object, have many common points among them in the first stages of human psychosexual development.

## 7. On Ego's Ideal and Ideal Ego

Following Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), Freud, as mentioned above, put disavowal as the main psychic mechanism involved in the Ego's splitting. He started from the previous notion of *Spaltung* due to J. Breuer and P. Janet, but gradually reached his original generically oriented conception to indicate an intrapsychic division, above all in the last part of his life, in reference to a splitting of the Ego into an *observing part* (Ego's Ideal) and into an *observed part* (Ideal Ego); the observing part, i.e., the Ego's Ideal, does not evaluate own level of morality and ethics but rather the level of own real psychic efficiency. Later, from his above-mentioned 1927 works on fetishism, gradually Freud posed the disavowal mechanism at the basis of this splitting phenomenon that he wanted, in turn, to put at the basis of psychoses and perversions. Freud however pointed out that in psychoses a full separation from reality never takes place; in every psychosis, even the deepest ones, two antithetic psychic attitudes always exist: the one that takes into account the reality in the normal attitude, and the other that, under the drive influence, detaches the Ego from reality, giving rise to delirious thoughts.

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<sup>51</sup> In this regard, it is useful to remember the incisive Freudian expression according to which "perversions are, in a certain sense, the 'negative' of neuroses". Herein, we refer to the widest meaning of the term "perversion" (Moore and Fine 1993).

The outcomes of this Ego's splitting are therefore two opposite psychic settings<sup>52</sup>, of which each subsists, throughout life, alongside the other and never singly of each other, but with the prevalence, from time to time, of only one of these two, to the detriment of the other. Out of these, there is a normal self-observing component which takes into account the external reality (and is prodromic to the formation of the system *Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego*) mainly through opposition to the contrary subagency (the Ideal Ego), while the other, under the Es' instinct influence, tears out the Ego from the reality (and is prodromic to the unconscious formation of the *Ideal Ego*) assuming a prevalent narcissistic formation on the basis of primary identifications as a result of the mother-child relation from which starts to develop the Super Ego-Ego's Ideal agency pair, which, in its formation stage taking place along the first fusional, symbiotic and incestuous relationship mother-child, has an ambivalent, invasive and archaic maternal feature strongly charged of aggressivity and superpower, viscous tie which, indeed, will be broken by the Father's action (*d'après* Lacan) and that, just through the intervention of the *Father's* (or *Name-of-the-Father*) law, gives rise to the Œdipal agency system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego (Rossi et al. 2008; Iurato 2014).

According to Nunberg and Lagache, the Ideal Ego, genetically prior to the Super-Ego, is the first Ego's component to be formed from the symbiotic mother-child state, upon which the subject will build up her or his further psychic development, and to which he or she comes back in psychotic states (and not only in these). According to Lagache, the Ideal Ego has sadomasochistic implications: in particular, hand in hand with Ideal Ego starting its formation, the negation of the Other, by the basic agency pair Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, is correlative to the affirmation of Self, thus giving rise to opposite pair formation and to the next separation of their elements (consciousness process – cf. Iurato (2015)). Thus, following Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), we have two basic Ego's psychic components, the one that observes (Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego) and the other that is observed (Ideal Ego<sup>53</sup>).

Human psychic behaviour will be the dialectic result of the concomitant action of these two opposite and inseparable, but independent from each other, Ego's (sub)agencies, hence by the prevalence of one of these two upon the remaining one. However, there is, always, a dialectic interaction<sup>54</sup> between them. Freud put this splitting mechanism at the psychodynamic basis of psychoses and other disorders (including neuroses), justifying the assumption of such a mechanism as one of the main dynamic processes of psychic formation, which basically allows us to relate ourselves to reality. In short, the basic opposition between the (narcissistic) Ideal Ego and the (social) Ego's Ideal is the early source of any further dialectic process of consciousness (Iurato 2015). Furthermore, within the Lacanian work, disavowal has been the first psychic mechanism involved in a complex epistemological evolution that reached the composite notion of *forclusion* which lies at the basis of the celebrated binomial *O/o* (that is, *discourse of the Other* versus *discourse of the other*) that Lacan derives from the previous binomial Ideal Ego/Ego's Ideal.

As mentioned above, these two Ego's components are not present in the Freudian thought, which introduced only the notion of Ego's Ideal and to which was brought back then the notion of Super-Ego. The history of the agency pair Ideal Ego-Ego's Ideal has undergone quite a hard-working evolutionary history. Following Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), Freud introduced the notion of

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<sup>52</sup> Which might be considered as forming the first precursor of an opposite pair (or else the source of any other possible philosophical pair), which will play a fundamental role in the dialectic reasoning, as already stated above.

<sup>53</sup> In passing, we recall that these two Ego's agencies, as the result of an intrasystemic agency separation (i.e., the Ego's splitting), play a fundamental role in Lacan's theoretical framework.

<sup>54</sup> Which is not present in psychoses.

Ego's Ideal in *On Narcissism. An Introduction* (1914) to indicate an agency as resulting from the convergence of infantile narcissism and omnipotence (which will form the idealizations of the Ego) and the parental (hence social) agencies and identifications; later, first in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), then in *The Id and the Ego* (1923), the Ego's Ideal was identified with the Super-Ego agency, whose function is put in the foreground in the formation of critical sense, of prohibition and self-observation agencies and of interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, the psychoanalytic literature identifies a certain difference between the Super-Ego agency and the Ego's Ideal one even if they overlap one another somewhat.

The system Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego is, however, related to social and prohibition agencies as well as to self-observation, moral and critical functions, even if there is no unanimous consensus in the respective attribution of these. As early in *On Narcissism. An Introduction* (1914), Freud used the term *Ideal Ego* but substantially as synonymous with Ego's Ideal. These subagencies would be retaken by Nunberg in 1932, of which we will outline some related ideas in the next section, and, in 1958, by Lagache, who identifies a main opposition between the Ideal Ego and the system Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego. According to Lagache, the Ideal Ego has a narcissistic character of omnipotence which is mainly due to a primary identification with the mother; it is irreducible to the Ego's Ideal agency, and its formation has sadomasochistic implications, including the negation of the Other in correlation to the affirmation of Self, on the basis of the main opposition between the Ideal Ego and the Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego system.

But, following Roudinesco (1995, Part VI, Ch. V), it was Lacan that, in 1953 – but without quoting Nunberg – considered, in his own way, these two Ego subagencies as distinct from each other, putting them at the foundation of his theoretical framework, highlighting their relevant nature and function. The Ideal Ego is a narcissistic formation belonging to the imaginary register and formed during the *mirror stage* (theorized by Lacan since 1936), whereas the Ego's Ideal refers to a symbolic function that is able to organize the set of the relationships of the subject with others. The institution of the dualism *O/o* is therefore a consequence of the establishment of the dualism Ego's Ideal/Ideal Ego. In this system, Lacan laid out the celebrated Lévi-Straussian splitting from nature to culture operated by universal incest prohibition (Gilliéron and Baldassarre 2012) because this allowed Lacan to conceive a basic opposition between the *symbolic function* of the *Father* (corresponding to the Ego's Ideal or to the *Other*), representing the culture and incarnation of the law, and the *imaginary position* of the *Mother* (from whom derives the Ideal Ego or the *other*), depending on the order of Nature and destined to merge with the child meant as the phallic object of a missing penis.

It is thank to the mirror stage that the Œdipus phase starts, in such a manner that, through the paternal metaphor (*Name-of-the-Father*), the child is separated from the mother, giving rise to the Ego's Ideal formation<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, it is just by *naming* the missing mother penis – that is to say, the child – by means of the paternal metaphor (the *phallus*) that the *symbolic register* takes place (Ego's Ideal or *Other O*, or *signifier*), which is related to a secondary process, through disengaging from the *imaginary register* (the Ideal Ego or *other o*, or *signified*), which is strictly related to the primary process.

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<sup>55</sup> A support to our discussion, is also (Target and Fonagy 2002).

The consequent *lack of being*, due to this disengaging from the mother womb,<sup>56</sup> creates, amongst other things, the unsatisfiable *desire* of the *other* of the imaginary order which will try to be satisfied with other maternal substitutes that she or he will find in the symbolic order of the *Other*. The symbolic register will allow her or himself to be perceived and recognized from the Ideal Ego to the Ego's Ideal, that is to say, through the symbol, whose notion starts from Lévi-Strauss and F. de Saussure's structuralistic theories. However, for Lacan, what is fundamentally important is the signifier structure of the symbolic order and not the link of symbol with the symbolized (or signified), which concerns with the imaginary order, as in Freud.

## 8. An outline of Hermann Nunberg's Ego psychology

Although little-known, the work of Hermann Nunberg (1932, 1955, 1975) contains a great number of new ideas and insights on psychoanalysis besides being one of the most important treatises<sup>57</sup> on orthodox psychoanalytic theory, as remembered by Freud himself in his preface to this work. For our purposes, we only recall here some points of his work which may have some usefulness for what is expounded here. For instance, in Nunberg (1975, Ch. 5), a clear and complete discussion of Ego psychology is presented, of which we here outline those main points that are useful for our studies. In it, the primary role of bodily Ego is highlighted, as well as understood as the first central core around which will revolve and build up all the following psychic representations. The perception is the first and basic element for establishing the *reality exam* which develops with great slowness but upon which will depend all the following psychic formation. The Ego will accomplish both internal and external requests, with a suitable right energy distribution.

According to Nunberg, the Ego initially is in an unorganized phase within the Id, whose delimitation identifies a subagency called *Ideal Ego*, which has a full narcissistic and omnipotent character turned only toward the satisfaction of the own needs.<sup>58</sup> It springs out from the fusional relationship child-mother of primary narcissism, in which child has a primary, archaic identification with mother, endowed of omnipotence. During the psychic development, this subagency gradually leaves its role in place of the other rising subagency, with which it will enter in a dialectic relation, called the *Ego's Ideal*, even if, particularly in psychotic states, the individual intends to come back to the Ideal Ego when fantasies of "coming back to the maternal womb" predominate. Children and schizophrenics have great difficulty in disengaging from their strong narcissistic and omnipotent Ideal Ego which has an unconscious nature and is ruled by the principle of pleasure, trying to satisfy every need also in a hallucinatory manner in case of non-immediate satisfaction.

Hence, the main defence mechanisms of Ideal Ego are negation, projection and hallucination to avoid any unpleasantness. Nevertheless, in normality, it is not always possible to disregard the reality, thus giving rise to the formation of the reality principle, which is often mediated by the

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<sup>56</sup> Just at this point occurs the *forclusion*, a specific Lacanian splitting mechanism based on reality's *rejection* (*Verwerfung*) and derived both from the Freudian *spaltung* and from Laforgue and Pichon-Rivière's *scotomization*. This mechanism roughly consists in the primordial rejection of a fundamental signifier (the name-of-the-father, hence the symbolic phallus) out of the symbolic register of the subject, so giving rise to a psychotic state. Therefore, the (symbolic) phallus is a cornerstone of Lacanian theory basically because it is the primordial symbol to enter into the symbolic order. Hence, also in the Lacan theory of the symbolic, the phallus, with related castration phenomena, plays a fundamental role (Recalcati 2003, Sect. 2.7; Macola 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Together the well-known treatise of O. Fenichel (1945).

<sup>58</sup> Subsequently, Lagache (1958) will bring back this subagency to the maternal predominance or to the phallic mother. He brings back to it possible deviant behaviours.

thought. Between the perception of reality and the action adapted to the perceived reality gradually the thought is inserted, which prepares the action, eventually substituting it. The judgment function of *negation*, according to Freud, is the first transition step from ignorance to recognition. To be precise, recognition takes place thanks to a state of spiritual protection which seeks stimuli from the external world which, in turn, will be apperceived and accepted by the Ego. Therefore, recognition undergoes the influx of impulses which are aimed at establishing a link with the external world and its objects, drawing its energy from life instincts. Ignorance, instead, comes from a state which feels the stimuli of the external world as unpleasant, so perturbing the ever desiderated quite. Thus, the Ego definitively closes the perceptive system against them.

Negation, instead, takes a further step, in the sense that it recognizes what is unpleasant, and, at the same time, eliminates, expels and annihilates (in the unconscious, by repression) all that. Ignorance and negation are energetically supported by death instincts. Therefore, the relationships between the external and internal world are ruled by the interplay between life and death instincts by means of the own bodily image and its borders. The gradual adaptation to reality takes place to inhibit the aggressiveness (Thanatos) through life instincts (Eros) which provide energy for libidinal investments of the first object relationships. In this regard, Nunberg considers the depersonalization states and schizophrenia as patterns to infer as a reality sense starts to form. In pursuing this, as we will see, the last 1938 Freudian thought seems to be re-evoked.

In both cases, there is a retirement of libido from the lost-love object to which are also associated the world's destruction feelings with related aggressiveness tendencies that Nunberg attributes to the anxieties of castration. Furthermore, in these pathological cases, Nunberg detected a certain increase of narcissistic components that he would want to bring back to an identification of the Ego with the phallus due to the retirement of the libidinal cathexis from objects to the Ego, with consequent loss of the reality sense. Therefore, Nunberg deduces two main consequences: first, that the recognition of reality takes place thanks to a certain capacity of the Ego to turn the libido toward external objects; second, that there is a component of the Ego that does not want to recognize the perceived reality, notwithstanding this is just perceived. It seems that this part of the Ego does not want to know of the perceptions, notwithstanding these are rightly perceived. And the remaining perceiving part of the Ego seems as well to be suffering from this denial.

Therefore, there are two subagencies of the Ego, one that perceives and acts, the other that judges the Ego's experiences which need to be approved in order that these may have a sense of reality. This might explain why it is immoral to deny the reality and not instead say the truth. Thus, Nunberg deepens this self-observing and critical agency of Ego which is located in the preconscious system. The first bodily Ego's percepts will be undergone to the critical and observational modalities of the Ego. They will be recognized or denied according to modalities which have no sensorial character and are absent in schizophrenic patients where a deep self-observation prevails, but not over percepts of the external world. In normality, the perceiving and self-observing Ego's subagencies harmonically and constructively co-operate with the critical one; often, these two Ego's subagencies are not easily distinguishable inasmuch as they overlap with one another, becoming quite differentiated or separated only when a conflict arises between them.

These critical and self-observing agencies will form the substrate to the next merely psychic *Super-Ego* agency, which will reach its most complete formation with the end of the Oedipus complex. The Super-Ego will begin to intervene between the Id and the narcissistic Ideal Ego agencies, making itself bearer of the social and reality agencies; it will be the result of successive identifications but, in turn, it is also susceptible to influences from the first ones. Nevertheless, this

mediation role is often failed by the Super-Ego because of its extreme difficulty in conciliating the Id and Ideal Ego agencies. Nevertheless, Nunberg highlights that both life and death instincts contribute to determining the structure of the Super-Ego. To be precise, its structure mainly stems from the inhibition of immediate instinctual satisfaction to account for reality needs, and this may take place both from death and life instincts.

The death instincts concur to determine such an inhibition of the rigid, prohibitive and authoritarian structure of the Super-Ego, whereas the life instincts concur to determine another particular structure classified as *Ego's Ideal*, which is carried out as follows. When, for love<sup>59</sup>, one gives in to an instinctual satisfaction for fear of losing a loved object, the latter will be taken on into the Ego domain and cathexed by the libido, so becoming a part of Ego which will be called *Ego's Ideal*. It is for love of her or his own ideal that the individual remains emotionally bound to it and undergoes to its requests. So, the Ego obeys both the Super-Ego for fear of a punishment and Ego's Ideal for love. This last love is not sexual because it is the outcome of a transformation of an object libido into an Ego's libido, so that a desexualization takes place, that is to say, a sublimation<sup>60</sup>, so that the narcissism of Ego's Ideal has a *secondary* nature, as it is linked to secondary process (secondary narcissism), while that of the Ideal Ego is a narcissism having a primary nature (primary narcissism).

According to Nunberg, the system Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego provides the representation of the external world to the Ego. Therefore, instinctual renunciations may take place either for hate or for fear of a punishment and for love, so that the dual system Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego is characterized by an ambiguous or ambivalent nature moulded on the fundamentally opposite love-hate pair. Nunberg puts in evidences the historical evolution of these notions since the Freudian work: indeed, as stated above, Freud mainly conceived the Ego's Ideal as being synonymous with Super-Ego, hence pointing out its prohibitive agencies and not the loving aspects. Instead, Nunberg retook the system Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego and deepened the distinction between these two agencies, although it is very difficult to describe a net distinction between them.

According to Nunberg, the Ego's Ideal has mainly a maternal libido (as it is a heir of Ideal Ego), while the Super-Ego has mainly a paternal libido, even if there is a certain merger of both. The Ego's Ideal<sup>61</sup>, due to its basically maternal nature, starts to form from pregenital phases, while the Super-Ego<sup>62</sup>, due to its mainly paternal nature, starts to form during the genital phase because of the castration fear which puts at risk the whole Ego due to its genital identification. The Super-Ego is responsible for the sense of guilt, while the Ego's Ideal is responsible for the sense of inferiority. The Ego's Ideal springs out from the renunciation, by the child, of her or his omnipotent narcissistic position acquired along Ideal Ego formation, so replacing the love for herself or himself with a relationship with an ideal, a model to be reached and pursued (Other), so opening the way to the subjective existentiality of the child (Petrini et al. 2013).

The Ego's Ideal is an agency of personality coming from the convergence of narcissism given by all the idealizations of Ego (Ideal Ego) with the next identifications coming from others (parents, caregivers, etc.) after the breaking of archaic symbiotic tie child-mother with the action of the

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<sup>59</sup> Here, when one speaks of love, we refer to the wider general sense of this term, not only to the sensual one.

<sup>60</sup> Subsequently, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985) identified various possible outcomes for the Ego's Ideal, perverse as well as creative.

<sup>61</sup> It is linked to narcissism, to perfection, to undifferentiation, and to the desire in restoring symbiotic union with mother (Petrini et al. 2013).

<sup>62</sup> It is linked to reality, to object world, to temporality, to separation, to the father (Petrini et al. 2013).



Name-of-the-Father law (Iurato 2014). So, Ego's Ideal is a model to which child tries to conform. In such a manner, the identification process and its structuring action on personality, takes place from the pre-Œdipal phases to Œdipal complex, till to the emergence of the agency system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego with the renunciation to the (incestuous) Œdipal desires for the identifications with others (Petrini et al. 2013).

Nunberg stresses the complexity of the system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, the first subagency being provided by life instincts and characterized by a prevalence of love while the second subagency is underpinned by death instincts and mainly ruled by severity, austerity and by a general asceticism just to stem these destructive instincts. The internal structure of this system is quite complex and variously subdivided into itself, with continuous oscillations from one component to another: for instance, in certain cases the more severe Super-Ego may prevail, in others the rather milder Ego's Ideal may prevail. The Ego will therefore accomplish control, mediation and synthetic functions in regard to the various requests coming from all these agencies, namely the Id, the system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego and the Ideal Ego, which are mostly in opposition with each other.

## 9. Relationships with Lacan's *Discourse of the Capitalist*, and further perspectives

From an historical-epistemological standpoint, therefore, Freud reached the conception of an Ego's splitting by studying a particular psychopathological model, that of fetishism, even if his ideas on that, were tacitly thought since the juvenile works<sup>63</sup>. This is mainly meant to be a male perversion in which there is no recognition of the female penile lack since this is a fact that, if it were denied, would turn out to be potentially anxiogenic because of the castration complex which is experienced by most people (due to its universal character, as recalled above). He (or she<sup>64</sup>) therefore recuses his (or her) own sensorial perception<sup>65</sup> which has shown to him (or her) that the female genital apparatus lacks a penis, firmly keeping to the opposite conviction. Nevertheless, this denied perception does not remain without any psychic consequence since he (or she) does not have the courage, or the dishonesty, to affirm seeing a penis, unless he (or she) stays in a psychotic state.

So, to compensate for this, he (or she) either turns towards a further general *symbolic elaboration*<sup>66</sup> (as in most normal cases) or clings to something more material, like a part of the body or an object to which he (or she) ascribes the penis role or considers it to be acting as a material symbolic replacement for this. All this (*fetish creation*) is due to the fact that he (or she) does not admit this lack of a penis, notwithstanding the evidence thereof. However, Freud (1938) himself pointed out that this fetish creation does not provide the exact paradigm of the Ego's splitting mechanism, since the former belongs to the proper psychopathological context whereas the castration complex, with its possible effects (including this Ego splitting), basically concerns normality – that is to say, it concerns every human being, as we shall see later – but without excluding possible pathological degenerations (just like in fetishism).

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<sup>63</sup> Indeed, as early in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud speaks of a splitting of the Ego (Britton 2004, p. 95).

<sup>64</sup> We have intentionally given precedence to males over females because these phenomena mainly concern the former, although not exclusively. Only for this reason have we put the female third person individual pronoun "she" within brackets. In any other case, when we have used (or shall use) personal pronouns, as a unique criterion we have chosen the one arranging them in alphabetical order.

<sup>65</sup> Which still turns out to be not compromised.

<sup>66</sup> Considering this in the general framework describing the crucial passage from nature to culture, that is to say, we regard the symbolic function as the main landmark of this. Sublimation therefore has to be meant as a consequence of it.

Subsequently, Freud was led to consider disavowal (as already seen, essentially based on castration anxiety) as concerning, in pathological cases, the full recusation of external reality by the psychotic, as opposed to the repression carried out by the neurotic. Indeed, the former completely recuses the external reality (due to a structural deficit of the pair Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego), whereas the latter removes the (internal) Es' needs. In the first case, as already said, we have an Ego splitting (with a complete prevalence of the narcissistic Ideal Ego) that is different from other splitting phenomena due to the neurotic repression, because the latter concerns an internal conflict between two distinct agencies, the Ego against the Es, in regard to an internal (and not external) reality. Hence, only the former has some relationship with the external world, and Freud put it at the source of every other form of disavowal of reality that yet may be symbolically reconceived or rebuilt up. Thus, disavowal mainly has to do with primary relationships between these two Ego's subagencies, the Ideal Ego and the Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, due to the above-mentioned Ego splitting<sup>67</sup>.

Anyway, this first Freudian model of fetishism, based on disavowal, was then supposed to be valid for all the possible painful and anxiogenic perceptions and experiences, as mainly motivated by separation<sup>68</sup>, either for males and females, so generalizing disavowal mechanism and Ego's splitting to all possible painful perceptions (above all, by separation and denial of it): indeed, Freud (1938) himself, already noted that the same castration's anxiety is felt by fetishists as well as by non-fetishists, both reacting to it, in the same manner<sup>69</sup>. In this case, in regard to consciousness as mainly identified in the Ego agency, we still have the formation, by Ego's splitting, of the dual subagency pair *Ideal Ego* vs. the system *Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego*, as characterized, around the end of (Freudian) psychosexual development of every human being, by the fundamental persistence (inheritance of the basic conflictual nature of human psyche) of a primary functional dialectic opposition between them, a feature coming from the handling of desire and its satisfaction with respect to reality, according to Eros and Thanatos basic drives as well as to pleasure and reality principles.

We wish to bring back what is said in Dolto (1998), within the above psychoanalytic pattern. To be precise, F. Dolto (1998) says that psychic development of child mainly take place through successive *castrations* (which she calls *symbologenous*, i.e., yielding symbols) each corresponding to one phase of the Freudian psychosexual development, until up Œdipus stage in which there is a kind of bifurcation of drives into sublimation on the one hand, and perversion<sup>70</sup> on the other hand (Dolto 1998, pp. 84-90). Thus, we would like to explain theoretically these Dolto's arguments also

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<sup>67</sup> Which is a mechanism in some respects quite similar to the *scotomization* process of E. Pichon-Rivière and R. Laforgue; see (Rycroft 1968a).

<sup>68</sup> As has been said in the footnote <sup>1</sup>, at the beginning of this paper, this defence mechanism is considered to be an archaic psychic process which took place from the tendency to not tolerate any form of contradiction (as anxiety producing) which may appear in the affective-émotive reality of human being, which is aimed to the search for good and rewarding relationships to avoiding any form of frustration. Furthermore, in the last period of his work, Freud himself put the anguish at the centre of his reflections on the psychic functioning either normal and pathological, assigning to the Ego the main function to contain, cope and facing it. Indeed, Freud, since his first works on dreaming, describes how child tries to control her or his instinctual fears and internal anguishes projecting them externally by means of playing, then analogically linking this usage of the playing to the role of dreaming in neurotics. As is well-known, this standpoint was then retaken, deepen and extended, in an original manner, by Melanie Klein (Britton 2004, p. 88).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. (Di Lorenzo 2003, Ch. 3, Sect. 2) where an interesting and clever psychological analysis of the pathological use of mobile communications and related technologies has been pursued. His study dates back to 2002, but surely it is of current interest and validity, even more nowadays, seen that wide and capillary proliferation of online networks, against which there exist outstanding criticisms (Maffei 2014, 2016).

<sup>70</sup> To be meant in its widest sense (Moore and Fine 1993).

in terms of the Ego's splitting as sketchily described above. Precisely, the sublimation branch (*phantasy* creating) roughly corresponds to the prevalence of the action of the double agency system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego upon the Ideal Ego subagency, while, vice versa, perversion branch (of the *pleasure*) corresponds to the prevalence of the action of the Ideal Ego subagency upon the system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, with the occurrence of fetishistic phenomena. This is in coherence with the contemporary notion of unconscious according to which it is the place of a primary knowledge structurally organized in terms of signifiers, in itself devoid of any meaning (signified), which will organize later pleasure and will rule phantasy (Chemama and Vandermerch, 1998).

Nevertheless, both these two opposite tendencies, arising from the above bifurcation process (in turn, springing out from Ego's splitting through disavowal mechanism), are always present in every human being, although in different ratio and in inverse proportion of each other. The prevalence of the sublimation branch with the system Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, roughly corresponds to the rising of *non-material* culture, while the prevalence of the perversion branch with the subagency Ideal Ego roughly entails the rising of *material* culture<sup>71</sup>. All that seems to find a further confirmation from neurosciences: indeed, in analyzing, cleverly, modern society from the standpoint of philosophy of neurosciences, it has been discussed deeply, in (Maffei 2014, 2016), the inverse proportion<sup>72</sup> existing between a kind of "*bulimia*" of consumptions (to be put in correspondence with Ideal Ego agency) and a kind of "*anorexia*" of ethical-moral, cultural and social values (to be put in correspondence with the agency pair Ego's Ideal-Super Ego).

Moreover, the above theoretical pattern, mainly worked out within Freudian theory, is also able to comprehensively explain most of the new pathologies identified by the current psychoanalytic clinic as claimed by M. Recalcati (2010), who, inter alia, put at the centre of his theoretical discussion, the well-known 1969 *Discourse of the Capitalist* by Lacan, just very close to what has been said above. Such a discourse cannot be simply reduced to a historical version of capitalism as economic system. It is, rather, a wider theoretical pattern or conceptual figure, worked out by Lacan just to highlight a certain declination of the modern social links featured by the failing of the crucial experience of symbolic castration, so that, the pleasure tasted by the subject, without the symbolic anchorage of castration, is pursued as a satisfaction merely dissipative, without limits, compulsive, dangerously linked with the destructive tendency of death drive.

Indeed, Recalcati (2010) shows the current nihilistic nullification process to which *desire*, i.e., the unconscious' subject, is undergone. Such a process, takes place according to a bifurcation in two main lines: the one, aimed to a narcissistic reinforcement of the Ego (hence, with a derailment towards Ideal Ego), the other turned towards an imperious demand of immediate pleasure (typical

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<sup>71</sup> Applications of this pattern to economic anthropology, are briefly outlined in (Iurato 2016), also on the basis of what has been suggested in (Horkheimer and Adorno 1947, 1966, 2002) and in (Carson 1999, Introduction), about possible relationships between consumption and fetishism. On the other hand, as early the *Frankfurt School* had stressed these problematic centred just on the severe risk of derive of every capitalist society towards a full and flat consumption's tendency, totalizing human being as, for instance, has clearly claimed Herbert Marcuse (1964, 1967). However, as early Fromm (1976, 1977) as well as theological and philosophical reflection (cf. (Chialà and Curi 2016)), from time, have admonished humans to put attention to this risk of the derive toward careless materialism, stigmatizing the current tendency towards the *having* rather than towards the *being*, the latter – i.e., *to have* and *to be* – being the two main categories within which oscillates every human existence since birth of society, a dichotomy already pointed out by Gabriel Marcel and by Jean-Paul Sartre but autonomously developed and masterly re-contextualized by Fromm. Furthermore, Umberto Curi, in (Chialà and Curi 2016), points out that already in the St. Paul's letter to Colossians, the insatiable avarice (*pleonexia* or *pleonexy*) must be condemned as an idolatry. Thus, also the Sacred Scriptures (with St. Paul but also in the Gospel of Luke) reveal what deep connections there exist between *pleonexia* (i.e., the having) and idolatry, so referring to fetishist phenomena.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. (Maffei 2016, p. 33).

of primary process of the *Id*) that crosses every form of the principle of symbolic mediation (typical of secondary process, above all, of sublimation phenomena) which explicates in the basic dialectic of the pair Ego's Ideal–Super Ego whose non-attendance (i.e., the absence of the *Other*), according to Lacan, is said to be *Father's evaporation*. What is required, is the immediate satisfaction of pleasure, and the even more wider global market should meet such a request, this corresponding, as seen above, to a drift towards perversion, meant in its widest sense, that is to say, a pleasure unhooked from desire, eluding any dialectic of repression.

The new clinic highlights the hypermodern tendency of the drive's push to avoid fully symbolic castration and its needful sublimatory canalization within phantasmatic framework, for becoming a sadistic push for a consumption pursued without going through the *Other*. This situation is characterized by the vanishing of the orientating and structuring function of great ideals, by the desacralization, the depoliticization, the demitization, as well as by the predominance of the undisputed power of global market, by the hyperactivity of the own hedonistic individualism, even more dominant, and by the volatilization of own inner time. Hypermodernization is giving a desubstantiation of the subject, making this free of the weight of the ideals of tradition (included in the pair Ego's Ideal–Super Ego) but, at the same time, creating, around her or him, a meaningless empty which paralyzes her or his affective life. So, the compulsory "machine of pleasure" replaces the sublimatory "machine of repression", that is to say, the falling of either the ideals of tradition and the regulating forms of the drives (whose metapsychological centre is just in the repression activity), has left the place to the unrestrained consumption which, as Lacan said, cyclically will damage nihilistically the consumer herself or himself (death drive).

Lacan has stressed on this dialectic, in which De Sadian deadly pleasure releases perversily from desire, like in the social relations inspired by the *discourse of the capitalist*. The pleasure machine prescind therefore from the dialectic of repression; the dissipative pleasure of death drive, structurally antagonist and alternative to desire, throws the subject into an autistic derive which separates her or him from the *Other*. Already Freud had descried such a metapsychological thesis, that is to say, the power of *Todestrieb* (i.e., death drive) breaks the Eros' restraints, dissolving the precious links of the subject with the *Other*, so nullifying the *élan vital* of desire, destroying the life and disconnecting it from the field of the *Other*<sup>73</sup>. Thus, Recalcati (2010) points out that current clinic is not a *clinic of desire*, as it was and should be, but rather a *clinic of death drive*; there is no longer the problematic of neurosis and the related vicissitudes of loving with its subjective demands, but rather a *clinic of anti-love*.

Recalcati (2010) once again warns on the fact that, there is no longer the neurotic difficulty to undertake own desire, subjectifying it, freeing from repression; current patients show to have severe difficulties to give a sense to their life, to have deep and true passions and feelings, to animate own existence which appears to be underpinned by an acephalous push towards a damned pleasure, dangerous to the life, devastating, not laid out within a phantasmatic framework, and not articulated according with the subject of the unconscious (i.e., the desire). There is no ethical assumption of the task to bring forward the unconscious programme of own desire, neither its neurotic delegation, but rather there is the pernicious programme to nullify it, cancel it, bypass it, negate it. But, what is the most dramatic one, is the absence of the dimension of the unconscious desire and its phantasmatic

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<sup>73</sup> This clinic of the new and multi-variegated dependences or addictions, all intended to bringing back humans to their original status (death drive), is also exposed, in a clear, clever and lucid manner, in (Pollo 2016).

elaboration through symbolic articulation (with words and thoughts), together the dissolution of the orientating function of Oedipal ideals which had bound, until last decades, modern society.

This liquefaction of the links with the Other, due to an incandescence of the dimension of the drive pleasure, is due to the absence of the regulatory function given by that symbolic castration acting in the unconscious framework by phantasms, and from which, as Freud said, desire springs out. What stands out is a clinic of psychoses, narcissism and perversions<sup>74</sup> as, at the centre of setting, there is no the unconscious agency of the desire, as it should be, but rather its negation whose outcomes are or the predominance of a drive action devoid of any symbolic articulation, or the bypassing of symbolic castration with the suspension of the basic gender difference and the related anguish of the encounter with the other, so destroying any creative power of the desire in a deadly compulsion to repeat process. So, the new clinic is aimed to restore, to revitalize, to reanimate the unconscious' subject, i.e., the desire.

Therefore, it seems that there are two distinct and disjoint pathways which may be followed, from the darkness of unconscious realm to the light of consciousness, and either characterized by the elimination of the subject of unconscious, i.e., the desire: or perversely, from the place of the *Id*, where reigns the full disorderliness of drives, which immediately reach consciousness (*acephalous* pleasure) with an unmediated stress-freeing discharge, eluding every form of symbolic mediation, and with a compulsive repetition of the pleasure without any symbolic relationship with the Other; or narcissistically, with a rigid hyperidentification negating every modality of alterity, so creating a narcissistic armour which flattens the individual to the extreme and total social conformism. In both cases, therefore, is fully neglected the original, singular *desiring subjectivity* of every human being, which is the key to open the way to others, i.e., it is the essence of otherness, the actualization of *alterity*, which might be considered as the early, chief root of unconscious experience. This desire is indestructible just because it goes beyond the Ego and its limits, that is to say, it does not depend on the Ego's will, it does not depend by Ego, it is not brought by Ego, and does not depend on it.

In conclusion, all this is quite enough to confirm or support our pattern outlined in the previous sections, based on the main opposition<sup>75</sup> *Ideal Ego vs. Ego's Ideal-Super Ego* pair, within which it

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<sup>74</sup> Coherently with our pattern of above, in which a central role is played by fetishism just invoked by Freud to try to explain psychoses and perversions.

<sup>75</sup> A corroboration of this opposition, may come from the theoretical underpinnings to the analytic treatment of certain serious psychopathologies in which mental structures originate from early traumatic areas and develop in isolation and lack of enough relationships, in particular, with the agency pair Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego, due to the pre-existence of a destructive organization, turning out to be structured in the absence of internal parents, so expressing a narcissistic hatred of need and dependence, hence with psychic structure collapsing to Ideal Ego agency. Such unelaborated areas become psychic structures – say, virtual “neo-creations” – in which aggression, seduction, terror and fascination hold sway. Structures of this kind may be said to have developed instead of the Super-Ego and Ego's Ideal, so that they are unable to grow into more mature forms as in the case of primitive formations. However, Freud's theory turned out be unable to fill the gap between the formation of the normal Super-Ego and that of its pathological counterpart, identified in melancholic disturbs. To be precise, in *Mourning and Melancholia* (of 1915), he refers to a consciousness imbued with powerful sadism that gives rise to an intrapsychic vicious circle, but then, in *The Ego and the Id* (of 1922), he instead describes a Super-Ego which now springs out from the introjection of parental images and becomes the representative of all the value and moral judgements. Such a polarity in the conception of Super-Ego seems to remain implicitly present throughout Freud's framework: on the one hand, it is seen as the expression of sociality and of positive identifications with the father figure and other social-cultural models, while, on the other hand, it is the heir to the cannibalistic and aggressive destructiveness of melancholia. At the same time, the importance of the aggressive instinct is implicit in Freud's conception of Super-Ego pathology: he indeed writes that in melancholia the Super-Ego is “as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct”, while later, in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (of 1924), he notes that, due to the defusion (meant in the psychological sense) of the death instinct, the Super-Ego becomes too cruel and inexorable against the Ego; hence, in *Civilization and its Discontents* (of 1929), the aggression of the Super-Ego is said to be turned against the Ego itself and transformed into the sense of guilt, in anguish. Considering all that, Freud

is possible, roughly, to lay out most of the arguments just discussed above, mainly centred on the far-sighted 1969 Lacanian *Discourse of the Capitalist*, so bringing back psychotic manifestations, narcissisms and perversions to the realm of *Ideal Ego* and its deep, strong links with *Id* (the place of *needs*), while symbolic function, triggered by *desire*, should correspond to the dialectic of the pair *Ego's Ideal-Super Ego*, inside which symbolic castration takes places, and sublimation phenomena arise, so allowing a subjective or personal, singular re-elaboration, of knowledge<sup>76</sup>.

This Lacan's *Discourse*, is, on its turn, closely linked with his previous *Seminar VII* in which the remarkable 1960 *Kant with Sade* argument is exposed, a basic dialectic between the imperativeness of Sade for a full pleasure satisfaction, and the opposite imperativeness of Kant which constrains subject to obey moral law; these are two unavoidable and intertwined imperatives inseparable of each other, between which subject is perennially buffeted, to undergoing a miserable destiny: being overcome by a law which nullifies desire and that is impossible to observe always, or falling into the desire which twists law to a net pleasure, annihilating and mortifying, as ruled by compulsion to repeat mechanism<sup>77</sup>.

Anyway, all that, is in agreement with what has been said at the end of section 2, in that *Ideal Ego*, as an unconscious narcissistic formation prior to *Super-Ego*, is featured by either an omnipotence's ideal bringing back to the early state of indistinctness of the *Ego* from the *Es* (death drive) or a primary *specular* identification with mother (child-mother bind) and experienced as omnipotent (narcissistic rigidity<sup>78</sup>); it is the depository of the warranty for an immediate and unlimited pleasure, or else, a return to an incestuous pleasure overcoming any possible form of symbolic Law (by Father's action, introducing the subject to the dimension of *otherness*), or interdict, coming from the *Œdipus* complex (and leading to the opposite side represented by the dialectic of the pair *Ego's Ideal-Super Ego*, sublimation producing), a pleasure assured by an immediate object satisfaction, as offered for example by *Capitalist* (meant in its widest Lacanian sense), without any sublimatory intermediation (of secondary process).

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notes that the severity of the *Super-Ego* no longer coincides with that of the real parents, but rather depends instead on a combination of environmental and innate constitutional factors (De Masi 2016). So, we should be inclined to invoke just the main opposition *Ideal Ego* vs. *Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego* in trying to dissolve such a contradiction regarding these opposite functions owned by *Super-Ego*, just relegating these aggressive aspects of *Super-Ego* to the *Ideal Ego* agency, rather than to the pair *Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego* to which, instead, is attributed only the task of representing the parental interdictions and the social-cultural laws as initially worked out by Freud.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. also (Cotter 2003, pp. 92-95), where *Ideal Ego* is called *narcissistic Ego*, while *Ego's Ideal* is called *Ideal Ego*. Furthermore, according to (Petrini et al. 2011), perversions are seen as the outcome of an opposition to Law. Indeed, Petrini and co-workers, observe that psychoanalysis may be also seen as a theory built up on the relationship between human beings and Law, this latter understood in its widest sense as ruling the desire, the pleasure and the power in the individuals. A pervert is simply seen as one who needs just of Law to get her or his pleasure in transgressing it (cf. *Ideal Ego*), putting herself or himself in opposition to Law (cf. *Ego's Ideal-Super Ego*), above all moral law, just to get her or his full, unconditioned and immediate pleasure (a merely narcissistic aim, therefore, belonging to *Ideal Ego* agency) to detriment of the others (just represented by the agency pair *Ego's Ideal-Super Ego*).

<sup>77</sup> Which, maybe, is pushed by the fascinating remembrance of the great omnipotence and infinite pleasure felt by child in her or his infancy, during the strong child-mother tie (*Ideal Ego*) established since pre-natal stage, and that operates, according to *Thanatos*, always contrasting the as much present and unavoidable *élan vital* due to *Eros*. In any case, the compulsion to repeat mechanism is one of the fundamental mechanisms with which unconscious runs; it overcomes the pleasure principle, and seems to concern almost every psychic drive in respect to their relationships with *Thanatos*. It may be correlated with *Ideal Ego* meant as the main agency coming from archaic child-mother tie, which is, in its deep nature, an incestuous bind drenched by ambivalence, invasiveness and viscosity which may lead to a tragic end like that of the *Orestes'* myth in the version provided either by *Aeschylus* or by *Euripides* (De Pasquali 2002). From all that, a possible motivation underlying the close link among *Ideal Ego*, *Thanatos* and compulsion to repeat mechanism, may follow.

<sup>78</sup> See also (Whitebook 1995, pp. 63-68, 278).

On the other hand, genetically, Ego starts to form bodily from the Es, physiologically thanks to the contact with reality by means of perceptive system (*bodily Ego*); afterwards, still in contact with reality, it undergoes a splitting process, as said above, with the formation of two outcomes due to this bifurcation leading on the one hand to the Ideal Ego agency, place of the antisublimation and immediate pleasure, on the other hand to the pair of subagencies Ego's Ideal–Super Ego, whose internal dialectic gives rise to sublimation. So, Ego agency and its functions have an early corporal origin and a deeply somatic nature<sup>79</sup>; among these functions, there is the *desire*. From an historical viewpoint, this notion played a crucial role since the birth of psychoanalysis.

Indeed, Freud, as early in his celebrated *The Interpretation of Dreams* of 1900, considers desire as springing out from a basic hallucinatory or phantasmatic<sup>80</sup> satisfaction of the tension arising from of a primary need that child didn't able to accomplish directly and immediately, that is to say, bodily, as acquired in the primary child-mother bond upon which builds up Ideal Ego agency. So, desire has a main bodily early origin, as coming from a primary satisfaction experience by hallucination or phantasmatically which takes place, for the first time, just when that need has been really satisfied bodily (e.g., by nutrition), that is to say, with the direct contact or live experience with the related satisfaction's object (e.g., food), provided by caregiver, which will be cathexed by a certain amount of psychic energy.

To this corporal perception, will correspond a mnestic image associated, in turn, with the trace of excitation originated by the need. From this first event onwards, once this latter again occurs, but without the real presence of the satisfaction's object, then the related mnestic image, associated just to the related excitation's trace accordingly left, will be re-enacted by a further cathexing of it, as well as it will be re-evoked, hence reproduced, the related perception, so re-establishing, either in an hallucinatory fashion (through the Ideal Ego agency, according to our pattern) or in a phantasmatic manner (by means of the dialectic of the pair Ego's Ideal–Super-Ego, according to our pattern), the original situation of primary corporal satisfaction when satisfaction's object was just present. This latter psychic manifestation is said to be *desire*, by Freud, and has chiefly an unconscious nature (Petrini et al. 2013).

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. (Iurato 2013) for more informations.

<sup>80</sup> Which is the prodromic germ of the next symbolic function and sublimation phenomena.

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