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# Some problems and issues at the edge of sociology and anthropology

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**Abstract.** Eight problems and issues, placeable between sociology and anthropology, are briefly exposed simply with the programmatic intention to develop further them, in the future, in a deeper manner.

Eight problematic issues, at the edge of anthropology, sociology and certain related disciplines, are briefly exposed, mainly as a remark, with the intention to reconsider further each of these, in a deeper manner. Each item is aimed to call the attention on a possible current problematic issue lies between anthropological and sociological contexts. Further, most of these are related of each other.

## •<sub>1</sub> The sense of subjective time, between sociology and anthropology

The time is a fundamental and crucial dimension of either human psyche and life, together that of space<sup>1</sup>. A basic distinction is between a physical (or objective) time (of external reality) and a psychological (or subjective) time (of our internal reality), upon which there exists an open debate in regard to their relationships (Vicario, 2005). The sense of subjective time is, however, a crucial structuring dimension of human psyche, as emerges from either anthropological (Ligi, 2011) and psychological research (Maffei, 2014; Vicario, 2005). Further, to avoid psychic illnesses, subjective time should be modulated in a different manner with respect to the general sense of time as due to the flow of life of every human being as a member of a society and its evolution (Beccaria, 2003; Ligi, 2011; Maffei, 2014), as human brain is settled to run according to a reduced speed with respect to the ever more increasing flow of social life (Maffei, 2014). Indeed, time ago, Erich Fromm<sup>2</sup> had pointed out that time in the modality of present regards the existential modality of being, while time in the modality of past and future concerns the existential modality of having (Fromm, 1976). Just this latter is then closely related with the model of capitalistic society and with its consumerism life style, in which time has become a mathematical variable or means of all those economic quantities to be optimized, so it has become a monetized quantity (Fromm, 1976). So, the frenzy typical of any sector, aspect and process of the life in a capitalistic society, has done ever more *manic* and frenetic the behaviour of the people, in which physical time of external reality, mainly dominated by the social life, is overwhelming the inner psychic time, ever more moulded on the physical external time, hence neglecting internal psychic needs, in particular leaving no space for personal reflection and meditation, so going towards alienation (Fromm, 1955, 1976; Conti & Principe, 1989). All that might also explain why the various personality disorders are ever more increasing (Emmelkamp and Kamphuis, 2007). Anyway, since the coming of capitalistic model of society, the inner psychic time has been gradually overwhelmed by the external physical time of reality, not the phenomenonic but the social one, if we assume as valid the remarkable arguments of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) according to which external reality is given by the social-institutional context in which every human being grows and lives. This also entails a proliferation of massive or collective *alienation* which is the typical trait of capitalistic and modern societies, according to Fromm (1955), whose arguments are still valid<sup>3</sup>. The alienation, in particular, entails a lacking of *reflection*<sup>4</sup> that, according to Carl Gustav Jung<sup>5</sup>, is the main civilization drive "par excellence", the essence and richness of human psyche (Jung 1937, § 1). All that, has unavoidably negative consequences for the human

1 See (Galimberti, 2006).

2 And, in general, as stressed by the so-called *Frankfurt school*.

3 See, in particular, (Fromm 1955, Ch. V, § C)-2.b)). See also (Carotenuto 1991, Parte I, Cap. XX; Conti and Principe 1989, Parte V, Capp. 2, 3).

4 See (Galimberti, 2006).

5 Whose analytical psychology has remarkable applications in sociology.

psyche<sup>6</sup>, and we remand to the work of Conti and Principe (1989) for a deepening of alienation phenomena from the psychological viewpoint; see also (Gallino, 2006). Furthermore, as the current setting of society requires, ever more, a faster satisfaction of needs and desires, it seems that there is a massive or collective drift towards a ruling of human psyche by primary processes rather than secondary processes, as stated by Freudian psychoanalysis, where time is a fundamental dimension typical of secondary process and not of primary one which does not know time, but requires a faster, almost immediate, satisfaction of any drive request (Galimberti, 2006; Rycroft, 1968).

## •<sub>2</sub> From anthropological epistemology to sociology of law: a case-study

The central foundational question of anthropology is the dualistic oscillation of its epistemological status between an *ethnocentric* vision on the one hand – which gives superiority to western cultures and societies, or in general to the ones to which belongs who is observing as an anthropologist – and a *relativistic* conception on the other hand – for which every culture and society has its own dignity and validity. Such an epistemological question has entailed another one, to be precise: how can we define civility, or what is a civil society? And answers may be provided in dependence on the stance we adopt just in relation to the above epistemological dualism about the standpoint we assume, that is, the ethnocentric or the relativistic one: in the first case, we reach an ethnocentric universalism, while, in the second case, an essentialistic relativism. In any case, the initial dualistic contraposition still hold, thus the impasse remains (Dei 2016; Fabietti 2010). However, as just mentioned in (Dei 2016; Kilani, 2009), it would be possible to make appeal to *human rights*<sup>7</sup> to try to descry an aim towards to turn the search of an equitable solution to such dualisms: in fact, as these fundamental rights just concern – by definition – every human being, no matter any difference of race, language, gender or religion, then either ethnocentric visions and relativistic indeterminacies might now be avoided, so a clear route towards modern and right progress of human societies towards civility might be identified with more clarity. The basic human rights chart dates back to the post-II World War years, as ratified by ONU in 1948, but no central, unified institution, overcoming every single nationalisms, today exists to warrant effectively such fundamental rights, which therefore risk to remain only abstract and noble absolute principles<sup>8</sup>. But, notwithstanding that, as has just been said above, further related difficulties come from this possible overcoming of the above epistemological dualism for anthropology: indeed, even if the final aim of a civilization process by a society should be the widest respect and observance of fundamental human rights, yet new problems would arise concerning the issues if there exists and which law system warrants the respect and the observance of such rights if meant as norms, so this latter – i.e., the law system – is a prerequisite for trying to solve the initial epistemological dualism concerning anthropology. Thus, an issue of anthropological epistemology becomes (or implies) an anthropology of law (Sacco, 2007) or sociology of law issue, as well as of philosophy of law.

## •<sub>3</sub> The psychological construct of *Self*, between anthropology and sociology

The psychological construct of *Self* has a multi-semantic nature in that its meaning depends on the psychological framework within which is considered. From the social psychology standpoint, the main problem concerning the *Self* is the position of this latter in regard to either the social and the personal identity, which, according to John Turner, are both comprised in it, and ruled by cognitive processes. In this regard, then, Ulric Neisser has identified many internal components of the *Self* in

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6 In this regard, it is also useful and important to consider the works of David Le Breton (1997, 2015) which recall, in particular, the attention on the ever more complex and dense set of external stimuli, of every type and manner, to which humans undergo, who become unable to rightly control and cope, until up to be submerged (hence ruled, often unconsciously) by them. This seems to be a typical feature of capitalistic and modern societies that were already described by Karl Marx and further highlighted next by the Frankfurt school (see, in particular, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse).

7 Nevertheless, open debates even exist in regard to this last theme on human rights and their role in anthropology and sociology, basically centred on the related law systems which should warrant their respect and observance in a certain country or society (Kilani, 2009).

8 Human rights might also be seen as falling inside the wider context of concrete natural law (or *giusnaturalism*) to which positive law should tend.

dependence on its function with respect to the external and internal interaction of the subject: these are the following ones: 1) an *ecological self*, related to the directly perceived position, experienced by every individual, with respect to the environment in which he/she stays; 2) an *interpersonal self*, which concerns the non-reflexive and immediate relationships with the others; 3) an *extended self*, based on what we recall and what we wish to anticipate (as a storytelling); 4) a *private self*, with which child starts to be aware a certain experience regards only herself/himself; 5) the *conceptual self*, thanks to which child begins to have a vision of herself/himself, hence a concept of self which is possible to arise only thinking the child embedded into a set of relationships and theories (that is, the cultural context of life), so that it has a chief social nature and a temporal dimension. These five components of the Self, according to Neisser, are quite independent of each other, but the latter one, i.e., the conceptual self, in a certain way, is the predominant one and comprehends the others, trying to provide a sense of psychic unity and coherence of our person into a given socio-cultural context. This explains why children are centred on themselves, as in they predominate such a component of the self, closely linked to those narcissistic/egocentric tendencies typical of the so-called *centring* process on herself/himself<sup>9</sup>. This component, therefore, rules the others, and being depending on the historical context in which individual lives, it is temporally variable and social context-dependending. Anyhow, according to Neisser, the Self of every individual springs out from the her/his interaction with the ecological, interpersonal and social environment; the first sense of Self starts since childhood and evolves with its components along all the life course, until up to become a privileged object as well as the main reference point of the everyday experience of everyone (Palmonari, 1989; 2011; Palmonari et al, 2012).

Therefore, from these partial notions on the theory of Self<sup>10</sup>, it is clearly evident its utility in trying to understand how environmental context (meant in its widest sense), temporally, may influence the personality (and its main aspects<sup>11</sup>) of every person, considered as a social actor or, however, as a member of a certain social group. This is particularly relevant nowadays in that, as we shall say in the next section, the human cognitive development – which is at its highest degree with respect to the historical evolution of humanity – is closely related with the moral development of human being and ethics, so that it will be possible to make an estimation of the current state of such an important correlation. Furthermore, above all within Heinz Kohut framework, the theory of Self may be put in relationship with the many mythological aspects of human life, which are still persisting, above all with the increase of narcissism with an inflation of the grandiose Self in most people.

#### •<sub>4</sub> Revisiting the theory of moral development according to L. Kohlberg

There are various psychological theories on the origin and development of moral sense (or ethics) in human being. One of the main theories, was due to Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987), worked out within the cognitive psychological context, to be precise, on the basis of the previous works done by Jean Piaget on the same topic, which has mainly ascertained that, a necessary prerequisite for the development of the moral sense in human being, is the development of the basic cognitive abilities. Further, next studies then proved that moral development was closely related to the development of Self (Sacchi and Brambilla, 2014), as briefly mentioned in •<sub>3</sub>. Kohlberg theory comprehends three main levels of moral development in human being, almost parallel but preliminarily requiring the contemporary cognitive development according to Piaget; each level, then, is subdivided into two main sublevels. The first level is the *pre-conventional* one, for children lower than 10 years old (and

9 On the other hand, the utilitaristic philosophy (which is at the basis of the capitalism) just identifies the Ego (of every individual) with the so-called "centre of the world", that is, all must revolve around the individual (Palmonari et al, 2012).

10 There exist many theories on the construct of Self; see for example (Carotenuto, 1991; Fossi, 1983,1984; Hogg and Vaughan, 2010).

11 For instance, to understand why and how the current and increasing drift towards exasperate egocentrism (*centring* processes) take place, where, here, we meant *egocentrism* as different from either *egoism* (chiefly aimed towards own personal advantage) and *narcissism* (which has a main erotic component and aim turned towards herself/himself). According to Jean Piaget (2015), the egocentrism – typical of children who are not yet decentred with respect to their own individuality – is mainly due to a basic undifferentiation between the psychological components of the *Ego* and the *Alter*; see also (Galimberti, 2006).

for adults having a specific past) for whom social, ethical and moral norms or rules are represented or personified by external authorities, whose respect is mainly due for getting benefits or avoiding punishments, so that there is neither internal acquisition nor an understanding of them; they are only interested in gaining personal advantage, their reasoning and behaviour are egoistically turned and there is a net separation between own Ego and the others. The second level is the *conventional* one, which is established during adolescence, and whose related moral sense so acquired mostly remains as such along adulthood; so, individualistic perspective is abandoned to give major attention to the interpersonal relations and social values, which are now acquired and understood, trying to be ever more accepted by the social group of membership, with respect to which person tries to maintain the so established right relationships based on loyalty and aimed to gain the higher level of wellness for the society, to which the own personal ones are subordinated. Finally, the third and final level is the *post-conventional* one, featured by moral judgements and ethic principles having the higher abstract degree, with a complete acceptance of the social norms and rules as for the full understanding of the underlying ethical principles which assume a universal value going beyond any possible restriction as possibly due to institutional constraints and social conventions. At this level of morality, which is the highest one, the person reaches a stance in which moral universal values predominate on the social norms and rules, or else the former have a primate on the latter, which should be moulded on them. Only at this level, the universal fundamental human rights (hence, the individual ones, but only when these respect the former) may be protected and warranted, and to which every other law system and social institutional setting, has to be moulded (Palmonari, 2012).

At the current status of human societies, it is necessary to reflect on their evolution with respect the sense of human history seen from the perspective of moral development just according to Kohlberg. These institutions (i.e., the human societies) are taking routes that, just compared with the history of the development of moral sense of human being (and the related parallel development of cognition), put several crucial and serious questions about the real fate of humanity. Kohlberg's theory on ethics and moral development in human beings<sup>12</sup>, just for its close relationships with Piaget's theory on the development of human cognition, undertakes a notable relevance from either the sociological and the anthropological standpoint.

#### •<sub>5</sub> The religious matrix of society: a brief remark

From the sociological standpoint, the relationships between religion (meant in its widest meaning) and society are well-known<sup>13</sup>; in particular, those related to the economic side of the structure of a society, as for instance highlighted by Max Weber in his celebrated work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), where, amongst other things<sup>14</sup>, he identifies in the Lutheran and Calvinist ethics the early roots of modern capitalism, while with the Enlightenment the new ethical meaning of work, as expounded now by any theological influences, becomes predominant and the consequent bourgeois morality of the work permeated all the industrial revolution. However, in the history of economic systems, there was a first fracture, in the conception of the *work*, placed in the passage from Hebraic religion to Christianity, hence a second one with the rising of protestantism which was at the basis, according to Weber, of the birth of capitalism and western modern societies. Hence, it follows that a remarkable role was played by certain chief religious traditions in the rising of economic systems of the modern society, at least according to certain sociological perspectives, as the Max Weber one (Demarchi et al, 1987). In particular, it would be very interesting to deepen the role played by the Christianity in the history of economics and ethic, in that, according to us, it has preceded, in many respects, various Marxist concepts. To be precise, in the light of the current

12 See also (Kuhmerker, 1991; Viganò, 1991).

13 See also (Donati, 2010) where, in particular, the basic relation transcendence-immanence is stressed as the common foundation of every religious trend.

14 In particular, subverting the irreversible dialectic of materialistic conception of history according to Marx, as Weber states that superstructures may also influence structures (in that, in the case of capitalism, religious tendencies just influence this economic system since its bases), and not only vice versa, as stated unidirectionally by Marx.

status of human societies, we deem that Christian ethic would have had the capability to avoid, or at least to dampen, certain crucial problems afflicting our society (above all from the economic side, but not limited only to this<sup>15</sup>), if its main precepts had been followed just from the moral point of view, and without any coercion intent or worship aim<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, an extreme and complete immanence of human life, without any relation with transcendence, may lead to abnormalities in humans (Zoja, 2011). Anyway, regardless of the possible influences of protestantism in the rising of capitalism, the main point we wish to stand out, here, is the reflection on which role, instead, *catholic ethic* would have had, in general (above all, seen the current state), for the contingent destiny of humans if it had been followed much more (Pannenberg, 1998).

#### •6 A psychoanalytic anthropology remark on the work of C. Lévi-Strauss

According to Freud, human being is determined (or better, acted) by two main drives, the sexual and the aggressive one, which explicate by means of the so-called *object-relations*<sup>17</sup>, through which the libidinal energy of such drives is thrown on, or is turned towards (i.e., is *cathexed* on), internal or external objects. In particular, the sexual drives are ruled by the so-called *Oedipus complex* whose modality of overcoming will determine the type of object choice. On the other hand, psychoanalytic anthropology, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, states that the crucial passage – for humans – from nature to culture, is based on two main principles: the overcoming of the Oedipus complex and the exogamic exchange of women; this latter, then, is closely related with the anthropological notion of *gift*<sup>18</sup> as due to Marcell Mauss. The overcoming of the Oedipus complex entails an object-choice that may be twofold: a narcissistic choice or an anaclitic one. The former is turned towards an internal object, that is to say, to the own personality (or else, herself or himself), while the latter is turned to an external love-object, usually chosen on the model of a parental figure (de Mijolla, 2005). Such an external choice (either narcissistic and anaclitic) mainly is the basis of exogamy, just in agreement with a positive overcoming of the Oedipus complex. In particular, the searching of such an external love-object, just due to the prohibition of incest as a consequence of Oedipal obligations, should oriented towards individuals outside the own familial circle, through a certain exchange (especially of women, because of the historical prevalence of patriarchate social regime) of persons among social groups not having parental links, which has entailed, on its turn, an economic exchange<sup>19</sup> (gifts, dowry, etc.), all this in agreement with Lévi-Strauss ideas. Now, as Freud has pointed out along his work, sexual drives have their own support (anaclisis) upon the self-preservation drives, becoming independent on these latter only secondarily along the psychological development process of every human being; so at the beginnings the sexual drives rely on basic somatic functions<sup>20</sup>, and only after they become autonomous (to contemplate too the so-called narcissistic object choice related to self-eroticism<sup>21</sup>), but never becoming fully independent and never leaving its original meaning related to self-preservation needs (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973). This might provide a possible sense to the main fact – besides socially evident – for which sexuality and economy<sup>22</sup> have however been closely correlated of each other, since the birth of human society. In particular, the satisfiability of a human need led to the notion of *utility*, that was then deepened by

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15 See also (Chialà and Curi, 2016).

16 This discussion should be meant pursued according to the History of Christianity and not to the History of Church (as institution).

17 Which is not a relation in the sense of interpersonal relation (Rycroft, 1968).

18 This exchange should be considered at the same manner of an exchange of goods or objects, in that primitive societies considered women as mere objects, not as human being, also inside the same family of the woman, as daughters were considered as pure objects of property of the father. Before the introduction of private property, men of a tribe acquired own woman through violent abduction of women of another tribe (for incest prohibition), to mean that women were considered just as mere objects. The real abduction of women was then replaced by symbolic rituals (like marriage), yet remaining unchanged the economic counterparts involved in the exchange of the women from a social group to another one (Fabietti, 1980).

19 The first forms of economy were based on barter.

20 Above all, those related to the oral phase of Freudian psychosexual development of human being.

21 The anaclitic love-object choice is related with the search of a parental imago, while the narcissistic one is turned to the search of a love-object having similarities with the individual. In any case, both choices concern a person outside parental context, for a positive overcoming of the Oedipus complex (Galimberti, 2006).

22 In this regard, see for example (Iurato, 2021).

the economic *marginalist school* of 19th-century, that worked out (by Hermann Gossen, William Jevons and others) basic formal principles ruling utility, which was related with the exchanges of goods (Papi, 1979). In fact, economy looks at the needs of human being, an *economic good* being simply any thing is in relation with human needs, whose *value* is given, according to Nassau Senior, by its attitude to satisfy human needs. Thus, utility is not a mere quality of things but rather a relationship between a thing and an individual, who is seen, according to Jeremy Bentham, as a machine which is programmed to reach the highest pleasure as provided by goods. To take into account, then, the shortage of goods for all humans, Jevons introduced the crucial notion of *marginal utility*, just related to the shortage of every good. The value of a good, therefore, is linked to its marginal utility, which will determine the price. The goods, then, will be exchanged in the market, where persons compare and exchange goods till to reach an equilibrium of prices reflecting the current status of *valuation* of goods by individuals, who have, nevertheless, a different scale of *preference* warranting the good exchange. Marginalist school, therefore, is based on the individual analysis of human needs, and will be the foundation and the starting point of modern economic systems of capitalistic societies, based on free market (Papi, 1979). Anyhow, from what has been said so far, the economics, in its marginalist trend, takes into consideration the individual analysis of preferences in relation to human needs and their satisfaction according to exchange of related goods, these latter being closely linked, on the other hand, with the so-called self-preservation drives, as postulated by Freud, which, in turn, are strictly correlated with sexual drives, according to his theory of *anaclisis* that however remained not fully clarified in his work. But, the above anthropological considerations by Lévi-Strauss related to the rising of human society in its early and basic structure, may be put in a double-way correspondence with these latter Freud considerations, and both may receive so – reciprocally – support and corroboration; anyhow, from this last two-way correspondence, it follows, in particular, that there is a close relationship between sexuality, self-preservation needs and social structures, reciprocally influencing one with the other, to be deepened within Freudian framework of object-relations theory<sup>23</sup>.

#### •7 A possible, current evaluation of mythology

Amongst the various meanings of *myth*, we are interested in that considering it as an autonomous form of thought and life, thus, from this perspective, the myth is not subordinated to other forms of thought, like rationality, but has an its own autonomy as well as an originary and primary validity. So, myth is placed on a level equal to that of rationality, yet in a different position. Therefore, the mythological thought has a same dignity of the rational one. This consideration was first stated by Giambattista Vico in his celebrated *Scienza Nuova* (1725), in a polemic with Cartesianism. Myth, therefore, is an authentic modality of thought yet different from rationality, mainly having a poetic and fantastic fashion. Romanticism adopted such a viewpoint, and Friedrich Schelling considered it as the natural religion of humans. The contemporary philosophical and sociological thought has also considered myth as an autonomous form of human spirituality, independent on rational thought. In particular Émile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl considered myth as a particular projection of the models of society, not of nature as deemed in past, represented through an own logic different from the rational one (Abbagnano, 1998). Likewise, the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Ignacio Matte-Blanco lays out myth on symmetric thought (or the irrational one), as parallel and at the same level of the (dual) asymmetric thought, that is, the rational one; these two dual forms of thought are at the same level and interact reciprocally and always, according to an higher form of logic, said to be *bilogic*, comprehending the rational one and that lies at the basis of everyday reasoning of any human being (Galimberti, 2006). According to the historic-psychological school (of Leo Frobenius, Adolf Jensen, and so on), the historical study of a certain work should be done taking into account the context in which it was conceived, hence the *Weltbild* of that certain period, its *Weltanschauung*,

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23 As, for instance, organically exposed in (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983).

that underpins or supports a certain culture and society in a given historical period, of which such a work is a meaningful fragment. From this perspective, the myth should be seen as such, and this is possible only if it is regarded as the outcome of that originary and primordial spirit which relies into the deepest and ancient structures of a given society, independently from every social, economic and cultural element of it; hence, myth expresses, in an autonomous manner, the soul of a given society but to be analysed according to an own logic, different from the one ruling rational thought, which therefore cannot be a priori used as a comparison tool for the myth. This last, finds its own position in the *Weltbild* of a society and its *Weltanschauung* – independently of any other knowledge that has to do with rationality – whose early origins are just retraceable in the myth; it may be an evidence of the deep roots of human existence, as well as its atemporal and universal signs. Myth therefore is an autonomous, inderivable and mere expression of the deep spirit of the world that informs people of themselves and their existence, which may catch in its essence by understanding (*Verstehen*) and not by explanation (*Erklären*), according to the basic distinction between humanities and natural/exact sciences by Wilhelm Dilthey (Trevi, 2012). According to Carl Gustav Jung, myth is a manifestation of symbolic function, which is higher than sign, as symbol has not a unique and fixed reference or meaning, belonging to external reality (like in scientific context), but an originary autonomy which makes symbol preceding sign. This was one of the chief discovery by Jung, with that of collective unconscious whose basic and irreducible structures are the so-called *archetypes*; these latter have a transcendental function operating on contents variously provided by everyday life and experience, by memory and personal unconscious, but have a universal and atemporal nature making them as forms common to every human being. This might explain the recurrence of the same mythological meaning as occurring in different (in place and time) peoples, when one analyses structurally certain their myths, which therefore turn out to have an identical mythological theme although expressed in a different fashion. So, analytical psychology, without prejudicing autonomy of myth, considers this last as the outcome of collective unconscious and its deep structure (made by archetypes), hence as an *archetypical image*. Thus, myth is not a pathological personal unconscious complex as meant by Freudian theory, but a universal manifestation (even if in many different fashions) of a same theme structurally built up by the formal collective unconscious through *archetypical images* historically determined. Jung has been a pioneer in psychology and philosophy as regard the discovery that the human symbolic function has a main genetic priority on every other one, with respect to which it maintains its autonomy, and relying at the early origin of human thought and of the being itself<sup>24</sup>. It lies on deep unconscious formal structures of human psyche, which have a universal and atemporal nature, whose formal running leads to all that variegated and multifaceted manifestation of human activity, among which are myths, images, modern and ancient symbols<sup>25</sup> (Trevi, 2012). Thus, the myth is a modality of thought, autonomous with respect to rationality and at the same level of this. It is always present and acting in human being, in every historical period, near the rational thought and independent of this. Such a supposition, mainly based on Jungian theory, might turn out to be useful to understand (not to explain) certain typical aspects and moments of human life and society, which are difficult to be explained invoking only rationally, and still present notwithstanding the remarkable cognitive development reached by human being.

#### •<sub>8</sub> The application of psychoanalysis to socio-humanities: the case of sublimation

As has been said in section •<sub>7</sub>, the symbolic function in human being is a primordial one, preceding the signic function typical of rational thought and closely related with external reality. The former is autonomous with respect to the latter, plausibly springing out later (as history of philosophy says to

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24 This latter was a consideration due to Kerényi, regarding a possible extension of the notion of archetype, as first meant by Jung, as a formal basic transcendental constitutive structure of the whole human existence, but according to phenomenological perspective of the history of religions (Trevi, 2012). In regard to the further work of Kerényi on myths and religions, see (Kerényi, 2017).

25 Indeed, a possible definition of myth refers to what is able to polarize the aspirations and aims of a people or of an historical period, rising to a privileged transcendental symbol (Devoto and Oli, 1971).

us) and based on it, i.e., the symbolic function, which is a typical feature of human being. It marked, for humans, the crucial passage from nature to culture, and psychoanalysis has tried to provide some explanations concerning it through the notion of *sublimation*. Freudian psychoanalysis was the first to give an initial framework in which to lay out sublimation process, hence Jungian theory followed with other ideas about it. Along his whole work, Sigmund Freud always tried to define and specify the notion of sublimation as the main psychic mechanism of human being that allowed the rising of the civility and society. Nevertheless, Freud didn't devote any completed work to this subject, simply making reference to it, throughout his long work, in relation to other subjects of psychoanalytic interest, so he didn't provide any organic and definitive theory of sublimation. Yet, some firm points of his ideas on sublimation may be identified, as, for instance, the consideration of it as basically due to a change (by *displacement*) of the sexual aims of the related drives, as it takes place during latency period, as well as as due to a desexualization (by *neutralization*) of libido by Ego's instance that avokes to itself object-libido, so transforming it in a narcissistic-libido (desexualization), hence to recathexis this on another non-sexual aim (Aurigemma, 1989). Anyway, regardless of the possible psychic mechanisms with which sublimation takes place and runs, Freud was sure that this defence mechanism, the only one really succeeded and effective as such (Lis et al., 2003), is the pivotal one to get society and civilization. Afterwards, Jung tried to fill this gap of the Freudian theory of sublimation starting from a wider conception of libido, not centred on sexual drive; we remand to (Aurigemma, 1989) for a deepening of this last perspective. Remaining within Freudian framework, the displacement of either sexual and aggressive drives, is the central point around which revolves sublimation. According to Freud, sublimation is one of the three main mechanisms through which humans acquire an ethical sense, the other two being the identification and the formation of the Super-Ego instance (Galimberti, 2006). The sublimation, therefore, is basically centred on replacing an inaccessible aim with another one out of sexuality but socially shared. It is usually adopted, unconsciously, by the individual when the unavoidable perversion tendencies, which are always present and pushing to become active, are not well integrated with genitality so, to avoid their pernicious repression, sublimation occurs (Favrod, 1975; Galimberti, 2006). In such a manner, unconscious desires may be satisfied, according to Super-Ego's prescriptions, so reducing or attenuating internal psychic conflicts, and warranting, at the same time, a better social inclusion. Sublimation plays a fundamental role in every spiritual activity of human being, and it is the only succeeded and efficient defence mechanism of human psyche (Lis et al., 2003) to avoid repressions; the right and equilibrated integration among creativity, perversion and neurosis just depends on the achieved degree of running of sublimation process (Favrod, 1975). Sublimation should be then considered as different from either idealization and identification processes: in particular, the former concerns solely the object of the sexual drive, not the aim (as in sublimation), so, in this case, what is really appreciated by society is the *object* loved by the individual, not her/his activities (as those springing out from sublimation), this entailing a (narcissistic) stagnation of sexual drives rather than a their dynamical rising (as in sublimation), hence it follows a drifting towards those components of the Self which are closely related to narcissism – so, reconnecting to •<sub>3</sub> (Favrod, 1975; Galimberti, 2006). Making then reference to the origins of human beings, after bipedalism has been achieved, it is still Freud that tries to descry a possible correlation between the origin of language and the new developments of human sexuality once standing position has been acquired by humans, so that, in a few words, he brings back to sexuality of first humans the dawning of language, then of symbolic function. Indeed, Freud supposes that language and sexuality are closely related of each other, and that the first words of humans made reference just to sexual organs. Further, this basic relation was then considered as giving a latent meaning underlying to any other next symbolism (AA.VV., 1992). Once human being has lost oestrus cycle, sexuality has become that unique primeval biological instinct to have much more degree of freedom with respect to the others (like drinking, eating, etc.), so it has undergoes several cultural deformations and variations, as well as its availability to be used differently from its originary reproductive aim, so it may be now repressed, sublimated, etc. Thus,

initial sexual instinct has now become a sexual *drive* which may have various manners of cathexis, is no rigid but much flexible, does not have necessarily need of an object to be satisfied, and it is always available as psychic energy (*libido*) to be cathected. So, sexuality is the basis of psychicism, being at the centre between the innate and the acquired, or else, between nature and culture. Thus, it is plausible to have taken Freudian theory of human psyche as a basic framework within which to might explain or understand many human phenomena (of economics, symbolism, sociology, etc.), as for example briefly sketched above and in the previous issues and problems. In particular, as has been said at the beginning of this section, sublimation<sup>26</sup>, as meant according to Freud, may provide a good theoretical framework in which to consider many aspects of humanities.

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<sup>26</sup> That may provide, among other things, an explicative basis to symbolic function, which is preliminary to any other cultural manifestation of humans.

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