



HAL
open science

A brief survey of the first works of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on psychoanalytic phantasies and the theory of seduction

Giuseppe Iurato

► **To cite this version:**

Giuseppe Iurato. A brief survey of the first works of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on psychoanalytic phantasies and the theory of seduction. 2022. hal-03769688

HAL Id: hal-03769688

<https://hal.science/hal-03769688>

Preprint submitted on 5 Sep 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

A brief survey of the first works of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on psychoanalytic phantasies and the theory of seduction

Giuseppe Iurato

Ministry of Education, Italy

Abstract. This historical note is aimed to recall into question the crucial, still opened issue about psychoanalytic phantasies taking the opportunity from the remembering of the remarkable work of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on phantasies, that has then led Laplanche to revisiting – with a his own methodology – the early Freudian theory of seduction. The final part of this note is turned to briefly outline the works of Lucia Figà-Talamanca and Giordano Fossi on primary phantasies.

1. Introduction: the concept of phantasy in psychoanalysis

The concept of *phantasy* is a central one in psychoanalysis. It mainly refers to unconscious realm. *Phantasies* have to be distinguished from *fantasies*, which mainly have a conscious nature; both are basic elements of every thought. Following (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967), *phantasy* may be defined as an imaginary scene in which the individual is – anyhow – present (not necessarily as the main protagonist) with the chief aim to fulfil however¹ an unconscious and infantile wish (or desire) yet under the constraints of (primitive) defence mechanisms. The term *phantasy* does not refer to the general capability of imagination, but rather to the imaginary world, its content, and the correlated creative activity; it does not even refer to the general imaginative capability, which has a chiefly conscious nature. In studying, deepening and analysing neurotic phenomenology, Freud was led to give a particular reality status to unconscious wishes (or desires) and their related phantasies, which belong to the so-called *psychic reality*², and that has to be distinguished from the material reality as springs out from perception system. He tried always to give an explanation of the relative stability, efficacy and quite organized structure of the phantasmatic life of any individual, on the basis of the clinical data provided by analytical setting. In doing so, he never accepted neither of the following two alternative explanations: the phantasies are deformed outcomes of the individual memory of past real events or else they are expression of the mere imagination finalized to cover up the real dynamics of drives and do not have any reality status. In deepening phantasies, Freud discovered typical scenarios or scenes – as "primary nuclei" inside of phantasies themselves – with which phantasies arise, said to be *phantasmatic scenes* (or *primary phantasies*), that psychoanalysis has to be discerned. Therefore, the main aim of psychoanalytic therapy should be trace back such primary phantasies. These latter are considered, by Freud, as unconscious schemes which go mainly beyond the ontogenetic development of the individual and are transmitted phylogenetically. Nevertheless that, Freud was ever puzzled about the exact (if possible) location of phantasies within his second topography of human psyche: yet, he was not able to reach a definitive conclusion about this issue, laying out phantasies amongst the various levels of human psyche and trying to descry the possible inter-relations between them. The notion of phantasy nevertheless remained rather vague in Freud's work: it entailed certain problems for him, especially that of the relationship between phantasy and representation: whereas the phantasy was an internal formation, produced without any reference to external reality, mental representations were based on their symbolic relationships with the external

¹ Indeed, phantasy is basically an illusionary construction failing with respect to external reality (and the related principle – of reality – ruling it at the psychic level, once it is as early present in the subject), but that, nonetheless, springs out, in any case, just to fulfil an urgent (because of the pleasure principle) unconscious desire which cannot be immediately satisfied (like biological needs).

² Freud stated that what was the reality in the prehistory of humanity became phylogenetically the psychic one, as inscribed in the collective memory for its traumatic nature (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967; Petrini et al., 2013). The discovery of a *psychic reality* is one of the pioneering discoveries done by Freud: he, in fact, intended to designate a specific psychic entity, internal to the subject, which showed a resistance and an internal coherence quite similar to those of external or material reality; and it had to be brought back to the unconscious wish and the related phantasies (Amadei et al., 2015).

world. More generally, there was the issue of the role played by phantasy (mainly ruled by pleasure principle) in mentalization (mainly ruled by reality principle) (Barale et al., 2007; De Mijolla, 2005; Galimberti, 2018; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967; Lis et al., 2003).

Anyway, psychoanalysis is aimed to find, behind any unconscious product, the underlying phantasy. If phantasies are, broadly speaking, the fulfilment of an unconscious wish, this last, in turn, meant as the cathexis of mnestic traces of past sensory-motor satisfactions, it follows that subjectivity of the individual gradually becomes ever more prevailing in the phantasmatic scene, so that, in a phantasy, the representation of the subject becomes structuring. Indeed, all the life of an individual is modelled, structured and organized by phantasmatic activity. This last should not be meant as a thematic only, although represented in dependence on the individual life course, but also as aimed by an its intrinsic transformation's dynamics³ that allows phantasmatic structures to express, finding an access towards consciousness and action, attracting ever new material along this route of becoming conscious (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967). It is further put forwards the hypothesis that such a phantasies' dynamics, no matter their content, might then going beyond the individual itself, that is to say, it might have a trans-individual nature. This is also supported historically by the Freudian conception of *primary phantasies*⁴ – as the basic, irreducible elements structuring and organising phantasmatic life – according to which they seem to be universally present and going beyond the single individual life (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967; Petrini et al., 2013). Freud then tried to link phantasies and wish (or desire), but without reaching a definitive conclusion. Anyhow, from what emerges even from the simplest clinical cases, it seems that phantasies (generally meant, as manifestations of unconscious and infantile wishes) are however linked closely with the most primitive defence mechanisms, in that, wish or desire is always linked to interdiction (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967). Primary phantasies are transmitted from generation to generation, without being acknowledged consciously, inside which any individual elaborates, yet in a masked way, its own psychic conflict put into stage through a personal phantasmatic assembly; the scenes of phantasies, as due to trans-generational trauma and restricted to a very few cases, dramatize what has not been possible to symbolise⁵ (Petrini et al., 2013). So, Freud hypothesised, since 1915, that primary phantasies had origin from drives but their schemes have a phylogenetic nature to which every individual has to conform for structuring its own subjectivity, in that they are the necessary means through which psychic representations (with their contents) may take place. Freud was then led to suppose that phantasies are psychic entities which allow to structure the whole subjectivity of every individual along its ontogenetic development, providing to child the immediate answers to those crucial and urgent existential questions that he/she poses on itself (Barale et al., 2007; De Mijolla, 2005; Cappelli & Petrelli, 2013; Galimberti, 2018; Green, 1973; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1964; 1967).

2. A first sight on the work of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on phantasies and seduction theory

2.1. Brief biographical notes

Jean Laplanche (1924-2012) has been a notable French psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and philosopher

³ These transformations, besides, seem to have a linguistic nature, in that the phantasmatic activity often explicates through linguistic transformations of previous phantasmatic thematics, operating mainly in their morphosyntactic structures: see, for instance, the various transformations underlying the phantasies of Freudian works *The Schreber Case* (1910) and *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919). This remark about the linguistic features of phantasies puts further issues in regard to the topographical location of phantasies (Barale et al., 2007; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1985).

⁴ Besides this, also Laplanche and Pontalis (1967) affirm that the hypothesis according to which there may exist possible structures of phantasmatic life having nature irreducible to the single individual lived, is not at all senseless. Furthermore, they states that primary phantasies are closely related with Oedipus complex, and this latter has an *a priori* structural aim, besides to be too almost universally present (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1964; 1967).

⁵ Even if it is not unreasonable to have reservations about this speculation, nevertheless clinical psychoanalysis has verified the role of “phantasies” that can be phylogenetically qualified as “primal” but however never neglecting their ontogenetic historicity, as they are the basis of every individual phantasy (De Mijolla, 2005).

who has spent his life to revise, in an original manner, Freud's work on psychoanalysis. In doing so, he has given a remarkable and innovative contribution to the epistemology of psychoanalysis and its history, reinterpreting some central ideas of Freudian psychoanalysis, from the hermeneutical and historical standpoint. He has had interests for psychoanalysis since his academic studies at the École Normale Supérieure of Paris. He graduates in Literature and Philosophy in 1951, under the supervision of Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968). In 1946, thanks to a scholarship, he spends one year at Harvard University, where he meets Rudolph Loewenstein (1898-1976). In 1947, he meets Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), with whom starts his personal analysis and training in psychoanalysis. In 1959, he attains in Paris a second graduation in medicine, with the thesis *Hölderlin et la question du père* (then published in 1961), under the supervision of Jean Delay (1907-1987). In 1962, Laplanche starts his academic career in Sorbonne. In 1964, he is one of the founders of the "Association Psychanalytique de France" (APF), of which is chairman from 1969 to 1971. In 1970, he joins the new University of Paris VII, as a full professor until 1993. Here, in 1970, he establishes the "Unité d'Enseignement et de Recherche (UER) des Sciences Humaines Cliniques" and, in 1976, the "Doctorat in Psychanalyse" within the "Diplôme d'Études Approfondies" (DEA). His historical-critical approach to psychoanalysis clearly emerges with the publication, in 1967, of the celebrated *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, wrote with Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (1924-2013) between 1962 and 1967, under the direction of Daniel Lagache (1903-1972). This celebrated work has become a classic of psychoanalytic literature, translated in many other languages. In 1964, with Pontalis, another fundamental work, *Fantasme originaire, Fantômes des origines, Origines du fantasme*⁶, is published and soon becomes another classical text of psychoanalytic literature. In 1970, Laplanche publishes *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*. These two latter texts show the epistemological stance that Laplanche undertakes in revisiting Freudian thought⁷: there are some crucial notions and aspects of the whole *corps freudien* that are unavoidable for understanding it. The lessons of psychoanalysis held by Laplanche continuously from 1962 onwards at the École Normale Supérieure, in Sorbonne, then University of Paris VII, have been, from time to time, published under the collective name of *Problématiques I-VII* (1980-1992), together to three volumes comprising various communications, papers, seminars and other works published in the years from 1967 to 2006: *Le primat de l'autre en psychanalyse*⁸ (écrits 1967-1992), *Entre séduction et inspiration: l'homme* (écrits 1992-1999), and *La sexualité élargie au sens freudien* (écrits 2000-2006). In 1987, Laplanche publishes *Nouveaux fondements pour la psychanalyse*.

Jean-Bertrand Pontalis (1924-2013) has been a French philosopher, psychoanalyst, writer and editor. After the degree in philosophy in 1945 at the Sorbonne, with Henri Goubier, agrégé in psychology and philosophy, he starts to collaborate with the well-known French journal *Les Temps Modernes* and other French publishers. Until to 1952, he is a high school teacher of philosophy, when he joins the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS). In the same year, he undertakes a didactic analysis with Jacques Lacan. In 1964, he is one of the founders of the "Association Psychanalytique de France" (APF). In 1968, he starts to teach at the *École pratique des hautes études* (EPHS). Furthermore, he becomes an appreciated writer and is in the directive and editorial boards of some well-known French publishers.

We refer to (De Mijolla, 2005), (Francioni, 1978; 1982), (Roudinesco, 1986; 1993) and (Scarfone, 1997) for more and deeper bio-bibliographical and historical-critical notices on Jean Laplanche, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis and, in general, on the remarkable French psychoanalytic tradition.

6 A first edition of this work was published, as an article, in *Les Temps Modernes*, Year 1964, Issue 215, Pages 1833-68, then an enlarged and revised edition was published in book in 1985.

7 A brief but complete outline of this new programmatic revisitation of Freudian work by Laplanche may be found in the first introductory sections of (Laplanche, 1970).

8 Initially published with the title *La révolution copernicienne inachevée*.

2.2. The early works of Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis on phantasies and seduction theory: a brief overview

In the early 1960s, Laplanche and Pontalis are engaged in writing the celebrated *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*. At the same time, they write the article *Fantasme originaire, Fantasmés des origines, Origines du fantasme* which will appear in the journal *Les Temps Modernes* in 1964. It will be then republished, as a book, in 1985, without any substantial modifications. In the post-scriptum to this latest edition, the authors specify that their main intention was to shed new light on some crucial concepts and notions of the original Freudian thought, from an exegetic standpoint: amongst them were the notions of *primal* (or *originary*) *phantasy*, *auto-eroticism* and *seduction*. This work will be the break-line between Jacques Lacan's theory⁹ and the thought of Laplanche and Pontalis. It marks the starting point of a new and original way of reinterpreting Freud's thought, which will be clearer delineated later with the publication of the *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, in 1970, by Jean Laplanche. These two works – together the famous *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*¹⁰ (1967) – have marked the starting point of the subsequent remarkable work of historical-critical, hermeneutical and exegetic revisitation work of the whole Freudian thought that Jean Laplanche pursued along his life, which will be considered in next papers.

2.2.1. *Fantasme originaire, Fantasmés des origines, Origines du fantasme* (1985)

The first sentence of chapter I of (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1985), states that psychoanalysis, since its early origins, has dealt with phantasies. Then, the authors reconsider the researches of Josef Breuer (1842-1925) and Freud on hysteria. In their *Studies on Hysteria* of 1895, Breuer and Freud clearly identify three main types of reality, i.e., the material reality, the psychic reality and the unconscious reality. The latter manifests through phantasies, and psychic reality is independent of the material one. In chapter II, Laplanche and Pontalis recall the first, pioneering attempts to explain hysteria clinic by means of the so-called *theory of sexual seduction* worked out by Freud in the years 1895-99. He is aware that psychic reality has an its own existence independent of the external one, in that the real trauma which is the cause of hysteric symptoms, is impossible to be detected with precision because of the main mechanisms of functioning of the unconscious¹¹, which make unpursuable such a search. Therefore, if such a triggering trauma is not detectable as a real external event, then Freud is brought to hypothesize that what induces hysteric phenomenology might be the emergence of a certain internal object (of psychic reality), in some way linked to real trauma (ever, if any), which is liable to be actualized even many time after the (alleged) traumatic event. Accordingly, Freud asks what is the precise nature of such internal objects that, like extraneous corps, may occur in any time to give rise hysteric symptoms. To this end, Freud puts forwards the hypothesis that these might be ascribed to an already existent infant sexuality which would be influenced by those adults who can, in some way, enter into contact with the infant, whose sexual drive, so awakened or stimulated, will be then repressed by defence mechanisms. Thus, Freud envisages, for the first time, a possible link between sexuality and repression, stating moreover that desire and prohibition go on ever together. In a nutshell, this is the essence of the theory of seduction worked out by Freud in 1895-96, which will be however refused by himself already in 1897 (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Chs. I, II).

Even if Freud renounced to his theory of seduction, as still aimed to provide possible biological explanations to his ideas, he was yet led to consider the crucial issue relating infant sexuality, phantasies and Oedipus complex, this last discovered in 1897 after having formulated the theory of seduction. Indeed, in the same year, himself says to be aware that hysteric symptoms are phantasies,

⁹ Nonetheless, Lacan's ideas will influence, more or less directly, all the next thought of either Laplanche and Pontalis.

¹⁰ Laplanche was also the scientific director, with André Bourguignon and Pierre Colet as publication coordinators, of the new French edition of the *Oeuvres Complètes de Freud*, from 1978 onwards.

¹¹ In particular, for the so-called *après-coup* modality (of secondary repression), or *deferred action*; see (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967).

not due to external real events, but bringing back to the seduction by the father in the case of female Oedipus complex. If therefore sexuality is already present since the birth (as psychoanalytic clinic shows), hence having an intrinsic biological root, it follows that phantasies, according to Freud, have to be considered as a simple psychic epiphenomenon of it, and not having psychic reality¹². The 'fiction' described by the hysteric person has therefore a double masking imposed by the social-cultural normative and its related interdictions: a phantasy converted in a real remembrance, and a spontaneous sexual activity disguised and represented by a passivity scene. Freud was sure that no reality's date could exist into the unconscious, so it was impossible to distinguish between truth and fiction cathected by affect in the manifestation of phantasies of hysteria, and this was the main motif (among others) that induced Freud to abandon his theory of seduction. Nevertheless that, phantasies are the main outcomes of analysis whose thematic or latent content must be made manifest going beyond symptoms, if one admits the following causal chain sexuality → phantasies → symptom, as Freud himself did. So, the symptom, as a mnemonic recall of the trauma, becomes the 'staging' of the phantasies¹³ (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Ch. II).

Therefore, Freud starts to investigate further, in the years between 1897 and 1906, these phantasies as emerging from the clinic, itemizing them, describing the various forms they assume, the many variants they have. Phantasy gradually regains importance, as a specific object of psychoanalytic study as a manifest empirical datum yet having, at the same time, a latent content to find. For Freud, phantasy now becomes – differently from how he had initially classified it, just a few years earlier – an object of psychic reality, studying its structure and typical processes. In the same period, Freud publishes all those pioneering works (amongst which is *The Interpretation of Dreams*) where he introduces, defines and describes the main mechanisms of functioning of the unconscious, just seen as transformations of phantasy. But, besides this, Freud undertook another tendency, then pursued until his latest works: that is to say, he tried always to identify the possible phylogenetic origins of the concepts and notions of psychoanalysis, in particular those of phantasies. Even if these show to belong to an autonomous, consistent and explorable field of psychoanalytic investigation, unsolved remained the question about the origins of their structure, nature and content. So, Freud was turned to seek the primary elements which were at the foundation of such phantasies, putting attention to the phylogenetic history of human beings, thus starting to study the prehistory of humanity. In doing so, also with the support of the empirical data coming from psychoanalytic clinic, Freud is led to identify certain *originary* or *primary scenes* (that Freud calls *Urszenen*) to which are bringable back many phantasies. The elaboration with which leads to these latter, is explainable through the typical *après-coup* modality¹⁴ of temporal functioning of the unconscious: indeed, Freud ascertains that, in analysing – in the smallest details – the many phantasies as revealed during analytical setting, ever the same process takes place, that is to say: he finds two occurrences, the first one is the originary scene (presumably, dating back to the early childhood and remaining incomprehensible – i.e., not symbolized, hence extraneous – to the subject) which is then separated, in a temporal series, by the second one, i.e., the dream (or the fiction of hysteria), as an unconscious elaboration (symbolized) of the former. It is just such a failed symbolization of the primary scenes¹⁵ (ever if really lived by the subject) that makes it like an extraneous internal object devoid of any possible subjective elaboration¹⁶, typical of the first time of *après-coup* modality (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Ch. III).

12 Nonetheless, as we shall see, Freud is not sure at all about the psychic reality or not of phantasies.

13 For instance, behind the agoraphobic symptom might be found the phantasy of prostitution, linked to the "pound (or beating) the pavement" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1985).

14 This term, which means a "two-times" modality, is technically named *deferred action* and concerns (secondary) repression. It is quite similar to the so-called *foreclosure* mechanism of Lacanian theory: in the first time, the originary or primary scene is not admitted in the Symbolic register (so, it is not symbolized), then it appears (now symbolized) in the Real's register as a hallucination. Laplanche and Pontalis (1985, Ch. III) give a clear and detailed re-examination of Freudian *après-coup* and Lacanian foreclosure, which were both drawn up by the analysis of the famous case-study *The Wolf Man* (1918).

15 To which phantasies may be brought back according to the causal chain sexuality → phantasies → symptom, if one admits (according to Freud) that, in any case, such primary scenes have ever a sexual nature.

16 Freud himself says such an internal object of this first time (of *après-coup*) is in a "symbolic pre-symbolic" state, in the sense that, it may, in a

To this point, in regard to the analogies between Freud's *après-coup* and Lacan's *foreclosure*, both based on the analysis of 1914 *The Wolf Man* case-study, Laplanche and Pontalis (1985) ask whether Lacan has considered a psychotic process which is, in fact, a more general psychic process or rather Freud has elevated, at a general rule, a specific psychotic case, in the main hypothesis that primary scenes are indeed real events occurred in the life course of an individual. Instead, Laplanche and Pontalis point out on another possible hypothesis, namely that the lacking of a symbolization in the first time of *après-coup* might be due, if one supposes really unperceived the primary scene, to the influences of the parental desires, which then manifest through phantasies. In neuroses, therefore, in a first time besides unplaceable (because of the basic temporal indeterminacy of the occurrence of such an event), a "symbolic pre-symbolic" (in the same terminology used by Freud) object isolates inside the subject, to be then retaken, in a second time, to be symbolized. In the case of psychosis, instead, the internal object of the first time (of *après-coup*) has moreover an irreducible component which is not liable to be symbolized further, making so catastrophic also the second time of *après-coup* for the failure of any attempts of possible symbolization. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, this might besides identify which main difference exists between (primary or originary) repression (related to neuroses) and psychotic mechanism which was always sought by Freud himself, until to his latest works (Freud, 1940), and that, finally, he identified in the *disavowal* (*Verleugnung*), while Lacan named it foreclosure¹⁷ (*forclusion*). If Freud kept, at least until 1916, the idea that primary scenes had a some real cause due to the occurrence of external events, in 1917, he changed opinion¹⁸. Indeed, if it is impossible to ascertain whether a primary scene is or not truly linked with a real event or it is simple a fiction, it follows – according to Freud – the need to bringing back phantasy to something which transcends, at the same time, the lived of the individual and what is imagined in such a phantasy. So, Freud introduces the so-called *primary* (or *originary*) *phantasy* (*Urphantasien*) to be understood as the key primeval nucleus (to be sought first in the ontogenetic history of the individual, then in the phylogenetic history of the species) from which a phantasy may follow, according to unconscious functioning¹⁹, without making reference to events (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Ch. III).

In 1915, Freud states that primary phantasies are those unconscious motives that analytical clinic is able to trace back in every neurotic patient and, probably, in each human being. The question that such primary phantasies have then the same themes (*primary scenes*), that is to say, some typical phantasies are recurrent independently of the individual lived, suggests that they go over individual history, whence they must have a phylogenetic origin, which are transmitted by means of a kind of collective memory. In 1923, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud puts into relation the Oedipus complex with phantasies. In such a manner, as Oedipal structure is almost universally present among human societies, Freud is led to confer an as much reality also to phantasies, even if he does not deepen the relationships amongst them. In the 1915 work *A Case of Paranoia in a Young Woman Patient*, Freud however tries to trace back the mythical nature of primary phantasies just analysing the possible relationships between Oedipus complex and phantasies, these last broadly meant as configurations of unconscious desires. In this regard, Freud deems that the structure of Oedipus complex brings the individual to meet it just thanks to phantasies, internally to these, which support the complex itself. Freud moreover identifies a typical, intrinsic retroactive nature of phantasies: namely, whenever the (ontogenetic) *phantasies of origins* occur, they automatically refer to the (phylogenetic) *primary*

second time, be symbolized.

¹⁷ In this regard, for more historical informations, see for example (Iurato, 2013) and references quoted therein.

¹⁸ Above all after that Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) had proposed the notion of *retroactive phantasy* (*Zurückphantasieren*) with which he prospected a phylogenetic origin of phantasies, so putting into question the Freudian theory of infantile sexuality itself (Barale et al., 20007). About the role of phylogenetic perspective in the works of Jung and Freud, see (Frey-Rohn, 1984).

¹⁹ Indeed, after having discovered that unconscious is a structured field in which new entities may be gotten by concatenation, decomposition and recombination of other entities, according to certain (unconscious) roles, it follows that also unconscious phantasies are gettable by reconstruction from other, more elementary entities of the same type, just called *primary phantasies*, through these operations.

phantasies (i.e., to the *primary scenes*), or the origin of the phantasy is integrated into the structure itself of the corresponding primary phantasy: thus, in the *primary scene* is represented the origin of the individual; in the *seduction scene* is represented the origin of human sexuality; in the *castration scene* is represented the origin of the sexual difference. In short, into the scene of an unconscious phantasy is already present what gives rise – or originates – the individual itself. Like myths, they have the aim to give a representation and an immediate explanation to the enigmas that infant poses to itself. Thus, for instance, the primary scene depicts the conjunction between the *biological* fact of conception (and birth) and the *symbolic* fact of filiation²⁰, or else, between the brutal or wild act of coitus and the existence of the triad mother-father-child (Oedipus structure). Laplanche and Pontalis then provide a new interpretation of this latter Freudian insight, seeing in the phantasy of origins the outcome of the insertion of the symbolic into the real of the body, an insertion which is mediated by an imaginary story which claims to re-enact forever this symbolic-real insertion itself (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Ch. IV).

Freud however does not distinguish clearly between *fantasy* (as outcome of imagination, even at the conscious level) and (unconscious) *phantasy*: he identifies these two psychic entities, which may be transferred from conscious-preconscious level to unconscious, and vice versa. As main content of unconscious mental processes, phantasies are the key elements managed by repression. Freud puts them at the extreme levels of any mental process: from the unconscious level to the conscious one: so, phantasies starts from primary ones, reach preconscious where they find daytime residues, hence go to alert thinking through secondary elaboration, as patients tell their dreams. Therefore, starting from the raw (unconscious) material (*phantasy*) built up through the main unconscious mechanisms (displacement, condensation, symbolism), secondary elaboration tries to give a minimal order and coherence to the story, reverie or dream (*fantasy*). But, Freud points out, there is a relation between these two entities: the latter being a deformation (by secondary elaboration) of some key thematics of the former, which refer to infant scenes. These last, in turn, may be either fully unconscious since their origin (*primary phantasies*) or repressed material of previous fantasies (*secondary phantasies*). Such a distinction is present in Freud's thought since 1908, in the work *Hysterical Fancies and Their Relations to Bisexuality*: therefore, unconscious comprises either *Urphantasien* (or *primary phantasies*), which form the so-called *primary* (or *originary*) *unconscious*, and the *secondary phantasies*, which form the so-called *secondary unconscious*, as products of *secondary repression* (or *après-coup*). The *Urphantasien* were introduced by Freud later in 1915 (as has been said above), and the formation of primary unconscious would be due to another, ancestral unconscious process said to be *primary repression* (*Urverdrängung*), mainly having a phylogenetic origin. The usual (or secondary) *repression* (*Verdrängung*), instead, would have an ontogenetic origin. Laplanche and Serge Leclaire have devoted a notable work about primary repression, in their communication at the *VI^e Colloque de Bonneval*, in 1961, on unconscious. Laplanche and Pontalis however add some new considerations about the possible link (already described by Freud) between fantasies and phantasies: to be precise, they point out that in the former, the individual is present in its full subjectivity as the chief protagonist of the story, as organized (mainly at the *imaginary* level) by the individual itself, with the aid of the secondary elaboration (by the *Ego*), while in the latter the individual is present as one of the many protagonists of the (primary) scene, as organized (mainly at the *structural* level) by unconscious, so there is a basic absence of subjectivation; and, as typical instances, Laplanche and Pontalis refer to the well-known primary phantasy *A Child is Being Beaten*, described by Freud in 1919, as well as to the famous Freud's quote "father's seduction of daughter" as a truly synthetic formulation of the seduction primary phantasy, about which Laplanche and Pontalis stress on the many enters that the structure of such a primary scene may have, due to the main fact for which the subject might be the daughter, or the father, as well as the seduction itself. It is just such an intrinsic

²⁰ In this regard, it should be need to take into considerations the remarkable work of Imre Hermann (1899-1984) on the so-called "filial instinct"; see (Hermann, 1972) and (Abraham & Török, 1987).

indeterminacy of (who is) the real subject of this scene to characterize the structure of the seduction primary phantasy, differently from the fantasies (Laplanche and Pontalis 1985, Ch. V).

In the last chapter VI, Laplanche and Pontalis outline the conclusions of their remarkable work on phantasies. They recall that Freud, in searching anything that, in the humans, may be the analogous of the animal instincts, he finds this not in the drives but rather in the primary phantasies. In doing so, Freud keeps himself far from mere biological reductionism (as drives are the main results of the biological constitution of humans), in that he identifies the origins of drives just in the phantasies and not vice versa: in fact, Freud clearly states that drives' constitution and functioning depend on previously existing phantasmatic structures. This is findable in the well-known Freudian case-study *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (Wolf Man)* of 1914. At this point, Laplanche and Pontalis make a critical examination of the possible relationships between drives and phantasies according to the psychoanalytic literature of the time, above all comparing with Kleinian standpoint²¹. They then conclude discarding the previous post-Freudian analyses which put into comparison phantasies with drives, stating mandatorily that phantasmatic life is much more implicit than repressed, that is to say, it precedes every possible individual course of life; likewise, they underscore the difficulty in determining the structure of phantasies, as well as the chief relation between phantasies, desire and sexuality. In trying to give answers about these last questions, Laplanche and Pontalis start from the fundamental Freud's discovery of the crucial role played by sexuality and phantasies in childhood as well as from his initial theory of sexual seduction and *auto-eroticism*, trying to clarify the possible exact relationships existing amongst these, reaching to the original conclusion that phantasies might develop just from auto-eroticism, in turn stimulated or awakened by maternal phantasies²² – in the basic relationship child-mother²³ – through which the maternal desire will be transferred to the child²⁴ (Laplanche & Pontalis 1985, Ch. VI). Such a thesis will be then systematically developed and deepened above all by Laplanche in his next fundamental work *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* of 1970. We shall give, in the next section, a very brief survey of this last work, which will be then deepened more in a next paper.

2.2.2. *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* (1970)

In 1960, Laplanche and Serge Leclaire (1924-1994) presented an interesting relation at the *VI^e Colloque de Bonneval* on the unconscious, entitled *L'Inconscient: une étude psychanalytique* (then included in *Problématiques IV*), where the main mechanisms of functioning of the unconscious, in its relations with language, are described. It clearly shows the influence of Jacques Lacan's thought²⁵. With the publication of *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* in 1970, Laplanche's thought marks its first separation from Lacan's ideas. Indeed, developing and deepening the main themes of the previous work *Fantasme originaire, Fantasmés des origines, Origines du fantasme*, wrote with

21 Melanie Klein (1882-1960) considered phantasy the representative basis of every possible thought activity and process (Galimberti, 2018).

22 Therefore, Laplanche and Pontalis (1985) identify the origin of phantasies in the disjunction between the satisfaction of a biological need from the fulfilment of the wish (a distinction already pointed out by Max Schur (1897-1969) in 1958 – see (Gill 1963, Ch. 7)), with the rising of auto-eroticism which, in turn, modulates the crucial passage from primary scenes to body, from phylogenesis to ontogenesis. At this crucial cross-road point marked from auto-eroticism, it is placed the convergence point between (phylogenetic) primary phantasies and (ontogenetic) phantasies of origins, these latter being correlated with the origins of individual, of sexuality, the difference between the two basic genders. This basic conceptual difference between primary phantasies and phantasies of origins is due to André Green (1927-2012): the phantasies of origins prefigure, at the epi-ontogenetic level, those features which will be attributed to primary phantasies of phylogenesis. According to Green, the phantasies of origins are a mixture of true and false, the searching of sexuality being the true while the phantasmatic elaboration is the false. Due to Freudian hypothesis about the immodiability of primary phantasies and their schemes, Green supposes that phantasies of origins, as ontogenetic declination of primary phantasies, are the outcomes of the encounter of extra-individual sensible schemes with individual experience. The analyst has to seek such phantasies of origins (which provide useful information about the conformation and mobility of the internal psychic structures of the individual), until to the Oedipal phantasy (Cappelli & Petrelli, 2013).

23 In this regard, there are many interesting analogy correlations with the theory of phantasies according to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Török (1987), which will be deepened in another place.

24 In regard to the origin and the formation of phantasies in the early life of the child, see also the works of Antonio Imbasciati (1998) and Enzo Funari (1984; 1985; 2007).

25 It is very interesting Lacan's conception of phantasy, according to which this latter is the chief promoter and support of desire (Galimberti, 2018).

Pontalis in 1964, Laplanche starts to realize that *sexuality* is the pivotal aspect around which revolves the notion of unconscious, its structure and real nature, in agreement with the original Freud's thought. In pursuing his analysis of unconscious, he begins to consider the two main extremes of vital order, that is to say, life and death, in the middle of which develops sexuality. To be precise, starting from a revisitation of the fundamental work of Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Laplanche shows what basic difference holds between the two notions of instinct (*Instinkt*) and drive (*Trieb*): the former has a precise and well-defined aim, which is the milk satisfying a primary *need* for living, drew from the breast of the mother, while the latter has not a precise and unique aim, as it is turned to satisfy the *desire*, which has potentially infinite objects of satisfaction as well as many means through which to accomplish this. Freud makes references to sexual perversions in discussing this last aspect of a drive in distinguishing it from the pure instinct. Laplanche sees, in this Freud's analysis of the breastfeeding of a baby, how upon an initial instinct for self-preservation then adds – for *anaclisis* – an infant sexual drive which is structured around an erotic zone suitably built up by the infant. This last comes when the initial object of external world, i.e., the milk, is lost, so it comes to be replaced (by *metonymy*, hence by *displacement*) by the object immediately correlated with it by contiguity, i.e., the breast, thanks to its erogenous relation with buccal mucosa of the infant. From this moment onwards, the breast itself becomes a real object which may be then replaced (just by displacement) with any other object able to satisfy and stimulate locally the mouth. This latter therefore becomes an erogenous zone of sexual pleasure, which gradually shall gain an increasing independence with respect to the initial external object, so that the pleasure shall become ever more *self-erotic*. To sum up, from an initial fixed contingent object (the milk), preassigned to a necessary primary need for self-preservation, the instinct then binds to itself, by *anaclisis*, a sexual drive by means of another real external object (the breast), which, in turn, will be replaced, in the self-erotic phase, by a *phantasmatic* object (the phantasmatic breast). This latter is quite different from the initial object related to the self-preservation instinct and, when this is lost, the support provided – by *anaclisis* – by sexual drive, locally triggered by the erogenous zone of buccal mucosa (in turn, stimulated by breast), has another object to be found, that will not be the initial lost object (the milk), but another one got from this last by displacement. So, the lost object is the object of the self-preservation instinct, while the new object to find, as an object of the sexual drive, is a displacement object that will never be the initial one: from that, it follows the essential "illusionary" feature of the sexual drive seeking, in that such a phantasmatic object is undetermined (Scarfone, 1997, Ch. 2, Sec. 1).

It was Laplanche to have given the right light to the 1905 Freud's essay. In doing so, Laplanche has "surgically" analysed, down to the smallest details, the origins of the sexuality (*sexuale*) in the human psyche, clarifying exactly what Freud meant with "sexual object out of the own body" in his 1905 essay: precisely, according to Laplanche's view, this means that a distinction had to be done between the satisfaction of living needs on the one hand, and the sexuality on the other hand, which will go to separate, along self-erotic phase, from the natural object (of primary needs) for indulging to phantasy, so giving rise to the *sexuale*. Nevertheless, Laplanche is forced to provide a further explanation to the basic question of how does sexual drive to be built up – by *anaclisis* – and then to be supported upon self-reproduction instinct if this latter gradually goes on vanishing. In this regard, Laplanche makes another deep analysis of the original Freudian texts such as the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* of 1895, and *On Narcissism: An Introduction* of 1914: from the analysis of the former, Laplanche identifies the fundamental *après-coup* modality (i.e., Freud's *secondary repression*) of functioning of the unconscious, while, from the analysis of the latter, Laplanche infers the dualistic nature of the Ego. Its second function is again inferred from the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (which is defined, by Laplanche, as the "great work on the Ego"), where Freud establishes the essential role of inhibition of the Ego, which has the main purpose to limit what perception system receives from the internal psychism for not hindering what comes from the

external reality; then, ever according to Laplanche, what makes up for the depletion of the self-preservation instinct (during anaclisis of the sexual drive) is just a sexual cathexis of the Ego, that Freud treats in *On Narcissism: An Introduction* in dealing with the rising of human narcissism, thanks to which it is warranted a vicariance to the deficiency springing out from the evanescence of the self-reproduction instinct, so guaranteeing the need for survival of the individual. In doing so, according to Laplanche's analysis of the Freudian thought, sexuality has a double nature, at the service of life drives: on the one hand, it attacks from inside the life drives (by the gradual replacement of the self-reproduction instinct through anaclisis), while, on the other side, it balances this lacking by means of a sexual cathexis of Ego (narcissism) which, for Laplanche, is the dawning of this latter. But, Freud himself, for that *economic principle* ruling any energetic psychic process, in his 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is forced to put, alongside the above processes of psychic pleasures played by sexuality (as *libido*) at the dependence of life drives for preserving individual, an opposite balancing drive, that he calls *death drive*, in such a manner that economic principle, that however provides always a discharge to zero of psychic energy, be accomplished. For Laplanche, therefore, sexuality and its related pleasure principle, has a basic dualistic nature, linked to either life drives (in turn, related to the Ego) and death drives, so he speaks of *sexual drives of life* and *sexual drives of death*. All that is, in short, what Laplanche has clearly exposed in his work *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* (Laplanche, 1970; Scarfone, 1997, Ch. 2).

3. The primary phantasies: other considerations and studies

In this section, at first we refer to the work of Lucia Figà-Talamanca (1976) on the logical meaning of the primary phantasies in psychoanalysis, conducted from a historical-critical perspective. The author points out the relevance of the notion of *phantasy* in psychoanalysis, even if, at the same time, she stresses on the difficulty to analyse such a central notion, due to its intrinsic complexity. To pursue this aim, the author starts from a general overview of psychoanalytic method (Part I), to end with an analysis of primary phantasies (Part II). Afterwards, we refer to the work of Giordano Fossi (1981).

•₁ The work of Lucia Figà-Talamanca

3.1. Part I: A general psychoanalytic introduction to phantasies

The first part of the work of Figà-Talamanca (1976) is a general brief introduction to psychoanalytic method, recalling those preliminary notions and concepts will serve to introduce that of phantasy, which will be the topic of Part II. In Chapter I, the author outlines the dawning of psychoanalysis according to Freud, hence, in Chapter II, she briefly focusses on the relevant contribution of Ignacio Matte Blanco (1908-1995) and his original approach to psychoanalysis. In Chapter III, the author outlines the Freudian infantile sexual theories, then the last Chapter IV is devoted to a first general introduction to the notion of phantasy. In what follows, we give a synoptic view of each chapter of Part I of the work (Figà-Talamanca, 1976).

3.1.1. Chapter I: The psychoanalytic method and the discovery of unconscious

Although the notion of unconscious was already known in either philosophy and psychology, Freud provided an original method to investigate it from a clinical standpoint. He in fact was aimed to find a specific clinical technique to treat the so-called *psychoneuroses* and their symptoms, hence, at the same time, to understand those psychic processes underlying these. In doing so, he first started with those empirical methods of the time, like hypnosis, then working out another original technique for investigating this particular psychic phenomenology, outlined in the basic work *Studies on Hysteria*

of 1895, published in collaboration with Joseph Breuer (1842-1925). In this work, Freud realized that hysterical symptoms are mainly due to a psychic conflict springing out from the resistance that consciousness exerts over an (unconscious) idea not accepted by the social-cultural and moral rules of the living context of patient; so, such an idea becomes pathogen in that rejected by consciousness of patient. Therefore, the possible therapeutic treatment had to be turned to overcome the force with which the psyche (of the patient) hindered the conscious emergence of such an idea. Freud was able to work out clearly his new therapeutic method only in 1904, after a considerable clinical work: it was based on two main principles: the *method of free association* and the *method of the fluctuating attention*. But, Freud gradually turned his interest from the therapeutic context to the theoretical one aimed to understand the related psychic mechanisms typical not only of neurotics but also of every (so-called normal) individual. This new perspective to look at psychic phenomena, led Freud to can work out a general theory of human psyche as a psychological one, turned to that phenomenology relying on the deepest realms of human psyche. At the same time, such a new methodology of study led to a specific hermeneutics of psychic phenomena. The whole theoretical framework of the new psychology of Sigmund Freud stood on the chief notion of unconscious, which yet became fully distinct from the previous ones, mainly belonging to philosophical context: indeed, the Freudian notion of unconscious occurred from the empirical data coming from the clinical applications of the new therapeutical method founded by Freud himself. The legitimacy of this construct is provided by many theoretical and empirical motives: the logical coherence of the psychoanalytic framework, the explanatory power of clinical data, the results of therapeutical practice. In particular, two chief principles seem have been quite well-established in psychoanalysis. i.e., the principles of psychic determinism (or causality) and the principle of limitedness of action of the field of consciousness; by now, the psychoanalysis may be considered as having a scientific status (Brenner, 1973). After that, Freud gave two main topographies of human psyche: in the first one, dating back to 1915-18, he distinguishes among unconscious, preconscious and conscious, whereas, in the second one, of 1921, he distinguished among *Id*, *Ego* and *Super-Ego*. The first one (*topological view* of human psyche) has a main spatial nature, in which the contents of unconscious are seen as representatives of drives, while the second one (*energetic view* of human psyche) has a main structural-dynamical nature, where the contents of unconscious are seen in dependence on the economic perspective closely correlated with the notion of cathexis' energy; Freud has never been categorical in using only one of these two topographies, oscillating between them with frequent intersections. However, as Freud himself pointed out, psychoanalytic theory, from an epistemological standpoint, is an open theory ever in continuous evolution, and this has been one of the basic principles that has led the whole historical-critical revision of the Freudian thought by Jean Laplanche (Laplanche, 1970).

3.1.2. Chapter II: The unconscious according to Ignacio Matte Blanco point of view

Figà-Talamanca, in the second chapter, briefly exposes the original view of unconscious according to the work of Ignacio Matte Blanco who was – also him – aimed to revise Freudian thought. Matte Blanco gave a fundamental contribution to the epistemology of psychoanalysis clarifying the logical and formal aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis. We refer to another work of Figà-Talamanca (1978) for more information about Matte Blanco's work.

3.1.3. Chapter III: The infantile sexual theory according to Freud

This chapter is mainly centred on the crucial work of Freud entitled *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, which has seen different revised and enlarged editions: in 1905, then in 1910, 1920 and 1924. Freud is the first scholar to put serious attention to this topic, fully neglected before his work. He defines scientifically child sexuality, its manifestations and empirical observation, tracing back its origins on *auto-eroticism* as fulfilment of a wish (upon the own body, like breastfeeding) of the

child, in *anaclisis* to the satisfaction of a biological need (like, milk drinking). According to Freud, sexuality is surely wider than genitality; furthermore, the theory of sexuality is closely linked to the theory of drives. In general, a drive is triggered by the sensation to fulfil a need by means of a some object sought by the subject. Sexual drives have a very wider range of possibility to be fulfilled. In a first interval of time (which varies from individual to individual), sexual drives are ruled by primary process, without having a precise object of satisfaction and remaining under the main influence of phantasies; they are thus satisfied in a hallucinatory or – in general – auto-erotic manner. Then, they evolve according to the well-known psychosexual development of *libido* delineated by Freud, along a precise sequence of three stages – oral, anal and phallic one – where their intensity, object and aim vary.

In the first stage, namely the *oral phase*, a privileged relation between child and mother comes to be established. It is centred around the primary needs of nutrition. These basic bio-physiological needs of nutrition play a double functional role: the satisfaction (as a first need function) of the instincts of self-preservation upon which then – by *anaclisis* – lay on a libidinal satisfaction (as a second wish function) springing out from the weakening of the hunger stimulus (as related to the first function). This first stage, featured by the symbiosis child-mother, goes on along the first year after birth. The main bodily zone of the child, interested by this stage, is the oral one, which becomes an erogenous zone: in it, the object relation for the libidinal satisfaction is still auto-erotic, and represented, for instance, by the sucking of the inch out of the breastfeeding moments or the biting, turned to search a pleasure satisfaction independent of nutrition needs. The second stage, that is to say, the *anal phase*, takes over, between the two-three years old, when the child reaches the sphincter control, in particular when defecation's act becomes voluntary. In this case, the main erogenous zone is the anal-urethral mucosa. Especially the voluntary retention or the immediate expulsion, by the child, of faecal material, meant as a part of the own body, are precursors of some later character behaviours. Around the four-five years old, in the third and final stage, i.e., the *phallic phase*, the genital area of the child becomes, by physiological ripening, the chief erogenous zone for the libidinal satisfaction. The rising of genital sexuality is the precursor of the curiosity and discovery attitudes by the child, which will lead – by *sublimation* – to the instincts of knowledge and seeking, that Ronald Britton (1998) has identified and unified in a kind of *epistemological drive*, typical of human being. This is the truly central moment in which the curiosity of the child assumes a deep existential relevance for her/him, which is quite neglected by adults in that it however explicates – in the child – in relation to the sexual context (conception, gender differences, etc.), by means of a phantasmatic thought.

3.1.4. Chapter IV: The phantasy, an introductory review of its main conceptions

Figà-Talamanca (1976) begins this final chapter of Part I of her work, explicitly saying that talking about phantasy means to grasp fully the key nucleus around which revolves psychoanalytic theory. Thus, the author states that, although Freudian thought has never been quite clear in distinguishing amongst unconscious phantasies, dreams and conscious fantasies, the unconscious phantasies have a key role for the whole psychic life of any individual. Hence the author reviews the main Freudian analyses of phantasmatic life, followed by the next interpretations provided by many post-Freudian psychoanalysts (Melanie Klein, Susan Isaacs, Viktor N. Smirnoff, Serge Lebovici, Michel Soulé), in which, however, the relationships between phantasies and reality seem to be the central theme of the whole psychoanalytic theory.

3.2. Part II: A detailed investigation of phantasies

In the second part of the work (Figà-Talamanca, 1976), the author provides a detailed analysis of the chief primary phantasies as identified by Freud: the Chapter V is devoted to a general overview

of primary phantasies, Chapter VI is centred on seduction, Chapter VI concerns castration, Chapter VII focusses on family romance, and the final Chapter VII treats the properly said primary scene.

3.2.1. Chapter V: The primary phantasies, a general introduction

In this chapter, Figà-Talamanca, after a rapid historical account of the work of Freud on phantasies and primary phantasies (already described in the previous sections), points out that Freud reached his conclusions after a long period of critical reflection, started since his first works, upon what underlies neuroses and, in general, what stays behind the phantasmatic life of every individual: he concluded that phantasies basically deal with the reproduction of some *sexual scenes* which are, in certain cases, directly accessible to consciousness, in others cases instead are masked by a veiled by overlapped phantasies due to sublimation and fantasize work having defence and justification aims. These latter phantasies are not related to the occurrence of real past events but rather are the simple impulsive outcomes of the sexual (primary) scenes underlying them. Thus, Freud focussed on these latter – the *primary scenes* – which are in a very few number and concern typical recurrent themes. Nevertheless that, for Freud, there was a lot of work to go through *primary scenes* to the related *primary phantasies*, that was parallel to the work of the general definition of *phantasy*. According to Serge Lebovici (1915-2000) and Michel Soulé (1922-2012), the evolution of the Freudian notion of phantasy has seen oscillations between a conception related to the influences of environment (as in the case-study *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (Dora)* of 1905) and a conception instead related to endogenous psychic conflicts and the consequent outcomes (as in the case-study *The Wolf Man* of 1918) (Lebovici & Soulé, 1970). Even if Freud acknowledged the autonomy of the unconscious phantasies as consistent psychic entities, with which child tries to answer to the urgent, crucial existential questions, he yet continued in seeking their origins, so introducing the notion of primary phantasy by means of the itemization of the underlying primary scenes. Although these last may be considered – according to Freud – as the outcome of a possible retroactive reconstruction by adult, a some triggering indication or clue (e.g., an auditory sign) should be however put at the basis of their occurrence: that is to say, if it is impossible – empirically – to determine that event (if any) of the ontogenetic route of an individual to which such a primary scene may be brought back, as this is a recurrent theme presents in many analytic stories and it is triggered by a some indication or clue in a certain way – directly or indirectly – correlated with it, independently of the individual lived, then there should yet be a some phylogenetic trace of such a primary scene stored into the deepest memory of the individual, transcending her/his personal life route, which will be then re-evoked (through a primary phantasy) by her/him. Thus, ever according to Freud, primary scenes should have a mere phylogenetic origin, whilst the corresponding primary phantasy, rebuilt up by any individual on the basis of its own singular lived experience, should have an ontogenetic origin. This should be the main, featuring trait distinguishing a primary scene from its corresponding primary phantasy. It follows that, as psychic entities²⁶, we have therefore to distinguish between primary scene and (the corresponding) primary phantasy, the former having a phylogenetic origin, whereas the latter has an ontogenetic one. Anyhow, the various thematics of primary scenes seem to be universally present and common in any individual: according to Freud, they are however closely linked to infantile sexuality and to the infantile existential problems of origins concerning any child. With the rising of primary phantasies, child *dramatizes* such an urgent existential problematic, so finding an although partial solution to it: in the castration phantasies, it is represented the problem of the origins of sex gender difference; in the seduction phantasies, it is put into stage the origin of sexuality; in the primary scene, it is figured the origin of the individual; and in the family romance, it is pictured the place took by the subject into the world. To sum up, with phantasmatic life the child imposes her/his own existential theory, so succeeding in controlling the problematic reality of her/his existence.

²⁶ Accordingly, we add that a deeper comparative analysis of the nature, structure and function of these two different entities should be pursued.

3.2.2. Chapter VI: The seduction

The chapter starts with a historical introduction to the theory of seduction as worked out by Freud at the very beginning of his work, until to its abandon by Freud himself²⁷. His first ideas on seduction were centred around the influence of adults on children, but subsequently he inverted this relation, highlighting the early development of sexuality in children in dyadic-triadic relations with adults, so discovering the first forms of Oedipus complex and reaching the notions of unconscious phantasies (in particular, the seduction phantasy), psychic reality and spontaneous infantile sexuality. Within this framework, the main problem – which yet remained unsolved in the Freudian work – was the identification of the right relationships among these notions. Such a problem was then approached by other scholars (amongst whom are Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis).

3.2.3. Chapter VII: The castration

The castration phantasy was first introduced by Freud in the 1908 paper *On the Sexual Theories of Children*, according to the principle for which child thinks that every human being, included the woman, is born with a penis (deemed to be – by psychoanalysis – the chief erogenous zone and the pre-eminent sexual object for auto-erotic aims). This belief is common to every child. For this reason, Freud gave precedence to the sexuality of male children with respect to female children, which is explained by means of the former. Freud also puts castration in relation to Oedipus complex, but with distinct implications for males and females: for the former, castration complex represents a threat by father (and other adults), whilst for the latter it has the meaning of a kind of impairment due to mother; for both, then, castration phantasy entails the awareness of the anatomical sexual gender difference. Freud stated that the castration phantasy is almost universal, with mainly narcissistic consequences. Castration phantasy is also crucial in the phallic phase, with many symbolic representations of the penis: for female children, it signs the entering into Oedipus complex with the searching of the father's penis, whereas for male children, with the rising of the related castration's anguish, it marks the end of the Oedipus complex, with the beginning of the next latency phase and the formation of the Super Ego agency. Freud discovered and described castration complex in the well-known case-study *The Little Hans* of 1908. Later studies however have shown that castration complex is more related to the early development of child sexuality, rather than to the Oedipus complex and its dynamics; such a precocious arising of sexuality, already present in two-years old children, would be then treated, by the child, through a still immature structuration of the own Self and to an inadequate object representation, with dawning of consequent psychic conflicts.

3.2.4. Chapter VIII: The family romance

Freud stated that the family romance is a phantasy omnipresent in the destiny of every human being and it refers to the relationships of the child with parents, daughters, brothers and meaningful adults. However, the key-nucleus of this phantasy stays in the triadic relations of the child with parents, in particular about her/his position and role with respect to parental dyad. Also this phantasy is related with Oedipus complex. The phantasies of family romance, according to Freud, follow an economic principle of economy which lead child, pubescent and adolescent to realize its own wishes with particular idealizations (which may become conscious in paranoia and delirious), to control and modify reality for pursuing two main scopes: eroticism and ambition. Phantasies of family romance are also linked to Oedipus complex and will be present in many next psychic settings of adults; their structures are quite composite and thematically complex with the aim to solve the strong Oedipal

²⁷ These notices have already been quite outlined in the previous sections, so we summarize the original considerations by Figà-Talamanca.

psychic conflicts²⁸.

3.2.5. Chapter IX: The primary scene

Amongst the primary scenes and related phantasies (briefly outlined above), there is a particular one properly said to be *primary scene*. It concerns specifically the parental coitus, as one of the chief sources of anguish for the child; this because the child, in such a situation, is caught by an extreme sexual excitation unexplainable and incomprehensible for her/him. Freud, according to this frame, has given an ever more relevance to this special scene in which child sees herself/himself however involved in such a sexual parental relationship, to which her/his participation is anyhow forbidden by Oedipal constraints. Freud identified such a primary scene during the analysis of the case-study *Wolf Man* of 1918, but he argues deeply about the reality or not of the scene (coitus) into question, which may be – he states – truly a real scene observed or a merely phantasmatic construction by the child, however triggered by some not well-known indications or clues. Thus, he is led, another time, to search for the early origins of primary phantasies, reaching the conclusion that child makes use of these primary scenes (in primis, the properly said primary scene related to parental coitus) to fill the lacking (for her/his constitutional psychic immaturity) of possible logic explanations, whence she or he fills up the constitutional gaps of her/his ontogenetic personal truth with prehistoric truths. Such a phylogenetic explanation was provided by Freud after Jung worked out his theory of retroactivity of phantasies²⁹ (and based on a kind of collective phylogenetic memory of human beings), but he didn't was fully in agreement with this latter theory of Jung: indeed, Freud, differently by Jung, had ever put an certain irremovable confidence in the role anyway played by the ontogenetic story of individual in giving rise to primary phantasies. Freud, not denying a relevant role to phylogenetic legacy owned by any individual, yet deemed that also ontogenesis has its non-negligible role in the dawning of primary phantasies³⁰. Post-Freudians focussed, above all, on the possible consequences that primary phantasies have for the infant and adult psychic life, neglecting the above mentioned questions about their exact nature, structure and function. Thus for instance Lebovici and Soulé (1970) say that unconscious phantasies ever refer to the awareness of having seen and understood, besides to have hampered, the relationships of adults as occurring within Oedipus complex. Phyllis Greenacre (1894-1989) has then pointed out the relationships existing between phantasies and the development of the sense of reality in child. Furthermore, primary phantasies, above all that related to primary scene, play a crucial role in the development of the character of child, influencing her/his later sexual and aggressive behaviours; this because of the intense emotive shock produced by the primary scene – which has to be meant as ubiquitous – in child.

●₂ The contribution of Giordano Fossi and co-workers

Although psychoanalytic phantasies are crucially important for psychoanalysis, there is not still a common agreement on their definition, structure and function and even their existence. Fossi (1981) affirms that this is chiefly due to the fact that unconscious phantasies are closely related with other, questionable – although central – psychoanalytic concepts, like drives, the definition of unconscious and repression. Further, as we have already said above, phantasies are placed on different psychic levels (i.e., unconscious, preconscious and conscious), quite difficult to separate of each other, also for the concomitant and unavoidable presence of a conscious component. In a few words, Fossi (1981) says that the notion of phantasy is a very generic one, so that it at least requires a detailed contextualization each time it is invoked or used. Besides, more caution is needed when we refer to unconscious phantasies as these may be – although partially – analysed and studied only through

28 See also (Casonato & Sagliaschi 2012, §§ 2.15-16).

29 According to Jung, the primary scene, for instance, comes from a need of rebirth of every human being (Galimberti, 2018).

30 In this regard, for more historical informations about the comparison of the works of Freud and Jung on the role of ontogenetic and phylogenetic factors in the rising of primary phantasies, see (Frey-Rohn, 1984).

their conscious derivatives, that is, unconscious phantasies may be inferred only from these latter. For these and many other reasons, phantasies are almost omnipresent in any theoretical and clinical psychoanalytic aspect, so, for trying to avoid such a high indeterminacy of the concept of phantasy, Fossi³¹ (1981) suggests to take into account, whenever one refers to psychoanalytic phantasy, some fixed guidelines in understanding the meaning of this notion. To be precise, he states that phantasy may be understood as: 1) the derivative of the repression of a fantasy or of a real previously conscious experience; 2) a subliminal or preconscious phantasy; 3) a psychic content which has never been conscious; 4) a direct psychic conversion of a biological entity, like a drive; 5) a kind of Lamarckian legacy of ancestral experiences. Fossi (1981) then gives a brief but complete historical-critical essay of the notion of phantasy, pointing out the many contradictions that such a notion gives rise, from early Freud's work through later post-Freudian studies and researches on phantasies, which have yet enlarged – rather than solved or restricted – the delicate problematic centred on the role of phantasy as a structuring or structured entity, as well as as biological or psychic entity, and in any case meant as the fundamental unity of psychic functioning. Fossi (1981), who is quite critical with almost all the already existent notions of phantasy, puts forward the hypothesis that phantasies are structurally related with the establishment of object relations during the crucial child-mother relationship that is deemed to be the key-nucleus of the rising of phantasies, language and bodily image. The structural hypothesis is needed because phantasy is an ubiquitous concept and occurs in any psychic process, but it does not solve fully the problematic of phantasy in that, if structurally defined, it should rely, in turn, on the structural theory of psyche according to Freud, hence on the structural system of psychic agencies Id, Ego and Super Ego, upon which there is yet not a definitive and unanimous consensus on their definition. Anyway, according to Fossi, if one is aimed to define structurally the notion of phantasy, then its founding operating structures should be – eventually – searched into the unconscious, where they would be active or potentially as such; moreover, ever according to Fossi, phantasies are the necessary cross-point with drives field and the related psychic energies, to which they provide ideational representations, if one paves the way opened by Melanie Klein, through which, starting from early Anna Freud (1895-1982) statements about the links between phantasies and defence mechanisms, the former have been then extended to any other possible behaviour's form. Fossi concludes his historical-critical essay on phantasies summarizing the many still present contradictions that brings with itself the notion of phantasy, recognizing its crucial importance and, at the same time, the impossibility to reach a unique and unanimous consensus about its existence, nature, structure and function, stating that it is however unavoidable the clinical use of such a notion so long as used with the necessary awareness of its intrinsic limits mainly bringing back to the difficulty in providing a unique and exact definition of unconscious, to the basic dichotomy psychic reality-external reality and to the nature, structure and function of symbolism (included language). Many years later, then, Fossi and Mascari (2013) have reconsidered the theme of phantasies, with a particular attention to the sexual ones: they conclude, pessimistically, that the notion of phantasy in psychoanalysis is still not uniquely and definitively worked out and it brings with itself almost all the early problematicity that has featured such a yet central notion, since its early appearance in psychoanalysis. They however put faith in the possible help coming from other near disciplines, like anthropology, sociology and biology, in trying to clarify better and deeper the concept of phantasy, whose real nature – according to Fossi and Mascari (2013) – should anyhow be interdisciplinarily searched in the context of evolutionary neuropsychobiology.

4. Conclusions

The historical recall of the seminal work of Laplanche and Pontalis (1964) on phantasies, has been

31 Giordano Fossi (1931-2021) was an Italian neuropsychiatrist and psychoanalyst, professor of psychotherapy and psychology at the University of Florence since 1960s. Ordinary member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (SPI) and of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), with many didactic functions, he has given remarkable contributions to psychoanalysis, its epistemology and history; from 2000s onward, he turned his attention to evolutionary psychology and psychoanalysis, upon which we shall return in another place.

an opportunity to recall the attention on the still crucial relevance of the notion of phantasy not only in psychoanalysis but also in the general history of culture and human thought. In the proper context of psychoanalysis, phantasy has played a central role as a key-notion of the whole psychoanalytic framework since its establishment due to Freud. All his work has been also finalized to clarify and to make more precise and lesser ambiguous the definition of phantasy. In doing so, he has called in question phylogenetic explanations but without losing or neglecting the scientific perspective of the time, especially the biological standpoint, which has always been a primer leading reference for his work since its early beginning. This was a methodological principle that he has ever tried to pursue, when has been possible, along his full work of study and research in psychology, of course taking into account the scientific and cultural knowledge of his time. In particular, he has made reference to biology, sociology and anthropology of the time, as witnessed by Ernest Jones (1879-1958) in his outstanding biography of the father of psychoanalysis (Jones, 1953). Indeed, in the third and final three-volumes of this biography, Jones recalls the references done by Freud to these disciplines as well as the later contributions of these to psychoanalysis by some other post-Freudian scholars (at least, till to 1950s): in particular, Chapter 10 of the Part II of Volume 3, is devoted to biology, from which emerges as Freud was a pioneer of psychobiology. So, Rudolph Brun (1926) traced back with analogical parallels many central psychoanalytic notions in various other biological species socially organized, even insects. Very important then, from the biological standpoint, the studies of Freud on drives and instincts. Jones also stresses on the relevance of the firm Freud's belief on Lamarckian ideas on acquired traits, which he firmly deemed necessary at all for his psychological theory. Jones ends this chapter stating that biology, in the future, will give ever more confirmations of Freudian ideas. This, together all what has been said so far, simply suggests a reconsideration of the central notions and themes of Freudian psychoanalysis, not with the will to confute them, but rather with the aim trying to confirm or clarify them, possibly with the support of other disciplines: this is, for instance, the case of the notion of phantasy, as we have highlighted in this historical note, which has the main intent to recall the attention on the still opened issue about psychoanalytic phantasies and their crucial problematic. In particular, biology may now turn its attention to psychoanalysis in such a manner to establish a reciprocal (epistemological) usefulness for both (Lis et al., 2002).

Acknowledgements. My warm thanks go to Professor Lucia Figà-Talamanca of the University of Rome "La Sapienza", who has been so kind in providing me a hard copy of her Laurea Degree dissertation in psychology, whose contents have been summarized in the final section 3 of this note.

References

Abraham, N., Török, M. (1987). *L'écorce et le noyau*. Paris: Flammarion.

Amadei, G., Cavanna, D., Zavattini, G.C. (a cura di) (2015). *Psicologia dinamica*. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino.

Barale, F., Bertani, M., Gallese, V., Mistura, S., Zamperini, A. (a cura di) (2007). *Psiche. Dizionario storico di psicologia, psichiatria, psicoanalisi, neuroscienze*. 2 voll., Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore.

Brenner, C. (1973). *An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis*. 2nd Edition, New York: International Universities Press, Inc.

Britton, R. (1998). *Belief and Imagination. Explorations in Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.

Brun, R. (1926). Biologische Parallelen zu Freuds Trieblehre Experimentelle Beiträge zur Dynamik und Ökonomie des Triebkonflikts. *Imago*, 12: 147-170.

- Cappelli, N., Petrelli, D. (2013). *Fantasie inconse, fantasmi originari, nella teoria e nella clinica. Seminari della Società psicoanalitica italiana (SPI)*, N. 18 del 24/06/2013.
- Casonato, M., Sagliaschi, S. (2012). *Manuale storico-comparatista di psicologia dinamica*. Torino: UTET.
- De Mijolla, A. (Ed.) (2005). *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. 3 Vols., Farmington Hills (MI): Thompson Gale Editions.
- Figà-Talamanca, L. (1976). *Considerazioni sul significato logico dei fantasmi originari all'interno della teoria psicoanalitica*. Tesi di laurea in Psicologia Generale (Relatore: Prof. Adriano Ossicini – Controrelatore: Prof. Giulio Cesare Zavattini), Anno Accademico 1975-1976, Roma: Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza", Facoltà di Magistero, Corso di laurea in Psicologia, II^a Cattedra di Psicologia Generale.
- Figà-Talamanca Dore, L. (1978). *La logica dell'inconscio. Introduzione all'opera di Ignacio Matte Blanco*. Roma: Edizioni Studium.
- Fossi, G. (1981). *Fantasia e onnipotenza. La teoria psicoanalitica dell'immaginario*. Torino: Editore Boringhieri.
- Fossi, G., Mascari, P. (2013). *L'immaginario. Fantasie e sessualità*. Nuova edizione ampliata, Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Francioni, M. (1978). *Psicoanalisi linguistica ed epistemologica in Jacques Lacan*. Torino: Editore Boringhieri.
- Francioni, M. (1982). *Storia della psicoanalisi francese. Teorie e istituzioni freudiane*. Con la collaborazione di M.A. Schepisi, Torino: Editore Boringhieri.
- Freud, S. (1940). Abriß der Psychoanalyse. *Internationalen Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und Imago*, 25 (1): 7-67.
- Frey-Rohn, L. (1984). *Da Freud a Jung. Uno studio comparato della psicologia dell'inconscio*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Funari, E. (1984). *Natura e destino della rappresentazione*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Funari, E. (1985). Introduzione all'edizione italiana di J. Laplanche, J-B. Pontalis, *Fantasma originario, Fantasmi delle origini, Origini del fantasma*, Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna, 1988, pp 9-30.
- Funari, E. (2007). *L'irrapresentabile come origine della vita psichica*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Galimberti, U. (2018). *Nuovo Dizionario di Psicologia, Psichiatria, Psicoanalisi, Neuroscienze*. Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore.
- Gill, M.M. (1963). *Topography and Systems in Psychoanalytic Theory*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.

- Green, A. (1973). *Le discours vivant. La conception psychanalytique de l'affect*. Paris: PUF.
- Hermann, I. (1972). *L'instinct filial*. Paris: Editions Denoël.
- Imbasciati, A. (1998). *Nascita e costruzione della mente: la teoria del protomentale*. Torino: UTET.
- Iurato, G. (2013). Σύμβολου: An Attempt Toward The Early Origins, Parts 1, 2. *Language and Psychoanalysis*, 2 (2): 77-161.
- Jones, E. (1953). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. 3 Vols., New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J-B. (1964). Fantasma originario, fantasmi des origines, origines du fantasma. *Les Temps Modernes*, 215: 1833-68 (see also Laplanche and Pontalis, 1985).
- Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J-B. (1967). *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*. Paris: PUF.
- Laplanche, J. (1970). *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J-B. (1985). *Fantasma originario, Fantasmi des origines, Origines du fantasma*. Paris: Hachette.
- Lebovici, S., Soulé, M. (1970). *La conoscenza de l'enfant par la psychanalyse*. Paris: PUF.
- Lis, A., Mazzeschi, C., Zennaro, A. (a cura di) (2002). *La psicoanalisi. Un percorso concettuale fra tradizione e attualità*. Roma: Carocci editore (Seconda edizione, 2007).
- Lis, A., Zennaro, A., Mazzeschi, C., Salcuni, S., Parolin, L. (2003). *Breve dizionario di psicoanalisi*. Roma: Carocci editore.
- Petrini, P., Renzi, A., Casadei, A., Mandese, A. (2013). *Dizionario di psicoanalisi, con elementi di psichiatria, psicodinamica e psicologia dinamica*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Roudinesco, É. (1986). *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*. 2 Vols. Paris: Seuil.
- Roudinesco, É. (1995). *Jacques Lacan. Profilo di una vita, storia di un sistema di pensiero*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Scarfone, D. (1997). *Jean Laplanche*. Paris: PUF.