

**PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A CLINICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN FREUD'S 'THREE ESSAIS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY': SOME PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF FREUD, KLEIN AND LACAN.<sup>1</sup>**

Ph.Van haute \*

**ABSTRACT**

In this text I try to determine the philosophical significance of psychoanalytic theory through a reading of Freud's "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality". I argue that the crystal principle that is governing Freud's argumentation in this text constitutes a real challenge to the philosophical tradition. Indeed, this principle implies that we can only understand what it means to be human through studying the pathological variations of it. This principle leads to the articulation of an anthropo-psychiatry -psychiatry becomes as it were the laboratory of philosophical anthropology - and breaks with the philosophical tradition that considers psychopathology as a secondary modification of human existence. It is further argued that it is precisely this principle that gives the psychoanalytic tradition an identity of its own. This idea is illustrated in the work of Lacan and Klein. In the concluding section I argue that this problematic might allow unexpected alliances - e.g. with evolutionary psychiatry - that go far beyond psychoanalytic theory as such and that suggest that it might be possible and desirable to develop a clinical anthropology.

**Key words:** Freud, Lacan, Klein, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, philosophical anthropology, crystal-principle, anthropo-psychiatry, psychopathology, desire, psychoanalysis.

**ÖZET**

Bu makalede, Freud'un "Cinselliğin Teorisi Üzerine Üç Çalışma" adlı eserinden yola çıkarak psikoanalitik teorinin felsefi önemini saptamayı amaçlıyorum. Adı geçen eserde Freud'un temel argümanını yöneten bu "kristal ilkenin" felsefi geleneğe ciddi bir meydan okuma içerdiğini

<sup>1</sup> This text is an extended version of an article that was published in *Philosophy Today* (special SPEP supplement), 50, p.90-96.

\* Prof.Dr./ Radboud University / Faculty of Philosophy

For Correspondance: [pvhaute@phil.ru.nl](mailto:pvhaute@phil.ru.nl)

düşünüyorum. Özetle, bu ilke, insanın ne olduğunu ancak insan denenden psikolojik sapmaların neler olduğunu çalışarak anlayabileceğimiz düşüncesidir. Bu düşünce bizi bir çeşit antropo-psikiyatri'ye –psikiyatrinin felsefi antropolojiye laboratuvarlık yapacağı türden- götürür ve psikopatolojiyi insan varoluşunun ikincil bir görünümü sayan felsefi gelenekle bağları atmayı önerir. Bu yaklaşımla Lacan ve Klein'in yapıtlarında karşılaşılıyoruz. Sonuç bölümünde, bu sorunsalın umulmadık bazı getirileri olacağını ileri sürüyorum; örneğin, klasik anlamıyla psikoanalitik teoriyi aşan ve klinik eğilimli bir antropoloji geliştirmenin hem olanaklı hem de istendik olduğunu akla getiren evrimsel bir psikiyatri dolayımının doğması gibi...

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Freud, Lacan, Klein, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, felsefi antropoloji, kristal ilke, antropo-psikiyatri, psikopatoloji, arzu, psikanaliz.

**PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A CLINICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN FREUD'S 'THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY': SOME PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF FREUD, KLEIN AND LACAN.**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

What does the challenge which psychoanalysis poses to philosophy consist of? Traditionally the assumption is often made that psychoanalysis needs philosophy to provide its foundation. Merleau-Ponty, for example, is of the opinion that psychoanalysis contains an implicit philosophy that, hidden from view by the scientific presuppositions of its founder, can only be formulated adequately by phenomenology. The insights of psychoanalysis must be translated into the language of phenomenology. Only then can they reveal their truth.<sup>2</sup> (Merleau-Ponty, p. 7)

In so doing, do we not run the risk to reduce psychoanalysis all too easily to well known philosophical topics, and thereby risk to avoid a genuine confrontation and debate? Regardless of the extent to which psychoanalysis may need philosophy, must we not first ask what in psychoanalysis resists philosophy? Must we not first ask which psychoanalytic insights offer resistance to what the philosophical tradition offers to thought? This is the only way in which to do justice to the originality of the psychoanalytic problematic while uncovering its proper philosophical radicality.

The radicality of the psychoanalytic project does not allow itself to be captured any more clearly than through a reading of one of Freud's most fundamental texts: 'Three Essays on the theory of sexuality'. Indeed, in the 'Three Essays' Freud formulates his most important insights in the central roles of sexuality and of the unconscious in human existence. The central tenets of the 'Three essays' are well known. Freud thematizes the foundational significance of sexuality, of phantasy and of the unconscious in human existence. In so doing he establishes the central role of human corporeality, while emphasizing its instinctual ('triebhaft') character.

---

<sup>2</sup> I primarily refer to the phenomenological tradition because the reductive interpretation of psychoanalysis against which I object is mainly to be found in that tradition. The relationship of psychoanalysis to the work of other philosophers, such as Nietzsche and Foucault, is probably more complex. I will return to these in my conclusion.

Undoubtedly, all of these are traditional topics of philosophy. Freud is not the first or the only one in the history of philosophy to have made the sexual body an explicit topic of discussion, and the significance and importance of phantasy is an equally popular subject of philosophy. Consequently it is understandable that any number of philosophers deem themselves to be on familiar ground when dealing with Freud. At the same time these philosophers can not take satisfaction with Freud's scientific use of language and the lack of philosophical depth that accompanies it. For example, Freud defines the pleasure principle which dominates human instinctual life exclusively in terms of the reduction of tension. The latter is so manifestly untrue – how, for example, could we describe the pleasure we experience when looking at a work of art in terms of a reduction of tension – that we are almost compelled to perform a philosophical cleansing and reformulation.<sup>3</sup> Without such a purification and reformulation texts such as the 'Three essays' merely have a historical value, and can not possibly be in any way normative for contemporary philosophical anthropology. Those who exclusively limit themselves to such a point of view, at the same time imply that there is no fundamental opposition between philosophy (phenomenology) and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic theory contains errors and must be corrected in a philosophical fashion, it merely states in a less successful manner what philosophy already knew, or it makes claims which could also be put into words without any psychoanalytical input.

Yet do we thereby do justice to the wealth of Freud's text? In this manner we neglect at least one crucial aspect of the problematic that is brought to the fore. Next to the constitutive claims made about sexuality, the phantasy, instincts and the unconscious which we have just mentioned, in the 'Three Essays' Freud also outlines and defends a methodology for the study of the human being. This methodology implies that human existence must be studied and articulated on the basis and in terms of its pathological variants. In order to plumb the depths of human existence we must start with psychopathology. In this context Freud speaks about the crystal-principle. Just as a crystal breaks along fault-lines which had previously not been visible, pathology informs us about the fundamental structures of human existence. The latter is often lost from sight by philosophical readers of the 'Three essays'. And yet it is exactly for that very reason that the text may be considered to be one of the fundamental texts of psychoanalytic anthropology.<sup>4</sup> The crystal-

<sup>3</sup> For a philosophical interpretation of the Freudian pleasure principle, see, for example, R. Bernet, *Lust en onlust. Pogen tot een filosofische fundering van de psychoanalytische begrippen*, in: *Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, 63/3 (2001), pp. 517-542.

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Freud continuously reworked this text in the light of the insights at which he arrived in the course of the years after the publication of the first edition in 1905. In this way the text in a succinct way also bears witness to the evolution of Freud's thought between 1905 and 1925, the year in which the last edition of the text was published.

principle – rather than the entirety of meta-psychological insights as such – confers onto psychoanalytic theory an identity which implies a powerful critique of traditional philosophical anthropology.<sup>5</sup> It is this identity and critique which at the same time offers the ultimate justification for the fact that until today psychoanalysis deserves the attention of philosophy in general and that of philosophical anthropology in particular. I will first analyze this problematic in Freud's 'Three Essais' and I will then show its foundational meaning for the work of both Klein and Lacan.

---

<sup>5</sup> Next to the crystal-principle here we must also make mention of the constitutive opposition or 'confusion of tongues' between the child and the adult. In their mutual interrelatedness these two insights constitute the fundamental principles of a psychoanalytic anthropology. We shall return on this point briefly in our conclusion. For a further elaboration of this topic see Van Haute & Geyskens, *Confusion of Tongues. The Primacy of Sexuality in the Work of Freud, Ferenczi en Laplanche*, SUNY, 2004, *passim*.

## 2. THE 'THREE ESSAYS' AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROJECT

'Three Essays on the theory of Sexuality' contains three chapters. The first deals with sexual aberrations, the second deals with infantile sexuality and the third with the 'changes of puberty'. Most commentators focus on the second and third chapter. Yet the first chapter is at least as important in order to reconstruct the peculiar state and nature of Freudian theory. Freud criticizes the "popular view of sexuality" according to which sexuality is a heterosexual instinct aimed at reproduction and entirely absent from childhood. Freud finds his starting point in the frequent occurrence of all sorts of perversions and in homosexuality.<sup>6</sup> (Freud, p. 125-243) Perversions as well as homosexuality call the 'self-evident character' of 'popular view of sexuality' into doubt. Yet Freud goes much further. He is of the opinion that perversions and homosexuality cast a light on the essence of the sexual instinct as such. Homosexuality for example, is not the privilege of a clearly delineated segment of the population. On the contrary, according to Freud, we have all made our homosexual object choices in infancy, and these choices remain determinative for the further development of our sexual orientation no matter what. According to him this implies that without exception no one escapes homosexuality and that the distinction between homo- and heterosexuality – at least in as much as their determinative factors are concerned – is merely a matter of degree. (Freud, p. 145-146)

Furthermore, the perversions – voyeurism and exhibitionism, fetishism and sado-masochism – reveal the constituent parts of sexuality in a magnified form. For example, voyeurism, according to Freud, is an exaggeration of the pleasure of looking, without which no sexual relations are said to be possible. Fetishism as a clinical phenomenon is also nothing other than the exaggeration of a tendency which belongs to sexuality as such. According to Freud there is merely a difference in degree between the safe-keeping of a lock of hair of the a loved one and the exclusive sexual inclination towards female footwear.

Here I lack the space to develop this problematic in full,<sup>7</sup> but the foregoing already allows us to draw a couple of conclusions with regard to the way in which Freud proceeds and his methodology.

<sup>6</sup> For what follows, see S. Freud, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, in: *Gesammelte Werke V*, S.Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1999, pp. 33 ff..

<sup>7</sup> I refer to Ph.Van Haute & T.Geyskens, *Confusion of Tongues. The Primacy of Sexuality in Freud, Ferenczi and Laplanche*, Suny, 2004 pp. 33-82.

Freud does not start from the assumption of a hypothetical ideal of “normality” or “psychological health” in contrast to which pathology is determined. On the contrary, he accepts the nosological categories of classical psychiatry and sexology as self-evident, and on their basis articulates the constitutive elements of the sexual instinct. According to Freud every different perversion refers to a partial instinct that becomes independent from the other partial drives and of which it is a magnification.<sup>8</sup>

This implies that something like a heterosexual instinct of which the perversions are simply a form of deviation, does not exist. On the contrary, Freud inscribes the perversions – to be more precise the partial drives to which they must be reduced – in the very heart of sexuality. The heterosexual instinct, the existence of which is assumed by popular opinion, and in which it has unshakeable faith, appears to be nothing other than the result of a delicate and dynamic interplay of partial instincts in which principally nothing is ever definitively acquired. Freud does not cease to repeat that altering circumstances may bring back to life long slumbering potentialities and reinforce long forgotten identifications and object choices.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore in the “Three Essays” Freud does not only describe the central significance of sexuality and the unconscious for human existence. At the same time he emphasizes that human sexuality only reveals its secrets through its pathological variants.<sup>10</sup> Freud intends the latter in the most radical sense. It is not merely the case that pathology casts a light on our existence by providing a contrast. Even though Freud does not deny this, we may not limit the function of the crystal principle to this idea alone. According to him pathology not only informs us about the basic structures of our corporeal existence, existence as such must be reformulated in terms of the different pathologies – in casu; the perversions, homosexuality and the various neuroses. In this way psychiatry and, more precisely put, psychiatric nosography receives an intrinsic anthropological significance. That is the basic premise of Freudian anthropology.

<sup>8</sup> One may think of the oral and anal instinct, the scopic instinct and so on. Freud calls these instincts partial instincts because they do not arise from the body as a whole. On this point see Laplanche & Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, PUF, Paris, 1967, pp. 367-368. English translation: Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Karnac Books, London, 1973, p 301.

<sup>10</sup> It is obvious that this thought causes as many problems as it solves. For example Freud silently assumes that psychopathology is a typically human phenomenon. An in-depth discussion of this problematic would lead us astray too far. See in this context: F. Van Coillie, *Zijn psychische stoornissen specifiek menselijk? – over het verschil tussen mens en dier*, in: idem, *De ongenode gast. Zes psychoanalytische opstellen over het verlangen en de dood*, Boom, Amsterdam, 2004, pp. 115-162.

Consequently, the philosophical significance of the Freudian crystal principle can hardly be over-estimated. After all, not only does it imply that human existence can fail, but also, and more importantly, that this failure is inscribed in a very radical way in the very heart of human existence itself. Indeed, according to Freud the fundamental tendencies which characterize what it means to be human do out of themselves lead to pathology, and that which we call psychological health is nothing other than the precarious balance of these tendencies. For Freud this immediately also implies that there is no intrinsic “natural” norm against which “normality” or “psychical health” can be measured.<sup>11</sup> Out of itself or ‘by nature’ sexuality does not self-evidently aim at coitus and reproduction. On the contrary, genital sexuality is the product of a complex human history which never quite ‘succeeds’. After all, no one ever quite escapes pathology entirely – there is, for example, no genital sexuality without perverse additions – such that the distinction between ‘psychical health’ and pathology can only be a matter of degree. In this sense pathology, according to Freud, is not a secondary modification of being human, but rather it is characteristic of the latter from the inside out.

The crystal principle – much more so than the (one-sided?) emphasis on the role of sexuality in the etiology of neurosis and psychosis? – confers a very particular identity to (Freudian) psychoanalysis. In this context it is notable how rarely this principle is addressed in philosophical discussions of psychoanalysis.<sup>12</sup> More often than not the discussion is limited to any number of claims concerning the content of psychoanalysis, and in so doing misses the redefinition of the relation between normality and pathology, which, however, is presupposed in any psychoanalytic assertion. Is it possible that this omission has to do with the fact that it is exactly on this point that psychoanalysis and the philosophical tradition part ways?

Philosophy much rather considers psychopathology as a deviation from the norm that is its proper object of study.<sup>13</sup> Here one may for example think of Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty. In their work

<sup>11</sup> It is true that in the text which we are discussing Freud repeatedly appears to draw an essential difference between “normality” and “pathology”. However, a thorough analysis of the text quickly reveals that the reference to ‘normality’ occurs for purposes of classification only rather than possessing any normative value. According to Freud’s own logic this cannot be otherwise. On this point see Ph. Van Haute & T. Geyskens, *Confusion of Tongues, passim*.

<sup>12</sup> The honor of having continuously drawn attention to this dimension in Freud’s work belongs to Jacques Schotte. In this context see J.Schotte, *Szondi avec Freud. Sur la voie d’une psychiatrie pulsionelle*, Editions universitaires De Boeck, Brussel, 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Also in places where such a norm is explicitly rejected (Nietzsche, Foucault) psychopathology does not receive the same central significance as it does in the work of Freud and his followers. I will come back to this point.



they describe the fundamental structures of Dasein and the incarnated subject respectively, the possible failure of which they do indeed consider, yet not as something which essentially characterizes this Dasein and this existence from the inside out. Heidegger as well as Merleau-Ponty do recognize the philosophical importance of psychopathology.<sup>14</sup> However they both do so in an exclusively negative sense.<sup>15</sup> Just like a fish that, if it could think, would only recognize the indispensable character of a humid environment when finding itself cast on dry land, according to these authors pathology only reveals the importance of something from the perspective of its lack – for example the lack of a feeling of self-evidence which accompanies our relation to reality. (Blankenburg, 1970) It is exactly when something is missing that our attention is drawn to it. In this particular view pathology does reveal the fundamental structures of human existence that philosophy must describe and articulate, but it is in no way determinative for this description. In other words, pathology does not contribute any positive insight particular to itself in the elucidation of human existence that philosophical anthropology aspires to. On this point Freud breaks with the philosophical – and in particular the phenomenological – tradition. He is the founder of clinical anthropology<sup>16</sup>, the originality of which in contrast to the philosophical tradition cannot be emphasized sufficiently.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In this context see M.Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Galimard, Paris, 1949 and M.Heidegger, *Zolikonerseminare* (Hrsg. M.Boss), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> The latter is also true for phenomenological psychiatry which also describes pathology with reference to being the ‘negative’ aspect of a state of ‘psychiatric health’ which can be described independent of pathology. In this context see for example A. Tatossian, *La phénoménologie des psychoses*, special double-issue of *L’art de comprendre*, July, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> In this context one may also think of the work of Leopold Szondi who radicalizes Freud’s clinical anthropology and develops it further. On this point see T.Geyskens "De mens als Schicksal. Over de antropologische grondslagen van de Schicksalsanalyse", to be published in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*.

<sup>17</sup> As we have already pointed out, Freudian clinical anthropology is characterized by two fundamental axioms that must be investigated further: on the one hand the anthropological significance of psychopathology which we address here and the gap between the world of the child and the world of the adult on the other hand. The latter we have discussed at length elsewhere. See T.Geyskens & Ph. Van Haute, *From Death Instinct to Attachment Theory. The Primacy of the Child in Freud, Klein and Hermann*, Other Press, New York, 2007.

### 3. THE CRYSTAL PRINCIPLE AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITION

The crystal principle, more than one of Freud's assertions of content concerning sexuality or the unconscious, determines the singular character of his psychoanalytic theory. In our opinion this also applies to psychoanalytic theory as a whole. In this context one may for example think of the work of Melanie Klein or Jacques Lacan. Unlike Freud, Klein does not characterize infancy immediately on the basis of sexual development, but rather in terms of 'positions' – a complex of psychical mechanisms to deal with (one's own) aggression in particular – which she describes and thematizes on the basis of the clinical picture of psychoses. On the one hand Klein speaks of a 'paranoid-schizoid' position in which a mechanism of splitting (for example between a 'good' and a 'bad' breast) is prevalent and in which anxiety for one's continued existence is predominant. On the other hand she speaks of a depressive position that is structured around the anxiety to have caused harm to the other by one's own aggression as well as the (phantasmatical) attempts to repair that damage. An exhaustive definition of these positions would lead as too far a field.<sup>18</sup> Two aspects of Klein's theory are however of particular relevance to our problematic. First, the two positions which according to Klein characterize childhood as such are described with reference to psychotic pathologies.<sup>19</sup> Even if it would be naïve – or simply false – to assume that Klein considers adult psychotic pathologies as a mere regression to these infantile positions, this does not take away from the fact that, like Freud, she describes 'normal' psychical development from the stand point of an intrinsic reference to pathology.<sup>20</sup> Second, this 'normal' development is not aimed at an ideal state of health or normality that can be defined apart from any reference to psychopathology. According to Klein, the final outcome of psychical development can only be described, in analogy to what Freud teaches us about sexuality, in terms of a precarious and dynamic interplay between the two positions mentioned. And in this interplay nothing is ever definitively acquired by principle. In other words, also according to Klein pathology resides as an intrinsic possibility in the heart of subjectivity itself.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this problematic and more references to the work of Klein see: T. Geyskens & Ph. Van Haute, *Van doodsdrijf tot hechtingstheorie*, pp.60-124.

<sup>19</sup> Incidentally we here encounter an important problem that must be addressed by any clinical anthropology. It is indeed noticeable that different psychoanalytical authors take different pathologies as their starting point for their reflections on human existence. On which basis can the relative privilege assigned to a particular pathology – neurosis and perversion in Freud's early work, traumatic neurosis in his later work, psychosis in the work of Klein – be justified?

<sup>20</sup> On the relation between pathology and the Kleinian positions see T. Geyskens & Ph. Van Haute, *From Death Drive to Attachment Theory*, *passim*.

But let us rather turn to the work of Jacques Lacan who is more familiar to most philosophers than Melanie Klein. Lacan indeed very often uses philosophy and philosophical authors to clarify his own thought. His work is therefore quite appropriate to elucidate the relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy as I seek to formulate it here. I will illustrate my point first by a short reading of Lacan's text on the mirror-stage and then by an analysis of some themes that play a central role in his work of the fifties and the sixties.

Lacan's text on the mirror-stage is explicitly directed against the Cartesian ego. (Lacan, 1989, p. 1-9) Hence there can be no doubt that this text, also in the mind of Lacan, has a philosophical significance. But what is this philosophical significance? In a first moment we could say that the Cartesian ego has an immediate access to itself - it grasps itself in the experience of doubt - whereas the lacanian ego is constituted and literally formed through an identification with an image, paradigmatically its own image in the mirror. This implies that identity is, according to Lacan, always and structurally 'from the other'. It only comes about through the identification with something that I am not. The ego doesn't grasp itself immediately as what it is, but it becomes what it is through an identification that is structurally alienating. 'I' love the image because it allows me to be or to become somebody, but since this image is 'from the other' it at the same time alienates me from myself. However, the ego also structurally misrecognizes its inequality with the image. It believes to be identical to how it appears to itself. The Cartesian ego falls into this trap and we could interpret Lacan's effort in this context as an attempt to undo the misrecognition of which the Cartesian subject is the result. Lacan, in other words, gives an account of the genesis of the Cartesian illusion and more generally of the modern subject.

In order to further elucidate this idea<sup>21</sup> let us turn for a short moment, and without losing ourselves in a detailed analysis of this text, to Heidegger's analysis of the Cartesian subject as we find it in the 9<sup>th</sup> 'Zusatz' (appendix) to his text on the 'The Age of the World Picture'. Heidegger in the 'The Age of the World Picture' shows that in modernity being means 'being represented': 'The being is no longer that which presents. Rather, it is that which in representation, is first set over and against (entgegen Gestellte), with the character of an object (Gegen-ständige). Representation, setting before, is a making everything stand over and against as object (Ver-gegen-ständlichung).' (Heidegger, 2002, p. 82) He adds a little bit further in the same appendix: 'The subject, the

<sup>21</sup> For what follows see also M. Borch-Jacobsen, Lacan. Le Maître absolu, Flammarion, Paris 1990, p. 60-96.

fundamental certainty, is that always secured entity which representing man always co-represents along with human or non-human beings, along, that is, with the objectified' (Heidegger, 2002, p. 82)

It is this 'Age of the World Picture' that Lacan's analysis seems to point at. With regard of the ego he speaks of 'a statue in which man project himself' and of a 'stasis de l'être' and he concludes: 'Now, this formal stagnation is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge: that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity and substantiality...'. (Lacan, 1989, p. 19) The experience of the mirror stage, as Lacan thematizes it, turns the world of the human being into a world of substantial stability that lies in front of us...It is the world as *Vorstellung*. He writes in this context: 'It is the stability of the standing posture, the prestige of the stature, the impressiveness of statues, which set the style for the identification in which the ego finds its starting-point and leave their imprint in it for ever.' (Lacan, 2003, p. 302) All of this implies that, for Lacan, the act in and through which the ego comes to be and in and through which the ego grasps itself – the identification with the mirror image – is also the act in and through which the world becomes an image, a '*Vor-stellung*' in the Heideggerian sense.

Lacan's early theories of the ego enter completely into the philosophical debates on the status of modern subjectivity. What then is so specifically psychoanalytic about them? Here I should recall that the theory of the mirror-stage was primarily meant to understand paranoia which in many respects is 'the' Lacanian pathology. Or even more radically, in this theory the ego was thought from the outset according to the model of paranoia. Lacan indeed relates what I have just said about the world becoming an image that lies in front of us waiting to be mastered by our curious gaze, to what he calls the essentially paranoid character of human knowledge. He further relates the constitutive paradox of the ego – the image that forms me and allows me to become somebody, at the same time alienates me from myself – with the aggressivity and jealousy that characterizes the paranoid experience. The structural misrecognition that characterizes the ego finally accounts for the certainty of the paranoid subject that knows no doubt neither about itself, nor about the other. Every thing here is a matter of degree: there is no essential difference between what we consider to be 'normal' and psychopathology. Hence, if it is true that Lacan in his theory of the mirror stage reconstructs the genesis of the Cartesian ego, it is equally true that in doing so he inscribes madness in the heart of the ego that is itself thought and understood from the point of view of pathology. If there

is such a thing as a Lacanian anthropology, it is a clinical anthropology (a patho-analysis of existence).

This perspective also characterizes Lacan's work as it developed in the fifties and sixties. It's basic axioms are well known. In essence the human being is a speaking being. On the basis of the human beings inscription in the order of the law and of language it is characterized by an unappeasable lack that gives life to (in essence insatiable) desire. The neurotic, Lacan teaches us further, has never accepted this lack and psychoanalytic therapy now aims to achieve this acceptance in extremis. Furthermore Lacan himself often articulates these insights in the language of the philosophical tradition (Kant, Hegel, Kojeve, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty). For example he describes the attitude of the neurotic that characterizes desire in terms of Heideggerian inauthenticity ('Das Man') and the acceptance of this lack which psychoanalysis pursues becomes the equivalent of the acceptance of the 'Sein zum Tode'. (Lacan, 2002, p. 31-106) Hence it comes as no great surprise that the suspicion has arisen in many that there is no real contrast between the philosophical tradition and psychoanalysis, and that in fact the latter is merely an extension of the former.

Yet in this manner no justice is done to the originality of Lacan's thought. Even though Lacan undoubtedly defines the human being on the basis of a (symbolic) lack, that is not the whole story. At the same time Lacan describes various subjective positions – one may think of the hysterical position or that of obsessive compulsive neurosis – which are that many ways to deal with that lack.<sup>22</sup> And it is noteworthy that Lacan formulates these positions of the subject from the perspective of an intrinsic reference to pathology. Furthermore, there is no 'normal' or 'healthy' position. This means that also for Lacan 'psychical health' must rather be understood in terms of an interplay of positions which out of themselves refer to pathology, rather than as the attainment of a state that can be defined entirely independent from psychopathology.

<sup>22</sup> Concerning the problematic of these positions see: Philippe Van Haute, Against Adaptation. Jacques Lacan's 'subversion' of the subject', Other Press, New York, 2002, pp. 217-282.

One might object at this point that already very early on a number of psychoanalytic authors – one may for example think of Freud’s daughter, Anna<sup>23</sup>, and the ego-psychologists – abandoned the crystal-principle as determinative methodological principle. Without a doubt this is the case. At the same time it is obvious that the relinquishing of this principle<sup>24</sup> is directly linked with the explicit wish of these authors to make psychoanalysis acceptable to the established sciences. This proves – as it were a contrario – that what brings psychoanalysis into conflict with these sciences – and the philosophical tradition/ - is nothing other than the concept of a clinical anthropology as I have briefly tried to sketch it in the foregoing.

---

<sup>23</sup> In this context see for example: A.Freud, Psychoanalytic Psychology of normal Development, The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1982.

<sup>24</sup> As well as, abandoning the concept of a constitutive confusion of tongues between the child and the adult.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: THE PROJECT OF A CLINICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN FREUD AND BEYOND?

Freud stands at the cradle of the project of a clinical anthropology. Although the ‘anthropologizing’ of psychiatry and psychiatric nosography which I addressed in the foregoing is not the only pillar on which this project is built, it is undoubtedly the most important one.<sup>25</sup> Thinking the human condition from out of its pathological variations implies a break with the philosophical tradition that presupposes a strict and essential distinction between ‘normality’ and pathology’. The philosophical originality of psychoanalytic thinking lies indeed much more in this radical questioning of the relation between normality and pathology, than in Freud’s insights on the primacy of sexuality or of the unconscious as such.

This questioning delineates its proper field of research which transcends psychoanalysis *sensu stricto*. Indeed, the deepening and development of the psychoanalytic project of a clinical anthropology will undoubtedly gain advantage from, sometimes unexpected, confrontations with other domains of science. One may for example think of certain currents in evolutionary psychiatry in which, following the example set by Freud and psychoanalysis, ‘normality’ is understood as an extension of, or even on the basis of, psychopathology. Psychopathology is there conceived as the effect of principally adaptive mechanisms – which are present in everyone - becoming ‘unhinged’.<sup>26</sup> We could think here e.g. of anxiety that in itself is an adaptive mechanism, but which when occurring at the wrong occasions or in the wrong intensities can also lead us to pathology. In the same manner, creativity and schizophrenia may be situated on the same continuous scale, for example. (Stevens & Price, 2000, p. 151) Hence we find in evolutionary psychiatry a problematic that in many respects comes close to Freudian thinking.<sup>27</sup>

The field of research that is determined in this way can further be specified and articulated by the number of problems it raises and which must be investigated further. Freud – and together with him

<sup>25</sup> We should also mention here the constitutive ‘confusion of tongues between the child and the adult’ (Ferenczi) which is another crucial presupposition of Freudian and psychoanalytic clinical anthropology. For an explanation of this ‘confusion’ in its relation to the anthropologizing’ of psychiatry we are discussing here see Van Haute & Geyskens, *Confusion of tongues. The primacy of sexuality in Freud, Ferenczi and Laplanche*, Other Press, New York, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> In this context see for example A. Stevens & J.Price, *Evolutionary Psychiatric. A New Beginning*, Routledge, London/Philadelphia, 2000 (second edition).

<sup>27</sup> See in this respect Simon Baron-Cohen (ed), *The Maladapted Mind. Classic Readings in Evolutionary Psychopathology*, Psychology Press, Erlbaum (UK), 1997.

the psychoanalysis tradition – wishes to investigate human existence from the perspective of its pathological variants. This implies that, according to him, psychopathology is typically human. At the very least this is not self-evident, and this thought must be deepened and further elucidated.<sup>28</sup> I have also already pointed out that different psychoanalytic authors take their starting point in different pathologies and hence arrive at different conclusions regarding the fundamental structures of human existence. This problematic also deserves closer attention and must be studied further in view of the fact that it appears to introduce a moment of arbitrariness into the debate.

I have claimed that the crystal principle confers onto psychoanalysis its own identity such that it cannot simply be recuperated into the philosophical tradition. Freud and psychoanalysis are of course not the first and only to subject this hypocritical opposition between ‘normality’ and pathology to a critical inquiry. On the contrary, we may find the same concern in, for example, the work of Nietzsche, Foucault or Deleuze. The confrontation of psychoanalysis with the work of these authors consequently provides an ideal opportunity to investigate the crystal principle – and its possible added value with regard to more traditional approaches. Even though these authors do not appear to defend the same anthropologization of psychopathology, this does in no way mean that psychoanalysis would not have anything to gain or learn from a debate with Foucault and Nietzsche. What is the status of the nosological categories that psychiatry works with, and how do they come about?<sup>29</sup> Are they not the result of hidden strategies of power which must be analyzed and unmasked? And is the ‘child’ the primacy of which psychoanalysis affirms, not a historical construction, the genealogy of which is yet to be written?

If it is to be viable, clinical anthropology must be able to provide an answer to the critiques that have been leveled against traditional philosophical anthropology during the course of the twentieth century. The latter has indeed increasingly come under much hostile fire in the wake of the work of, for example, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida. Foucault, for example, is of the opinion that the human being – in its modern form of a self-conscious subject at the absolute origin of its own meaning and sense – is a recent invention which is doomed to disappear in the not too distant future. (Foucault, 1966, p. 398) Philosophical anthropology makes this self-conscious human being the object of its study – and consequently risks disappearing with its object, or at the least stands to

<sup>28</sup> On this point see Fons Van Coillie, *Zijn psychische stoornissen specifiek menselijk?*

<sup>29</sup> See on this e.g. A. De Block & P. Adriaens, *The Evolution of a Social Construction. The Case of Male Homosexuality* (forthcoming).



lose its legitimacy. Heidegger and Derrida are also of the opinion that the project of a philosophical anthropology is intrinsically linked to the triumph of modern subjectivity. (Heidegger, p. 311-366) The future will tell whether Freud's project of a clinical anthropology will offer sufficient possibilities to outline a philosophical anthropology – that is the philosophical reflection on the 'anthropological difference' - able to answer the criticisms mentioned above.

## REFERENCES

- Merleau-Ponty, M., Préface, in: Hesnard, E., *L'oeuvre de Freud et son importance pour le Monde Moderne*, Paris: Payot.
- Freud, S. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. Standard Edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII*, trans. E. Strachey
- Blankenburg, W. (1970) *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur Psychopathologie der symptomarmen Schizophrenie*, Stuttgart: Enke.
- Lacan, J. (1989) *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of The I. In Ecrits. a Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London and New York: Routledge.
- Heidegger, M (2002) *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Lacan, L. (1989) *Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis. In Ecrits, a Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London and New York: Routledge
- Lacan, J. (2003) "Some Reflections on the Ego", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis Key Papers series. Papers from the Decades, Influential Papers from the 1950s*, London and New York: Karnac.
- Lacan, J. (2002) *The function and field of Speech and Language in psychoanalysis, In Ecrits, a Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink, W.W. Norton & Co.
- Stevens, A. & Price, J. (2000) (second edition) *Evolutionary Psychiatrie. A New Beginning*, London/Philadelphia: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1966) *Les mots et les choses*, Paris: Galimard.
- Heidegger, M. Brief über den Humanismus, in: Klostermann, V., *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main