

## Misinterpretations of the Conception of Psychoanalysis According to Merleau-Ponty

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### **Abstract**

*This article is part of ongoing research on Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Psychoanalysis. The study proceeds from the thesis that the philosopher has an original intuition, which reveals important and innovative points to Philosophy and Psychoanalysis. The work presented here addresses one of the courses taught by Merleau-Ponty at the Sorbonne from 1949 to 1952 that deals with the adult's view of the child. On this subject, the philosopher presents the limits of the current philosophical and scientific conceptions, and concerning the purpose of our study, he presents misconceptions, not only about the child but about Psychoanalysis; interpretations of Freudian concepts that contradict what is original and innovative in Psychoanalysis, and how this generates a misconception about the child, reducing Psychoanalysis to a reactionary theory.*

**Keywords:** philosophy of psychoanalysis, existential-phenomenology, psychoanalysis, Merleau-Ponty, Freud

Merleau-Ponty (Severo 2018; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023) presents an original and relevant intuition about Psychoanalysis. The way he apprehends Freudian thought, for example, allows him to use it as an important tool and source of data for his philosophical reflections. We realize that Psychoanalysis appears in his works ambiguously – it is a

source of criticism for him, who demands a purification of it to extirpate its determinism and metapsychological naturalism; and Psychoanalysis provides a new philosophical perspective to him through the clinic, presenting new philosophical premises and overcoming philosophical problems inherited from tradition. We will see Merleau-Ponty's perspective (Severo 2018; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023) on Psychoanalysis in courses on Psychology and Pedagogy taught by the author, in which this intuition and original apprehensions appear. These courses took place at the Sorbonne from 1949 to 1952 and had a total of eight courses, entitled *Psychologie et pédagogie de l'enfant* [Psychology and Pedagogy of the Child]. Psychoanalysis is not the subject of all courses, but it appears in most of them.

The objective of this work is to describe how the philosopher understands Psychoanalysis in *L'enfant vu par l'adulte* [The child as seen by the adult] – the second course of the set and the first in which Psychoanalysis is thematized. Before, we shall visit the first – *La conscience et l'acquisition du langage* [Consciousness and the acquisition of language], where Merleau-Ponty (1949-52b) presents the philosophical method that he will use throughout all the courses.

Something that may be curious to many psychoanalysts, about the course *La conscience et l'acquisition du langage*, is that Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) does not use Psychoanalysis in his analysis, even though the element of language is present – something appreciated by many psychoanalysts. He understands that, contemporaneously, the problem of language between Philosophy and Psychology is because, ironically, due to a philosophical tradition (passing through Descartes and Kant), language has been deprived of all its philosophical meaning and reduced to a strictly technical question. Language is denied all its philosophical significance and framed as a merely technical tool or instrument. The author sees in the tradition two philosophical lines on the subject that contributed to the formation of this problematic view

of language – on the one hand, the line of *reflexive conception* that forged the problem; on the other, the lines that use the *inductive method* that failed to solve the problem of knowledge, and contributed to its aggravation, reducing language to a technical instrument exclusive for its application. The solution for Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) would be the phenomenological method because it is the only one that stands as a path that seeks to make contact with the facts and aims to understand them in themselves.

The phenomenological method allows us to read and decipher facts in a way that gives them meaning – which occurs in the apprehension of the phenomena variation, and a common meaning emerges from the variations. Besides Philosophy – since the problem of language lies between it and Psychology –, Psychology, through Gestalt, applies the phenomenological method to observe the conduct of animals; it sees this method as a qualitative method to promote qualitative descriptions (configured in an intersubjective and not subjective knowledge, since it manages, according to the philosopher, to describe something observable by all). The profound meaning of this intersubjective knowledge refers to great philosophical problems that slide into two important points concerning our theme. The first is the importance of the possibility of apprehending animals' conduct according to the animal itself (the monkey by the monkey itself, in the case of Gestalt) and not according to man. For the author, this is the repetition of greater philosophical problems of Kantian origin. That is, for Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) knowledge cannot be restricted to the limits of subjectivity (or to how it is presented) – something that, more contemporaneously, results in the problem called *humanism* by Phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1956-57). Therefore, under subjective conditions, it would be impossible to know animals by themselves, since it would always be according to man. This is replicated in *L'enfant vu par l'adulte*, because, as the title exposes, there is no apprehension

of the child's conduct by the child because the scientist is an adult. Thus, every theory about the child, every psychology and pedagogy of the child, is the adult's view of the child, just as man's view of the animal. In this way, everything is reduced to an adult's version of the child. Once childhood is abandoned and one becomes an adult, the subjective conditions of knowledge are adult and not infantile, and the child becomes an inaccessible object of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 1949-52a). Therefore, having a way to access the phenomenon as itself, something that Gestalt accomplishes with animal conduct, is fundamental to accessing the child according to themselves. As we shall see, for the philosopher, this will be one of the great contributions of Psychoanalysis because it methodologically breaks with the tradition and, like the phenomenological method, allows us to read and decipher facts in a way that gives them meaning.

Our second point of concern refers to the qualitative aspect of the phenomenological and psychoanalytic methods used. They are forms that access facts, not by verification, that is, to verify a hypothesis that transcends phenomena (whether this hypothesis comes from a pure understanding or from a language based on a logical form), but to find the meaning in these same facts, the inherent meaning of the facts. This qualitative aspect resonates with a philosophical objective, which Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*; 1956-57) understands that Bergson defined (and barely practiced) but which he will apply, that philosophy must discover the meaning of the phenomena described by scientists. The role of the philosopher is to reconstruct the world seen by Science, including all the fringes not mentioned or thematized by it and which provide contact with the qualitative world. Immersed in this qualitative world, the philosopher understands that we can see no differences between Psychology and Philosophy – since Philosophy has never lost its contact with the facts, despite subjectivism and humanism saying otherwise. As the contact with the facts has not been lost, Philosophy has always

been applied qualitatively as well, and Psychology is always implicit in it. We shall now see how Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) understands Psychoanalysis through the child as seen by the adult.

In the course *L'enfant vu par l'adulte*, Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) proposes Pedagogy as his object for it is understood (natural attitude) as a technique of education supported by a Science – the Psychology of the Child. Thus, Pedagogy is the effective application and technique of a Science – the Psychology of the Child. Psychology would be constituted as a Science because it studies and aims to understand behaviors by causal relationships. Pedagogy would be a technique because it studies means and ends that would transform Psychology into rules of action or norms of conduct to be able to educate someone. Trying to transform a Science into rules of action, the restricted technical level of Pedagogy is revealed: 1) in the beginning, it is subordinated to the Science of Psychology, it is an application of this Science; 2) but as it enters the rules of action and norms of conduct in educating children, it is also subordinated to morals. To educate, the pedagogue uses pre-established values in the application of the Science of Psychology. Merleau-Ponty (89)<sup>1</sup> exemplifies this moral action of the pedagogue, comparing it with that of the doctor, and says that they proceed from 'implicit assumptions such as medicine implicitly postulating that life is valuable and preferable to death'. Therefore, when establishing a set of rules of action and norms of conduct based on the Science of Psychology, the pedagogue uses implicit assumptions to select what they will apply from this Science. These implicit assumptions reveal our first point, that is, the selection is based on a reading of the child seen by the adult and not by the child themselves. The pedagogue uses the subjectivist and humanist view

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this text are our translations of the Brazilian Portuguese versions of the works.

when applying Psychology to the child, verifying and validating this Science as a transcendent theory and not capturing the inherent meaning of the facts – of the child according to themselves. As Merleau-Ponty (90) says, 'there is something artificial in this first passage'. Despite criticizing the split (inherited from tradition) between theory and practice or the application as artificial, he observes that Pedagogy was built around the reactions of the adult towards the child, and the Psychology of the Child tried to see the child from the child's view. The result is that Pedagogy becomes effective as a description or image that the adult makes of the child.

Referring to conflict between Pedagogy and the Psychology of the Child, via Gestalt, being an attempt to see the child for themselves, for Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), Psychoanalysis overcomes the difficulty of both – because it opts and acts more in the child/adult relationship than the problematic subjective adult/child relationship. Psychoanalysis carries out this description, which goes beyond the proposal put above the tradition, which makes the child an inaccessible fact, through the clinic. He realizes that during the analysis some behaviors of the adults reveal the child/adult relationship. Merleau-Ponty (92) exemplifies with the aggressive reactions that an adult manifests during a session – when verifying the genesis of these reactions, one perceives 'for example in the case of a sixty-five-year-old grandmother, whose hostility towards her grandson turns out to be the displacement of an old hostility towards her brother, born when she was two years old'. Thus, due to the timelessness of the unconscious (Freud 1915a)<sup>2</sup>, no matter the age of the grandmother, her hostility dates from her age of two, that is, the two-year-old child manifests

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<sup>2</sup> We chose to indicate references to Freud's texts that show, according to our interpretation, what Merleau-Ponty refers to and that validate his original and relevant intuition about Psychoanalysis. It was not possible to insert the description in each of Freud's referenced texts about how we found what was inferred by the philosopher and how valid his proposal is.

herself in the sixty-five-year-old lady, putting her in direct contact with her as a child. These displacements provide experiences that allow us to contact and describe the child's self-perception, breaking with the impossibility posed by the principles that proceed from tradition. We found an important path through the Psychoanalysis of investigation – how these displacements, by bringing back these behaviors, allow our access to facts and phenomena in themselves and in a generalized way. Merleau-Ponty's point about the generalization is because he does not forget that 'psychoanalysis studies interindividual relations as they are established in the flow of life' (1949-52a: 93). Therefore, the displacement exemplified by the hostility of the sixty-five-year-old grandmother, despite revealing a path to the facts and phenomena itself (the child themselves), due to the demarcation of the field of the psychoanalytic clinic (interindividual relations), requires Psychoanalysis to be able to answer two (similar) questions so that there is generalization and validation of the proposed object of study by the philosopher. Thus, Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) asks: 'to what extent can we apply Psychoanalysis to the study of social relations?'. Answering this question allows us to answer another more relevant question: 'what is necessary to think about Psychoanalysis as an instrument of a collective psychology and a philosophy?'. The last question reveals the importance of generalization; when Psychoanalysis generalizes its discoveries, through interindividual relationships, it validates its path of access to facts and phenomena in itself, as well as validates it as an instrument of a Philosophy.

Answering these questions means, for him, to be faced with the misunderstanding constituted in the conception not only of or about Psychoanalysis about this point (generalization, social, collective, etc.) but also of Psychoanalysis itself. Therefore, to get to it as an instrument of a Philosophy, that is, to perform as a qualitative mode, like the phenomenological method; to provide qualitative descriptions in

contact with the facts; and, like Philosophy, to be able to reconstruct the world seen by Science, with the fringe that Science does not thematize and that provides contact with the qualitative world. There are many misconceptions to be cleared up. This Psychoanalysis anchored in mistakes, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) calls *Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense*; which he contrasts with a *Psychoanalysis in the broad sense*, with no mark of the mistakes of tradition, overcoming them, and revealing a broad meaning. For him, it is possible to distinguish these two conceptions, but the confusion between them occurred during the history of Psychoanalysis, and remains until today, because these two conceptions are intertwined in Freud's work, which oscillates constantly between them in his descriptions. He understands that it is necessary to distinguish them, because they have essential differences, and by undoing the mistakes of tradition present in psychoanalytic formulations, we separate them.

According to Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*), the first challenge that the mistakes of Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense pose is to understand, for Psychoanalysis is an instrument of Philosophy, how the roles of individual history and that of historical and social drama are played in the formation of the individual. For him, in general, when observing the patterns of conduct of an individual, Psychoanalysis is not concerned with seeing these schemes anchored in social life or how social life imposes these schemes on people. Thus, in order not to reduce the formation of the individual to his individual history, for Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*), it is necessary to extend psychoanalytic studies to social life. He begins his analysis of the feasibility of this extension with the father of Psychoanalysis, in which he realizes that the Freudian view on this point tends to consider every historical and/or social drama as a manifestation or repetition of another drama, namely, a parental drama. Merleau-Ponty (93) exemplifies this Freudian attitude in his explanation of totemism, in which the totemic ritual would be in essence 'the



disguised reevaluation of an old parricide'. It would escape Freud (1913), in his eagerness for a point of foundation of civilization, to realize that the social would not result from individual experiences, in the sense that it would found the social, but that this social pre-exists it, that is, if it is possible to conceive this experience isolated from relations with institutions, for example, this is not carried out. As we have always lived in society, this requires our experiences to be broader than strictly individual.

Mezan (2019) follows the philosopher's view of the interconnection between 'individual' and 'collective' functioning. Unlike Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), for the author, this transition from the individual to the collective was not problematic, but a Freudian way of conceiving the structures of culture. This transition of the same functioning from the individual to the collective is demonstrated by Mezan (2019) without the problems pointed out by Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a). The emphasis on these two authors helps us to understand the difference in the position concerning *metapsychology*. Freud (Glymour 2018; Mezan 2017; Severo 2021) has always categorized Psychoanalysis as a Natural Science, and the epistemological model is Newtonian Physics – as well as the Darwinian view. Thus, all metapsychology is structured in this epistemological parameter. This implies that Freud's metapsychological theorization of psychic functioning aims at the status of a law of nature – such as that of inertia in Physics, for example. Within Freud's ambition (Glymour 2018; Mezan 2017; Severo 2021), of elevating psychic laws to laws of nature, there is no room for individual and collective or social distinction, since, in Physics, the law does not refer to an individual or social body, but to bodies in general. Therefore, the transition from the individual to the collective, so criticized by Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) and revealed by Mezan (2019), presents no obstacles to Freud because both, individual and society, would be manifestations of the same psychic mechanisms, which,

according to Freud's deterministic and naturalistic view, are not exclusive to the individual, but are a general law of functioning present both in a person and in a civilization. Terminologically, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) would be mistaken in epistemological terms in saying that Freud (1913; 2020) sees the historical and social drama as a manifestation and repetition of an individual drama, because, in this deterministic and naturalistic epistemological matrix, the psychic mechanism is not individual or subjective, but a universal and objective functioning. Therefore, it does not depend on where it manifests itself, individually or collectively, because these criteria are not valid for a psychic law that claims to be of nature. Freud (1940: 49) makes this identity of Psychoanalysis clear, as a Science, with Physics when he declares that he intended to constitute psychic functioning as a law of nature, because:

The conception that the psychic is in itself unconscious, allows Psychology to be configured as one among the other Natural Sciences. The processes with which it is concerned are in themselves as unknowable as those of the other Sciences, chemistry or physics, but it is possible to establish the laws to which they obey, to follow their mutual relations and their dependencies without leaving gaps for long distances, that is, what is designated as the understanding of the field of natural phenomena in question.

For this reason, it is not surprising when Freud (1921: 137) understands that 'in the individual psychic life, the other is, as a rule, seen as a model, as an object, as a helper, and as an opponent, and so from the very first individual psychology, in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well'. For, since the 'rule' – which establishes what these relations of

model, object, helper, and opponent are – is given by laws that obey natural phenomena and that are the same or simultaneous to social and individual psychology, this shows us that both forms of psychology are subject to these universal and necessary laws, becoming indistinct.

Thus, one of the reasons for the individual/social transition in Psychoanalysis to be a problem for Merleau-Ponty (Severo 2018; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023) is his refusal of metapsychology being based on the Natural Sciences. This epistemological point of support of Freud (Glymour 2018; Mezan 2017; Severo 2021) is exactly one of the things that need to be refined in Psychoanalysis to the philosopher. This possible metapsychological epistemological virtue is, for Merleau-Ponty (Severo 2018; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023), a vice, which makes it repeat the tradition that he criticizes. Purifying Psychoanalysis of all this determinism and naturalism is fundamental so that it can be an instrument of a Philosophy; and hence the philosophical stress of Psychoanalysis to Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) will be the clinic as opposed to theory and metapsychology. Without metapsychology, because it needs to be purified, the transition from the individual to the collective or social becomes a problem, because it now lacks foundation. To think that it is the same psychic mechanism, the same law that does not depend on whether it manifests itself in a person or in a culture, is to think in a deterministic and naturalistic way, something outdated and reactionary of theory and metapsychology. Thus, this is more a *classic detriment or overflight thought*, rather than a response to Merleau-Ponty (1945; 1964).

Thus, having rejecting the metapsychological deterministic and naturalistic answer, the questions 'to what extent can we apply psychoanalysis to the study of social relations?' and 'what is necessary to think of psychoanalysis as an instrument of a collective Psychology and a Philosophy?' (Merleau-Ponty, 1949-52a: 93) remain open, and now Psychoanalysis requires a foundation for this transition to become

an instrument of a Philosophy. This Freudian attitude of seeing the historical and social drama as a manifestation and repetition of an individual or parental drama is paradoxical, in the sense that our behaviors are contained in a set of relationships with others. This implies that all our relationships with others cannot be understood from the point of view of individual behaviors, as their manifestations or repetitions. Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) perceives Freud's effort to try to link the infantile attitude to the social one via relations with the parents, because they would be the child's first social form, but there is the absence of other factors in Freud's descriptions of the composition of the social attitude, since every integration into society implies an extension, a modification of individual life, and at the same time reveals an incompleteness in Freud's formulations of how the properly social components constitute the individual attitude.

Having presented the problem existing in this first misunderstanding, Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) attempts a conclusion with the objective of, not closing the question, but broadening it, so that other misunderstandings arise to be overcome and carry out Psychoanalysis as an instrument of Philosophy. He concludes that the Freudian intention is not verified, because it is not feasible to see the individual history as the sole determinant of social attitude in an individual. Interindividual history, the way social rules are presented and apprehended, and the historical drama experienced, at least for him, play important roles in the formation of the individual. Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) understands that the method used by Freud proposes analogies between historical and interindividual drama with individual history, and that, from a heuristic point of view, this Freudian method opened up new forms of investigation. However, it proved to be insufficient because it was not supported by historical evidence, so Freudian descriptions were not able to overcome the dimension of hypotheses, becoming effective as conjectures based on individual Psychoanalysis.

The final result is that Psychoanalysis has deprived itself of what is most authentic in the individual reading, because the lack of foundation of the transition to the collective, by not collectively validating the theory, calls into question in a generalized way everything it says.

Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense worsens this problem that was disseminated through theory and metapsychology, for Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*), because it prolongs the individual historical prevalence to a limited psychoanalytic system. In this system, it is added, to the prolongation of individual historical prevalence, the reduction of all human conduct to a strict sexual composition, in which the term sexual is reduced, losing all its original haughtiness and authenticity. The chronification occurs because, according to him, the system constituted by the narrow sense, in addition to disregarding the historical and social drama, reduces the explanations about human conduct to three stages: first, the adult's conduct is based on his infantile prehistory. Secondly, this infantile prehistory remains in the unconscious state. Thirdly, this infantile unconscious is of a sexual nature. Thus, we get to the second mistake in the conception of Psychoanalysis, in which the exit from this restrictive system occurs via Psychoanalysis in the author's broad sense<sup>3</sup>.

To overcome the second misconception, Merleau-Ponty (*Ib.*) understands that the conception in the broad sense differs from the conception in the narrow sense in each of the three stages. About the first time, in the broad sense, it understands that the children's prehistory present in the adult is not in an inert state, as suggested by the proposal of children's prehistory in the narrow sense. He realizes

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<sup>3</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) attributes Psychoanalysis in the broad sense (following, he understands, Politzer, Bachelard, Sartre, and Lacan) to the second period of Freud's career. However, he does not date these periods or indicate Freud's works to highlight these distinctions, but everything leads us to believe that the author refers to metapsychology I on the one hand and II on the other, or between metapsychology I and II on the one hand and clinical psychology on the other – something to be verified at another time. However, textual evidence points to the second case.

that this prehistory is perpetually recreated by current attitudes, something that is consistent with Freud's proposal of *verarbeiten* (elaborate) and *nachträglich* (a posteriori) (1914b; 1920; Hanns 1996; Severo 2022). Therefore, he realizes that the 'complex' is a trauma that the child never wanted to overcome, being continually recreated; unacceptance leads to regression. In the second period, in the narrow sense, considering the children's prehistory in an inert and unconscious state, the philosopher understands that Politzer's (1928) version – which replaces the notion of the unconscious with that of *ambivalence* – would be more valid. According to Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), the unconscious conceived in the narrow sense makes Politzer's (1928) proposal that the unconscious is a creation of the analyst more valid than conceiving it in an inert state because it is more sustainable.

The process of creation of the unconscious would occur in the art of interpretation (Freud 1900) for Politzer (1928). According to the philosopher, it is through this art (Freud 1914b; 1920), where the psychoanalyst would translate the report or narrative of the analysand, using a psychoanalytic language, that a second narrative was constituted giving birth to the unconscious. To make it worse, the analyst would not be content with just translating and constructing the second narrative, giving birth to the unconscious, but he also supposes that this is the true narrative and that the analysand wants to hide or repress it because it has exactly the true meaning. For Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), if the unconscious is how Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense presents it, Politzer (1928) would be right in pointing out that this substitution for an interpreted narrative of the original narrative is illegitimate – and worse, a static and inert unconscious turns out to be something that Freud (1915a) emphasized that the unconscious was not, that is, a *second consciousness*, behind a first and being its deposit. Exemplifying the duplicity of the dream, of the difference between the dreamed dream and the reported dream, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a)

points out that Politzer (1928) declares that the dreamer in the dreamed dream lives the dream with symbols that would not be based on conventional signs, and this allows him to disguise the concreteness of his dreamlike thought. This concreteness would be structured in affective realities full of meaning and freely created. Awoken, the dreamer no longer recognizes these senses, because awakened, the signs regain their conventional meaning, and soon the meaning of the dreamed dream remains to the dreamer in an 'ambivalent state (lived, experienced, felt, but ignored), in no way in the unconscious state' (Merleau-Ponty 1949-52a: 96). Faced with this second period of Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense, the philosopher understands that the notion of ambivalence is preferable because it would comprehend clinical phenomena (for example, resistance to treatment, the simultaneity of love and hate, desires expressed by anxiety, among others) more than the notion of a static and inert unconscious, which would finally come as a second consciousness. The overcoming of this second period of Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense by Psychoanalysis in the broad sense takes place with the third period – which refers to the issue of sexuality.

Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) had already pointed out that, understood by Psychoanalysis in the broad sense and by Freud (1905), it requires the distinction of the genital, which would reduce it to relations with and functioning of the sexual organs. For him, the sexual in Freud (*Ib.*) refers to any affective relationship or investment that contains the genital but goes beyond it. Freud improves the concept, and it indicates to the author a generalization of the notion that would encompass corporeality and body consciousness, expressed, for example, when Freud (1915b; 1924) uses the term *sexual and aggressive*, which would indicate that sexuality is contained in the general relations of the subject with others. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) perceives some development in Freud (2020) of a

*metagenital* sense of sexuality by linking it to a range of collective notions (projection, identification, and fixation, for example) that reveal the phenomena of alienation to others – something that he realizes will be deepened later in Psychoanalysis by post-Freudians. He cites, as an example of this deepening, Lacan's *mirror stage* (1949), where, according to him, there will be a more concrete description of infantile narcissism, in which he reveals the alienating fascination of the child in the contemplation of their image – which does not originate from themselves. For Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), Lacan (1949) reveals the infantile experience of the 'contrast between the vision of one's body as seen from the outside, as seen by others, and the image one has of oneself (the contrast of the self as object and the self as lived, experienced consciousness)' (Merleau-Ponty 1949-52a: 96). According to the philosopher, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense reveals elements of our relations with others, such as the identification and alienation based on sexuality. However, it is these relations that determine the identification, and not the other way around, showing the conquest of these relations over individual sexuality. According to him, sexuality, in general, is fundamental in these relations, as the mirror stage (Lacan 1949) shows us in its relations with the body, but corporeality goes beyond sexuality as a major element that contains it. In this way, the philosopher understands that the overcoming of Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense, and all its three periods, occurs when we perceive that sexuality intervenes as a component of corporeality; or the conduct cannot be explained by it alone, something that Psychoanalysis in a broad sense accomplishes, for it does not reduce all human conduct to the sexual, but strives to describe how the sexual participates as a fundamental component of all human conduct.

Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) concludes that the proposals of Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense are unfeasible, and I understand that they are unsustainable. The philosopher presents another case



that would corroborate the unsustainability of these proposals, which is the narrow psychoanalytic analysis of jealousy. Freud (1922) would explain that, for Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense and for him, someone's jealousy for their partner is due to a latent homosexuality. Therefore, according to this narrow conception, a woman, for example, feels jealous of her partner with another woman, not for him, but because she desires the woman – not her partner. The rivalry or competition occurs at the latent level distinctly and unusually to consciousness, for the real rivalry and competition would be between the woman and her partner for the third party, for the other woman – whom both would desire at the same time. Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) understands that this conception is not sustained, since it is possible to conceive of many other factors in the composition of jealousy than only latent homosexuality. Freud (1922) proposes another element that makes up jealousy – the desire for infidelity in the partner. In this way, Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense is faced with the adversity of its proposals that reveal them as unsustainable and unfeasible. However, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense – through its analyses and interpretations – gives these conceptions – jealousy and sexuality, for example – a sustainable and incontestable meaning, by revealing the depth of what is at stake. That is, the connection we have with the people or things we love is greater than the connection with anything or anyone. The sphere of sexual interest, according to the author, encompasses everything that has been invested by the subject. Thus, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense reveals that there is a sexual polymorphism of the one who loves by investing their sexuality and love in beloved people and objects. And that, in the case of jealousy, the woman who loves a man or a partner finds herself bound inevitably through him to a sphere or universe of things and persons, and she also finds herself bound to persons and things to which he, her partner, is attached. Thus, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a: 97) realizes that 'in her

identification with her husband, the jealous woman feels deeply present in the loving relationships that he can maintain with another person, her suffering comes above all from what she is involved in, whether she wants it or not'. The advantage of the description by Psychoanalysis in a broad sense, for the philosopher, in addition to overcoming the misconception by Psychoanalysis in the narrow sense, is to present the sexual sphere as a general phenomenon. By achieving this, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense succeeds in fulfilling the philosopher's initial goal – that of Psychoanalysis being an instrument of a Philosophy. By showing us that every relationship, via sexuality, flows over and around it, encompassing a whole set of experiences and elements that influence the feelings of those involved, it being an emotional and sexual sphere, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense shows that 'from this perspective, Freud's idea seems incontestable. The example [of jealousy] shows us the necessity of considering in social psychology the profound unity of all conducts' (*Ib.*) as a general phenomenon. Thus, Psychoanalysis in a broad sense makes, in a qualitative way, like the phenomenological method, qualitative descriptions in contact with the facts, and can, like Philosophy, play the role of reconstructing the world seen by Science, with the fringe that Science does not thematize and that provides contact with the qualitative world. Following the course, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) sees, in Hélène Deutsch (1925), attempts to expand Psychoanalysis to the broad sense, and Jacques Lacan (1938) as one of the achievements of this expansion. Thus, he proceeds to analyze specific works of both to show how this process of expansion is underway in the first and how it is carried out in the second.

For Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), Deutsch (1925) aims at this profound unity of all behaviors by manifesting it in some specific universal behaviors. The first refers to birth, in which the author highlights the transition from a condition of the organism to the subject.

Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) identifies in this experience, philosophically speaking, the transition from the *in-itself* to the *for-itself*. The woman who will have a child will put in the world another consciousness, a mystery of life, which is not reduced to matter or spirit, but that this experience of pregnancy is all accompanied by anxiety, ambivalence, and conflicts (not only with the child but with the mother's mother and the husband, for example), revealing that it will always be a relationship with someone else. The second conduct is about weaning, in which Deutsch (1925) points to a distressing experience of separation that will promote learning about human loneliness, and that at the same time inserts us into the current of life and communion with another being. Expanding the view on communion with another being, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) observes that these experiences of separation point to the experience of filiation as a concomitant expression of the parents' *being two* and its negation, as the child is a third character that transforms relationships, since it is simultaneously the realization and transformation of *being two*, inserting, among other things, the conflict between individual and species. Focusing on the mother-child relationship, as a human relationship, Deutsch (1925) reveals fundamental extensions of general relations, such as self-double, rivalry, substitution, recognition of oneself in the other, fulfillment, being independent, witness, enslavement, revenge, among others, which manifest varied and fundamental forms of self/other relationships based on feelings and are always ambivalent. As to the father-child relationship, as ambivalent as that of the mother, identification, sacrifice, sadomasochism (punishing the child is synonymous with punishing oneself), the child as one's second self, are examples of these self/other relationships that we find in the parental care of their children. Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) perceives that Lacan (1938) elevates maternity and paternity to an institutional link, something relevant that makes the expansion of Psychoanalysis. In the

case of fatherhood, it requires an identification of the father with the child, which is a construction and is constituted from a free decision, as a human fulfillment created by the life in common. Love relationships, according to the philosopher, are necessarily seen through the prism of autonomy and freedom in Lacan (1938).

Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), observing Lacan (1938), realizes that in human relations between adults, despite the dissymmetries that exist in them, it is possible to place oneself in a dimension that transcends the struggle generated by the differences in relations by renouncing the struggle, allowing them to exercise freedom and autonomy. However, when this loving relationship is between adults and children, it is not possible due to the child's condition, especially in the first years of life, as they do not have the strength to exercise their autonomy and freedom – something that is still developing. Therefore, one of the roles of the adult is to build together with the child their autonomous and free conditions, something that the resistance of the adult, arising from their traumas, will try to boycott. Identifications, either of parents with their parents or of parents with their children, can hinder or assist in the exercise of this function of the adult – which will always happen through complexes, observes Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), referring to Lacan's concept (1938). For the philosopher, Lacan (1938) presents a new conception of the complex that depathologizes the concept and inserts it into a normal formation that belongs to all our conducts, individual or collective. In this way, the family, at its base, is not instinctive, but a complex. The pathological dimension possible to a complex is found in traumatic experiences, which is not the only possible form of complex, but one possibility among others. Thus, the family complex can generate progress if it extends experiences to the child, or neurosis if it restricts them. Another characteristic of the complex is that it is always present in an *imago* (implicit focus of conduct), allowing Lacan (1938), according to Merleau-Ponty (1949-

52a), to replace Freud's notion of the unconscious, from deterministic and naturalistic explanations, by the notion of imaginary – a way of purifying psychoanalysis. The imago, as an imaginary formation, projects itself forward to consciousness, operating a substitution of a retrospective conception of the narrow sense of Psychoanalysis to a prospective conception of the broad sense of Psychoanalysis. In an order of apparitions established by Lacan (1938), and of the establishment of the conditions of autonomy and freedom for Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), the first complex is that of *weaning*. The removal of the mother's breast produces meaning, it becomes a symbol in the human consciousness. The separation inflicted by weaning resumes that of birth, consisting of countless sensations of discomfort and displeasure, felt as threats that make it difficult for the baby *to be*. The imaginary conceives a well-being prior to these sensations and attributes to the breast this power to establish this previous period 'created' by the fantasy at birth. According to Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), in Lacan (1938) we can perceive that in human thought both birth and weaning are separations (beginning or resumption of them) that contrast with the imaginarily structured fantasy of well-being.

The second complex would be that of *intrusion*, which, according to the philosopher, in Lacan (1938), is structured in a struggle for the love of the other, which, in the case of the child, manifests in the struggle for the parents' love. This struggle is not based on a vital order for instinctive survival, but on the human order, constantly anchored in jealousy. Normally, when observing the care given to the youngest, it awakens in us the need and desire for the maternal breast, symbolized in the golden figure of the previous moment or stage of our lives. We then realize that at the base of this complex, there is identification with others, which fuels jealousy. Unlike Freud (1922), Lacan (1938) explains jealousy by the identification and not by the homosexual libido – which 'is two-folded: 1- one experiences everything that the other

experiences: one comes out of oneself and absorbs oneself in the other; 2- but they also feel opposed to the other, they hate them' (Merleau-Ponty 1949-52a: 111). For the philosopher, there is a mixture of sadism and masochism in the Lacanian identification of jealousy, because 'suffering inflicted on others is inflicted on oneself; conversely, by inflicting oneself, the suffering seems to be the other's' (112). Thus, for him, we can see in Lacan (1938) the resumption of the weaning complex through the sadomasochism of jealousy – in this game of suffering, we see the other with admiration and hatred, altering attitudes and roles. According to Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a), for Lacan (1938), the exit from these intrusions of the identification of the complex would occur through a more stable and systematic relationship with the other through the specular image. For him, this image, as identification, would be of a specifically human order, like the human moment in the mirror – the child recognizes and contemplates themselves joyfully, since there is, in the face of fragmentation and somatic dispersions, the domination of their body as their own. Thus, a proprioceptive visual integration into consciousness is formed.

The third and final complex, which concludes our work, would be that of Oedipus. Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) understands that Freud (1925) conceived the complex as a situation structured in incestuous relations between the child and the parent of the opposite sex. In Lacan (1938), he says, the complex would be a form of anticipation or a 'psychological puberty' that transports the child to identifications and rivalries with the parents – relations that provoke interdictions and feelings of guilt in relation to them. The differences between the sexes are based on physiognomy, and with latency, psychological puberty falls asleep until puberty itself, which updates psychological puberty through genital sexuality. Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) concludes that this complex was conceived in an exaggeratedly symmetrical way between boys and girls. Although Freud (1925) sought to present a

dissymmetry via envy of the penis in the girl, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) claims, based on Klein (1945), that he would only break this symmetry if he considered, like the psychoanalyst, the boy's envy of motherhood, something that did not do so and revealed his exaggerated symmetrical way. This restrained us from grasping the essence of the complex, which he observed in Lacan (1938) when he presented a negative and positive function of Oedipus. In Lacan (1938), Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a) understands that we can see that Oedipus reveals the first objectifications of the world made by the child, which require from them, as a final result, the conception of an external world, and as such, distinct from them. This objectification will constitute the child's later way of life because their life will happen within their conception of the world – to be tested in every experience. Therefore, there is a first function of the Oedipus complex, called negative, which is repressive; but there is also a positive one, expressed in the formation of the conception of the world and its objectification anchored in sublimation. Regarding the universality of the Oedipus complex, Merleau-Ponty (1949-52a: 116) understands that 'this conception does not rest on any historical analysis, and there are many arguments against it'. For this reason, he understands that the expansion generated by Lacan (1938) links the complex to the composition of our society, institutionalizing it.

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<sup>4</sup> The date in brackets indicates the year of the original publication of the work. The other date is the edition consulted by the author. In this text, the references were only to the date of the original publication.

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