In his own definition of psychoanalysis, Freud outlined its three dimensions:

**Psycho-Analysis** is the name (1) of a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (3) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline.

(Freud 1923a)

Freud’s definition articulates a dimension of research devoted to unconscious processes of the mind; a practical-clinical as well as research-guided dimension of therapy; and a theoretical dimension, meaning psychoanalysis has ever since been aiming for a general theory of the mind, not merely a theory of psychopathology.

Regardless of some degrees of plurality among current developments of these three dimensions (research, therapy, and theory) within contemporary psychoanalysis, the threefold approach to knowledge is constantly pursued.

**Psychoanalysis as a therapy**

The second dimension of psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis as a therapy, including the clinical concept of the psychoanalytic relationship, seems to allow for a comparison with the phenomenological approach to subjectivity. Psychoanalysis since Freud has not only been a theory of mind and a scientific methodology for investigating mental processes; psychoanalysts have also been developing their own practices and techniques for treating patients.

Psychoanalysis has acquainted us with the insight that something might occur to a subject and, in that sense, be subjective and yet not be accessible to him or her. Psychoanalysis differentiates between conscious and non-conscious phenomena and justifies this distinction by maintaining that the subject is not aware of what happened to him or her. However, although psychoanalysis questions the “first-person” perspective of patients and of psychoanalysts as well, this perspective is nevertheless a *sine qua non* for it as a treatment.
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Glen Gabbard, psychoanalyst and researcher, emphasizes the “unique value of subjective experience” for the psychoanalytic approach to the patients. Psychoanalysts work with their patients by trying to determine what is unique about each one – how a particular patient differs from other patients as a result of a life story like no other. Symptoms and behaviors are viewed as the final common pathways of highly personalized subjective experiences that filter the biological and environmental determinants of illness.

(Gabbard 2014, 8–9)

Paul Ricœur’s phenomenological approach to the psychoanalytic experience

As early as 1965, Paul Ricœur’s Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation attempted to reformulate psychoanalysis both in terms of scientific psychology such as behaviorisms as well as in terms of phenomenology (Ricœur 1970, 344–408). This chapter will focus on Ricœur’s tentative approach to the psychoanalytic situation through the phenomenological experience, an “experience that is deliberately philosophical and reflective” (ibid., 376).

Here Ricœur’s seminal intuition is to consider the psychoanalytic situation as a via regia for reaching the phenomenon of subjective experience, and further to choose phenomenology for approximating to psychoanalysis. Ricœur seems to be aware that the psychoanalytic clinical method is not only a unique source of information on the mind and its mechanisms, but also provides a systematic exploration of subjective experience.

Ricœur’s approximation of phenomenology to psychoanalysis is developed along four steps, addressing the following issues:

1. The method of reduction or suspension of the immediate consciousness as origin and place of meaning is the starting point of the phenomenological investigation. Its own natural attitude makes a self-deception of the immediate consciousness possible. Phenomenology reveals an “unconsciousness” or unawareness that has to do with the implicit or “co-intended”.

2. The theme of intentionality shows that consciousness is not self-presence or self-possession, but first of all intentional vision of the other. Since thematic intentionality is sustained by intentionality in act, which precedes and founds it, it generates another form of unawareness, the unreflected, and this brings about some relevant consequences:
   (a) The mind is definable by meaning, before and without appealing to self-consciousness;
   (b) The lived relation can be dissociated from its conscious representation in consciousness;
   (c) The meaning in act is more primary than the expressed or represented meaning: the passive genesis of meaning introduces the concept of meaning in act without me;
   (d) The mode of being of this meaning, which exists without being conscious, is the mode of being of the body.

Finally, as the two last steps, Ricœur suggests taking the following into consideration:

3. The attention of phenomenology given to the dialectic aspects of language.
4. The theme of intersubjectivity as constitutive of all our relations with the world.

Let me elaborate on Ricœur’s steps of approximation of phenomenology to psychoanalysis, as well as on his detailed explication of how the psychoanalytic approach to experience within
the psychoanalytical situation differs considerably from the phenomenological and hence offers different outcomes.

1. Edmund Husserl calls reduction that attitude of phenomenology that suspends the natural attitude of “self-evidence” [Selbstverständlichkeit] of the appearance of things. This methodological displacement reveals the self-misunderstanding of the immediate consciousness. Phenomenology presupposes a nucleus of experience named “the ego’s living self-presence” [lebendige Selbstgegenwart], but beyond this lies an implicit horizon of the “properly nonexperienced” [eigentlich nicht erfahren] and the “necessarily co-intended” [notwendig mitgemeint]. The phenomenological unconscious is in fact unawareness about the implicit, co-intended or “co-implicit”.

Against the backdrop of this approximation to the method of the phenomenological reduction, it immediately becomes clear why Ricœur records that the Freudian unconscious is rendered accessible through the psychoanalytic technique, which has no parallel in phenomenology:

Hence the suspicion analysis professes about the illusions of consciousness is different from the suspension of the natural attitude. […] By starting from the very level of this bondage, that is, by unreservedly delivering oneself over the dominating flux of underlying motivation, the true situation of consciousness is discovered. The fiction of absence of motivation, on which consciousness based its illusion of self-determination, is recognised as fiction. The fullness of motivation is revealed in place of the emptiness and arbitrariness of consciousness.

(Ricœur 1970, 390–391)

As a major result of the psychoanalytic working through, Ricœur finds a genuinely novel comprehension of freedom, which can no longer be related to the arbitrary but should be linked to understood determination.

2. For Ricœur intentionality is the theme of phenomenology which seems to mark another step toward the unconscious: “[C]onsciousness is first of all an intending of the other, and not self-presence or self-possession” (Ricœur 1970, 378). Ricœur evokes the “invincible unawareness of the self that characterizes intentionality in act” (ibid., 379) because for the Husserl of Krisis, intentionality in act is broader than thematic intentionality, therefore leading to the “primacy of the unreflected over the reflected, of the operative over the uttered, of the actual over the thematic” (ibid.). The co-implicit and co-intended cannot become transparent to consciousness.

In the end, Ricœur must object to his second tentative approximation:

[O]ne moves from phenomenology to psychoanalysis when one understands that the main barrier separates the unconscious and the preconscious, and not the preconscious and the conscious: to replace the formula Cs./Ps., Ucs. by the formula Cs., Ps./Ucs. is to move from the phenomenological point of view to the topographic point of view. The unconscious of phenomenology is the preconscious of psychoanalysis, that is to say, an unconscious that is descriptive and not topographic. The meaning of the barrier is that the unconscious is inaccessible unless an appropriate technique is used.

(ibid., 392)

Ricœur also considers four corollaries to intentionality, his second step of approximation:
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(a) He defines the mind as the intending of something and not as self-consciousness, and refers to Antoine Vergote: “[T]he psychical is defined as meaning, and this meaning is dynamic and historical” (Vergote 1958). Ricœur explicates that the division of meaning in psychoanalysis is only one aspect of the laws of the systems of the mind, which have their own legality such as the laws of the system unconscious including primary process, absence of negation, absence of contradiction, timelessness, etc. He maintains that this “legality cannot be reconstructed phenomenologically but only through the familiarity provided by analytic technique” (Ricœur 1970, 393).

(b) Phenomenology shows that the lived relationship is dissociable from its representation. By becoming representation, the relation to the world becomes self-knowing.

In a philosophy of immediate consciousness, the subject is a knowing subject. In phenomenology, on the contrary, the subject is primarily a desiring subject. If phenomenology shows that the lived meaning of a behavior extends beyond its representation in consciousness, an investigation other than phenomenology is required. Psychoanalytic technique is indispensable for understanding the division at the basis of the distortion that is making the text of consciousness unrecognizable.

(c) According to Ricœur, in phenomenology the meaning in act is more primary than the expressed or represented meaning: the passive genesis of meaning introduces the concept of meaning in act without me. How are different experiences possible in the same ego? They are “compossible” through the genesis that links together past, present, and future in the unity of a history. Also concerning the passive genesis, Ricœur remarks its unmistakable difference to Freud’s dynamic of drives and conflicts, which are again decipherable only by means of the psychoanalytic technique.

(d) While asking how it is possible for a meaning to exist without being conscious, Ricœur answers that its mode of being is that of the body: “The phenomenologist is not saying that the Freudian unconscious is the body; he is simply saying that the mode of being of the body, neither representation in me nor thing outside of me, is the ontic model for any conceivable unconscious” (Ricœur 1970, 382).

Investigating the unconscious origins of the self, Johannes Lehtonen, psychoanalyst and researcher, refers to Joona Taipale’s recent interpretation (Taipale 2013) of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, according to whom “a pre-personal self is regarded to exist as something ‘anonymous’ and ‘mute’. It can be regarded as the lived body itself that underlies the conscious and reflective self, and rests upon an embodied ‘work already done’” (Lehtonen 2016, 215; Merleau-Ponty 2002, 277)

However, Freud himself strenuously rejected the widespread common conception held by the philosophical psychology of the 19th century, including Franz Brentano and William James, that the unconscious states are not mental but physical states. Freud called the question whether unconscious states are mental or physical states “the first shibboleth of psycho-analysis,” further explaining:

To most people who have been educated in philosophy the idea of anything psychical which is not also conscious is so inconceivable that it seems to them absurd and refutable simply by logic. I believe this is only because they have never studied the relevant phenomena of hypnosis and dreams, which – quite apart from pathological manifestations – necessitate this view. Their psychology of consciousness is incapable of solving the problems of dreams and hypnosis.

(Freud 1923b)
3. For Ricœur an important implication of intentionality concerns the dialectical aspects of language, especially the interplay of the presence and absence characteristics of signs. Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1920) describes the child’s mastery over privation by playing the game of *fort-da*:

   By alternately voicing the two words, the child interrelates absence and presence in a meaningful contrast; at the same time, he no longer undergoes absence as a fit of panic massively substituted for a close and saturating presence. Dominated thus by language, privation – and consequently presence as well – is signified and transformed into intentionality; being deprived of the mother becomes an intending of the mother.

   (*Ricœur 1970, 385; Waelhens 1959, 232*)

Ricœur finds that the linguistic interpretation of psychoanalysis, as carried out by Lacan and his followers, does not constitute an alternative to the Freudian “economic” explanation, e.g. in terms of drives and intrapsychic conflict: “We are in presence of phenomena structured like a language; but the problem is to assign an appropriate meaning to the word ‘like’” (*Ricœur 1970, 400*). In Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud 1900), the dream mechanisms of condensation and displacement appear to be similar to figures of rhetoric like metaphor and metonymy. Ricœur is nonetheless aware that only Freud’s economic explanation in terms of drives takes account of the barrier between the systems of the mind and therefore of their separation.

4. The fourth point mentioned by Ricœur considers the phenomenological theme of intersubjectivity as constitutive of all our relations with the world. According to Ricœur, another relevant implication of intentionality involves the theory of intersubjectivity, which assumes its whole meaning in the semantic of desire, where the meaning is more lived than represented and where the human desire is intentional vision, that is, a desire of other desires.

   However, it is exactly on the theme of intersubjectivity that the experience within the psychoanalytic situation diverges most distinctly from the phenomenological experience: “[P]sychoanalysis is an arduous technique, learned by diligent exercise and practice. One cannot underestimate the amazing audacity of this discovery, namely of treating the intersubjective relationship as technique” (*Ricœur 1970, 417*). Undertaking an accurate investigation of the technical writings of Freud, Ricœur acknowledges that in the experience of psychoanalytic treatment, the crucial question is less about replacing the ignorance of the patient with knowledge than overcoming his or her resistances that defend the patient’s illness.

   At this point, the concept of experience in psychoanalysis seems to me to be worth a more in-depth look. Here, I would like to refer to the clarifying contribution of R. Horacio Etchegoyen, who further elaborated on Freud’s distinction between two different phenomena coming from the past. According to Freud, the conscious ones are constantly forced to confront themselves with reality progressively reaching their psychic accomplishment and staying at the disposal of the ego. On the other hand, the arrested so-called “defended” impulses fixated on the archaic object have been isolated from consciousness and reality remaining unconscious. On the basis of Freud’s differentiation, Etchegoyen makes a distinction between his concept of experience and the concept of transference. According to him, experience is constituted by “conscious impulses, which help the ego to understand present circumstances using models from the past and within the reality principle.” In contrast, transference arises from unconscious...
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impulses, which, “subjected to the pleasure principle, [take] the present for the past in search of satisfaction” (Etchegoyen 1992, 87–88).

On the whole, according to Etchegoyen:

the libido that seeks channels of satisfactions in reality has to do with experience and not with transference. The idea is applied to all human experience no less than to the erotic encounter […] To the extent that these experiences operate as memories at the disposal of the ego and are conscious, our ability to operate realistically will be greater. The other part of the libido, that linked to unconscious imagos, is always by definition dissatisfied and seeks discharge without taking the elements of reality into account.  (ibid., 106–107)

Addressing that special kind of resistance termed transference-love, Ricœur outlines the technique for its management during the psychoanalytic treatment as described by Freud in “Observation on Transference-Love” (Freud 1915), consisting in the technique of exploiting it without satisfying it. Again, Etchegoyen tries to put the distinction between reality and experience regarding the patient into words:

My relation with my analyst, if I am within the framework of reality, cannot be other than the reality of the treatment. Insofar as my infantile libido attempts to attach itself to this woman, I am already erring. Here my reality judgement fails. The task then is, in my view, what guides us to apprehend reality, the anchor that ties us to; and everything that is not linked to the task can be considered, by definition, transference, since it occurs in an inadequate context.

(Etchegoyen 1992, 107)

In his The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known, Christopher Bollas outlines the experience of the analyst, as the “most ordinary countertransference state” i.e. “a not-knowing-yet-experiencing one”.4 Furthermore, Glen Gabbard and Sallye Wilkinson point out – especially in case of the treatment of patients with severe illness such as borderline patients – as its “essential and unavoidable aspect” the “immersion in this intense affective experience” of the patient (Gabbard and Wilkinson 1994, 32).

Indeed, the psychoanalytic treatment should be carried through in a state of abstinence: “For the phenomenologist, this technique of frustration is the most surprising aspect of the analytic method; he can no doubt understand the rule of veracity, but not the principle of frustration: the latter can only be practiced” (Ricœur 1970, 417). Meaning that even dealing with the demanding phenomenon of transference-love of the patients, the analysts are “curious to know what this resistance is protecting and what past situation is being reenacted” (Gabbard 2014, 22).

There seems to be no relation that is so artificial and constructed as the psychoanalytic relation, as Freud points out: “The course the analyst must pursue is […] one for which there is no model in real life” (Freud 1915, 166). Ricœur describes the conditions of possibility for an entirely technical relationship to be conducted as an intersubjective relation:

[T]he fact that the analytic dialogue, within a special context of disengagement, of isolation, of derealisation, brings to light the demands in which desire ultimately consists; but only the technique of transference, as a technique of frustration, could reveal the fact that desire is at bottom an unanswered demand.

(Ricœur 1970, 417)
In the previously considered chapter “Epistemology: Between Psychology and Phenomenology” from *Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation*, Ricœur’s tentative understanding of the psychoanalytic situation through phenomenology seems promising. Due to the richness of his evocative style, Ricœur’s definition of psychoanalytic experience remains ambiguous but open. It is true that Ricœur has already described the psychoanalytic situation also as “a work of speech with the patient” (Ricœur 1970, 369), but for understanding the mode of being of the unconscious he suggests links to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notions of one’s own body. Further, he explicitly criticizes Lacan’s linguistic turn regarding the understanding of the unconscious: “The linguistic interpretation does not constitute an alternative to the economic explanation” (ibid.). Even more, Ricœur seems to be attempting to grasp the rich variety of emotions occurring in the dynamic of transference and countertransference.

**Psychoanalysis and phenomenology overlap on the attention to phenomena rather than to the texts**

In his later *The Question of Proof in Freud’s Psychoanalytic Writings* (Ricœur 1981, 22), Ricœur holds – even more definitely and explicitly – psychoanalytic theory to be coextensive with what takes place within the psychoanalytic relationship, where the psychoanalytic experience happens. Unfortunately, Ricœur moves away from phenomenology and almost exclusively restricts the psychoanalytic experience to speech acts.

The philosopher of science Adolf Grünbaum, in his *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, argues that Ricœur “immures its [the psychoanalytic clinical theory] substantive purview within the verbal productions of the clinical transaction between the analyst and the patient. […] the analyst’s non verbal are excluded from its scope” (Grünbaum 1984, 43) And he adds: “True enough, psychoanalysts generally regard their many observations of the patient’s verbal and non verbal interactions with them in the treatment sessions as the source of findings that are simply peerless as evidence, not only heuristically but also probatively” (Grünbaum 1984, 44).

Thus Ricœur’s controversial epistemological understanding of psychoanalysis as hermeneutics receives a dismissive critique from Adolf Grünbaum who maintains that the generic disavowal of causal attributions advocated by the radical hermeneuticians is a nihilistic, if not frivolous, trivialisation of Freud’s entire clinical theory. Far from serving as a new citadel for psychoanalytic apologetics, the embrace of such hermeneuticians is, I submit, the kiss of death for the legacy that was to be saved.

* (ibid., 58)

Although Grünbaum criticizes both of Ricœur’s works, especially because of the weakness of his epistemological approach, the plentiful suggestions of Ricœur’s tentative phenomenological approach should not be underestimated.

Back to his later, through and through hermeneutical *The Question of Proof in Freud’s Psychoanalytic Writings*, Ricœur first claims that “the equivalent of what the epistemology of logical empiricism calls ‘observables’ is to be sought first in the analytic situation, in the analytic relationship” (Ricœur 1981, 248). Ricœur’s tentative answer to the widespread critique that psychoanalysis does not satisfy the required criteria of scientificity leads him to deny the scientific status of Freud’s clinical theory. Ricœur argues that psychoanalysis should not be judged using the criteria of an empirical observational science, because facts in psychoanalysis are in no way facts of observable behavior. Therefore, he suggests changing the criteria for “facts” in psychoanalysis.
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It is worth mentioning that, even as early as 1983, before Grünbaum's *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, the psychoanalyst and philosopher Charles Hanly warned psychoanalysts and all “friends” of psychoanalysis of the trap of making “psychoanalysis more defensible as a science by weakening the epistemological criteria for scientific knowledge in general” (Hanly 1983, 394).

The crucial limitation in Ricœur’s approach is constituted by his four criteria of selection among the facts that can be taken into account using the narrowed frame of a psychoanalytic clinical theory so understood. According to this impoverishment of the domain of facts, only the following issues enter into the fields of investigation and treatment as the objects of psychoanalytic knowledge:

1. That part of experience which is capable of being said;
2. Even more, the psychoanalytic situation selects not only what is sayable, but what is said to another person;
3. Further, the psychoanalytic experience requires that we add the reference to fantasies to the two preceding criteria; for what has been said (the first criterion) and what is demanded of the other person (the second criterion) bear the mark of the particular imaginary formations which Freud brings together under the term *phantasieren*. (Ricœur 1981, 28)
4. As the fourth criterion, the analytic situation singles out what is capable of entering into a story or narrative from a subject’s experience, because to remember is “to be able to constitute one’s own existence in the form of a story where a memory as such is only a fragment of the story” (ibid., 253).

His conclusion about the verification of the assumptions of psychoanalysis is the following: “[I]f the ultimate truth claim resides in the case histories, the means of proofs reside in the articulation of the entire network: theory, hermeneutics, therapeutic, and narration” (ibid., 268). Far from substantiating the experience within the psychoanalytic situation through linking it to results of the phenomenology of perception or to further phenomenological inquiries on subjective experience, the later Ricœur increasingly circumscribes the psychoanalytic experience to a narrative enterprise.

**Further remarks on the psychoanalytic technique**

Although, as previously stated, psychoanalysis goes far beyond the “first-person” perspective of patients and psychoanalysts as well, the living subjective perspective is at the core of the treatment. A common misunderstanding of the psychoanalytic practices and techniques compares them with text-decoding linguistic work. Interpreting the spoken text of patients is really just a component of the whole psychoanalytic undertaking. Another misleading metaphor considers psychoanalytic work as archeology in search of the lived past of the patient. Indeed, the past suddenly becomes crucial every time a hidden, unwelcomed past is unconsciously repeated in the present, in the case of past “in vivo” without the awareness of the patient, as in the phenomena...
of transference. The focus of the analytic work of listening and observing, understanding and conceptualizing, as well as finally intervening-interpreting is devoted to the living subjectivity of the patient including his or her pre-, para-, and nonverbal expressions.

The experience of living subjectivity occurs in an intersubjective situation, in the relationship between psychoanalysts and patients.

The psychoanalytic experience is not just a mental one, but rather a psychophysical, embodied experience, which further allows for re-establishing contact and continuity between one’s own mind and body. Framing the approach of Freud’s psychoanalysis within the philosophical mind-body problem, psychoanalysis assumes a continuum from the body to the mind. In current philosophical terms, Freud’s position can be termed as a nonreductive physicalism including emergent irreducible mental properties which hold causal powers. As Shmuel Erlich points out:

> The most basic underpinnings of Freud's discoveries are, first and foremost, the unified spectrum of body and mind that may be approached and studied from either side. The mind is the direct and immediate elaboration of the body and its component systems, especially but not only the nervous system.

*(Erlich 2015, 5–6)*

While the work of patients is basically to express their free associations, presenting their “first-person” subjectivity, psychoanalysts are required to focus not only on the patient’s whole expression (meaning cognitive and emotional, conscious and unconscious, verbal and pre-, para-, and nonverbal expressions) of his or her own experiences, but also on their own overall reaction to the patient, termed countertransference.

The countertransference of the analyst is assumed to be the best way to reach the subjective experience of the patient. The concept of evenly hovering or free-floating attention defines the psychoanalytic mode of listening, which, according to Joseph Sandler, is the “capacity to allow all sorts of thoughts, daydreams and associations to enter the analyst’s consciousness while he is at the same time listening to and observing the patient” (Sandler 1976, 44).

Concerning countertransference, long before Heinrich Racker (Racker 1968) in Buenos Aires and Paula Heimann (Heimann 1950, 81–84) in London recognized it to be not simply interference but an important tool of the treatment, the pioneer Sándor Ferenczi led the way in this direction (Ferenczi 1950, Giampieri-Deutsch 1996/2000). Going in a similar direction, Sandler outlines the free-floating responsiveness in countertransference:

> The analyst is, of course, not a machine in absolute self-control, only experiencing on the one hand, and delivering interpretations on the other […]. Among many other things he talks, he greets the patient, he makes arrangements about practical matters, he may joke and, to some degree, allow his responses to depart from the classical psychoanalytic norm. My contention is that the analyst’s overt reactions to the patient as well as in his thoughts and feelings what can be called his “role responsiveness” shows itself, not only in his feelings but also in his attitudes and behaviour, as a crucial element in his “useful” countertransference.

*(Sandler 1976, 44–45)*

Psychoanalysts have the unique opportunity to take part in the living subjective experience of their patients. What patients cannot tell us, they will show us. This experience offered by patients in the analytic session may even be the instantiation *in vivo* of their very early preverbal past experience.
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A great clinical “object relation” tradition in psychoanalysis, starting with Sándor Ferenczi and carried on to the “Independent Group” inside of the British Psycho-Analytical Society has always recognized the importance of all these pre-, para-, or simply nonverbal expressions (Giampieri-Deutsch 1995, 1996/2000). Another less well-known line was developed by the pioneers Paul Federn and Edoardo Weiss (Weiss 1972, 41–44) who devoted themselves to the treatment of severe disturbances and even psychoses, focusing first and foremost on the pure phenomenology of the analytic session. Nevertheless, they worked toward making psychoanalysis a science in the long run and they never dismissed this position (Giampieri-Deutsch 2002b, 1225–1226).

As previously elaborated, psychoanalysis as a therapy is a treatment that heavily takes into account the “first-person” perspective of the patient. However, his or her subjective point of view as well as his or her experience will be challenged during the course of the treatment. Indeed, psychoanalysis assumes models of the mind to consist of dynamical parts in conflict, which, in his last model from 1923, Freud terms as structures: the Id, the Ego, and the Super-Ego, including its sub-structure, the Ego Ideal (Freud 1923b, cf. also Freud 1923b/2020). Further contributors to this conflict are states of mind deeply rooted in the body such as drives, affects, and feelings that are equally parts of this cognitive and affective structural model of the mind. All parts of the conflict could certainly be analyzed in the long-term; furthermore, their mainly unconscious processing could become partly predictable. Notwithstanding this, assuming a psychodynamic frame of reference, a subject can hardly be considered prima facie and immediately transparent to herself or himself. This includes her or his thoughts and emotions as well as his or her past experiences and decisions about his or her future.

Psychoanalytic knowledge from the “third-person” perspective

The psychoanalytic clinical method provides a systematic exploration of living subjective experience and is a source of clinical data on the mind. In the clinical situation, psychoanalysts hold the “first-person” perspective in evenly hovering attention and in the phenomena of counter-transference.

Nevertheless, the knowledge of a psychoanalyst is also knowledge from the “third-person” perspective on different levels:

On the first weak level, psychoanalysts take a distance in their everyday clinical work of interpretation, namely in the on-line real-time situation of the setting. Other weak “third-person” practices are participating in supervision, intervision, or case study seminars.

A further weak “third-person” methodology is Freud’s traditional case study method, according to which psychoanalysts write individual case studies in their clinical investigations.

However, there is even a hard level of “third-person” methodologies, the psychoanalytic empirical research, which claims more compelling “evidence” (Giampieri-Deutsch 2004).

Bridging the gap between weak “third-person” and hard “third-person” methodologies, Rolf Sandell, psychoanalyst and researcher, names his own approach double vision:

*Double vision* in research means having in mind two points of view simultaneously. One point of view involves focusing on what is generally expectable, not knowing the specifics of any particular case. […] This is of course what nowadays is naively called “evidence” in outcome research […]. There are regularities, indeed. The second point of view involves focusing on the individual differences [and using a means of synthesizing to bring some order to the individualities].

(Sandell 2014, 56)
Robert Wallerstein, psychoanalyst and researcher, welcomes Sandell’s *double vision*: “This involves setting up research strategies that encompass both the generalizable and the individual […] the formal systematic research program, and the intensive individual case study; both, not just one or the other” (Wallerstein 2014, 263). A *double vision* in psychoanalysis allows for bringing together both perspectives: on the one hand, Freud’s traditional case study method, “first-person” research methodologies and the qualitative research as a whole, and on the other hand, the later developed formal empirical and experimental research, mainly embedded within a quantitative frame.

Reaching here the dimension of empirical research in psychoanalysis devoted to general processes of the mind including unconscious mechanisms, a major difference to/from phenomenology becomes progressively apparent. To conclude, it is in utilizing “third-person” methodologies in psychoanalysis to investigate general mechanisms of the mind that psychoanalysis mostly diverges from the phenomenological approach to the mind.

Notes


2 The following two paragraphs are an extensively revised version of Giampieri-Deutsch (2012, 84–89).

3 Within this chapter, I will not elaborate further on the divergence between the representational theory of the mind of psychoanalysis and the non-representational tradition in phenomenology inspired by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and further developed, among others, by Varela, Rosch and Thompson (1991), Dreyfus (2002), Noë (2004) or Gallagher (2008).

4 Even if Bollas (1987, 203) seems to introduce a distinction between experience and knowledge, I will not summarize it here nor can I enter the longstanding debate within the philosophy of mind about the question to what extent experiencing can be regarded as a knowledge or not – see also Giampieri-Deutsch (2002a, 64–71) – nor the underlying distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description deeply rooted in the 19th century as well as the still running discussion about it. At stake here is the epistemological status of experience.

5 This paragraph is based upon the paragraphs “Psychoanalysis” (Giampieri-Deutsch 2016, 232–233) and “Psychoanalytic Technique” (Giampieri-Deutsch 2016, 233–234).


References


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