

## Ricœur's Freud

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### Abstract

Ricœur's reading of Freud is one of the most comprehensive, perceptive and judicious explications of Freudianism—one that begins with his early "Project" of 1895 and culminates with the last book that Freud published, *Moses and Monotheism*. Ricœur is successful in exposing some of the weaknesses in Freud, and even more importantly, why we need to move beyond Freud. I am deeply sympathetic with his claim that there is a dialectical relationship between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a restorative hermeneutics of meaning—and that they are *integral* to each other. And I also think he is successful in showing how, if we relentlessly pursue the logic of Freud's thinking, we are led beyond Freud. But, even though he gives some indications of how such dialectic is to be developed, this remains a task (an *Aufgabe*) that lies before us.

*Keywords:* Freud, Psychoanalysis, Hermeneutics, Dialectic

### Résumé

La lecture Ricœurienne de Freud est l'une des explications les plus complètes, perspicaces et judicieuses du freudisme - oeuvre qui commence avec son "projet" au début de 1895 et se termine avec le dernier livre que Freud publia, *Moïse et le monothéisme*. Ricœur a réussi à exposer certaines des faiblesses dans l'oeuvre de Freud, et plus important encore, il a réussi à montrer pourquoi nous devons aller au-delà de Freud. Je suis profondément en phase avec son affirmation selon laquelle il existe une relation dialectique entre une herméneutique du soupçon et une herméneutique de la restauration de sens et qu'elles font partie intégrante l'une de l'autre. Et je pense aussi qu'il a réussi à montrer comment, si nous poursuivons sans relâche la logique de la pensée freudienne, nous devons aller au-delà de Freud. Mais, même s'il donne quelques indications sur la façon dont cette dialectique doit être développée, cela reste une tâche (un *Aufgabe*) qui se situe devant nous.

*Mots-clés:* Freud, Psychanalyse, Herméneutique, Dialectique

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## Ricœur's Freud

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I want to begin with a few personal remarks about my encounters with Paul Ricœur—for they are relevant to the topic that I will be exploring. I first met Paul in the late 70s. I believe one of our first meetings was at a conference on Hannah Arendt in Paris—one of the earliest conferences on her work in France. At the time, there was barely any philosophic interest in Arendt but Ricœur and I shared an enthusiasm for her work. And we were both interested in her conception of action. Paul sometimes used my book *Praxis and Action* in the courses that he taught at the University of Chicago. But what really united us was his growing interest and contribution to hermeneutics. It was in the 1970s and early 1980s that there was a new interest in hermeneutics in America. In part this was due to the English translation of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. But there were other contributing factors such as Habermas's appreciation of the role of hermeneutics as a form of practical knowledge that he explores in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. And on the Anglo-American scene there was the appearance of Charles Taylor's classic essay "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man." Even Thomas Kuhn came to appreciate that *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* had a deep affinity with hermeneutics. In 1977 in *The Essential Tension*, Kuhn writes:

What I as a physicist had to discover for myself, most historians learn by example in the course of professional training. Consciously or not, they are all practitioners of the hermeneutic method. In my case, however the discovery of hermeneutics did more than make history seem consequential. Its most immediate and decisive effect was instead on my view of science.

And he adds:

In my own case, for example, even the term 'hermeneutics,' to which I resorted briefly above, was no part of my vocabulary as recently as five years ago. Increasingly, I suspect that anyone who believes that history may have deep philosophical import will have to learn to bridge the longstanding divide between the Continental and English-language philosophical traditions.<sup>1</sup>

I don't think it is an exaggeration to suggest that during these decades there was a sea change taking place—that in the humanities, the social sciences and even the natural sciences there was a new appreciation for hermeneutics—for the significance of understanding and interpretation of meaning—and its importance for understanding our being-in-the world. And clearly one of the leaders in this new sensitivity to hermeneutics was Paul Ricœur.

Now already in 1970, Ricœur had published his monumental *Freud and Philosophy*, which he subtitled "An Essay in Interpretation" based on the Terry lectures that he gave at Yale. The full title of these lectures is "The Dwight Harrington Terry Foundation Lectures in Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy." In the statement of the purpose of these lectures we are told that "it is desired that a series of lectures be given by men eminent in their respective

departments . . . to the end that the Christian spirit may be nurtured in the fullest light of the world's knowledge and that mankind may be helped to attain its highest possible welfare and happiness upon this earth."<sup>2</sup> Although Ricœur was known for his work on the philosophy of religion, it must have taken an act of intellectual courage to give a series of lectures on Freud – who was one of the most outspoken and vigorous atheistic thinkers of the twentieth century. *Freud and Philosophy* is a remarkable book. Written more than forty years ago, it stands as one of the most judicious, thorough and comprehensive explications of Freud's work and development. Ricœur displays an intellectual virtue that is all too rare. In Book II, the main part of his study, entitled "Analytic: Reading of Freud" Ricœur not only shows his subtle understanding of Freud's entire corpus but he brackets his own philosophic views to explicate the complex stages of Freud's development. It is a model of interpretation that stays close to Freud's texts and is always illuminating. Freud presents a deep challenge to Ricœur's own philosophical convictions. I have always admired those thinkers who have the imagination and the hermeneutical generosity to "take on" what is alien and antithetical to their own way of thinking. Ricœur exemplifies this. In one of his essays he tells us:

For someone trained in phenomenology, existential philosophy, linguistic or semiological methods, and the revival of Hegel studies, the encounter with psychoanalysis constitutes a considerable shock, for this discipline affects and questions anew not simply some particular theme within philosophical reflection but the philosophical project as a whole. The contemporary philosopher meets Freud on the same ground as Nietzsche and Marx. All three rise up before him as protagonists of suspicion who rip away masks and pose the novel problem of the lie of consciousness and consciousness as a lie. This problem cannot remain just one among many, for what all three generally and radically put into question is something that appears to any good phenomenologist as the field, foundation, and the very origin of any meaning at all: consciousness itself. What in one sense is a foundation must appear to us in a different sense as a prejudice, the prejudice of consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

Ricœur is alluding to his famous idea of a hermeneutics of suspicion. I will have more to say about this, but here I want to emphasize Ricœur's awareness that psychoanalysis poses a deep challenge to the foundation and starting point of any phenomenology when he speaks of the "lie of consciousness and consciousness as a lie." Consciousness turns out to be just as obscure as the unconscious. Consciousness is not a given, not a starting point, not a presupposition that cannot be questioned, it will turn out to be a task and an achievement. The questions that Ricœur poses are: "What is the meaning of the unconscious for a being whose task is consciousness?" "What is consciousness as a task for a being who is somehow bound to those factors such as repetition and even regression, which the unconscious represents for the most part?"<sup>4</sup>

To appreciate what is at stake in these questions and to appreciate what is involved in Ricœur's encounter with Freud, we must turn to the outlines of his "reading" of Freud. Ricœur distinguishes two aspects or dimensions of Freud's approach –what he calls "energetics" and "hermeneutics." To a great extent "energetics" refers to Freud's earliest scientific and positivist leanings where he attempted to present an understanding of psychic life that was completely

dependent on a quantitative apparatus—one that Freud originally associated with the operation of the brain. Energetics is based on an “economic” interpretation of psychical life which is initially represented in Freud’s “Project” of 1895. Ricoeur tells us that the “Project” of 1895 represents what could be called a non-hermeneutic state of the system. Indeed, the notion of the “psychical apparatus” that dominates this essay appears to have no correlation with a work of deciphering and “is based on a principle borrowed from physics—the constancy principle—and tends to be a quantitative treatment of energy.”<sup>5</sup> As Ricoeur notes “this recourse to the principle of constancy and the quantitative hypothesis is the aspect of Freudianism that most resists the reading I propose based on the correlation between energetics and hermeneutics, between connections of forces and relations of meanings.”<sup>6</sup> What Ricoeur brilliantly shows is that a close reading of the “Project” of 1895 already indicates the tension in Freud’s thinking—the need for interpretation even to make sense of the psychical apparatus. Consequently, even when Freud (before *The Interpretation of Dreams*) was most deeply influenced by the quantitative natural science of his time and hoped to provide a psychology limited to physical principles, we can already detect the hermeneutic tensions in the “Project”—the beginning of Freud’s sense of the need for interpretation of *meaning*. Ricoeur sees the development of Freudian theory in terms of “the gradual reduction of the notion of psychical apparatus—in the sense of ‘a machine which in a moment would run of itself’—to a topography in which space is no longer a place within the world of action but a scene of action where roles and masks enter into debate” (Ricoeur 1970: 70). But even this characterization does not quite indicate what is distinctive about Ricoeur’s reading of Freud. Freud *never* gives up the model of energetics or economics—although it gets transformed in the course of his development of the topological models of the psyche—first, in terms of the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious, and later in terms of the id, ego, and superego. Even though the problem of deciphering and interpreting becomes more prominent, what Freud elaborates is a distinctive “mixed discourse” of energetics and hermeneutics. Both dimensions are essential for psychoanalytic discourse—and they do not stand opposed to each other. Energetics (force) implies a hermeneutics (meaning) and a hermeneutics discloses energetics. So what initially presents itself as an *aporia*—the contradiction of energetics and hermeneutics—turns out ultimately to be Freud’s great accomplishment. Ricoeur declares that the whole problem of a Freudian epistemology may be centralized in a single question: “How can the economic explanation be *involved* in an interpretation dealing with meanings; and conversely, how can interpretation be an *aspect* of the economic interpretation?” This is the question that Ricoeur seeks to answer—and he does so by carefully pursuing three cycles in Freud’s development. What emerges in the course of Ricoeur’s reading is an elaboration of what he calls Freud’s “semantics of desire.”

Let me remind you of the structure of *Freud and Philosophy*. It consists of three parts or books: “Problematic: The Placing of Freud,” “Analytic: Reading of Freud,” and finally “Dialectic: A Philosophic Interpretation of Freud.” The use of the terms “Analytic” and “Dialectic” might suggest that Ricoeur is using Kant as a template for his reading and interpretation of Freud, but we will see that it is really Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* that inspires Ricoeur. In the first part, the placing of Freud, Ricoeur reviews his own understanding of language and symbol. It is in this opening part that he introduces a distinction between two different types of hermeneutics: interpretation as recollection of meaning and interpretation as exercise of suspicion. And the three great practitioners of the hermeneutics of suspicion are Marx, Nietzsche and Freud—each, in a different way, seeks to expose the hidden or latent meaning of what is manifest; each challenges interpretations that fail to acknowledge what symbols *conceal*. This discussion of the

conflicting types of interpretation sets the stage for Ricœur's reading of Freud. And this reading contains its own inner complexity because Ricœur shows how in the course of Freud's development the understanding of energetics and hermeneutics is transformed. Against the prevailing view that Freud began his psychoanalytic investigations with a focus exclusively on the analytic situation of curing individual patients and only turned to problems of culture in his later writings, Ricœur argues that the *interpretation* of culture was always evident in Freud's writings. He also argues that when Freud introduces the Death Instinct and pursues its consequences in the great struggle of Eros and Thanatos, there is a radical transformation in the psychoanalytic understanding of culture. Psychoanalysis as an interpretation of culture becomes an intrinsic aspect of all culture.

In the culminating section of *Freud and Philosophy*, "Dialectic," Ricœur offers "a"—not "the"—philosophical interpretation of Freud. Although Ricœur makes it clear that his study is oriented to this final section, I actually think it is the least satisfactory. I want to explore some of the tensions and unresolved issues in his philosophical interpretation. But first consider Ricœur's description of his journey:

In my introductory presentation of Freud I regarded him, along with Marx and Nietzsche, as one of the representatives of reductive and demystifying hermeneutics. In this view I was guided by a taste for extremes: I saw Freud as having a precise place in the hermeneutic debate, opposed to a nonreductive and restorative hermeneutics, and in league with other thinkers who wage a combat comparable to his. The whole movement of this book consists in a gradual readjusting of that initial position and of the panoramic view of the battlefield governing it. In the end it may seem that in this indecisive combat Freud is nowhere because he is everywhere. That impression is correct: The limits of psychoanalysis will finally have to be conceived not so much as a frontier beyond which exist other points of view, *but rather as the imaginary line of a front of investigation which constantly advances*, while the other points of view filter through the dividing line. In the beginning, Freud is one combatant among many; in the end, he shall have become the privileged witness of the total combat, for all the opposition will be carried over to him.

Now there is something unsettling about this passage. It already indicates a certain hesitancy in how Ricœur understands Freud as a privileged witness to the total combat. One might think that after the careful explication of Freud as an exemplar of the hermeneutics of suspicion, then one can (or should be able) to demarcate clearly the boundaries and limits of this hermeneutics of suspicion—and confront it with other more restorative hermeneutic interpretations. And there are many passages in Ricœur that suggest that this is his project. But things are not quite this straightforward. Indeed, the above passage suggests that there isn't a sharp boundary that delimits psychoanalysis but rather that there is an imaginary line of investigation which constantly advances. Phrased in a different way, Ricœur's reading of Freud is so powerful and comprehensive that it becomes increasingly difficult to "contain" it-- to assimilate and reconcile

it with other types of restorative hermeneutics. There is a disparity and tension between what Ricoeur claims to show and what he actually shows.

Let me illustrate this with an example that is fundamental for Ricoeur's project. In his initial discussion of symbol, Ricoeur reiterates a theme that had been prominent in his earlier reflections on language, the double meaning of symbol—the way in which symbols *reveal* and *conceal* —“the showing-hiding of double meaning” (Ricoeur 1970: 7). Ricoeur emphasizes this double meaning in his phenomenology of religion and he notes a parallel between the role of symbols in religion and psychoanalysis:

The problem of double meaning is not peculiar to psychoanalysis. It is known in the philosophy of religion in its constant encounter with those great cosmic symbols of earth, heaven water, life, trees, and stones, and with strange narratives about the origin and end of things which are myths . . . What psychoanalysis encounters primarily as the distortion of elementary meanings connected with wishes and desires, the phenomenology of religion encounters primarily as a manifestation of a depth or, to use the word immediately, leaving for later a discussion of its content and validity, the revelation of the sacred.<sup>7</sup>

Ricoeur, in his *Analytic*, his explication of psychoanalysis, rigorously excludes any reference to the phenomenology of religion—any reference to *the revelation of the sacred*. But he does return to this theme in his *Dialectic*—in his philosophic interpretation of Freud. And here he wants to acknowledge the contribution and challenge of Freud—as well as the limitations of his hermeneutics of suspicion. He acknowledges the force of Freud's psychoanalytic critique of religion. The psychoanalytic analysis of illusion, the comparison of religion with neurosis, the genetic account (in both the individual and culture) of the origin of religion in *Totem and Taboo* presents a powerful challenge to any believer. Ricoeur tells us that Freud's critique is effective against superstition and naïve conceptions of religion. He notes that Freud draws an analogy between the three basic stages of the childhood condition—“neurotic phase, latency period, return of the repressed”—and religion, but Ricoeur goes on to say that the meaning of the analogy remains and must remain indefinite: “All that can be said is that man is capable of neurosis as he is capable of religion, and vice versa. The same causes—life's hardship, the triple suffering dealt the individual by nature, his body, and other men—give rise to similar responses—neurotic ceremonials and religious ceremonials. . . .”<sup>8</sup> This may well be true, but it doesn't strike me as a forceful response to Freud—to the Freud that Ricoeur has so effectively explicated. The point of naming the final section of his study “Dialectic” is to indicate that there is a genuine dialectic between the “merciless exercise of reductive hermeneutics” and a restorative hermeneutics that acknowledges what Ricoeur calls the signs of “the Wholly Other.” But although this is announced as his project, I don't see that he really *shows* this in any detail. Ricoeur laments the cultural movement that seeks to objectify and reify the Wholly Other. He writes:

It seems to me, however, that this cultural movement cannot and must not remain external to the restoration of the signs of the Wholly Other in their authentic function as sentinels of the horizon. Today we can no longer hear and read the signs of the approach of the Wholly Other except through the merciless



exercise of reductive hermeneutics; such is our helplessness and perhaps our good fortune and joy. Faith in that region of the symbolic where the horizon-function is constantly being reduced to the object-function: thus arise idols, the religious figures of that same illusion which in metaphysics engenders the concepts of a supreme being, first as substance, absolute thought. An idol is the reification of the horizon into a thing, the fall of the sign into a supernatural and supracultural object.

Thus there is a never-ending task of distinguishing between the faith in religion—faith in the Wholly Other which draws near—and belief in the religious object, which becomes another object of our culture and thus a part of our own sphere.<sup>9</sup>

And he concludes this section with a dramatic claim: “That idols must die—so that symbols may live.”

What precisely is Ricœur telling us, and how does it bear on psychoanalysis as a hermeneutics of suspicion and the restorative hermeneutics of the sign of the Wholly Other? Ricœur believes that there is a pernicious cultural tendency to reify the Wholly Other—to make the sacred into some sort of divine *object*. Freudian psychoanalysis plays a crucial role of exposing and critiquing this tendency to idolatry. The hermeneutics of suspicion cannot be bracketed or put aside. It is the fire that purifies faith and keeps us from idolatry. In the final analysis, there are not *two* types of hermeneutics that can be neatly separated from each other; rather they are dialectically related. The hermeneutics of suspicion exemplified in Freud’s multifaceted critique of religion *informs* a restorative hermeneutics of the signs of the Wholly Other. And a genuine hermeneutics of restorative meaning must pass through the fire of merciless suspicion. This is what Ricœur wants to show. And in many ways it is an attractive resolution of the conflict of interpretations. But, as I have already indicated, although this is what he *says*, I do not see that he has actually *shown* how this dialectic works. Ricœur wants to limit Freud’s critique to a critique of idolatry – a cultural tendency that is always a seductive temptation, but he says that this critique does not touch the heart of a genuine faith in the signs of the Wholly Other. I don’t want to deny that this may be true, and I certainly don’t want to affirm that psychoanalysis can or will ever “refute” a true faith. But the hermeneutics of suspicion is not simply limited to a critique of idolatry. It also raises suspicions about a faith directed to the sacred symbols of the Wholly Other. If there is or can be a genuine *dialectical* reconciliation between “the merciless exercise of reductive hermeneutics” and the restorative hermeneutics of “the symbols of the Wholly Other,” then this must be shown and not simply affirmed. I think it is to Ricœur’s credit that in many places he indicates his awareness that he has outlined a *task* and not a completed project. He speaks of the “never-ending task” of distinguishing the faith of religion from belief in a religious object. More generally, he admits that the project of showing “how other types of hermeneutics which are foreign to psychoanalysis, is waiting to be constructed.” This is “currently the most urgent task of a philosophical anthropology.” He limits himself to pointing out “certain border zones within that vast field.”<sup>10</sup>

I find a similar tension in the way in which Ricœur seeks to reconcile what he calls the dialectic of archaeology and teleology. It is this dialectic that presumably is the key to his philosophical interpretation of Freud. “Archaeology” is the term that Ricœur adopts to indicate Freud’s analysis of the Subject—as it is understood from the perspective of reflective philosophy.

Ricoeur understands “the Freudian metapsychology as an adventure of reflection; the dispossession of consciousness in its path, because the act of becoming conscious is its task.” And the result of this adventure is a “wounded Cogito—a Cogito that posits itself but does not possess itself; a Cogito that sees its original truth only in and through the avowal of the inadequacy, illusion, and lying of actual consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> In the movement from force to language, from energetics to hermeneutics we discover the very emergence of the semantics of desire. But from a philosophical perspective, the problem is how can we reconcile the economic model that is so fundamental and persistent in Freud with reflection. Ricoeur wants to show that there is a way of reconciling Freud’s economic model with reflection—with the task of becoming conscious: “Can we understand this archeology within the framework of a philosophy of reflection?”<sup>12</sup> This is the fundamental question that Ricoeur seeks to answer in his philosophic interpretation. An affirmative answer depends on showing the dialectic of archeology and teleology. And the way that Ricoeur sets about answering this question is at once bold and imaginative. In what might seem like a detour, he explores this development in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, focusing especially on the crucial stage when Hegel introduces the concepts of desire and life at the beginning of the section on Self-consciousness. Ricoeur makes it clear that he is not interested in a facile and absurd eclecticism between Freud and Hegel:

Hegel and Freud each stand in a separate continent, and between one totality and another there can only be relations of homology. I will try to express one of these homologous relations by discovering in Freudianism a certain dialectic of archaeology and teleology that is clearly evident in Hegel. The same connection is in Freud, but in reverse order and proportion. Whereas Hegel links an explicit teleology of mind or spirit to an implicit archaeology of life and desire, Freud links a thematized archeology of the unconscious to an unthematized teleology of the process of becoming conscious . . . . I seek to find in Freud an inverted image of Hegel, in order to discern, with the help of this schema certain dialectical features which, though obviously operative in analytic practice, have not found in the theory a complete systematic elaboration.<sup>13</sup>

Let me elucidate what Ricoeur is claiming. Hegel’s great achievement in the *Phenomenology* is to trace and make concrete the complex enriching dialectical unfolding of spirit—spirit that initially is rooted in consciousness. And when the “truth” of consciousness is revealed, we discover that it leads us to self-consciousness that presupposes desire and life. Hegel’s dialectic of negativity gradually leads us to ever enriching concrete understanding of intersubjective recognition. Nothing like this is thematized in Freud. But Ricoeur employs his rich discussion of Hegel to highlight those aspects of Freudianism where such adialectic of the development of consciousness is implicit and unthematized. There is an implicit teleology (in this Hegelian sense) in Freudianism. Ricoeur finds three indications of this in Freud. The first is in the “operative concepts” that Freud employs (but does not thematize). In the analytic encounter between therapist and patient there is a structural homology with Hegel’s depiction of the struggle for recognition. This is evident in the dynamics of transference where (ideally) analysis is completed “with the attainment of the two consciousnesses, when the truth in the analyst has become the truth of sick consciousness. Then the patient is no longer alienated, no longer another: he has



become a self, he has become himself."<sup>14</sup> The second way in which we can discern the implicit teleology of Freudianism is in the Freudian concept of identification. Ricœur claims that the notion of identification is problematic for Freud. And here again Ricœur appeals to Hegel to illuminate a lacuna in Freud. Freud's texts suggest the "beginning of a dialectic of desire, in which negation is placed at the very center of desire":

The possibility is thus opened of rereading Freud's writings from the standpoint of the reduplication of consciousness. The rule of this rereading would be the oscillation between a dialectic and an economics, between a dialectic oriented toward the gradual emergence of self-consciousness and an economics that explains the "placements" and "displacements" of desire through which this difficult emergence is effected.<sup>15</sup>

The final indication of the implicit teleology of Freudianism is the question of sublimation. Freud's comments about sublimation are suggestive, problematic, and sketchy. Freud never really explicitly explains this "instinctual vicissitude." Ricœur reviews the various texts that discuss sublimation in order to show the incompleteness of inadequacies of Freud's reflections. But the topic of sublimation opens up the possibility developing the teleology that is implicit in Freudian archaeology. "Ultimately, through the more highly elaborated concepts of identification and idealization, the empty concept of sublimation refers us back to the operative unthematized concepts of the Freudian economics."<sup>16</sup> All of this can be summed up in "the task of becoming conscious, which defines the finality of analysis." For Ricœur this is what is at once implicit and entailed in the famous claim that "Where id was, there ego shall be."

What are we to make of this philosophical interpretation—this attempt by Ricœur to show a dialectic of archaeology and teleology in Freudianism. As always, Ricœur's reflections are illuminating and thought provoking. In the spirit of immanent critique Ricœur exposes weaknesses in Freud. And he presents a powerful case for showing why Freudianism needs to be supplemented with a type of teleology that would be homologous with the dialectical story of the development of spirit that we find in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. But at best, what we have are notes and suggestions toward such a dialectic—not the dialectic itself. We may fully agree with Ricœur's critique: "Ultimately, the task of becoming I, of becoming the ego, a task set within the economics of desire, is in principle irreducible to the economics."<sup>17</sup> But this negative point only sets the task for showing in *detail* how starting with the Freudian semantics of desire we can progress to the development of self-consciousness—a self-consciousness that achieves its satisfaction in another self-consciousness. And although at times Ricœur's rhetoric suggests that he has actually concretely developed this dialectic, I am not sure he would disagree with me that he sketches a project and a task that is yet to be fulfilled.

I want to try to show this vividly by considering a concrete instance of two different types of interpretation that Ricœur develops. Ricœur frequently returns to Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" for obvious reasons. This is the text that initially served as the basis for Freud's introduction of the Oedipus complex. Ricœur quotes the *Interpretation of Dreams*:

His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours—because the oracle laid the same curse on all of us before our birth as upon him"; and later on, "King Oedipus . . . merely shows us the fulfillment of our childhood wishes." Our pity and

terror, the famous tragic *phobos* is merely an expression of the violence of our own repression before this manifestation of our impulses.<sup>18</sup>

Ricoeur tells us that this reading is “possible, illuminating and necessary, but there is a second possible reading which is not so much concerned with the drama of incest and patricide *which actually took place* as with the tragedy of truth.”<sup>19</sup> Ricoeur then develops a subtle reading of the Oedipus story that points to “Oedipus at Colonus.” The tragedy of Oedipus is that the king’s pride that must be broken through suffering. The tragedy is about the *hybris* of adult guilt, about a man who considers himself unaffected by the truth. Oedipus’ zeal is the zeal of ignorance and is revealed in his outburst against Tiresias. “Thus Tiresias and not Oedipus is the center from which the truth proceeds.” “The connection between Oedipus’ anger and the power of truth is the core of the real Oedipus tragedy.”<sup>20</sup> In pursuing this illuminating interpretation Ricoeur brings out further revealing details of the tragedy of “Oedipus Rex.” Ricoeur illustrates the two types of hermeneutics “one oriented toward the resurgence of archaic symbols and the other toward the emergence of new symbols and ascending figures, all absorbed into the final stage, which, as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is no longer a figure but knowledge.”<sup>21</sup>

Now Ricoeur himself raises the very question we (his readers) want to raise: How are these two different interpretations related to each other? “As long as we remain within the perspective of an opposition between the two, consciousness and unconsciousness will answer to two inverse interpretations progressive and regressive.”<sup>22</sup> Ricoeur wants to avoid the Scylla of simply stating a stark abstract opposition and the Charybdis of a facile eclecticism. “We cannot simply add Hegel and Freud and give to each a half of man.”<sup>23</sup> Once again, the problem is to show in detail that there really is a genuine dialectic between these two modes of interpretation. But just as we arrive at the denouement, at the point where Ricoeur will show us the dialectical relation these two different types of hermeneutic, he leaves us in suspense. And he concedes that he has not yet answered the question we want him to answer—and which he claims is the heart of the matter. He concludes his essay “Consciousness and Unconsciousness” with the admission: “Finally, we have left unanswered the question of the fundamental identity of these two hermeneutics—an identity which leads us to say that a phenomenology of spirit and an archaeology of the unconscious speak *not of two halves of man but each one of the whole of man.*”<sup>24</sup>

In conclusion, I want to make it clear precisely what I am arguing. I think that Ricoeur’s “Analytic”—his reading of Freud is one of the most comprehensive, perceptive and judicious explications of Freudianism—one that begins with his early “Project” of 1895 and culminates with the last book that Freud published, *Moses and Monotheism*. I also think that Ricoeur is successful in exposing some of the weaknesses in Freud, and even more importantly, why we need to move beyond Freud. I am deeply sympathetic with his claim that there is a dialectical relationship between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a restorative hermeneutics of meaning—and that they are *integral* to each other. And I also think he is successful in showing how, if we relentlessly pursue the logic of Freud’s thinking, we are led beyond Freud—we are led to a set of concerns about consciousness, self-consciousness, and intersubjectivity that Freudianism does not adequately illuminate. But although he gives us many indications of how such dialectic is to be developed, I do not think he has actually achieved this. This is still a task (an *Aufgabe*) that lies before us.

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), xiii.
- <sup>2</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), vi.
- <sup>3</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 99. In this lecture when I speak of psychoanalysis I am referring to Freud's understanding of psychoanalysis—not to contributions made by others.
- <sup>4</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 108-109.
- <sup>5</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 69.
- <sup>6</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 69-70.
- <sup>7</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 533.
- <sup>9</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 533.
- <sup>10</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 143.
- <sup>11</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 439.
- <sup>12</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 453.
- <sup>13</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 461-462.
- <sup>14</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 474.
- <sup>15</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 483.
- <sup>16</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 492.
- <sup>17</sup> Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 492.
- <sup>18</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 115.
- <sup>19</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 115.
- <sup>20</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 116.
- <sup>21</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 117.
- <sup>22</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 118.
- <sup>23</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 118.
- <sup>24</sup> Ricœur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 120; emphasis added.