

El deseo: del instinto al inconsciente. Un recorrido epistemológico

The Desire: from the Instinct to the Unconscious. An Epistemological Tour

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Resumen

El presente escrito, se enmarca en el Proyecto de investigación UBACyT 2011-2014 *Actitudes de estudiantes universitarios de grado y de posgrado de la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad de Buenos Aires respecto de la ética profesional* dirigido por la Dra. Elizabeth Ormart

Para su presentación utilizaremos un recurso cinematográfico, se trata del film de Alan Parker, *The life of David Gale*, estrenado en 2003, con Kevin Spacey en el papel protagónico.

Su finalidad es reseñar brevemente algunos de los antecedentes de la noción del “deseo humano”. La larga historia del concepto del deseo humano ilumina una diversidad de aspectos que fueron aportados por la filosofía clásica en el proceso de su construcción conceptual.

Nuestra intención es mostrar cómo este concepto es recepcionado y transformado por el psicoanálisis, relacionando este proceso con el método científico

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utilizado por él para su abordaje; método diferente al de las ciencias exactas, pero no por eso menos riguroso.

Palabras clave: Deseo- pasión- método científico- psicoanálisis.

Abstract

This letter is part of the Research Project 2011-2014 UBACyT Attitudes of college students graduate and graduate of the School of Psychology at the University of Buenos Aires on professional ethics led by Dr. Elizabeth Ormart. To use a resource submission film, this is the Alan Parker film, The Life of David Gale, released in 2003, with Kevin Spacey in the title role. Its purpose is to briefly review some of the history of the notion of "human desire". The long history of the concept of human desire illuminates a variety of aspects that were provided by classical philosophy in its conceptual construction process. Our intention is to show how this concept is receptionado and transformed by psychoanalysis, linking this process with the scientific method used by him for his approach, method different from the exact sciences, but no less rigorous.

Key words: Desire-passion-psychoanalysis scientific method.

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Introduction

In this paper we intend to review, in a brief epistemological journey, certain founding definitions of the concept of "human desire" received and later transformed by psychoanalysis.

An epistemological journey of the concept of desire cannot be unfolded, for psychoanalysis, without referring to classical philosophy. Well, it is through it that we will be able to illuminate a diversity of aspects that have been forgotten in the process of conceptual construction of the notion of desire proposed by psychoanalysis.

To introduce the concept of desire, as understood by psychoanalysis, we will use the cinema as a didactic support; then we will carry out a brief epistemological journey on the concept of desire and its relationship with the scientific method used by psychoanalysis for its approach. Finally, we will show how this concept is received and transformed within the psychoanalytic theoretical framework

WHAT CINEMA TEACHES US ABOUT DESIRE

As an epilogue, we will introduce a brief cinematographic reference. Alan Parker's film, *The life of David Gale*, released in 2003, with Kevin Spacey in the leading role, will help us present the question of desire in a colloquial way.

David Gale is a brilliant young intellectual, an honors graduate from Harvard, who got his tenured position as Professor of Philosophy at Cornell when he was just twenty-six years old. The first scene shows him lecturing before a large and attentive audience of students. The theme: the conception of desire in the thought of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan –not a very common theme for North American universities-. One of Lacan's best-known schemes, the so-called graph of desire, is neatly drawn on the blackboard in chalk, and the phrase with which Gale closes his talk will have, as we shall see, a crucial significance: our entire existence is for the Other.



Let us return to the scene in detail. Everything takes place in the auditorium of the university where Gale works as a professor. He is in front of his students and explains the role of fantasy and the sense of desire in human beings:

David Gale: Come on, think. I want you to go back inside those minds and tell me, tell us everything. What is your fantasy? World peace? (audience laughter) Think about it. Do you fantasize about international fame? (cheering) Do you fantasize about winning a Pulitzer Prize or a Nobel Prize? An award on MTV? (laughs) Do you fantasize about finding some piece of genius, ostensibly bad but secretly slow-cooked with noble passion and will, and then rest on your laurels? (laughs)

Student: Give me two.

Gale: What was that?

Student: Give me two.

Gale: Kimberly takes two. You've got Lacan's point. Fantasies have to be utopian, because at the moment, the second you have what you're looking for, you don't want it anymore. In order to continue to exist, desire must have its object perpetually absent. It's not what you want, it's the fantasy of it. So the desire sustains crazy fantasies.

A door slams and a student enters saying:

Sorry...

Gale: This is what Pascal means when he says "we are only truly happy when we daydream about future happiness" Or why do we say "the hunt is sweeter than the hunted" or "be careful what you wish for"? Not because they will have it but because they are doomed not to want it once they have it. So Lacan's lesson is that living by your desires will never make you happy. What it means to be fully human is to live by ideas and by ideals and not to measure your lives by what you have achieved in terms of your desires but by those little moments of integrity and passion, rationally, even self-sacrifice. Because in the end, the only way we can measure the meaning of our lives is by valuing the lives of others.

In "The Life of David Gale", it could be proven that the very story that the film tells is a demonstration that when Gale teaches his class, he does not realize how much anticipation there is in his words. How much of his desire is played out in that first scene of the movie.

THE PATH OF SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION.

When trying to understand the world in which we live, we put our subjectivity at stake, elaborating theories that allow us to understand the world around us. However, our perception does not provide us with the necessary tools to obtain a criterion of truth that validates the theories obtained from our perceptions of the facts. But shouldn't we attribute the content of our perceptions to nature? Do we not possess a method for describing in a universally evident way what belongs to reality?

Following Strasser (1967), we could affirm that the systematic application of the mathematical-geometrical method to the exploration of nature began in the Renaissance period; Galileo being the pioneer of this process of mathematization whose purpose was to exclude subjectivity from the consideration of nature, since by counting and measuring the relativity of subjective perception is overcome, obtaining, instead, a universalization of knowledge; It is in the field of physics where this method will obtain its greatest successes, claiming to become "the only valid method" for scientific research.

However, the philosopher Edmund Husserl warns us about the dangers that threaten modern research since it seeks to "construct an objective nature by eliminating the subject for whom nature is nature" (Strasser, 1967). His denunciation focuses on what he calls the positivist reduction of the idea of science, alluding to those who consider that only science could build an objective universe.

It should be noted that although Galileo is credited with the universalization of the mathematical-geometric method, already in antiquity various cultures had developed their own scientific method conceiving the goals of science differently "while the goal of science in Babylon was to predict phenomena, that of Greek science was to

explain them" (De Asúa, 1996). A brief tour of the history of astronomy in ancient times will allow us to better understand the above.

The peoples who inhabited Mesopotamia were the ones who built a very sophisticated astronomical system. During the Seléusida era (between 250 and 50 BC) a predictive astronomy was developed that used mathematical techniques with the aim of determining certain significant positions of the stars, as well as numerical functions with maximums and minimums to predict what would happen in the future. The future with them.

At this time, astronomy together with astrology were part of the magical-religious practices of the Mesopotamian civilization, which is why knowing in advance the location of the stars acquires a relevant importance, since their location was associated with an omen system.

In Greece, on the other hand, the construction of science took a different path. In the sixth century a. C the pre-Socratics tried to find a rational explanation of the principles of nature, based on a natural philosophy that sought a natural explanation of its phenomena. It is on the basis of these theories that Greek astronomy was outlined, seeking geometric explanations of the structure of the cosmos.

Going back to Husserl we can affirm that "discovery is a mixture of instinct and method. Now it is the method that adapts to the instinct and not the instinct to the method (...) the accuracy of the physicist is not, then, the significant feature of all the disciplines, it is rather the most manifest expression of a more fundamental project (...) the episteme has a general form that is found in all its domains. It is based on two categories: method and fact" (Strasser, 1967).

We can ask ourselves what is a fact for science? According to this author, a "fact" always refers to something discernible, and acquires a certain importance according to the area in which it is used. For the man in the street, for example, knowing the facts is synonymous with "certainly knowing", since for him the verification of the fact corresponds to his perception or observation of it. However, a fact has nothing to do with a sensation. Furthermore, a fact cannot always be proved by observations; in

mathematical language, for example, it is not possible to speak of "an established truth of fact" without first having rigorously developed a deductive judgment from certain axioms or postulates.

So, what is a fact? "A fact is an objective object or relationship with which we are confronted. We place ourselves in front of a certain totality in order to be able to distinguish and determine facts" (Strasser, 1967). The fact is closely related to another category: "the method". The method is the equivalent of the path that science takes. It is built while trying to reach the goal, the latter becoming the guide that tells us which way to go; thus establishing the facts according to a methodical idea.

Husserl's analyzes do not refer to the totality of the modern episteme, he only speaks of the humanities to reproach them for having allowed themselves to be carried away by scientism. However, it is possible to affirm that mathematization is only carried out to the extent that it can be useful.

FROM PSYCHIATRY TO PSYCHOANALYSIS

This tension between a method emanating from the exact sciences and the findings that come from the humanistic field can also be verified in the history of Argentine psychiatry. As confirmed by Florencia Ibarra, the influence of the Enlightenment, in the May Revolution of 1810, brought about epistemological consequences in the conceptions of the time: "the word passion begins to be used in the opposite sense by passively suffering (...) the passions already they do not connote passive suffering, as can be read in Cartesian considerations, but rather they direct the action and do it towards an object" (Ibarra, 2007; p.2). In the words of Monteagudo "(...) all passions have a moral gravitation towards their object, which necessarily precipitates those who are possessed of them" (Goldman, in Ibarra, op. cit.).

In short, the notions that connote the affections - passion, desire, etc. - appear with the Enlightenment associated with moral phenomena, hence many authors defined themselves as doctor-philosophers.

The method, therefore, is not accompanied by the criteria of the exact sciences but follows a different course.

Let us take another important example in relation to the category of desire, such as the case of psychoanalysis, whose scientific status is disputed, precisely with regard to the method.

In his demarcation model of science, Karl Popper took psychoanalysis as an example of pseudoscience, because it violated the principle of falsifiability, in contrast to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. Popper observed that while the refutation conditions for Einstein's hypotheses were precisely determined and Einstein was willing to start over if the evidence did not support them, Sigmund Freud's theories were unfalsifiable and allowed him to reinterpret the evidence when it did not confirm the theories. hypothesis.

The epistemologist Mario Bunge, for his part, in his model of demarcation of science, maintains that psychoanalysis is an example of pseudoscience because it lacks external consistency. While the different scientific disciplines interact by supporting each other, both in their theoretical and empirical aspects, the serious problem of psychoanalysis, according to Bunge, would be that it is a discipline isolated from the rest of knowledge, which does not interact with other disciplines. obviously relevant, such as experimental psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and the biological sciences

A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DESIRE

Strictly speaking, the conception of desire is not a creation of psychoanalysis. This is confirmed by Jacques Lacan himself, who recognizes three sources: the Socratic dialogues of Plato, Hegel and Sigmund Freud himself.

Indeed, already in Plato's Banquet, we can read: "what he desires, he desires what he lacks, and does not desire it if he is provided with it" (...) this and any other who feels desire, desires what he does not have, what he does not possess, and what he is not.

And more explicitly in the following quotes from Hegel, all of them taken from the Phenomenology of Spirit:

"In order for the subject to appear, it is necessary for a desire to appear. Now, not simply a desire for the object, that the only thing that would give it is the sensation of individuality, identity, feeling of oneself, that is, it is not strictly a desire but a desire."

"Anthropogenic desire therefore differs from animal desire, which constitutes a natural being, only living and which has no other feeling than that of its life"

"... while the desire, which is postulated on another desire, generates something different from the mere position of the living being, of the natural being, due to the fact that it is directed not towards a real, positive, given object, but on another desire "

Finally, two last sentences of Hegel, also conclusive on the dimension of desire: "Human desire must overcome this desire for conservation: in other words, man does not consider himself human if he does not risk his life based on his human desire "(...) Man recognizes himself as human by risking his life to satisfy his human desire."

In short, for Hegel the desire that is directed towards a natural object is not human except to the extent that it is mediated by the desire of the other directed towards the same object. Therefore, it is characteristic of the human being to want what others want, precisely because they want it. Thus, a totally useless object can be desired to the extent that it is the object of other desires.

The logical consequence is that life itself is subject to that desire of the other. That is why for Hegel "to speak of the origin of self-consciousness is, necessarily, to speak of the risk of life with a view to an essentially non-vital end."

Likewise, within the field of classical philosophy, the concept of desire linked to the passions can be traced.

A first conceptualization of the desire linked to the passions can be found in the text *Treatise on the passions of the soul* by René Descartes (1649) who tells us that "... the main effect of all the passions in men is that they incite and dispose their soul to to want the things for which they prepare their bodies..." Likewise, in this text, he performs an ordering and enumeration of them, placing desire among the six primary passions "...it is easy to observe that there are only six that are, namely : admiration, love, hate, desire, joy and sadness; and that all the others are composed of these six, or

are species of the same..."; defining it in the following way: "The passion of desire is an agitation of the soul caused by the spirits that dispose it to want for the future the thing that seems convenient to it. In this way, not only the presence of the absent good is desired, but also the conservation of the present, and also the absence of evil, both the one that is already suffered and the one that we can receive in the future (...) I observe, finally, in the desire the peculiarity that it stirs the heart more than any other passion"

In the text *The Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes (1651) says that "the effort when directed to something that causes it, is called APPETITE OR DESIRE; (...) the former is often restricted to signifying the desire for food, especially hunger and thirst (...) What men desire is said to be loved (...) thus love and desire are the same thing, only that with desire we always mean the absence of the object and with love its presence".

The Epicureans, on the other hand, associated desires with natural impulses and needs. For this reason they considered that "they should be educated", because in this way they could discover "their own unique nature" and act in that direction to achieve happiness.

Spinoza in his text *Ethics* demonstrated according to the geometric order tells us the following: "(...) between appetite and desire there is no difference, if it is not that desire generally refers to men, insofar as they are aware of his appetite and therefore can be defined as follows: desire is appetite accompanied by awareness of it. Thus, it is clear, by virtue of all this, that we do not try, want, feel like or desire something because we judge it good, but, on the contrary, we judge that something is good because we try, want, feel like and desire it. This author distinguishes man from the animal precisely because of his desiring condition and although desire is still found in him linked to instinct, it is possible to perceive that the question that Jacques Lacan will formulate in Seminar 7 *The Ethics of psychoanalysis* when referring to the unconscious desire and the subjective position that rests on it "have you acted according to the desire that inhabits you?"; question that challenges the man making him responsible for his desire.

conclusion

By way of conclusion we will try to reorder and summarize what was previously exposed.

The long history of the concept of human desire illuminates a diversity of aspects contributed by classical philosophy in the process of its conceptual construction. This conceptual construction of human desire received and transformed by psychoanalysis is not possible without a scientific research method that allows its approach.

Considering that, according to Strasser, the fact as an object with which science is confronted is approached by a method and it is from this approach that an object of study is constructed; It is possible to reflect that for psychoanalysis, unconscious desire is constituted as an object of study based on clinical evidence that shows that there is something that exceeds the subject of consciousness, determining a singular subjective position.

In short, it is possible to consider that desire as a subjectivizing singularity becomes a challenge for the objectivizing universalization of the method of the positive sciences. In other words, the elaboration of the concept of desire does not follow a linear evolution, like that of advances in physics or other exact sciences.

However, it is possible to affirm that although the method used by psychoanalysis to build knowledge is not the same as that of the exact sciences, the result is equally rigorous.

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