

## The Exteriority of Mind: Some Critical remarks about Neuro-Reductionism from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

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### **Abstract**

Any thesis about human nature that wants to call itself scientific today pretend to verify itself by neurosciences. These perspectives propose a pure organism that is far from unitary but with a common denominator: the reduction of the subject to its neural substrate, sometimes ignoring socio-symbolical dimension. This article develops the topics from the neuro-reductionist perspective showing its limits, both theoretical and clinical. The articulation of Lacanian conception of subject with Wittgenstein's critical approach to philosophy demonstrates the vacuity of neuro-reductionism discourse face to the "real", which resides at the bottom of human nature.

**Keywords:** *Neurosciences ; Psychoanalysis ; Reductionism ; Real ; Wittgenstein*

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«C'est, si je puis dire, le grand secret de la psychanalyse. Le grand secret, c'est – il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre.» (Lacan, 2013, p. 353)

## Introduction

Several authors have seen points of convergence between Lacan's psychoanalytic thinking and Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysical thought. Lacan himself, on several occasions, engages with the ideas of the Austrian philosopher, emphasizing the acuity of his analyses and underlining his subjective position in relation to language (Lacan, 1991, p. 69). In this article, we will explore the extent to which Wittgenstein's thinking, particularly his “later” work (“second Wittgenstein”), offers psychoanalysis a framework to contemplate certain aspects of subjectivity by providing insights into understanding some reductionist attitudes of human nature. For this purpose, we will briefly compare the psychoanalytic conception of the subject with Wittgenstein's philosophical critique of the language used by classical philosophers.

Our main aim is to clarify the difference between the subjectivity of psychoanalysis and that advocated by what we will call here as “neuro-reductionism”, which is a cultural tendency very popular in common sense but also in human sciences, especially in many academic trends of studies in philosophy of mind, moral philosophy and cognitive psychology.

The utilization of certain aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy will serve to demonstrate how neuro-reductionism relies on a model of the mind that adheres to a bipolar and obsolete logic of interiority-exteriority. This type of logic is based on a conception

of language as a label and is reduced to a correspondence between “language” and what we commonly call “reality”. A difference which we will explore using Lacanian psychoanalytic theorization about the gap between symbolic order and the real. Indeed, De Saussure (1987)'s linguistics, or the theoretical base of Lacanian psychoanalysis, makes a difference between signifier, signified, and referent, producing a fundamental cut into human reality due to language. In this perspective, Wittgenstein's “immanentist” view of language moves toward recognizing this gap, meaning that there is no point in “external reality”, which could serve as an external reference to close the “set of language”, or the symbolic order (in Lacanian terms). In Lacan's final teachings we also find the same perspective about the relationship between body and language, indeed he highlights the grammatical role in the production of meaning emphasizing how the body is traversed by the signifier, which marks organs too (Lacan, 2001a, pp. 452-453). The subject is the effect of this language traversal by the organism, and so, in analysis, he is nothing but the result of the signifying cut: «the subject is the effect of the said» (ibid., p. 472).

This set of language, therefore, remains open and escapes the possibility of being reduced to a “fundamental equation” (a quilting point) from a sign to a specific object. In fact, we will demonstrate that Wittgenstein prevents us from falling into an essentialization of mental states and, therefore, subjectivity. Wittgenstein's critique of interiority as a metaphysical worldview unfolds from language (Cometti, 2004, p. 237), which will lead us to a critically approach of reductionism in neuroscience.

## A subject that escapes

The subject in psychoanalysis is neither the philosophical subject of knowledge, nor the psycho-behaviorist subject of conduct, nor the organism of medicine. The subject what Lacan talks about is the subject of the unconscious that lies beyond any possible classification and normalization that could relegate it to objective standards or biopower logics. This is what J.-A. Miller underscores when defining the subject in terms of “absence”: «from the outset, the subject is a disparity. Its concept is linked to absence, to bypassing, to the bypassing of an area I described as forbidden, that is to say, a hole, but that can just as well be treated as a residue – [Lacan] indeed calls it the *caput mortuum* of the signifier» (Miller, 2019a, p.157).

In other words, the subject is what remains outside of any possibility of being expressed; it only finds its proper status through one signifier to another signifier, meaning within a constant referral: «the self-differentiation of the signifier in that it cannot signify itself, the self-differentiation of the subject in that it is represented by one signifier in relation to another» (Miller, 1981, p. 11). We can say that this dimension of the subject is invoked in the analytic relationship. It is in strict relation to the analyst’s silence, similar to what Wittgenstein (1922, p. 89) indicates, and it takes an ethical turn in both cases: «Wittgenstein has nothing more to say. In this regard, for Lacan, he is close to the position of the analyst who completely removes himself from his discourse». (Fontaneau, 1999, p. 210). Subject in psychoanalysis is a void, so our encounter with it coincides with the onset of the real, which implies the loss of power of words, language, symbolic order.

This reveals to us that the subject of the unconscious cannot be fixed by a signifier (even though it desires to be), but it eludes signification in a discontinuous fading movement, with the slip of the tongue being its most striking manifestation. The subject is, therefore, an avoid place, a symbolic space created by the effect of the signifier, a void from which discourse can unfold. The subject we are talking about is the one Lacan introduces and conceives through a reinterpretation of French philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre:

[it is] the subject marked by the signifier, who is also the subject with no pre-existing identity, a lack-of-being. This subject fills its lack-of-being by identifying with certain features of the Other. [This subject] Lacan elaborated from the Sartrean subject, in the sense that the subject divided by the signifier is a new version of Sartre’s nothingness of being revisited through the question of the relationship to speech and language (Leguil, 2019).

The subject referred to by Sartre (1965) is derived from Husserl’s phenomenology, and it is a consciousness, so to speak, twilight-like, meaning a consciousness that, with its intentionality, designates the object in a transcendental field in an “unreflexive” manner: «This transcendental sphere is a sphere of absolute existence, that is to say, of pure spontaneities that are never objects and that determine themselves to exist» (ibid., p. 77, our translation). The subjectivity discussed in psychoanalysis is that of a consciousness that excludes the dimension of auto-reflexivity and thus the solipsism of a self-enclosed consciousness that would be a rational subject purely observing the “external world”, following Cartesian model of *Cogito*. The subject in psychoanalysis represents a fundamental openness of life to the world, and being devoid of substantiality, it goes beyond any ideal of psychological interiority. This is indeed what

Miller (2019a) emphasizes as a fundamental difference between psychoanalysis and psychology: «the terms subject and subjectivity are used by Lacan right from the start entirely at a distance from the cognitive meaning intention that aims at activity, reflexivity, and consciousness» (ibid., p. 155). It is evident that this gap also arises in a comparison between neuroscience and psychoanalysis but on an even deeper level.

The belief at the core of neuroscience is in direct continuity with that of cognitive psychology, which presupposes that the mind is a perfectly circumscribed object, assumed to exist within what is called “reality”, and on which investigations could be conducted. In this regard, we could say that:

Psychology is the science of the soul or of the mind. But if we think of the soul or mind as a kind of *res*, and as an object of scientific inquiry, then psychoanalysis is not a science of the soul or of the mind. In fact, Lacan attacks American interpretations of psychoanalysis because he refuses to consider analytic practice as linked to a scientific theory of a particular object, the mind or Self. Not by chance a Lacanian (or generally a Continental philosopher) never speaks of mind or self, rather of subjectivity: the mind is now seen as a special object of scientific inquiry, but the subject is not an object at all (Benvenuto, 2018).

The mind as a real object is consciousness with its reflective function, and one can find its substrate within the organism. This perspective allows for a model of the mind where interiority is reversed onto the exterior, onto brain imaging. It is a position that is particularly evident in the field of affective neurosciences, as seen, for example, in the work of Damasio (1994), who argues that different states of consciousness, or *qualia*, have a single substrate that can always be traced back to brain matter in a sort of materialistic monism.

## The Blind Spot of Cognitive Neuroscience

Neurosciences are a combination of scientific disciplines aimed at studying the nervous system. However, this combination is influenced by various paradigms, which, in asserting their scientificity, tend to falsify or at least contradict each other. In summary, within the field of cognitive neurosciences – that is, the area dedicated to understanding how neural circuits can generate various psychological functions – there are two main positions: the adaptationist and the extended. To exemplify what we are thinking here when we talk about neuro-reductionism, we will describe the first one of these two approaches.

The first position is ultra-Darwinian, as it focuses solely on the activity of genes. Consequently, life, whether human or not, is nothing but the product of evolution, understood as a «biological machine whose engine consists of genes and their incessant “competition for reproductive success”, that is, replication and transmission of as much genetic information as possible to the offspring» (Attanasio, 2010, pp. VIII-IX). In this perspective, organisms have the sole task of serving as genetic vehicles; everything is reduced to genes and their ability to replicate and propagate various genetic components. Species with their diversities, various ethnicities with their histories and cultures, and individuals with their desires play no fundamental role because everything is reduced to genetics.

An example helps clarify the reasoning: a subject hears the doorbell ring at their home and decides to open the door. A philosopher of the mind can analyze the action by breaking it down into an external event (EE), which produces a perception (P). This perception, combined with mental dispositions (M), leads the subject to make a decision (D) about an

action (A), which in this case is to open the door. This can be schematized as follows:

$$EE \rightarrow P (+ M) \rightarrow D \rightarrow A$$

Unlike EE and A, which are publicly observable, P, M, and D are deduced or inferred by the scientist, especially by the so-called “adaptationist”, as mental states closely related to the central nervous system. Therefore, what is described in ordinary language can be translated into a biophysical language that interprets the example described above in terms of a distal stimulus (SD), meaning sound waves that create a proximal stimulus (SP) by vibrating the eardrum and, connecting to cerebral processes (C) and motor neuron activities (N), triggering a response (R):

$$SD \rightarrow SP \rightarrow ..C... \rightarrow N \rightarrow R$$

A question arises at this point: is there a relationship between the two languages, the ordinary one and the biophysical one? Taking the adaptationist seriously, the mind is only understandable through a neuro-reductionist approach called eliminative materialism. For this line of thought, mental acts described by ordinary language cannot be reduced to cerebral processes. In other words, between SD and R, they only exist in C, the cerebral processes of a specific subject, with no one-to-one correspondence between the elements of C and M (mental disposition).

In this perspective, the failure to reduce all mental acts to cerebral processes, far from being a concession to dualism, is simply due to the fact that psychological language, as it is imbued with common sense concepts, is too imprecise, coarse, and laden with old religious or philosophical beliefs to be translated with-

out residue into the language of natural sciences. What many traditional concepts in folk psychology, such as “belief” or “desire”, refer to does not correspond to anything real (Nannini, 2021, pp. XV-XVI).

This perspective, however, would be, at least apparently, contested by the second major neuroscientific position, the extended one. The latter does not disconnect natural selection from historical and cultural factors. Human organisms are not just vehicles for genes, but first and foremost, bodies struggling for survival, while ecosystems are seen as a set of historical and cultural interactions. In other words, the extended position interprets various social systems as «sedimentations, choices, judgments of individuals living in society, that is, sedimentations of knowledge and behaviors learned and transmitted to future generations, not through genes, but through languages, culture, history» (Attanasio, 2010, p. X).

To better understand the argument, we could refer to one of the leading proponents of this perspective, Antonio Damasio. According to the neuroscientist, it is impossible to understand the self, its constitution, and its development without considering emotions. Before the subject can have a conscious self, they are immersed in a process where the self, as it emerges, disappears; a stage of development called “proto-self”. Damasio’s theory (1994) aims to refute the view that the self and consciousness emerge after language. By reducing the latter to the verb, he states how «phrases, reasoning express, sometimes occult, what already exists in non-verbal form sunken in the nuclear or proto-self, a magmatic component of personality where knowledge ranging from non-verbal and not conscious of the neural self to the non-verbal but conscious of the nuclear self» (Attanasio,



2010, p. 68). Damasio's starting point is an organism where biological dispositions allow a living being to continue living, and that is the ordinary source of the self. From this perspective, the brain amplifies and enhances the ability to know. In other words, the drive for life uses an implicit (and innate) knowledge of the organism, organized with the help of certain brain structures, and only subsequently from a conscious mind. In this regard, the neuroscientist suggests:

the sense of self has a preconscious biological precedent, the protoself [which] is a coherent collection of neural patterns which map, moment by moment, the state of the physical structure of the organism in its many dimensions. This ceaselessly maintained firstorder collection of neural patterns occurs not in one brain place but in many, at a multiplicity of levels, from the brain stem to the cerebral cortex, in structures that are interconnected by neural pathways. These structures are intimately involved in the process of regulating the state of the organism (Damasio, 2000, p. 180).

If the proto-self allows an organism to exist, but not to know, for the latter, there is a need for a core-self, which takes shape from the continuous interaction between the environment and the organism, which sees its primary configurations modified. For Damasio, «the self is to the extent that it is integrated in the act of knowing, without being able to extricate it from that act and distinguish it from that, temporally or spatially» (Attanasio, 2010, p. 77). Thus, the organism finds itself, in representing its own state, also representing something else. Second-order maps are added to the first-order maps of the physical structure, which implicitly record and regulate the organism, producing explicit images.

A core self has an instantaneous consciousness. It is the product of changes, which occur when the organism encounters an object

such as the perception of a face, a sound, well-being, or suffering. This core-consciousness represents the object in images, without language and in a form that is still pre-reflective, without a future and with a past confined to that just-passed moment. Yet, this ephemeral self, in its continuous appearance, leaves traces that contribute to the construction of autobiographical memory: this is the appearance of the autobiographical self, an extended consciousness.

The whole is not reduced to the series of stimuli received by the organism through its encounters with objects. Or rather, memory records, along with the stimuli, the resulting emotions because they allow living beings to react in the best way to life situations, positive or negative. However, far from being an entirely human prerogative, devoid of a « brain without mind, without thoughts, even the simplest organisms are provided with emotional reactions that can preserve life. But not to feel feelings or reflect on them » (ibid., p. 91). It is the feelings, on the other hand, along with the autobiographical self that belong to those animals, like humans, who have a strong capacity for memory and reasoning. In fact, feelings extend the emotion, activate attention, and combine images and memories, increasing the likelihood of new and innovative responses, enhancing the adaptive and survival capabilities of organisms.

The difference between speaking animals and other living beings is based on the amount of memory and greater reasoning ability, coupled with the non-essential, albeit useful, language. Damasio is convinced:

I believe the self to which they refer is the autobiographical self. I also believe apes such as bonobo chimpanzees have an autobiographical self, and I am willing to venture that some dogs of my acquaintance also do. They possess an autobiographical self but not quite a person.

You and I possess both, of course, thanks to an even more ample endowment of memory, reasoning ability, and that critical gift called language (Damasio, 2000, p. 101-102).

In conclusion, the human animal has developed its mental abilities to better protect itself and adapt to its environment. Damasio's work is remarkable in his attempt not to confine the subject solely to the brain and its biochemistry. However, his theory falls into neurological reductionism, as seen in his view of emotions, which are not considered much differently than as a set of chemical exchanges between neurons (Attanasio, 2010, p. 93), and consequently, even feelings are regarded as extensions. This raises a question: how can such an approach explain phenomena like anorexia, addiction, or masochism? Here, the evolutionary paradigm seems overly simplistic and inappropriate for grasping the essence of the speaking animal, which involves a disruption of homeostasis, the dimension of excess, and the articulation of enjoyment linked to desire.

### Neurosciences and the Subject-Substance

How we have seen, the neurocognitive conception of the mind makes the individual psyche the paradigm of subjectivity, meaning an individual interiority presumed in every action and conduct. Such an idea of psychic interiority is at the foundation of a concept of the subject-substance, which implicitly or explicitly refers to a theory of language as mirroring reality, as we will discuss below. It is in this direction that the slope toward reductionism lies, which has indeed been criticized as contradictory by certain philosophical perspectives, such as those affiliated with idealism, claiming that the identity proposed by

neuroscience is an identity outside of relation. It defines the subject as autonomous and solipsistic, thereby contradicting the very concept of identity (Stella & Ianulardo, 2019, pp. 13-14).

This way of thinking about the mind relates to a specific conception of language as a tool to indicate the object (the so-called "ostensive"), a kind of label through which reference is made to some specific and concrete external entity, namely a model of language as a duplication of reality. At this regard, E. Laurent emphasizes the difference in scope between cognitive neuroscience and psychoanalysis: «Like our cognition theorists, Lacan trusts what is senseless and is wary of meaning. But it's the reverse of representation conceived as storage. The place of the subject is the place of loss and its encounter, or *tuché*. The unconscious is not a trace of learning; it's a play with the signifier that's lacking» (Laurent, 2008, p. 43). In other words, there is no signifier of the subject in psychoanalysis, which "shows itself" as that which eludes representation, whereas in neuroscientific theory, consciousness is seen as a reflection of the subject of his own functioning, which is based on specific brain circuits. Therefore, the subject as conceived in psychoanalysis appears as an empty set, where the realm of identification serves to attach it to the signifying chain on which it depends. It does not correspond to an ideal of self-sufficiency; it stands out for being caused by the signifier, as pulsatile, a discontinuity in the real:

The language effect is the cause introduced into the subject. By this effect, it is not the cause of itself; it carries within it the worm of the cause that splits it. [...] An effect of language in that it arises from this original splitting, the subject translates a signifying synchrony into that primordial temporal pulsation,

which is the fading that constitutes its identification (Lacan, 1966 a, p. 200).

The subject is like an effect of language, and thus it is merely a logical effect, not a reality with ontological consistency. In this sense, Lacan suggests that a distinction needs to be made «not between the physical and the psychic, [...] but between the psychic and the logical» (Lacan, 2005, p. 45). The paradigm of reductionist neurosciences stands in stark contrast to what psychoanalysis reveals in its clinical practice, where it concerns a dimension of subjectivity that is foreign to itself. This dimension is recognized by the ego (which coincides with the aforementioned reflective consciousness) as a part of oneself and simultaneously as external. In the reductionist application of neuroscience to the subjective dimension, there is a new attempt to substantialize subjectivity, aiming to provide it with a psychological delineation, assign a personality profile, and so on. This is the most intriguing aspect of neuroscience; it offers to the contemporary subject the illusion of finally being able to define oneself, to settle into a clearly defined identity, a sort of roadmap of the brain's inner workings useful for visualizing “without filters” and “without veils” their “inner life”. (Ehrenberg, 2018, p. 11). Contemporary subject finds in neuro-reductionism the realization of the illusory hope that afflicts every subject: to have well-fixed and totally completed identity.

From this perspective, the interest of cognitive psychology and neurosciences in the emotional dimension of human experiences stems from this fundamental illusion. For example, developmental psychologists emphasize how at the origin of an individual's development, there are pre-linguistic and fundamentally biological experiences of the self (Parvizi & Damasio, 2001, p. 137), where the

essence of consciousness coincides with physiological states, changes in the activity of certain brain regions associated with emotions (ibid., p. 139). This perspective implies a conception of human subjectivity that is based on a mind that feels, that has self-experiences, that undergoes emotions. It is a mind with specific, locatable places within the brain regions, as F. Fontaneau demonstrates well with the following example in the neuroscience investigation:

We have three realities: an individual A observing a red flower, an individual B observing the brain of A, and the visual experiences of B. However, we confuse the physical concept 'process in the brain of A' with the reality itself designated by the concept. We have, for example, the lived experience of A regarding the redness of the flower and the physical process in the brain of A, and we believe that the two must be parallel or act upon each other. We treat the intuitive images of B's consciousness as if they were already the physical object 'A's brain' and as if the properties of the transcendent thing 'A's brain' were immediately grasped within them (Fontaneau, 2010, p. 223).

This perspective relies on the paradigm of thinking about the mind in terms of interiority-exteriority, where interiority is considered beyond the realm of language and therefore inexpressible except through measuring devices that make it objectifiable or “external”. It is the same logical error that behaviorism made by claiming that psychic experience is unknowable and, therefore, the study of directly observable external behavior is needed to define it in an “objective” manner (Gauvry, 2019). However, as we aim to explain, “psychic experience” is only expressible through linguistic means: «This doesn't mean, however, that our psychic experience is purely linguistic. We continuously have psychic experiences, just like all our other experiences, but we truly experience them only when they



manifest in our statements in the form of expressions (or, more rarely, descriptions)» (ibid., p. 113). Indeed, Lacan also recognizes that the human being “is not a body” but “has a body”, precisely because of being a “being of language” (*parlêtre*): man «has something else (a body), without being able to make it his own» (Lacan, 2001b, p. 567). The experience that the speaking being has of their own body is one of fundamental alienation, and the same holds true for their interiority.

One of the ramifications of this logic is the programmatic approach of brief psychotherapies, based on affective neuroscience, aimed at managing emotions that disrupt an individual’s life, such as in the case of trauma. Emotions are fundamental, but at the same time, they can be controlled. It is no accident that we never talk about the feeling of anxiety, which is fundamental in Freud and Lacan, but rather about anguish, meaning an emotion that doesn’t fundamentally question the subject but can always be managed in some way:

The path proposed by cognitive-behavioral therapies is that of “emotional remodeling”. The principle is based on the malleability of reactivated memories and their ability to integrate new information. Through pharmacological treatment, subjects are put in a state of trust that allows reducing the emotional component before reactivating the memory to gradually diminish its pathological nature (Blancard, 2019, p. 227).

This is a tendency in cognitive psychology towards a sort of ego psychology, based on the centrality of the “self”, understood as a function of synthesis in the psychic economy, similar to the adaptive interpretation of the Freudian adage «*wo Es war, soll Ich werden*» (Freud, 1933, p. 111) by Ego psychology. From this, it follows that if emotions are the foundation of subjectivity, then language has

only secondary importance, especially as a tool for communicating one’s inner emotional experiences to others. This is one of the central points of “incommensurability” between psychoanalysis and neuroscience: «Language implies a logical causality different from neuronal causality. And above all, language is external, it precedes us. It is already there at our birth, and it will follow us beyond. Language is another form of life than neuronal life (Ansermet, 2019, p. 63). It is about giving substance to subjectivity by presenting it as an entity, whereas in psychoanalysis, there is a notion of “fading”. In the value attributed to emotions and the reduction of mental functions to brain regions, there is always a form of substantialization that involves using language as a set of labels to refer to so-called “real objects”.

This perspective is famously criticized by Wittgenstein in relation to the language of philosophers, in which he critiques, for instance, the “ostensive” explanation of language: «One might say that ostensive definition explains the use - the meaning - of a word if the role that this word is generally to play in language is already clear. [...] You already have to know something (or be able to do something) in order to be able to ask a question about the name». (Wittgenstein, 1958b, p. 14, § 30)

In other words, Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of a word has nothing to do with the object; it is not a question of representation but of the use to which words are put in everyday life. Therefore, one shouldn’t look for an external origin to grasp the meaning of words, which is what characterizes metaphysical approaches, namely «subordinating reality to truth and thought» (Utaker, 2019, p. 348). On the other hand, the psychoanalytic

conception of language and reality is that reality always surpasses us, and language is not a mirror of either reality or the real. Language itself, not being self-contained, always surpasses its user, as De Saussure (1987) stated, «we cannot control the linguistic sign» (ibid., p. 71).

### The linguistic game of interiority

Wittgenstein emphasizes that one cannot treat the object of psychology as if it were an object of physics: «What shows it is that the physicist sees these phenomena, hears them, reflects on them, and informs us about them, whereas the psychologist observes the expressions (the behavior) of the subject» (Wittgenstein, 1958b, §571). In other words, we can say that there is interiority only with reference to an external linguistic framework: «an internal process needs external criteria» (ibid., §580) for understanding, even for the subject. Such interiority would, therefore, be posited by social discourse, what Wittgenstein calls a “language game”, which establishes the concept of interiority accepted in the forms of life in which we act (ibid., §583). For these reasons, we relate our critique of interiority to Wittgenstein's remarks about the fact that the meaning of words cannot be understood from an ostensive gesture. Indeed, he demonstrates that in the case of “internal” mental states, language does not require an object to be shown to be understandable by others. One cannot say that there is another person's mind, so we can only base our certainty on their own linguistic expressions about their experience, that is, we talk about feelings or thoughts (express them), but we do not show them (or describe them). We understand internal states as the result of a language game accepted on the basis of a context with specific “forms of life”.

One could therefore say that, in a certain way, scientific reductionism addresses Wittgenstein's questions about the legitimacy of asserting the existence of interiority. At the point where we can see everyone's mental state in brain imaging, they respond by creating a sort of ontology of the mind or subjectivity, that is, by providing objective evidence about what is subjective. It can be noted that in this position, there is a kind of zeal to define reality by giving it linguistic labels in the manner of a map (Cassou-Noguès, 2019). In the specific case of the relationship with neuroscience, each psychological concept is matched with a location in the brain, which is a sort of direct connection between concept and thing, between the word (the union of signifier and signified) and referent.

From this perspective, it seems important to refer to J.-A. Miller (2019b) when he points out that “second Wittgenstein”

questioned the fundamental absence of a point of quilting and his investigations precisely focus on what could well tie together the signifier, signified, and referent. He presents this readily in an aporetic manner: how do we know that red is red? How do we know that what we call red, the other also calls it that way, especially when the other could be color-blind, it raises a question. In essence, his fundamental recourse, in what he clearly experienced as the fundamental absence of a point of quilting, his recourse is the community of language users. It means something within the framework of a community of those who do the same. Practice is the criterion. This is what happens when the Other has shattered, all that remains is the common practice of language within a given community (Miller, 2019, p. 169).

Common and consensual usage is what binds the signifier and the signified, allowing us to understand the meaning of words in our everyday life, and therefore, in other words,

enabling us to access a common sense of socially shared, objective reality. Wittgenstein's proposed logic means that language is not a closed set, and there is no external point to it that would establish a univocal relationship between the signifier and the signified, which would imply essentializing meaning. From this perspective, raising the question of interiority based on brain investigation, as if the brain were the ideal organ where this interiority would occur, can nonetheless be read as an attempt to fix the point of origin of language outside of language itself, thus pointing to reality as the place where language takes on substance outside of itself.

Upon reflection, this is the same criticism that Laurent makes of the representation-storage model used by neurocognitive scientists, which is quite the opposite of what distinguishes psychoanalytic discourse. Moreover, this is what Cosenza identifies as the core element that makes psychoanalysis irreducible to neurology:

*Das Ding* is the mythic object of the first satisfaction lost forever; the object irreducible to the realms of *Vorstellung*, representations of both the thing and speech. *Das Ding* is the first name of Freud's unconscious as the indefinable core of the psychic apparatus, an absent cause. It is the point at which the young Freud's project of a scientific psychology for neurologists is thwarted. *Das Ding* is what paves the way for the foundation of psychoanalysis (Cosenza, 2019, p. 55).

There is no coincidence between language and the real. In psychoanalysis, there is instead a fundamental gap between representation and what is the object to be represented, between language and sensory experience. They are irreducible to each other.

Another way to approach the solution to the enigma of interiority, as indicated by Wittgenstein and Lacan, is through language: «Both De Saussure and Wittgenstein reverse

the empiricist and cognitivist conception of the construction of language: we need first a language in order to have a sensed experience of the world, we never are in a solitary, virginal, primal touch with the things» (Benvenuto, 2018). In particular, from the perspective of the Austrian philosopher, the "I" we talk about as being connected to a body has only a grammatical derivation (Wittgenstein, 1958a, p. 124). It is only an effect of the language game of positioning oneself as a subject who feels, hears, desires, namely being able to talk about "myself" in the third person (ibid., 126; Descombes, 2014, p. 207). The same logic can be found, for example, in Wittgenstein's resolution of Moore's paradox, "It's raining, but I don't believe it". The philosopher points out the contradiction between the first and the second proposition in the fact that the latter is superfluous: the assertion "It's raining" is already sufficient to express the subject's opinion on the weather, and there is no need for the psychological verb in the second proposition ("I believe"). In other words, the assertion about the weather already conveys something about the subject's stance on reality, and there is no need for the "reflective" moment in the second proposition. The contradiction in this paradox is in expressing two contrary opinions simultaneously, where the second part indeed represents the moment of subjective division as the subject turns inward. It is a psychological moment where the subject posits itself as an entity with opinions, thoughts, etc., but what Wittgenstein makes us realize is that the speaking subject is already posited when he talks about weather, not when speaking about himself as a unitary and reflexive psychological entity (Descombes, 2013). From this perspective, it's not difficult to deduce a critique of cognitive, substantialist and

reductionist models of the mind where consciousness is viewed solely as a phenomenon of duplicating perception that establishes a sense of self-continuity over time (Jeannerod, 2009, pp. 91-92).

Therefore, in Wittgenstein's philosophy we can see a critique of cognitive model of the psyche. Our perspective aligns with the logical view of Jacques-Alain Miller when he describes the subject as a shifter between signifiers (Miller, 2019 c, p. 162). However, the two conceptions of the subject (from psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein) differ when considering that Wittgenstein's "I" is a logical-grammatical function that underlies action, while the subject in psychoanalysis is the subject of the unconscious, meaning it is thought of in terms of discontinuity in reflexivity. However, in both case the result is that subject is a result of a linguistic and grammatical operation which operates a discontinuity on the illusion of unitarity of cognitive subject: «This cut in the signifying chain alone verifies the structure of the subject as a discontinuity in the real» (Lacan, 1966b, p. 160). In both perspectives, real onset by the hiatus created by the symbolic order in the subjective experience by the effect of significant, precisely because language set is not a closed set. There is not a meta-language, which could guarantee a perfect and closed relation between signifiers, signify and referent, and the consequent of this is the inner division of subject. Subject is overcome by grammar, which is his logical precondition; and in this way it is an avoid set that cannot correspond with brain.

## Conclusions

What has interested us in the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and Witt-

genstein's philosophy is this convergence towards an anti-cognitivist perspective of psyche. The assertion that we have material or "natural" evidence of interiority, that we can say that such interiority exists and has ontological value, involves a metaphysical belief, a philosophical prejudice where language is conceived as a set of labels for pre-existing mental experiences. Conversely, physiology tells us only that there are possible correlations between mental states (intention, memory, perception, etc.) and changes in the activity of certain brain regions when the individual does something. However, the meaning of, for example, an individual's action is given by the social processes of signification.

The intention is not given in an agent's intimate experience, for example, in their conscious awareness of wanting to vote when their arm goes up: it is given in the interplay of these descriptions, all of which belong to the external world. It is not physiology that can tell us that raising the arm is also the act of voting; it is the context in which the action consciously takes place. (Aubin, 2014, p. 45).

In other words, the discourse of neuro-reductionism about interiority is a kind of response to the same logic of philosophical metaphysical subjectivity, where it is possible to say something about the subject in an objective way, reducible to some material entity. However, what they actually do is fall into the same logic of metaphysics, which reduces the complexity of the world to an ideal entity, which would allow the language to be reduced to a relationship of fundamental equivalence or substitution with objects of the world; hereby closing the language system.

In conclusion, as Wittgenstein humorously states, a statement that Lacan would likely appreciate, the mind is like a beetle in a closed box that each of us possesses but no

one can verify its real existence (Wittgenstein, 1958b, §293). It is a collective game that everyone engages in, and it is by not opening the box to see what is inside that the mind, as an entity, can “exist”, in the sense of a linguistic game. In other words, the mind is nothing more than the performative effect of social practices of signification and symbolic production of reality and it is not less “real” for this, at the contrary it is “real” because to this.



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