

Another Scene

“It thinks rather badly, but it thinks steadily. It is in these very terms that Freud announces the unconscious to us: thoughts that, while their laws are not exactly the same as those of our everyday thoughts, whether noble or vulgar, are certainly articulated”¹.

One of the central accomplishments of Freudian psychoanalysis is its examination of the ability to think. How thought is produced and who or what is producing it is much less unambiguous after the event of psychoanalysis, and of course the concept of the unconscious is the key protagonist of this reinterpretation. Psychoanalysis teaches, at the very least, that thinking is going on in us in ways that are not clear to ourselves. We are thinking more than we know, and although unconscious thought might not be following “exactly the same laws” as what we usually understand by (rational) thought, it is fundamentally important to acknowledge it as thought in order to understand the full extension of what thought can be. Dreams are a testimony to this. When we dream, we are thinking something that has not yet been recognized or that has been ruled out from the conscious mind. It appears in mysterious forms, but its very appearance is itself a testimony of something that cannot be reduced to merely somatic reactions or erratic leftovers of half-consumed impressions. Dreams need to be

interpreted, because they do not immediately present a recognizable content for our understanding, but they contain material nonetheless that might expand our knowledge of ourselves and the world around us. They are the result of a certain kind of work: A dream work which is also a work of thought. Freud is certain of this, and it is his certainty of the unconscious that marks the ontological break of psychoanalysis: “It is because Freud declares the certainty of the unconscious that the progress by which he changed the world for us was made.”²

This volume is inspired and guided by the basic Freudian insight that thoughts should be examined in forms and in places, where they are not immediately expected. The unconscious, to Freud, was *ein anderer Schauplatz*, another scene, and what the authors of the present collection have all set out to do is to explore various kinds of such scenes for their potential in the continued elaboration of the understanding of what it means to think.

Marisa Žele compares the figure of the “Trickster” from Biblical Ontology with some of Freud’s writing on forgetfulness and demonstrates how, in both cases, some of the essential processes are taking place behind the back of the subject. A form of thinking is going on, e.g., when Freud himself cannot remember a certain name (the name of the painter Signorelli), but comes up with alternatives that resemble it to some extent. Forgetfulness in this case turns into “a completely self-governing process, over which the producer has no control”. The producer’s lack of control could also be a description of Lilian Munk Rösing’s take on thinking in art, when she investigates how thinking is going on in the very material itself: “. . . it is the moment when the real speaks instead of the symbolic signifiers, for instance when the body starts to speak instead of verbal language (as in the hysteric’s spasms and tics), or when the normally non-signifying material of the words themselves (letters, sounds) starts to signify, as in slips and puns.” Anders Ruby investigates musical stage performances by means of Lacan’s four discourses and claims that a “master” on stage risks “losing it”, if mistakes, slips or irregularities start breaking through the otherwise perfect performance. In order to remain a master, he must repress and cannot therefore “fully relate to, cannot fully listen to” the effects of his own barred subjectivity. The business of psychoanalysis, of course, could precisely be said to be to listen to such irregularities. Cathrine Michaelsen compares artistic processes

more explicitly with those that take place in psychoanalysis, when she describes how "... the writing of literature is not the result or the representation of the writer's intentions, thoughts, or wishes; on the contrary, it is the writing that demands and puts its claim on the writer who, in turn, remains strangely distanced from the automatic autonomy of the written." Similarly, psychoanalysis is calling us to listen, not for what makes sense or is understood in the analysand's speech, but for "the ring of being not the same with oneself", as Amanda Holmes puts it in her contribution in which she also unfolds Lacan's critical reaction (to say the least) to Karl Jaspers' understanding of understanding.

Tadej Troha moves one step further into Freud's own theorization of concrete case stories and particularly Freud's description of the Wolf Man, whose thoughts, Freud claimed, had already been occupied with the possibility of castration before his (alleged) witnessing of the primal scene at a very young age. Again, a kind of thinking has to be assumed, which predates, escapes, counteracts or supplements the thinking that is commonly understood as such.

The final four contributions engage more extensively with philosophical authors' takes on the thinking that does not reduce itself to conscious processes of sovereign subjects. Brian Benjamin Hansen engages with Hegel's examples and claims that thinking begins, when a concept is forced out of its only apparent self-sufficiency. If God is defined as being, he is no longer simply God, but also something else, and "thinking is this very movement back and forth in a sentence, in a philosophical exposition, where subject becomes substance, and substance becomes subject." Henrik Jøker Bjerre also thematises a movement in philosophical thought, but in his contribution, the movement in question is the one that can be discerned in Kierkegaard's authorship, particularly with regards to the staging of the authorship in elaborate relations of sources, authors and publishers (with or without pseudonyms): Kierkegaard was not merely exclaiming his insights, but much rather investigating the thoughts that appeared in writing; "creating an analytical setting, which made it possible for the author to turn into a reader of his own thoughts". Finally, in the two articles that thematise Martin Heidegger's conception of thinking, Kirsten Hyldgaard first proposes that Heidegger's understanding of thought without a consciousness and thought without a subject can be com-

pared to Lacan's elaboration of the psychoanalytic concept of the subject of the unconscious: "Thinking", in Heideggerian terms, "is not a meditative, reflective phenomenon; thinking is something that may occur, "ereignet", and this event, "Ereignis", concerns truth". In a similar vein, "psychoanalysis does not analyze the psyche but speech; an analyst is someone who can listen", and therefore analysis enables us to "hear the effects of the unconscious in the spoken word." Morten Ziethen goes on to investigate how what is "given" in thought can be conceptualized as something that "does not come up because man wants it or intends it" without resigning to a passive understanding of human subjectivity as determined or decided by some inscrutable force beyond our grasp. His answer, on behalf of the later Heidegger, is that being human does not mean that we ourselves provide the content of our thoughts, but that we are nonetheless called upon to *respond to it*.

The present issue hopefully gives something for its readers to think. How they will respond is certainly an open question.

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1. Lacan 2006: 458.
 2. Lacan 1998: 36.

LITERATURE

- Lacan, Jacques: *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, Translated by Alan Sheridan, W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.
- Lacan, Jacques: *Écrits*, translated by Bruce Fink, W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.