

Reading the Unconscious and Writing the “Personology”: Some Allegories of Psychoanalysis

Introduction

Freud is well known, not only for his preference for the symbol, but also the extremely important role symbols and symbolism plays in dream analysis, in the critique of culture, and in pathology in general. As a result, the presence of other figural tropes in his work is often overlooked, in particular that of allegory. However, upon closer examination of several elements of psychoanalytic theory, particularly the elements that are found in *The Ego and the Id*, allegory seems to play a central role in psychoanalysis, particularly in the Freudian picture of the mind. The present paper is an attempt to demonstrate the close connection between allegory and psychoanalysis and to demonstrate just how relevant allegory is in approaching psychoanalysis, by explaining the deep affinity between allegory and Freud’s critique of the philosophical psychological concept of the subject. In fact, Freud is at his most allegorical when he is most strongly criticizing or critically engaging with, the philosophic notion of the subject, which is one of the major themes of *The Ego and the Id*.

There are two major traditions of allegory, allegorical interpretation, also known as allegoresis, and allegorical composition, the more well known grammatical/rhetorical figure. I will demonstrate in this paper that Freud’s work belongs to both traditions. I will begin the analysis by examining the features of psychoanalytic analysis (that is the therapeutic work) most prominent in *The Ego and the Id*, through consideration of the goals and means of a psychoanalytic analysis and establishing the connection between analysis and allegorical interpretation. I will then examine the psychoanalytic picture of the mind and ways in which the unconscious means, in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which Freud composes

allegories with psychoanalysis. This will be accomplished through an analysis of the “personology” of the id, the ego, and the super-ego and its resemblance to personification allegory and the affinity between obliquity of allegorical expression and the conscious expressions of the unconscious desires respectively. Finally, in an attempt to show the usefulness of this approach, I will turn my attention to Freud’s critique of the idea of the unity of consciousness and a meaning giving subject and how this relates to allegory, and Freud’s extensive use of it.

Allegorical Interpretation

In order to understand allegorical interpretation, it is necessary to look at the ancient practices, terms, and definitions of it, since it is not (openly) practiced by critics or theorists today. This is essentially a result of the desire to understand what a text means. This is something that gets in the way of understanding allegory, because this is not how the ancients attempted to understand a text. The ancients are less interested in what a text *means* than in what a text *teaches* (Figuration 154). The ancients then, when interpreting a text, come to the text how that text can be read, so that it can be construed as true for them (Hermeneutics 83). The more important meaning, the philosophic meaning, that is the teaching of a text, is not the literal or surface meaning of the text, but the *hyponoia* (also spelled *huponoia*), the under-sense. This may seem to be more complicated than is necessary, but the reason for this is that the texts that were so interpreted, particularly the Bible (or the Greek translation of it, the Septuagint), and Homer, which were not at all easy for ancient interpreters to read. They were considered to be “scandalous” texts, that is to say the texts that were offensive to reason. The “ancient and abiding rule of allegory“ then is that “if a text is scandalous with respect to reason, we must rewrite it or,

much to the same point, find a way of reading it that removes the scandal” (Hermeneutics 230-31). This is where *hyponoia* comes in. Bruns defines *hyponoia* as the “deeper, higher, or additional thought” that is “in that portion [of the text] that is dark or contrary to reason there is something more for the mind, namely, philosophy, divine wisdom, the truth” (Figuration 149). This decision to see the truth on under-side of what is said is a guiding principle of Freud’s psychoanalytic work.

Psychoanalysis insists that something lies behind (under if you will) every action, every personal characteristic, every symptom and every dream. It is the essence of the psychoanalytic understanding of the unconscious. For every conscious thought that we have, for every conscious motivation for our actions, there is another deeper, and truer, thought-process, a deeper motivation. These true motivations lie within the unconscious. Ricoeur notes this feature of Freudian psychoanalysis and it is the reason why Ricoeur calls psychoanalysis a version of the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” This hermeneutics is one that seeks to cast aside the veil, to demonstrate the deeper truths of human existence. For Ricoeur, Freud establishes a “new relationship . . . between the patent and the latent; this new relation would correspond to the one that consciousness had instituted between appearances and the reality of things” (33). This is a very valuable description of the activity of psychoanalysis, despite the fact that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is a “science of exegetical rules” (26) that is not really reconcilable with the ancient practice of hermeneutics. However, the notion that Freud’s psychoanalysis is mediating between “the patent and the latent” is precisely the notion that demonstrates his connection with *hyponoia* and allegorical interpretation.

Psychoanalysis then can be understood as a set of rules for the allegorical reading of any kind of “any set of signs that may be taken as a text to decipher; dreams, neurotic symptoms,

ritual, myth, work of art” (Ricoeur 26) etc. One complaint about psychoanalysis is that in the long run, it really only produces one kind of interpretation. It has made up its mind how to read a text before it has already begun. But this very notion of having a strategy already in place for the reading of texts is also a point of contact with allegorical interpretation. Todorov, in his chapter on Freudian symbolics in *The Theory of Symbols*, links Origen’s (allegorical) interpretive strategy with that of Freudian psychoanalysis, noting that “the finalist character” of Freudian interpretation is to that of patristic exegesis. It is a “foreknowledge of the meaning to be discovered” within the text (Todorov 254). This is colored by Todorov’s disdain for such interpretations and he feels that it is a weakness in Freudian symbolics. The reason for his disdain is clear, since allegorical interpretation, as has already been shown, does not share the same concern for meaning that Todorov and others do.

Underneath that disdain, there is also a misunderstanding of the work of allegorical interpretation. It is not that there is a “foreknowledge of the meaning to be discovered” in the sense that it has already been decided. Part of the concept of *hyponoia* is the idea of recognition. Bruns points that both Philo (the allegorical interpreter of the Bible (the Hebrew Bible)) and Aristotle both divide what is written into what is strange and what is familiar “where the one [the strange] is often understood to conceal the other [the familiar]” (Figuration 149). *Hyponoia* then contains an element of recognition, so that it does indeed appear that one has already decided what the meaning will be, but in reality the interpreter is simply discovering what is already familiar to them, which is what Bruns calls “a memory-based epistemology” (Figuration 151). This would seem to indicate then that it is possible to consider psychoanalysis as looking for what is familiar, a scientific understanding of the nature of the mind and human behavior for example, in what is strange, the so far inexplicable pathologies of humans. That is

psychoanalysis involves an entire outlook on such texts, which is very similar to exegetes such as Philo and Origen. Their interpretive outlooks are naturally different, but the structure is the same. Bruns notes that “allegory is not a *method* of interpretation, it is not any sort of formal approach to the text. It is a form of mental or spiritual life, or a way of practicing philosophical contemplation” (Figuration 151). This is rather alien to modern observers who view way of reading as technical, textual approaches. As a result, allegorical interpretation seems to have a pre-determined meaning in mind, when in reality it is not so clear-cut. One could better say that the terms of the interpretation and the world-view have already been decided and this will completely color how the text is read, rather than having read it, so to speak, already.

The idea of familiarity brings up another aspect of allegorical interpretation that has a bearing on psychoanalysis. The goal of allegorists such as Origen and Philo is to discover the familiar in the strangeness of what Bruns calls an “alien text” (Hermeneutics 217). For Bruns an allegorist “is someone who deals with alien discourses by re-contextualizing them within his or her own conceptual scheme” (Hermeneutics 15). Or, to put it another way “it is a way of reinscribing the alien text within one’s own hermeneutic circle” (Hermeneutics 217). This again is a very good description of the work of psychoanalysis. For psychoanalysis tells us that the unconscious is an “alien text” that must be recontextualized into the psychoanalytic hermeneutic circle in order to be understood consciously. This relates directly to mediating work of analysis that Freud lays out in *The Ego and the Id*. According to Freud, the only way for an unconscious thought to become conscious is to become associated with a word-presentation, which must first be heard before it is available to the conscious. For Freud all conscious knowledge is the result of perception. The goal of psychoanalysis is to make the repressed thoughts conscious again and thus to allow the patient’s ego to have control over the id (and to escape the criticism or the guilt

associated with such criticism) by understanding its processes and motivations. Analysis achieves this goal by providing the word-presentations, which can make unconscious thoughts conscious (or more precisely pre-conscious, that is available to the Cs.) (Freud 10-11). In more allegorical terms, the goal of psychoanalysis is to provide the person under analysis a new horizon of expectation, a new hermeneutic circle, for the understanding of the alien text of the unconscious. Thus the development of psychoanalytic concepts and ideas is to create a complete set of rules that allow for this understanding. This is much more specific than allegorical interpretation as a whole, which is not bound to see only one meaning, or only one type of meaning in a given text. Psychoanalysis should be understood as a specific instance of one type of allegorical interpretation.

Another way of saying this in allegorical terms is again provided by a link to the word *hermeneia*, to interpret (hence hermeneutics). Bruns makes very clear that for Philo and other ancients, including Aristotle, felt that speech was a form of interpretation, that the act of speaking was the act of interpreting one's own thoughts. For the ancients "to interpret what is written is to speak for it" (Figuartion 151). This finds its parallel in the psychoanalytic notion of the talking cure, but the act of interpretation (which for most of the ancients meant allegorical interpretation) is the psychoanalytic act of reading the text (of whatever type, dream, symptom, etc.) and to speak for it by giving the patient the words to deal with it.

It has been shown then that the goals and methods of psychoanalysis accord very well with the goals and methods of allegorical interpretation developed by the ancients. Todorov has even noted, somewhat disparagingly, the similarity between biblical exegesis and psychoanalysis, something that Ricoeur develops in a much more explicit and positive way in his own work (cf. *Freud and Philosophy*). The correspondences include the notion of *hyponoia*, the

idea of getting to the under-sense, or philosophic meaning, of a text, which for the ancients is to discover the discernible truths in a text and for Freud is to discover the unconscious truths.

Another correspondence is the idea of transcribing an alien text into a new hermeneutic circle, which for the ancients was to make alien texts understandable to their cultural milieu by reading them figurally and for Freud was the development of the technique of psychoanalysis to read the behaviors, symptoms, dreams, and culture of human beings figurally, with an aim toward examining their roots in the unconscious. The ancients accomplished this by interpreting the text and demonstrating the hidden truths, while psychoanalysis accomplishes this by speaking for the text, for the person, in order to demonstrate the unconscious truths. In all of this it can be seen that psychoanalysis does not stand for all of the abilities and practices of allegorical interpretation, it is rather a specific kind and instance of allegorical interpretation.

Allegorical Composition

The practice of allegorical composition is much better received and is more thoroughly understood than that of allegorical interpretation, indeed some of the most well known and highly regarded pieces of literature in the Western tradition and clearly and openly allegorical, including Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Lorris and de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The term *allegoria*, which was probably first used for allegorical interpretation and not as a rhetorical term, has had a long a varied use. The exact definition of allegory as a rhetorical trope has been fairly consistent over the years. Despite the occasional variation allegory has been consistently defined as saying other than what is meant (interpretation then is meaning other than what is said - cf. Jon Whitman 263ff.) and it is essentially a "a grammatical or rhetorical technique" (Whitman 4). Whitman goes on to say that

“in its most striking form it personifies abstract concepts and fashions a narrative around them” (4). Whitman clarifies the concept of personification further by adding that personification is “giving a consciously *fictional* personality to an abstraction” (271). It is important then that the personality has no basis in fact, or belief, to be considered literary personification. This would seem to bar the ego, the id, and the super-ego from consideration since Freud himself considered them to be actual structures of the mind. However, it is not necessary to believe, along with Freud, in an actual structural existence of the “personology.” What is the issue here is not, whether Freud’s work is intentionally allegorical and whether or not he actually believed in these structures, but whether it is possible to see what is allegorical in psychoanalysis. There is no doubt though, that the less one believes in psychoanalysis, the more allegorical it will appear.

Personification allegory is also the most well known form of allegory, which in many respects constitutes its own genre. The representatives of this genre include the great personification allegories of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance: *Roman de la Rose*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and a number of major personification allegories of the Middle Ages proper, works such as Prudentius’ *Psychomachia*, Silvestrius’ *Cosmographia*, and Boethius’ *Consolations*.

For Whitman, allegory is the “pre-eminent way of speaking obliquely” (267). The obliquity of allegory is probably its dominant rhetorical feature. This feature is shared by the Freudian concept of the unconscious and of the repressed (This is an important distinction to make; while the repressed is all in the unconscious, not all of what is unconscious is repressed (Freud 8)). The unconscious, by which the system *Ucs* is meant, cannot mean directly to the outside world, nor to the conscious, which can only perceive it through word-presentations (see the discussion of word-presentations above). It cannot be emphasized enough how crucial the

indirect relationship between the unconscious and reality, and the unconscious and the ego (in the form of the ego's repressing of unconscious desires/motivations, which in *The Ego and the Id* becomes the relationship between the ego and the id). Freud emphasizes in *The Ego and the Id* how important the notion of the unconscious is to psychoanalysis. "The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss[sic] of psychoanalysis; and it alone makes it possible for psychoanalysis to understand the pathological processes in mental life" (Freud 3). The purpose of *The Ego and the Id* is to explain more fully the relationship between what is conscious and what is unconscious. The path that psychoanalysis took to an understanding of this relationship is through the theory of repression, which introduces a dynamic view of the unconscious, which believes that there is something actively keeping some knowledge from becoming conscious; the force of the repressive on the repressed (Freud 4-5). In many respects this repression does not work, because the unconscious thoughts and feelings find expression in other more indirect ways. One way that they find their expression according to Freud is through the action of the pleasure principle. When the path to discharge of sexual energy is blocked, a person experiences displeasure (Freud 12). There are numerous other examples of this throughout psychoanalysis. All symptoms, dreams, personal characteristics (which are after all just "normal" symptoms) are indirect expressions of either the repressed or other parts of *Ucs*.

This has already been seen in the light of psychoanalysis as allegorical interpretation, but that is of course to assume that there is a certain amount of truth to psychoanalysis. If one does not accept the idea that psychoanalysis is reliable or as ultimately true in a fundamental sense, then psychoanalysis can be seen a set of rules for the creation of allegorical texts that attempts to

tell the tale of the inner conflicts of the mind (the representation of which is the oldest source of allegorical composition, the psychomachia).

Another way of demonstrating the connection between allegorical oblique meaning and psychoanalysis is not through the unconscious, but in the narratives Freud creates that elaborate the unconscious events of the mind. Perhaps an example of this is in order. An example that occurs frequently in *The Ego and the Id* is the tale (if you will) of identification. According to Freud, the ego assumes the characteristics of an object that for whatever reason that cannot be maintained as a love-object, since the replacement of the object through identification is many times the only way the id will give an object up (19). The ego's solution to identify with the object so that it can be more acceptable to the id as a love-object. The ego then offers itself to the id, saying "Look, you can love me too - I am so like the object." This tale is a rhetorical figure in two senses. Clearly, Freud is attempting to make the idea intelligible and presentable, hence the reason for putting words into the ego's mouth. However, it is not necessary to take that rhetorical gambit literally in order to see that the narrative of identification itself is also allegorical. This narrative can either be understood as an allegorical text whose referent is reality, and the ego and the id as the fictional figures created to explain or explicate it. It is also possible to this narrative as the allegorical interpretation of the text of reality, where the ego's identification with the love-object, indeed the ego's existence is held to be true. The allegorical nature of the tale is of course unchanged by whether it is perceived as composition or as interpretation. The important feature of this tale is the interaction of two abstract concepts in a way that resembles human behavior. Personification is pre-eminently the assumption or creation of human characteristics for the abstractions (Whitman 272ff.).

The most striking example of the allegorical features of psychoanalysis can be found in Freud's final description of the mind in *The Ego and the Id* (45-49). This is where Freud lays out the most important relations of the ego with respect to the id and the super-ego. Elements of this picture have been seen earlier in Freud's presentation of the ego's motives for identifying with the love object and can also be seen the narrative of the first object choice and the creation of super-ego. Freud presents this picture of the mind in the last few pages of *The Ego and the Id*, where it is an attempt to bring all of the information and concepts developed in the text back together. The overall picture of the mind is centered on the dependent relations of the ego, although Freud begins the narrative with a discussion of what little power the ego has, that of control over the discharge of energy (motility), and the ability (and the need) to subject the id to the reality principle. The ego attempts to free libido energy from the id by courting the favor of the id. The id however remains unable to answer the ego's desire for it; the id is incapable of expressing anything but its needs. The ego is also subject to the tyranny of the super-ego through its criticism of the ego. The ego is also forced to accept the guilt associated with failure's to meet the ego ideal, and the ego is punished by the super-ego for the deeds of the id (particularly the id's defensive mechanism of projecting the death instinct onto the object, which manifests itself as hostility toward the object. The ego did not instigate this transfer, but the super-ego treats it as if the ego were responsible for it). In essence, the ego is subject to three masters, reality, from which the ego may not escape, the id and its relentless sexual drives, and the endless criticisms of the super-ego. Freud develops this picture even further, particularly the place of fear and its referents, but for the purposes of this paper, the dependent relations of the ego is sufficient to demonstrate the allegorical nature of both the concepts and Freud's narrative of it. The allegorical nature of the ego, the id, and the super-ego should, by now, be extraordinarily

obvious. The id, the ego, and the super-ego resemble nothing so much as the characters that Freud uses to explore and deepen understanding of the mind. The id, the ego and the super-ego are no longer just concepts or literal structures of the mind (though they were that for Freud as well). The ego has previous to this been endowed with human characteristics, which is of course no surprise since it is meant to be the seat of all human emotion that we are familiar with. The human qualities of the id and the super-ego, particularly the frequent characterizations of them as cruel and tyrannical, are also evident throughout the text. This picture of the mind then can be viewed as a full-blown personification allegory. All the elements are there; the clothing of abstract concepts with human emotions and behaviors and the figural nature of the tale. The id, the super-ego and the ego do not necessarily have to be seen as literal structures of the mind and even if they were they have no anatomical referent (Ricoeur 87) at this point. They stand for other structures, such as the passions, or morality, mediating between that which humans barely understand of themselves and the events of their lives, as they are perceived.

It may be object that the human features of the id, the ego and the super-ego are primarily a result of being concepts that are attempts at explaining human behavior. This does not lessen the correspondence between this picture of the mind (regardless of its presentation) and personification allegory. Indeed, many of the first personification allegories did not have literal referents, but referred to the internal struggles of the mind, whether it be the eternal struggle between Vice and Virtue in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* or the (psychological) process of falling in love in *Roman de la Rose*. The classical space of the personification allegory is the space of men's minds and it is because of the need for the structures of the mind to correspond to human behavior that has often led to its allegorization, it is an almost inescapable tactic when dealing with the mind psychologically.

It has been shown then, that in addition to being characterized by features of allegorical interpretation, psychoanalysis is also characterized by features of allegorical composition. It has been seen that the oblique and indirect way of meaning that is characteristic of allegory, is also characteristic of psychoanalytic concepts, such as the unconscious and the repressed, concepts that stand at the core psychoanalytic doctrine. In many ways this is deeply related to allegorical interpretation, for psychoanalysis reads structures indirectly in many respects because it creates structures that mean indirectly. It has also been shown that the most striking form of allegorical composition, personification allegory, lies at the heart of the psychoanalytic picture of the mind.

Consequences: Allegory, Psychoanalysis, and the Subject

From the very first pages of *The Ego and the Id*, Freud's disagreement with the philosophy of the subject is evident (in *The Ego and the Id* Freud refers often to the objections of philosophical psychologists to the idea of the unconscious; the contrasts that Freud offers between their notions of consciousness and his own seem to strongly indicate that it is their notion of the subject as a meaning engendering self and as the seat of consciousness that Freud is objecting to. Cf. *The Ego and the Id* 3,7,16, 45-9). Freud clearly does not believe in any kind subject. He removes nearly all of the normal functions of the subject, such as the ability to engender meaning, consciousness itself (not just the state of being conscious) from the ego, and reduced the ego to simply structure of the mind that interacts with reality. The ego is no longer a seat of consciousness; it is only partly conscious, and it is conscious of nothing of that which it represses, nothing that it has not already perceived from the body. For Freud, the ego is "first and foremost a bodily ego" (16). There is no center of consciousness in psychoanalysis; consciousness is splintered and fragmented throughout the mind. Everywhere in the picture of

the mind there are limits. The ego is no longer a thinking subject, nor is it the creator and thinker of all thoughts and thought processes, it is but a passive object able only to receive impressions from outside, able only to be conscious of things that have already been seen or heard. The ego is otherwise incapable of expressing itself at least to the external world. The true motive forces in life, the instincts and desires, both for life (love) and death are not conscious at all and in many ways will never be made conscious (unless analysis intervenes and even then it is not always possible). Interaction between human beings is not then the interaction of subjects, but the oblique expression of internal, unconscious thought-processes. Self-communication, that is introspection cannot be accomplished on its own, it requires the aid of analysis, of the allegorical key to the internal life in order for it be of any use. As with allegory, so with psycho-analytic understanding of the mind; meaning stems from an unknowable source, from an absence (a temporal absence of sorts considering the timelessness of the unconscious) only its effects and desires can be felt.

It is no coincidence that the point of Freud's banishment of the subject, the Cartesian Ego, from psychoanalysis is also the height of his allegorical narrative. This truly is suggestive of the deep link of psychoanalysis with allegory, for at their hearts, neither allegory nor psychoanalysis requires a meaning-giving subject; they are in many ways opposed to the concept. It is here that it will be useful to examine Paul de Man's historical de-mystification of the history of allegory in his famous essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality." In that essay, de Man points out the close ties that exist between the valuation of the symbol and the subject/object dialectic. "This dialectic originates . . . in the assumed predominance of the symbol as the outstanding characteristic of romantic diction" (de Man 198). De Man points out that this is a mystification and misunderstanding of the original Romantic characterizations of symbol and

that this dialectic, “the experienced dialectic between nature and consciousness” (de Man 203) is not at all the basis of romantic diction, neither for Rousseau nor Wordsworth. For de Man indicates that “if the dialectic between the subject and the object does not designate the main Romantic experience, but only one passing moment, and a negative moment at that” (204-05) then history has to be re-examined in a new light. For the purposes of this essay, a different conclusion is reached. If symbolism is rejected in favor of allegory, and de Man indicates that the allegory being preferred here is that of the classical, Biblical, Renaissance tradition (205), then the subject/object dialectic has been entirely sidestepped. Allegory is “a temporal relationship between signs where the allegorical sign refers to a sign that precedes it . . . the essence of the previous sign is pure anteriority” (207), not a relationship of a subject to a landscape or to the creation of meaning. For de Man, as indeed for Freud, the self and the subject do not coincide and for de Man, this is an allegorical/ironical realization.

Gerald Bruns also offers a reminder that allegory, of whatever type, whether rhetorical or hermeneutical, is much older than the notion of the subject, as it was defined in the Enlightenment. It is in fact a way of coping with and understanding texts, with understanding meaning, indeed the world in general, that has nothing to do with the dialectic of the subjects and objects. Bruns returns once more to the recognition based concept of *hyponoia*, whose “memory-based epistemology” is not “an epistemology of subjects and objects and methods for verifying their correspondence” (Figuration 151). The dialectic of the subject and its relationship to the object is an invention of the Enlightenment. Bruns is not at all astonished by the decrease and disappearance of allegory (he means allegorical interpretation) after the Enlightenment began, “It can hardly be an accident that allegory did not survive the onset of modernity, with its definition of the self as a subject external to everything but itself” since allegorical interpretation

“presupposes belonging and participation, interpretation is not something that such a[n] [solitary] ego can intelligibly perform” (Hermeneutics 102). Freud’s own problems with notion of the subject external to everything but itself find a natural expression in the use of allegorical figures and in the fashioning of psychoanalysis as an allegorical interpretation, (though this was not done intentionally).

Conclusion

It has been shown that many of the most important features of psychoanalysis are in fact also important features of the allegorical tradition, both as a rhetorical and a hermeneutical form. Psychoanalysis shares with allegorical interpretation the notion of *hyponoia*, of the under-sense, the underlying truth that must be sought out figurally and separated from the literal features of the text, texts of all sorts, for psychoanalysis reads more than the texts of the written word. In its attempts to relate these texts, the actions, thoughts, and motivations of man, psychoanalysis takes recourse to the great allegorical tradition of personification allegory and produces the personification concepts of the ego, the id, and the super-ego. Indeed the strength of psychoanalysis in explaining and seeking to understand human behavior (and culture) is the strength of allegory, the strength of both meaning obliquely and discerning was has been obliquely said.

For psychoanalysis the self, with its myriad mental parts, finds its expression allegorically partly because allegory is a form of expression that does not involve itself in the dialectic of the subject, nor in the concept of a subject external to everything but itself. The presence of allegorical features in the psychoanalytic picture of the mind accords fully with indeed is proper in, the psychoanalytic world without a subject. This is certainly not the

prevailing view of the rhetorical mode of psychoanalysis, which is seen as being predominantly symbolic, even by Freud himself. However “Freud’s contribution to rhetoric and symbolics does not always lie where he thought it did, nor where his disciples have seen it” (Todorov 254). Perhaps it is possible, in the light of the knowledge of the relationship between psychoanalysis and allegory, to re-evaluate Freud’s symbolic praxis, outside of the glare of the supposed distinction between allegory and symbol, a “problematic distinction that varies from theorist to theorist” and where “terminology may in fact obscure the praxis” (Whitman 267). Hopefully, the recognition of allegorical features in psychoanalysis will provide critics and theorists with a new tool for understanding psychoanalysis, which may in turn shed more light on the modern praxis of allegory.

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