

The schizophrenic of the family. An essay on Bateson and Foucault*

By Pietro Barbetta

To you, the daring venturers and adventurers, and whoever hath embarked with cunning sails upon frightful seas, -
To you the enigma-intoxicated, the twilight-enjoyers, whose souls are allured by flutes to every treacherous gulf:
-For ye dislike to grope at a thread with cowardly hand; and where ye can divine, there do ye hate to calculate-
To you only do I tell the enigma that I saw- the vision of the lonest one.
(Nietzsche)

An acausal connecting principle: Bateson and Foucault Synchronicity in Psychiatry

I begin this essay by giving the first paragraph a title from a work by Jung. In this piece Jung discusses synchronicity, or that particular and otherwise uncanny phenomenon that he finds implicated among the creators of a link between, for example, talking about an old friend that we haven't seen for years and receiving a phone call from him at that exact moment. Our talking about that friend and his phone call are synchronicities and although we could call it a random occurrence, we still tend to attribute some meaning to that random occurrence. So much so that, for example, if the friend calls us to say that he's very sick and we, while talking about him, had been thinking about that very possibility. In these cases, Jung says, more or less, that we go to meet the synchronicity and we call for it. I've been studying the works of both Gregory Bateson and Michael Foucault for a long time and I believe that both are very influential authors in my work both as a therapist and as a teacher. Recently, I also wrote an essay (Barbetta 2004) that, in its search to redefine the role of degeneration, utilizes both authors' thoughts in parallel. It's also interesting to note that some of the ideas that have been suggested to me in relation to the redefinition of the notion of degeneration belong to Frederick William Henry Meyers, founder of the first British society of psychic research, scholar of esotericism and of paranormal phenomena, and inventor of the term *telepathy*. Meyers attributes a sort of degenerative illness to the genius:

Where any charge of degeneracy or "nervosity" made out against all these eminent men as a body, it would merely seem to prove the paradox that degeneracy makes for success. But in truth many of the cases alleged admit of a much simpler explanation. There are in most of us some traits of human nature which we are not very anxious to reveal. If the great world looks at us too closely these traits tend to come out. The same is the case with those who are born great as with those who achieve greatness. But is scarcely worthwhile to go to history for what any valet de chambre will maintain of any hero. What you have to prove is rather that the average man is any less degenerate than his betters (Meyers, 2001, p. 54).

Why not talk about esotericism and telepathy knowing that in this volume, between the others, there is an essay by Gabriella Gilli about the intellectual relationships between Gregory Bateson and William Blake? Perhaps one day there will be someone who will accomplish the task of showing the pattern that connects Gregory Bateson (G.B.) with Giordano Bruno (G.B.) and how the fact that *two G.B.* went around the world to unveil the hermetic ecology of mind, of which Blake was one of the guardians, wasn't just a coincidence. In the meantime, waiting for this monumental piece that could be titled *Gregory Bateson and the hermetic tradition*, I will limit myself to signal the synchronicities between Bateson and Foucault, two authors that never met each other, but have had, uniquely in the world, in the same historical period (the immediate postwar), almost identical job and learning experiences. Bateson was an ethnologist at the Veteran Administration Hospital of Palo Alto between 1949 and 1962. What did an ethnologist do in a psychiatric hospital? Let's take a look at what the author tells of his experience:

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From 1949 to 1962, I had the title of “Ethnologist” in the Veterans Administration Hospital at Palo Alto, where I was given singular freedom to study whatever I thought interesting. I was protected from outside demands and given this freedom by the director of the hospital, Dr. John J. Prusmack. (Bateson, 1972, p. xx).

From 1952 to 1954 Foucault had an internship in Psychology at the *Sainte-Anne* hospital of Paris and he describes his experience in this way:

At that time the profession of Psychology in the psychiatric hospitals didn't exist at all or began soon after being created, at least in France. I had been recruited vaguely as a psychologist. In fact, I didn't have anything to do and nobody knew what to have me do. So, I stayed for two years in training, tolerated by the doctors but without work. This way I was able to go to the border between the doctors and the sick, not having neither the privilege of a doctor nor the sad types of illnesses. The relationship between the doctors and the sick, the institutional forms, at least in the psychiatric hospitals, stunned and surprised me until it anguished me. (Foucault, 2001, p. 369 of French edition)

We can imagine them as marginal figures, neither doctors nor patients, on the border between the world of clinical health and of that of mental illness, wandering about the hospital wards (perhaps even without their own office), with the hospital staff annoyed with their observatory presence and with all of the patients curious about these two incompetent (they don't know how to administer injections, they don't give medications, they don't use microscopes or stethoscopes) but not insane people. Not as insane as them, or not in the same sense in which they were.

Thanks to this experience, both Bateson and Foucault, although not immediately after, have been able to describe that world on the borderline; those evanescent situations that don't truly grasp our attention that we could define as transactions or interactions.

Foucault writes: “The true issue for me wasn't so much to find out what occurs in the patients' heads but what occurs in the interactions between the doctors and the sick.”

However, it isn't like this for Bateson or Foucault. At least it wasn't like this when they were there.

Neither *Maladie mentale et personnalité* nor *Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia* describe these interactions.

In *Maladie mentale et personnalité* Foucault presents himself as a follower of Binswanger (Fink-Eitel, 1990). In the same period he had edited the French edition of *Traum und Existenz* (Dream and Existence) by Binswanger and wrote a long introduction that is of great interest, especially because it puts the Freudian model of dream interpretation in a new perspective; dare I say semiotics.

Foucault's point of view regarding schizophrenia shows, in that period, the trace influences of the *Daseinanalyse*. Such a fascinating perspective - from Jaspers, to Binswanger and Minkowski, including even the early Lacan - the *Daseinanalyse* considers schizophrenia as a modality of apprehending the world intentionally. The phenomenological idea of consciousness as a condition of existence (and therefore of the schizophrenic conscience as a condition of the existence of a schizophrenic) represented an interesting attempt to apply the philosophy of Husserl and early Heidegger to the field of psychiatry. Connecting psychoanalysis with phenomenology, the schizophrenic was considered an existence at the limit of possibility; a paradoxical and a cruel and unbearable look at life; a sort of heroism of extreme madness. Nevertheless, these types of humanistic considerations didn't put into discussion the dominant health practices of the time. They searched, rather, to portray the look of psychiatry as less biological than it was or more attentive to the existential dimension of the schizophrenic *patient*, but without putting into question the paradigm of the *moral cure*, as had been conceived by Pinel and by Tuke and had been expanded in Europe throughout all of the 19th century and part of the 20th.

In *Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia* Bateson, with a group of psychiatrists of the Veteran Administration Hospital of Palo Alto, proposes an etiology of schizophrenia that is not biological. Schizophrenia, according to this study, would have its own origins in a disturbance of human communication. It's about the first formulation of the theory of the *double bind*. The schizophrenic patient would have developed this type of syndrome from a pattern of systematic and repetitive communication, generally from inside the family that is based on the *double bind*.

The most well-known and interesting example includes this description:

An analysis of an incident occurring between a schizophrenic patient and his mother illustrates the double bind situation. A young man who had fairly well recovered from an acute schizophrenic episode was

visited in the hospital by his mother. He was glad to see her and impulsively put his arm around her shoulders, whereupon she stiffened. He withdrew his arm and she asked, "Don't you love me any more?" He then blushed, and she said, "Dear, you must not be so easily embarrassed and afraid of your feelings." The patient was able to stay with her only a few minutes more and following her departure he assaulted an aide and was put in the tubs. (Bateson, 1972, p. 217).

This by now historic description greatly influenced all those who were interested in finding an etiology related to schizophrenia and in France, in the most advanced spheres of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, the theory of the double bind aroused some interest. In his seminars, Lacan had invited Gisela Pankow to speak about Bateson and of the theory of the *double bind*. And Lacan said:

You've heard Gisela Pankow speak of someone who is not the last to arrive, Bateson, anthropologist and ethnographer, who has given a contribution to the therapeutic actions that has led us to see a bit farther of the end of our nose.

Bateson seeks to situate and formulate the beginning of the genesis of the psychotic trouble in something that would stabilize at the level of the relationship between mother and child and that would not be simply an elementary effect of frustration, of tension, of retention and distension, of satisfaction, as if the human relationship occurred at the two ends of an elastic. He introduces, since the beginning, the notion of communication in terms of not simply a contact, a relationship, an environment, but of a significance.

These words were said in 1957 in the same hospital, the *Sainte-Anne*, where Foucault had worked three years before and represent Bateson's reception in the psychiatric circles and by French psychoanalysts. In the same period, the interest surrounding Bateson was an interest towards a theory of psychopathology. His considerations, which were based on the theory of communication, did not put into discussion the practices of care and intervention of the psychiatric patients and their families from the point of view of the health organization.

In fact, we should recognize that, in that period, and we are now around the first half of the 1950's, neither Bateson nor Foucault had put into discussion the psychiatric organization and had not even tackled the issue of the doctor-patient interaction.

Both, one as an "ethnologist" and the other as a "psychologist," were there on the border. They were neither doctors nor patients. Nevertheless, they were paid by the psychiatric institution and they worked with health personnel profoundly involved in health practices and this created a blind spot. The focus of the attention was the oppression. Bateson had found, as it were, the *formula* of that oppressive language about which the neomarxists of the Frankfurt School had talked.

The studies of Horkheimer on Authority and the Family, the studies of Adorno on *Authoritarian Personality*, and the studies of Fromm on Nazism searched for an authoritarian root in the system of domestic language. They disputed the familial institution in that they are based on a patriarchal organization that was the root of political and social authoritarianism.

Bateson had found the formula: *double bind*.

Psychiatry, or better yet, anti-psychiatry, seemed to have become that instrument of social critique that located the system of oppression and of reproduction of authoritarianism in the family and the form of oppression in the language.

In the early 1960's that monumental work titled *Madness and Civilization* was published, like in a sort of long-distance competition (because I don't think that Foucault had knowledge of Bateson's research). If the *double bind* expresses the formal instrument of analysis of the oppressive family system, Foucault's historic research becomes the paradigm of anti-psychiatry in the battle for the de-institutionalization of chronically mentally ill. It was only after his voluntary estrangement from the psychiatric institution that Foucault had developed, through *Madness and Civilization*, a radical critique of psychiatry that also signaled a radical change in his way of thinking. In writing *Madness and Civilization*, but still earlier, in changing the title of *Maladie mentale et personnalité* to *Maladie mentale et psychologie*, Foucault must have made an important turn. He had abandoned existential phenomenology and had started a journey of analyses of the systems of thought that would take him to think about the knowledge in a historical way. It's interesting to see how Foucault's changes in thinking often correspond to the title changes of some of his works. But this is, in my opinion, a special case. Why is the change of this title so important? If one believes the idea that mental illness can have to do with personality - with its structure and the existential condition of the mentally ill - one thinks of a conscience that apprehends the world in a

phenomenological sense. The only type of philosophical analysis that can be done, in the strictest sense, is here in the analysis of the intentional states of the conscience. Data are intentional objects. There is a kernel of each piece of data that is surrounded by a fringe of related impressions (*Abschattungen*). Together, kernel and fringe found the horizon of the human being. This philosophy, of course critical in the debates in scientific positivism and in Cartesian rationalism, represents a new founding value in the debates in psychology and psychiatry that, in fact, proposes as a rigorous analysis of the human mind the exact opposite of what behaviorism had proposed.

For behaviorism, all that could be empirically observed was self-evident behavior. Every inference on the mind was an inference on the black box and therefore illegitimate from the scientific point of view. For phenomenology it's about exactly the opposite. Every analysis is an analysis of the intentional states of the conscience for which a genuine psychological analysis must be an introspective analysis of the states of the conscience and every object must be an intentional object; an object immersed in a horizon of meaning. Psychiatry, from this perspective, is that branch of psychology that deals with the states of pathological conscience.

At this point comes Foucault's turning point: "Psychology will never tell the truth about madness, because it's madness that retains the truth about Psychology." Foucault shifts the attention from the analysis of personality to the discourse that constructs the analysis of personality. Deleuze (1986) would say from the affirmation of mental illness to the enunciation of the discourse on mental illness.

Bateson's course resembles and differs from that of Foucault's. It resembles it because it occurs more or less in the same years and because it's an exit from the adhesion to psychopathological discourse.

What was decisive in Bateson's case was, in my opinion, the abandonment of the theory of Schismogenesis as a model of universal explanation for human interaction. Before then, the *double bind* couldn't be anything but the matrix of psychopathology.

The theory of Schismogenesis (Bateson, 1958) believes that human beings can have two types of interactions. Symmetrical interactions are characterized by producing reactions of the same type at the moment of response: "If you show me your muscles I'll show you mine." Complementarities instead have the characteristic of having differential reactions: "Show me your muscles and I'll show my admiration for your muscles."

There are circumstances in which the interactions, be they symmetrical or complementary, become cumulative. "I would like to define Schismogenesis as a *process of differentiation from the norms of individual behavior* resulting from the cumulative interaction between individuals." (Bateson, 1958, p. 167).

The problem of Schismogenesis is the problem of the *climax*. Every cumulative process reaches a peak that assumes the function of interrupting the same process, reducing the risks of a never-ending cumulative interaction.

It's about Bateson's first great idea, so much so that Bateson believes that "We should prepare ourselves to study Schismogenesis from all points of view; structural, ethological, sociological." Schismogenesis is important because it represents a new theory of the construction of identity. Here is its great worth and its great defect.

For now let's limit ourselves to analyzing its worth: the theory of Schismogenesis is a new interactionist theory of the construction of identity. Bateson expresses himself with his usual skill:

I am inclined to regard the study of *the reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals* as a useful definition of the whole discipline which is vaguely referred to as Social Psychology. This definition might steer the subject away from mysticism.

It's about a radical attempt at a new disciplinary foundation:

We should do well, I think, to speak no more of "the social behaviour of individuals" or of "the reactions of the individuals to society." These phrasings lead all too easily to such concepts as those of Group Mind and Collective Unconscious. These concepts are nearly meaningless to me [...]

This passage seems to put into evidence how the premises of social psychology are often ideological premises, indisputable premises such as social behavior (Behaviorism), the collective unconscious (Jungian psychoanalysis), and group thinking (psychology of the masses of Le Bon). Premises that Bateson doesn't hesitate to define empty of significance.

In place of these premises, Bateson proposes inserting communication, understood as *reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals*. It's easy to see here another formulation of the idea that the meaning is a *difference that creates a difference*.

Nevertheless, the theory of Schismogenesis seems to want to tell us that the *reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals* always lead to a peak. The first formulation of the theory of communication is a radical formulation. Communication creates strategies that construct hierarchies or functions. The peak of the interaction seems to present itself as a solidification that creates a hierarchical or functional relation.

Until now the best application of the Batesonian theory to family therapy is that of Minuchin and perhaps it wasn't a coincidence that, in the period in which Bateson did some family therapy at Palo Alto, he made, in a big way, a sort of strategic-structural therapy. He got mad at the parents of the Identified Patient because their *double binds* were pathogenic. This is something I still see being done around the world by structural therapists.

He invented the *double bind* when he was still at Palo Alto. The *double bind* represents, in my opinion, the first strong objection to the theory of Schismogenesis.

In fact, already in Naven there are some problematic considerations that precisely concern the subject of schizophrenia. Bateson shows an example of the adaptability of the theory of Schismogenesis to the psychopathology speaking of paranoia. However, when he switches to schizophrenia he must admit:

In the case of schizoid maladjustment, the matter is not so clear [...] We must be prepared to accept the fact that the schizophrenic is not merely working out his own internal pathology, which indeed may or may not be getting worse, but is also responding to the more cyclothymic people around him by himself becoming more and more schizoid.

Paranoia versus schizophrenia. The schizophrenic reacts to the cyclothymic persons that are always making them more schizoid. Schizophrenia would seem here to emerge as a sort of Schismogenesis of the complementary interaction between Cyclothymia and Schizothymia. Let's read again the most famous clinical description of the double bind:

An analysis of an incident occurring between a schizophrenic patient and his mother illustrates the double bind situation. A young man who had fairly well recovered from an acute schizophrenic episode was visited in the hospital by his mother. He was glad to see her and impulsively put his arm around her shoulders, whereupon she stiffened. He withdrew his arm and she asked, "Don't you love me any more?" He then blushed, and she said, "Dear, you must not be so easily embarrassed and afraid of your feelings." The patient was able to stay with her only a few minutes more and following her departure he assaulted an aide and was put in the tubs.

The *double bind* would seem to be a cumulative interaction between a cyclothymic ethos (that of the mother) and a schizothymic ethos (that of the son) that reaches its peak in the outburst of the schizophrenic symptoms. In my opinion, Bateson has never abandoned this model of explanation. What he has abandoned is the idea that this type of interaction is universal. Is the climax a necessary condition for a cumulative interaction? Or, to agree with Foucault, is the climax the organizing rule of the discourse on the cumulative interactions that construct the paradigms and the protocols observed in Western culture?

For now I don't want to respond to this question. I'll try to do it later in the essay, looking for a connection with the thinking of Deleuze about schizophrenia.

Be it in Foucault's case or in Bateson's, it seems to me that one could say that the resignations from Psychiatry corresponded to a philosophical turn from universalism to concrete observation. But what did they observe? Foucaultians will probably feel insulted, but I must say they observed the *difference that creates difference*.

In Bateson's case it concerned the differences in the biological and animal systems as well as the anthropological ones. In Foucault's case, it concerned the differences in the systems of thought. Bateson reformulates the program of cybernetics as an image of the pattern that connects. Foucault invents a new area of knowledge: the history of the systems of thought.

All this occurred without them meeting each other. Still, if we had to identify the two principle inspirational sources of the anti-psychiatric movement - that very often has transformed itself into an

ideologization and into a caricature of their thinking - we would need to mention Gregory Bateson and Michael Foucault. One is the multiplicity of multiplicity.

Deleuze is, of course, an important *trait d'union* between Bateson and Foucault. It is with him, a great admirer and friend of Foucault, that the third Batesonian step, *the Heterarchy*, is realized.

The enigma of the family

Does Bateson have an opinion of the family? And what about Foucault?

“The family, in the tradition of Western thought, is an institution *sui generis*: a moment of mediation between nature and culture. It delimits that space of *nurture*.”

I believe that this type of traditional statement is, for both authors, a polemical subject. However, before defining the terms of the critique of this naturalistic idea of the family, I think it's necessary to analyze some theoretical assumptions.

According to George Steiner (1984):

What seems more probably is the echo in the knot of incest around Oedipus, in Oedipus' encounter with the riddle of the sphinx, of elements of uncertainty, of trial and error, in the evolution of western kinship systems and of the civic institutions which these systems generate and underwrite. I will argue [...] that this evolution, as well as the root sense of certain other primary Greek myths, is intimately associated with and registered in the fundamental features of our syntax (gender, nomination, verb tenses and modes). In the story of the House of Laius, the anthropological, the sociological, the linguistic origins and lines of descent are most probably inseparable.

The problem of the enigma of the sphinx of course has to do with the problem of the family, be it for Bateson or Foucault. Bateson writes:

It is to the Riddle of the Sphinx that I have devoted fifty years of professional life as an anthropologist. It is of first-class importance that our answer to the Riddle of the Sphinx should be in step with how we conduct our civilisation [...] we should be careful what we pretend because we become what we pretend.

We pretend the family to have a nature, which is, in many ways, the capital lie: the lie of all lies. Which does not mean that the family is an institution to abolish, a necessarily oppressive institution reproductive of an oppressive ideology. Today, the two positions (naturalist and radical) are represented: one by the *attachment* theories, the other by post-modernism. According to the attachment theorists, the natural root of the family is a scientific fact and is based on the irrefutable demonstration of the biological basis for the need for attachment, demonstrated by the Harlow experiment with the Rhesus monkeys.

According to post-modernism the patriarchal family would be the place of gender oppression and the source and origin of every other type of socio-cultural oppression. The concept of kinship would come then to dissolve itself until the point of confusion and of complete overlapping to the concept of friendship. You should observe that both of these positions contain useful elements of meditation.

The first makes us reflect on the notion of “attachment”, that has ever been resistant to any theoretical confutation. People feel attraction and attachment towards each other, they fall in love, they involve themselves, and then suffer separation and abandonment.

The second - with its reconsideration of the subject of friendship - shows us how these forms of attachment are in fact constructed in contexts and in ecological conditions that shape them, and can assume a multitude of forms.

Nevertheless, the question of the sphinx is much more radical. First of all, because it puts forth two questions: generation and sexuality. It was Bachofen who created a narrative about the genealogy of the family that, although not well known and largely contested by the successive anthropological investigations, has greatly influenced our way of thinking. According to Bachofen the matriarchy represents the first attempt to create a moral and primordial order. Regarding the telluric primordial chaos Bachofen uses the term *rhizome* - retaken in a positive sense by Deleuze and Guattari - or also the term *heterism* - a term derived from *hetera*, that means whore. According to Bachofen, there has been a period of sexual promiscuity governed by Aphrodite (Roudinesco, 2002). At the end of this chaotic period,

women installed the matriarchy. Women found the family, invent agriculture, and forbid matricide. However, matriarchy is about a fragile order, always threatened by the return to primordial telluric chaos. Bachofen claims that the patriarchic period instead determines a stable order. The father resolves to separate the son from the mother in order to give him independence and autonomy. Still, this regimen isn't exempt from the threats of regression to the previous states.

From this perspective, Bachofen interprets the myth of Oedipus as the translation of the long story of *Mutterrecht*. According to him, the hero kills the sphinx, the symbol of heterism, to establish in Thebes the reign of the matriarchy under the wand of Queen Jocasta. (Roudinesco, 2002, p. 54).

The question of the sphinx, seen from this perspective, is a pre-Freudian question to which Freud attempts to give a response that, in addition to closing the conversation on the argument, is strongly conditioned by the historical and cultural context of a Europe straddling between two periods. Firstly, it's necessary to reaffirm that, in a myth such as in the tragedy of Sophocles, Oedipus doesn't desire Jocasta at all. At least he doesn't desire her in the sense of what the term *desire* meant in Freud's time. Oedipus has resolved the enigma of the sphinx and must marry Jocasta. It's about a legal necessity rather than a romantic desire. Secondly, as George Steiner has observed (1996), the tragedy – in this sense not only Oedipus of Sophocles, but all Greek tragedy – assumes a determining linguistic value. It has a redefining role in the boundaries of symbolic order. Greek tragedy becomes, in this sense, a pattern that connects. Oedipus defines the boundaries of sexual order through the mise-en-scene of the consequences of the violation of the taboo against incest, while Antigone defines the necessity of the construction of political consensus through the respect of the family laws, with particular reference to the relations between brother and sister. What Levi-Strauss describes in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and Lacan had defined as “symbolic order” (Butler, 2000), this order that isn't *natural*, but universal (this *nurturing* order), in the Greek tragedy is put into question. But what does the riddle of the sphinx mean?

The story of the curse of the descendants of Labdacus – the limping, the descendants from whom Oedipus comes – begins with a crime committed by Laius, Oedipus's father (Del Corno, 1998, Bettini, Guidorizzi, 2004).

Brought up by King Pelpos, Laius violates the intimacy of the son of Pelpos Chrysippus, who kills himself. Pelpos decides to wreak revenge cursing the descendants of Labdacus for the descendants to exhaust themselves. Everything that happens afterwards until the death of Oedipus's children is the consequence of this exhaustion of the species. Therefore the exhaustion of the species occurs through incest and parricide. The mise-en-scene of this *drama* has a linguistic value. The riddle of the sphinx is resolved through a language that defeats the sphinx and then pushes her into the abyss. Such a language represents the family order.

In 1982 Gallimard published a volume by Arlette Farge and Michael Foucault titled *Le Desordre des familles*. It's a historical investigation about a French Legal system defined as *ordre du roi* and better known as *lettre de cachet*. An order of the period of the absolute monarchy, abolished shortly before the Revolution, gave the possibility of speaking directly to the king. An untrustworthy son, a violent husband, and an adulterous wife gave the possibility to the family of going directly to the king to request the internment of the person that threatened the order, passing over the legal order and pointing out an internal disorder of the same family.

There existed, rather, the possibility of turning to a judge to resolve the issue. Following a request presented by the family (exceptionally by the king's procurator), the judge sent out an order of a procedure of arrest after having gathered the testimonies, made the parties appear and interrogated the insane. The recognized foolish subject could at this point (but this wasn't obligatory) be hospitalized in an asylum and his *well-being* put under guardianship. The complexity of this procedure, its elevated cost, and the publication of these debates, strongly feared for “the honor of the family,” led to an unwanted measure. For these reasons, many people went to the king for him to regulate issues of family order.

In my opinion, Antigone represents the exact opposite of this norm. Through the *lettre de cachet* the dominion of family justice is put in the hands of the royal law, which, taking over the necessary publicity in the debate of the magistrate, guaranteed the confidentiality, the family honor, and the speed of the measure. It's about a sort of collusion between the king and the family; the king becomes a sort of power that, intervening in the family disorganization, guarantees them normal function.

With Antigone the exact opposite occurs. The absolute monarch – the tyrant Creon – negates the possibility of having a principle of family justice – that of burying the brother with honor – in the name of

public justice and, in the discovery of this private act of burial in violation of the state law, makes public a private family matter.

Farge and Foucault investigate the notions of the private and the public. If the family order can be considered a necessary condition for the constitution of a legal order, as Hegel (1913) had observed, the safeguard of the difference between the private family order and the public order has always been discussed as a fundamental principle. Where the public intervenes in the affairs of family order, without a documented and serious reason, a situation of institutional abuse is created. This, however, didn't happen in the period of absolutism in France. It happens later, when the "commissaries and the police inspectors, overwhelmed by work, begin thinking that these family affairs didn't concern them," (Farge in Foucault, 2001, p. 1171). In that moment the public and the private disassociate themselves and the family becomes something else.

Let's consider now again the notion of *double bind*. The *double bind* is a bond of a private nature. For it to happen it's necessary that the interlocutors involved in this form of communication not be able to abandon the field. Like in the modern bondage sexual techniques, the more you try to escape, the more the ropes clench.

What is the *double bind* anyway? Is it the element that determines and maintains the family order, or vice-versa, the element of devastation? At one level of meaning the *double bind* represents the disorder, which in fact disturbs the hierarchical communication constituting the strange loops that make the understanding of the context of the message impossible to decide. On another level, as we've seen above, the *double bind* represents the general formula of the oppressive system of family communication.

Finally, the moment came in which Bateson realized that the analysis of the *double bind* represented, in turn, a *double bind*. It was in these circumstances that Bateson wrote:

Our original paper on the double bind contains numerous errors due simply to our having not yet articulately examined the reification problem. We talk in that paper as though a double bind were a something and as though such somethings could be counted.

Of course that's all nonsense. You cannot count the bates in an inkblot because there are none. And yet a man-if he be "bat-minded"-may "see" several. (Bateson, 1972, p. 272).

Here the double bind is not no longer a fact in the communication, but a *reaction of individuals to the reactions of other individuals*. He who has the vision of a double bind is already inside of the double bind that he/she sees. This could be a Foucaultian vision of Bateson.

But there is more. Thanks to the suggestions of Margaret Mead, Bateson becomes curious of a new phenomenon: the cumulative interaction without the climax. He compares in this description of the mother-child interaction in Bali:

Typically, the mother will start a small flirtation with the child, pulling its penis or otherwise stimulating it to interpersonal activity. This will excite the child, and for a few moments cumulative interaction will occur. Then just as the child, approaching some small climax, flings its arms around the mother's neck, her attention wanders. At this point the child will typically start an alternative cumulative interaction, building up toward temper tantrum. The mother will either play a spectator's role, enjoying the child's tantrum, or, if the child actually attacks her, will brush off his attack with no show of anger on her part. These sequences can be seen either as an expression of the mother's distaste for this type of personal involvement or as context in which the child acquires a deep distrust of such involvement. The perhaps basically human tendency towards cumulative personal interaction is thus muted.

The quotation above concerns an essay from 1949. That is, written seven years before *Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia*. Still, there are present in this essay ideas and instances that, in many aspects, place Bateson's thinking in a position far closer to the formulation of 1956. Here Bateson describes a sequence of double binds without climax. Immediately after the above quotation, Bateson makes a comment: "Some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for climax."

Deleuze and Guattari, in writing *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizofrénie*, have been inspired to the word *plateau* used by Bateson's. They write:

A plateau is always in the middle, neither at the beginning nor the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word "plateau" to designate some very special things: a continuing region of

intensity, that vibrates on itself and develops evading every orientation towards a culminating point or around an exterior end.

In my opinion, upon this argument we find the convergence of at least four authors: Bateson, Foucault, Deleuze and Wittgenstein. The family is a rhizomatic entity. It moves according to a principle of heterarchy and designates some similarities that distribute themselves as the threads of a cord. Some intertwine with others, but still none of the threads woven into the head of a cord will ever reach the other head. In a family there are rhizomatic resemblances. The father and the son have the same nose, the brothers have the same eye color and the other son has his mother's posture but narrow shoulders like his father. The only hierarchic principle is that of the name of the family, which is still a legally and publicly imposed principle.

We can say, using a paradox that we constantly find in Foucault, that language gathers itself on a body exclusively like the medium of distribution or dispersion of the utterance, as rule of a "family" that is naturally dispersed. (Deleuze, 1986)

Rhizome and heterarchy have the same form, a form without a unique organizing rule. Deleuze and Guattari counter the rhizome with the taproot structure or with a tree that represents a hierarchic order tied to genre and difference (*genus proximum, differentia specifica*). The theory of the logical levels of Bertrand Russell is an example of this. For years family therapists trained themselves with the strategic idea, which perhaps Bateson has shared for a period (although very limited), that the distinct and clear communication, hierarchical in transparent and normative contexts, is a source of mental health. With this assumption, Family Therapy resented a theoretical reductionism that has transformed the therapeutic practices to strategic interventions progressively exhausting the critical instances that had characterized family therapy at its very beginnings.

The family therapists, engaged in the practice of fixing the "confused" families, have let themselves escape from a thinking of the family and a view capable of comprehending its transformations. It is like this that, to find something interesting regarding the family it's necessary to read the work of a psychoanalyst like Elisabeth Roudinesco who, more than renaming the title of Foucault's work – *Le désordre des familles* by Farge and Foucault is renamed *La famille en désordre* - observes how the developments of the microphysics of power are producing a profound transformation of the family, analogous, or perhaps more significant, to that occurrence between l'*ancien régime* and the modern period beginning after the abolition of the *lettres de cachet*.

Such a transformation concerns the separation of the regime of generation from the regime of sexuality. At the moment in which the regime of generation can be placed below the technological inspection of in vitro artificial insemination conditions, the family loses its natural feature. One must face a completely different social construction of the family, in which the symbolic Lacanian order will fall apart, or is forced, *oborto collo*, to transform itself. Who will represent the law of the father? In which type of normalcy will one be able to think in a world where the symbolic order has abolished, by statute, the "name of the father" that will remain therefore precluded to everyone?

The Self and the power

As Foucault claims, giving the example of Panopticon, the boundaries of modern Western thought can be designated by the Self and by a specific configuration of power. These two terms, Self and power, are, in turn, connections to each other. I use the word *Self*, although the critical philosophy has utilized also the terms *I* and *subject*.

It's notable that Bateson advances the most incisive critical arguments on the Self in an essay dedicated to alcoholism, so as not to observe that the *Dionysic* was, in Nietzsche, the element that, in Greek tragedy, characterizes the loss of the *principium individuationis*.

Although Dionysus isn't reducible to the god of wine, it is associated in general with the orgiastic dimension. The orgy can be considered, in turn, as a sort of temporary return to the rhizomatic condition described by Bachofen, whom taught – perhaps not by chance – in the same university in which Nietzsche taught and during the same years.

Does the rhizomatic disorder appear, in the first place, as a disorder of the Self? And if this were true, could one think of Schizophrenia as a pathological condition that, to exist, must presuppose the order the Self? Then what is this order of the Self?

It seems to be about the idea that there is something (the Self) that, as a part, has everything under control from a transcendent position. In this sense Foucault observes a weak point in Descartes' thinking. Dreams are studied as a good example of doubt, madness as a bad one. I mustn't *confront myself* with an *external term*: the insane. I can *remember* the dreamer that *I myself have been* and that I will again be. Madness is the absolute opposite. The dream is perhaps a deformation of something real.

In fact, the problem isn't that I force myself to consider myself an insane person that considers himself a king; and not even that I ask myself if I'm not a king (or a Thuringian captain) that believes he is a philosopher closed to meditate. The difference with madness hasn't been proven: it is established. As soon as the arguments of extravagance are evoked, suddenly the distinction explodes, like a shout: "sed amentes sunt isti" [...] "But those are of the insane" plural, third person, they, the others, "isti"). (Foucault, 1972, p. 648).

In other terms Descartes counters the *dormiens* that I am, with the *demens*, which is the other. The method of doubt must be used with the *dormiens* (that is, me), and it makes me completely stunned, my *stupor* is almost ready to persuade me, "I'm in the uncertainty of my own vigil. And it's in this uncertainty that I decide to continue with the meditation." (Foucault, 1972, p. 646).

Regarding the *demens* there isn't an exercise of methodical doubt: "I wouldn't be less insane if I regulated myself based on their examples." (Descartes in Foucault, 1972, p. 646).

Descartes' movement, in removing any possibility of confrontation with madness and delirium, assures its own meditation and, along with this, the subject in terms of the condition of an absolute evidence that is found only on the condition of a refusal of the confrontation with the other.

From here the impossibility of considering the argument of madness if not in medical terms.

From here the possibility of founding a transcendent subjectivity able to have under control one's own thoughts, to produce absolute certainties and clear and distinct ideas, and able to manipulate the world indefinitely to one's own ends.

Bateson returns to the question of the transcendence of the Self. He doesn't directly confront Descartes or the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, he observes the practical consequences of this mentality in the events of everyday life. Still, the observation that it's impossible that, in a system that shows mental characteristics, some parts are able to exercise a unilateral control over everything cannot not recall the Foucaultian critique of Descartes.

Bateson's example is well known: Let's imagine the cutting of a tree. The Western man sees this operation as a finalistic action of the Self that cuts the tree. The Self, the only center of control of the action of cutting the tree, is deconstructed by Bateson in the following way: "(differences in the tree)-(differences in the retina)-(differences in the brain)-(differences in the muscles)-(differences in the movement of the hatchet)-(differences in the tree), etc." (Bateson, 1972, p. 349).

Bateson claims that a difference that produces a difference is an idea, that is, unity of information.

According to Bateson, the Self is a simplifying expedient. Through the postulation of a Self one postulates a transcendent entity into the system that controls it and acts on it in a finalistic way, so as to obtain what one wants from the system. The closeness of these considerations to the analyses of Nietzsche – whom surely is one of the greatest sources of inspiration for Foucault, perhaps the greatest – of the subject is incredible.

In more points Nietzsche observes how the Self or, as he writes in *The Dawn*, "the so-called 'Self'" (Nietzsche, 1971, p. 106) is nothing but an illusion of the possibility of controlling life as if life possessed, in its being lived, a sort of pilot, a quartermaster, a *kybernetes* that guarantees, from a plateau of transcendence, the possibility of exercising power and control over it.

The critique, explicit or implicit, is obviously directed to the Cartesian *cogito*. Nietzsche observes: "Our opinion of ourselves, that we have found on this false street, the so-called 'Self,' works but, from now on, on our character and on our destiny."

So what is this "false street" about which Nietzsche speaks? That of the "I think," or that of the "I want," (Nietzsche, 1977, pp. 39-40).

The *Panopticon* of Bentham, in Foucault's description, is a design of a model prison. A circular floor plan, with in the center a control tower occupied by a warder that, through the slits, sees, without being seen, the shape of the prisoner that is found in one of the many cells that is stationed circularly along the entire arch of the perimeter of every floor of the prison. The windows, of opaque glass, permit the warder to continuously control the outline of the prisoner. The prisoner, who doesn't see the warder, will never know, at any moment, if the warder is or isn't observing him, but can at any time presuppose it. The idea of a prison of this type is a pedagogical idea: the internalization of the warder. So who is this warder about which Foucault speaks if not Nietzsche's so-called "Self"? Or the Self, thought of as a transcendent entity that has the system completely under its control, about which Bateson speaks? In fact, the prisoner can be considered completely rehabilitated when he has fully internalized the warder. That is to say, when he has finally become the bearer of *Self-control*. It's not surprising that this design comes from an Anglo-Saxon philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, and marks the crowning achievement of a period in which the puritan world, having risen from the most rigorous and intransigent currents of Protestantism, puts the *Self* into question with great force.

As Berchovitch (1975) and Paden (1988) have observed, Puritanism, since its origins, and in particular from the moment in which it stabilized as a way of thinking and a way of life in New England, feels the strong need to have the *Self* under control. The *Self* is represented as a primary source of sin and of betrayal. For this to happen it is necessary that the *Self* be used as a noun and therefore transform itself from a pronoun that represents a mere syntactic function indicative of impersonal reflexivity into a thing that can be made into a noun and accompanied by an article and (why not?) by a possessive pronoun: *My-Self*. However, it's interesting to observe how in the puritan world the *Self* was not even considered a positive thing for the sole reason of existing as an autonomous entity. On the contrary, the *Self* was the source of every wicked deed or even the devil. For this very reason the analysis of the *Self* became fundamental. However, it was about a profoundly critical analysis. The control of the *Self* presupposed a community of righteous men that supplied the criteria of truth through which the *Self* was deceived and rigorously controlled. In the first place it concerned the announcing of any imaginary instance, a sort of iconoclasm of the human mind. For example, the mirrors that by reflecting the image of oneself could supply the starting point for an illusion of profoundly sinful auto affirmation were banned.

It seems that this type of technology of the *Self* influenced the social construction of subject.

Here the *Self* can take fully under control his or her agency far more deeply than in the *cogito* philosophy of Descartes. Indeed, this may have contributed to turning Western thought in the direction of retaining the full control of the very actions in consequence of the method that, in producing the first absolute certainty, then produces clear and distinct ideas. The diffusion of social practices that miniaturize and break up the gestures of everyday life making every one of our actions productive has its origins and roots in a profound transformation of mentality. The microphysics of power, like Foucault intends, is constituted precisely by the analysis and by the description of these social practices of daily life and by being determined and transforming itself, through such practices, of all those that constitute the grand tapestry of modernity.

But this is not how the average Occidental sees the event sequence of tree felling. He says, "I cut down the tree" and he even believes that there is a delimited agent, the "Self," which performed a delimited "purposive" action upon a delimited object. (Bateson, 1972, p. 318).

When Bateson writes this, with respect to his description of the action of knocking down a tree, he once again detaches himself from the sociological theory of the social actor that must presuppose something as a "Self" that calculates, in a strategic way, the efficacy of his own actions.

Perhaps now the meaning of the strong polemic with Haley appears more clear, and in particular of this famous Batesonian claim that the idea of power always corrupts. In my opinion, the corruptive element consists precisely of the hypothesis of transcendence of the "Self." The *Self*, a transcendental element capable of controlling the entire system and the entire process, is thought of as an absolute manipulator. It works, as Nietzsche has observed, from now on, on our character and on our destiny.

Therefore and above all it's not about a mistaken idea that has no consequences. The idea of power is an idea that corrupts. That is to say, that has fatal consequences on our behavior. For example, family therapy has become, due in large part to the work of health services, an instrument of rigid social control. The ideas of the family therapists are made, in all their complexity, old and repetitive, incapable of confronting themselves with the social and cultural transformations.

The greatest influence on family therapy comes from strategic therapy and a small amount of practical consideration was dedicated to Bateson's ideas. Bateson has been treated, in large part, as a dead dog. On this point I think that Gregory Bateson thought comes back to the hermetic tradition that I've pointed out at the beginning of this essay. The transcendent Self that Bateson describes as an epistemological error of the Western tradition and the Foucaultian metaphor of the Panopticon of Bentham, counter the modern tradition. Since its origins modernism pretends to separate Imagination and Reason. Bercovitch (1975) underlines how The Puritan origins of the American Self were constituted by eliminating the mirrors from the puritan culture of New England:

It has become fashionable to link the production of mirrors during the Renaissance with the growth of modern individualism. This may hold true for the humanist Renaissance. For Baxter, Dell, and Richard Mather, the mirror radiated the divine image. They never sought their own reflection in it [...] Manetti, Ficino and Pico held up the christic mirror to show man his own splendor. The Puritans felt that the less one saw of oneself in that mirror, the better; and best of all was to cast no reflection at all, to disappear. (Bercovitch, 1975, p.14).

The studies of Frances Yates (Yates, 1964, 1966, 1979) show how, to the English academic circles, the debate over the art of memory had assumed the tone of a real war in order to reduce or eliminate imagination from the mnemo-technique.

Yates and Rossi (1991) have compared the philosophy of Giordano Bruno - and of his Scottish student Alexander Dickson - with the academics at Oxford, at the turn of the 16th century. It seems that the positions on divine grace emerged from the protestant reform - in particular with reference to the doctrine of the free will - intended to advance a downright reform of the thinking that parted from a radical revision of the art of memory. It was about a new technology based on the *step by step* method, inspired by the logical doctrine of Peter Ramus (1515-1572). As Yates observes, Ramus puts aside images and imagination and strengthens the memory with logic and abstract order, while Bruno makes of images and imagination the key to a significant organization of memory (Yates, 1966, p. 223). At the end of the 16th century, modern scientific thought was grounded on an interpretative conflict about what thinking means. With the applications of the method of Ramus to the thinking, one witnesses a downright reform of memory and more in general of mentality. A reform that is described in an effective way by Paolo Rossi:

Halfway through the 16th century, Peter Ramus separates memory from rhetoric (to which it belonged by very ancient tradition) and he transforms it into one of the parts or component elements of dialectics or new logic. The method exercises a classificatory function. Logic is a universal topic. The problem of the method identifies itself with that of memory. (Rossi, 1991, p. 51).

In England they witness a double cultural manifestation, a sort of clash between modes of thinking: on one side the influence of authors like Bruno and John Dee, the experience of Elizabethan theater, the work of Shakespeare. They retake the most salient elements of the imaginative Renaissance culture: the dream, delirium, and madness, all well represented in Shakespearian work. On the other side the Calvinist and puritan influence, inspired to an extreme moral Rigorism that also must transform itself into a cultural and intellectual Rigorism.

It appears plausible that this new conception of memory and logical-rational thinking was influenced by the new theological ideas and the everyday religiosity emergent from the Reform, and was particularly suitable to a doctrine of the examination of conscience that parted from the close examination of the deceits implicit in the *Self*. The emergent idea of a human being that has the necessity to have the *Self* under control and to subdue it to the human and divine necessity through a rigorous practice of self control.

There, the world of the analogy and here, the world of the rigorous distinction.

In the work *The Order of Things* Foucault (1966) describes this epistemological turn, straddling between the 16th and 17th centuries, precisely as the passage from a doctrine of analogies and a doctrine of distinctions.

So, which were the salient elements of this analogical and imaginative thinking?

The hermetic tradition, that had inspired a large part of the systems of thought of the Italian Renaissance - beginning with the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticus* by Marsilio Ficino - put the question of the thinking in terms of an interrogation of the mystery. *Poimandres* - a part of the *Corpus Hermeticus* - for example, began like this:

One day, in which I was reflecting on the beings and my thinking had risen to great heights, while my physical senses were restrained, as happens to those who fall asleep, after having abundantly satisfied by food and after having supported a lot of hard work, it seemed to me that a figure of immense dimensions appeared before me and called me by my name and said to me: "What do you want to hear and to see, what do you want to learn and to find out with your intellect?" (Corpus Hermeticus, 1997, p. 13).

From this passage we can observe how, since the very beginning, the question of the meaning of the thinking is put in a radically different way than is put by Descartes. The hermetic thinking is presented as an interrogation. But not only as this.

The oniric dimension, contrary to what occurs in Descartes, isn't at all considered as a point of passage of methodic doubt, destined to be overtaken, but as a dimension of the revelation: "And here it appears as an infinite spectacle: All things became luminous and a joyous and serene vision, with which after having seen I fell in love." The infinite isn't a necessary deduction of the thinking that exercises the methodic doubt. Rather, an immediate vision with which one falls in love.

Here we are below the threshold of the divisions of mind/body, dream/waken life, Self/other. The sleep (and the dream), the body and the emotions enter in the argument of the hermetic thinking as in a *texture* from which they can't be split. The Self present in the hermetic Body, if there is one, is a narrative constitutively implicated in the dialogue with the other, immanent to this argument and incapable of any sort of transcendence. It's a Self that has visions, that hears voices, that gets confused with these visions and with these voices.

The imaginative is the constitutive element of this way of thinking: the dialogical element. The *Corpus Hermeticus* presents itself as a continuous dialogue, like the Brunian work, like a large part of the hermetic and hermeneutic work. It isn't a coincidence that the two terms have references to Hermes whom, as Kermodé (1979) has supported, is the god of thieves, tricksters and heralds.

Gregory Bateson and his intricate and sometimes bizarre way of thinking express the presence of an internal debate that doesn't resign, in the background of the dimension of the sacred. We could say, using Heideggerian jargon, that it concerns a thinking that "interrogates the Being." A thinking in which the imaginary assumes salient connotations starting from an idea of the form as a "structure that connects the crab with the lobster, the orchid with the primrose and all and four with me."

Bateson describes his teaching experience to a group of art students saying that it was truly a fortune that they weren't scientists and that, on the contrary, had anti-scientific mental inclination. He says they weren't like Peter Bell, the character about whom Wordsworth sang:

*A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him
And it was nothing more*

Foucault, both in his youth and his last years, also posed numerous critical questions regarding the imaginary. His way of writing about it was connected to the use of the terms *vision* and *gaze*. In his early years, in an essay on dreams, he advances a decisive critique of the Freudian interpretative method on the basis of the need for a reevaluation of the imaginary versus a description of dreams as mere indicators of symptoms. When still his principal point of theoretical reference was Husserl, Foucault wrote:

...Between the sense and the expression, the Freudian analysis could only recognize a forced link: the hallucinatory nature of the satisfaction of desire. On the opposite side, phenomenology permits one to grasp the meaning of the context of the expressive act; the context on which the act is based. By this measure a phenomenological description knows how to uncover the presence of the sense to an imaginary substance.

For Freud the dream is the figure of underlying neurotic symptomatology: the imaginary is immediately made dull on the significant sign without creating any difference between the two dimensions. The mere data of the dream and the possibilities recalled by the dream's image are immediately connected to each other to become the object of a normative interpretation that indicates a potential pathology. The analysis of nuances (or the analysis of the transformations of words and plots in the following narrations of the same

dream) doesn't change the pattern of such a paradigm. The nuance does not shield us from the detective paradigm. On the contrary, it grounds it.

It's about pathography which, before being a method of literary analysis it is the method of interpretation of the oniric narrative. The imaginary, an evanescent and eminently unstable condition, is transformed into a static image or an icon. It locks itself, becoming the index of the neurosis.

This also means that the "care of the Self" in the era of psychoanalysis is transformed into a specific technology of the Self: "Where Id was, there Ego shall be."

The technology of the psychoanalysis consists of the strengthening of the Self. The confrontation, carried out by Foucault some years later, between Freud and Descartes (1972), assumes a sense in connection with the relationship between the imaginary and the social construction of identity. It's an analysis that indicates to us the gap between Western thought and its critique. Freud, like Descartes, although through a different method, works in the direction of a reinforcing of the Self. In the time of Bateson and Foucault, the Self started to become a real problem. They revealed that the observation, to exist, does not need a Self. Any observation is there – and makes sense - as a difference. The gaze and the utterance are and stay irreducible one from the other (Deleuze, 1986, Foucault, 1969).

There always exists an irreducibility of the language to the observation, of the map to the territory, of the Self to the other, of the thinking to the being. This makes Gregory Bateson and Michael Foucault so tremendously incompatible with the period that we are now in; so dated.

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