

## Introduction

The intersection of psychoanalysis and the occult is a problematic issue for several reasons. First of all, psychoanalysis itself is a contentious field of research, characterized by serious debates, criticized and attacked both by outstanding and lesser-known representatives of the human sciences. Its history is a history of authority, schisms, rebels and freedom fighters. Demarcating psychoanalysis from other fields of psychology, differentiating genuine psychoanalysis from alternative theories of the unconscious has often been an authoritarian act. When facing the challenges of joining the academic mainstream, Sigmund Freud and his early fellows had to be extremely cautious in defining psychoanalysis and designating its boundaries. Thanks to them, psychoanalysis soon achieved an extraordinary significance within the medical and academic world. Nevertheless, its development was arrested on many occasions. Innovations were often identified as non-psychoanalytic, quarrels and excommunications emerged.

Several historians of psychoanalysis contributed rather significantly to the relatively bad fame of psychoanalysis. Ernest Jones, for instance, depicted Freud as a secret adherent of occultism; although, in fact, Freud was rather ambivalent on the question and obviously not a believer in occult phenomena. Jones' biography was partly responsible for the evolution of the so-called Freud-myth, in which Freud was cast as the authoritarian, conservative and cruel father of psychoanalysis (see Jones, 1957; Roazen, 1975; Sulloway, 1979; Masson, 1998). Fueled by rumors of Freud's sexual, emotional and secret ideological motives, psychoanalysis soon gained a rather contradictory reputation, one which persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On top of that, in spite of its successful application in many fields of psychology and human sciences, psychoanalysis still has serious difficulties in competing with cognitive psychology, statistically-based psy-

chology and the proliferating theories of biological, neuronal and genetic approaches to human behaviour.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, psychoanalysis has preserved its legitimacy. In fact, one of the reasons for its survival (and even popularity) has been its potential to be questioned, corrected and advanced. In contrast to the strict image of Freudian psychoanalytical orthodoxy, to some degree, a rather flexible system emerged that—quasi-independently of the will of its creator—had the ability to change, adapt and incorporate new dimensions, all the while preserving its fundamental principles. Because of this, dozens of new approaches emerged within depth psychology, integrating what was declared to be rebellious, unscientific, incorrect, etc. by the conservative authorities of psychoanalytic thinking with the more classical theories of psychoanalysis. If psychoanalysis had not had these flexible features, it would be long dead today. Its encounters with competing ideas proved to be fruitful and generated further development, even if these encounters were scandalous and schism-inducing at the time.

One of these encounters unfolded between psychoanalysis and the occult, that is to say, the different theories and practices of modern occult movements that most of the psychoanalysts, rather improperly, identified as a homogenous trend. In fact, these psychoanalysts mixed the different branches of spiritualism, psychical research, early parapsychology, fortune-telling, theosophy, animal magnetism, astrology, etc., generating serious conceptual problems for the future interpreters of the encounter in question. What psychoanalysts identified as occult was actually a very heterogeneous and flourishing stream of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western culture.<sup>1</sup> In contrast with its other encounters, psychoanalysis' encounter with the occult did not get considerable attention in the history of psychoanalysis. Although there have been some valuable attempts to conceptualize the nature and significance of this connection (e.g. Bálint, 1955; Deutsch, 1926; Ferenczi, 1899; Raberyon, Evrard, 2012), no systematic and comprehensive work has yet been written on the subject. Up until now, only one anthology has been published on the subject, that was edited by Georges Devereux back in 1953. Unfortunately, the anthology offered no overall analysis of the rather contradictory ideas of the various contributors.

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<sup>1</sup> It is still not easy to find an all-embracing term that could summarize the most characteristic features of these different trends. 'Modern occultism', and more recently, 'Western esotericism' are terms used by the contemporary researchers of this colorful field.

In fact, for a long time, inquiry into this matter was purposefully suppressed. Several of the most faithful disciples of Freud truly believed that they had nothing to do with occultists, therefore they made great efforts to avoid the entire topic and actively discouraged their fellow colleagues from researching the field (e.g. Jones, 1957). Contrary to these endeavors, the aim of this special issue is to illuminate some strong links between psychoanalysis and the occult, to show how impregnating and significant this relationship was, and how ineffective the efforts were to deny the connection between psychoanalysis and spiritualism, psychical research and other forms of early parapsychology. There was no battle between psychoanalysis and the occult. Rather, there was a fruitful interplay that was much less dangerous and destructive than the historians of psychoanalysis previously depicted.

A further objective of the special issue is to highlight the reasons why this interplay has been neglected for so long. At first glance, the explanation is rather obvious: psychoanalysis identified itself as a science that would fully meet the requirements of the modern natural sciences. Occultism—whatever the term meant to psychoanalysts—was, by definition, in opposition to the scientific, naturalistic worldview. However, this was not the only reason for the neglect. It was not exactly occult practices, spiritualistic beliefs or concrete occult ideas that manifested themselves in the discipline of psychoanalysis. Rather, it was the underlying assumptions of the occult that influenced the development and practice of psychoanalysis. Thus, the intersection of the two became so complicated that it was not an obvious or simple task to identify how the occult could have shaped some of the psychoanalytic theories. Several of the early psychoanalysts simply did not reveal that they were already dealing with ideas that originated in the “black tide of mud” of occultism (Jung, 1961:150). Only the explicit forms of occult thinking were rejected as foreign elements; therefore, its more subtle influences on psychoanalysis were easily overlooked.

In addition to giving an insight into the intersection of the occult and psychoanalysis, the special issue has also further aims. First of all, it intends to call attention to the implicit forms of knowledges that influence, and in some cases, actually determine the development of a branch of science. The opposition of the mainstream and the marginal is in the core of this enterprise, more precisely the examination of images, settings, explicit and implicit contents of the mainstream and the marginal. It is easy to realize that incomplete demarcation processes have had long-term, uncontrollable and determinative effects on the theories and practices of psychoanalysis. In fact, I would suggest that, incom-

plete demarcation has worked in a manner very similar to that of incomplete repression: the splitting of the undesirable part necessarily leads to the so-called return of the repressed, a constant threat, a haunting (see Frosh, 2013).

The intersection of psychoanalysis and the occult is characterized by dozens of incomplete demarcation processes. This is due not only to the rigid standpoint of the orthodox representatives of psychoanalysis, but also in part to those psychoanalysts who were ready to incorporate certain contents of spiritualism, psychical research and other aspects of occult thinking into psychoanalysis. Interestingly, despite the official standpoint, a significant number of psychoanalysts was well-aware that what their fellows identified as occult was not always in opposition to their own scientific worldviews. These scholars learned about the latest results of psychical researchers, knew about the convictions of spiritualists regarding the natural origins of spiritualistic occurrences, as well as the objective and experimental attitude that characterized so many occult researchers. They also knew that spiritualistic and related phenomena were worth examining from a psychological point of view. Moreover, they believed that these were exactly the sorts of phenomena that could give answers to the greatest riddles of the unconscious psyche. However, most of these scholars kept their knowledge to themselves and avoided making any explicit reference to the possible connection between psychoanalysis and the realm of the occult. It seems they were controlled by the politics of science in this matter. A disciple whose status in the academic and medical world was insecure could not afford to be associated with such stigmatized doctrines and practices. However, their silence in this area did not guarantee that the assumptions and beliefs of the occultists would not influence their own frameworks of thinking, questions, and preferences. Furthermore, personal involvement in any kind of modern occult practices easily led to unique and powerful experiences that could have also shaped their thought. Whether they published their findings or kept them private, it is likely that such encounters with the occult had strong effects on their professional development. Thus, in the background, the occult has had a significant, albeit subtle and even unconscious effect on the development of modern psychoanalysis. And in this way, demarcation between the two remained incomplete, while the influence of the occult could even rise.

Psychology itself suffers from unfinished demarcation processes in other areas, as well. There are many sub-fields of psychology in which clear differentiation between science and pseudoscience is still missing. This special issue will reveal at least one form of this interplay, and I hope that with it I can contribute

to the understanding of the as yet unresolved demarcation problems lying in wait in many other fields of psychology.

Most of the articles published in this volume provide historical contributions to the interpretation of the connection between psychoanalysis and the occult. The article of Renaud Evrard, Claudie Massicotte and Thomas Rabeyron illuminates Freud's genuine interest in psychical research, calling attention to the outstanding influence of Gilbert Murray's experiments on Freud's ideas on telepathy. The article gives a comprehensive overview of the connection between psychoanalysis and psychical research, too. Júlia Gyimesi focuses on the manifold effects of the occult by exploring the work of the Viennese psychoanalyst, Herbert Silberer. The author highlights the significance of the theory of symbol-formation in connection with the influence of the so-called occult on psychoanalysis. Bartholomeu Vieira points out a theoretical parallel between animal magnetism and the psychoanalytic concept of empathy, raising fundamental questions and outlining thought-provoking ideas. Last but not least, Csilla Hunya and Péter Aszalós give insight into the epistemological problems of Moreno's concept of tele and highlight the practical, psychodramatic consequences of such epistemological inaccuracy.

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