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# Psychoanalysis, Socialization and Society – The Psychoanalytical Thought and Interpretation of Alfred Lorenzer

Thomas Leithäuser\*

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**Abstract:** »Psychoanalyse, Sozialisation und Gesellschaft. Zum psychoanalytischen Denken und Deuten von Alfred Lorenzer«. Alfred Lorenzer belongs to those few psychoanalysts, who did understand psychoanalysis not only in clinical therapy, clinical thinking and research but also as a social science. In the perspective of Lorenzer the individual fundamentally could not be taken out of his social contexts. The therapeutic setting of psychoanalysis insofar is an artificial undertaking, a psychological experiment of a special kind. Lorenzer did understand society not only as an environment outside of the individual, how it is studied through most of the psychological paradigms. In the sense of Lorenzer society penetrates and mediates the deep individual structures. He describes this process as a socialization of the individual. In my following essay I discuss the perspective of Lorenzer's research in the fields of mother-child-relationship, of the child's learning of language, of work-relationships, and of religious and ideological attitudes. My research interest is directed on the complex mediation of familial and social interaction forms. The center of the analyses is the concept of the unconsciousness, which Lorenzer has developed in a close relation to Sigmund Freud.

**Keywords:** society, socialization, individual, individual structure, mother-child dyad, language game, interaction form, unconsciousness, mediation.

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## 1. Alfred Lorenzer at the University of Bremen – A Personal Foreword

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Alfred Lorenzer arrived at the University of Bremen for the summer term 1971, after accepting a chair there in psychoanalysis and research into socialization.

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The newly-founded University started teaching in this term and so Alfred Lorenzer belonged to the first generation of professors in Bremen. He was very curious. The new University was still to find its feet; its structure and organization were untried and Lorenzer, who had primarily been a psychoanalyst, was keen to establish what was possible in teaching and research. What could students of social sciences, human sciences and education learn during their time at University from psychoanalysis? Could psychoanalysis be taught anyway at university? And if the answer was “yes,” then how to balance theory and practice? Alfred Lorenzer was really not sure if this would work at all.

At this time I was a scientific assistant at the Psychology Institute of the University of Hannover, and was also passionately interested in how psychoanalysis could be introduced into a university course. Bremen and Hannover are, after all, barely an hour’s distance apart by train and so we, my colleagues at the Institute and I, were able to persuade Alfred Lorenzer to undertake – in addition to his commitments in Bremen – a guest professorship for a few terms at our Institute. We came to know and value each other personally and as scientists. Over the years we became close friends and scientific partners, our collaboration deepening when I accepted the chair for developmental psychology and social psychology at the University of Bremen in the winter term 1972/73. We worked for more than five years together: he the medical doctor and psychoanalyst and I, from the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, social psychologist and sociologist. We wanted to work on a theory and empirical research which Lorenzer termed “critical theory of the subject.” We were concerned with the balance; with being able not only to differentiate in our perception of the individual and society, but also depicting that balance.

Of course during this attempt we often wondered what practical initiatives might follow; we were both very taken with the student protest movement of 1968 and certainly had some sympathy with the students’ slogan, “Marx and Freud must unite,” Lorenzer was keen to develop a “materialistic socialization theory” which he wanted then to transfer into psychoanalytical developmental psychology. I had taken a criticism and development of Marxist ideology as my starting point and was developing the “theory of everyday consciousness.” This should not only be a theory, but empirically examined using our own research methods which I had learned from Alfred Lorenzer – with psychoanalytical concepts integrated.

Alfred Lorenzer followed Freudian psychoanalysis closely, both in his teaching and research. He considered psychoanalysis a social science *and* a natural science. In the course of this essay I will concentrate on Lorenzer’s especially formulated social science view of psychoanalysis. My own understanding of research into consciousness, oriented towards psychoanalysis owes a good deal to him.

When Alfred Lorenzer returned to Frankfurt University after five years at the University of Bremen, we arranged further cooperation in theoretical and

methodological matters. In Frankfurt, he developed the *tiefenhermeneutische* [in-depth hermeneutic] cultural analysis and I the research into everyday consciousness of social and political processes (Leithäuser 1976; Leithäuser and Volmerg 1988).

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## 2. Socialization: The Mother as Representative of Society

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Here I describe Alfred Lorenzer's socialization theory, showing the profound influence of societal values and rules on development in early childhood. An important role is played by the mother's interaction with the child. The mother-child dyad is explained. So-called "Interaction forms" are established within this dyad. These interaction forms, in the further psychological development of the child, influence the unconscious: the central point of psychoanalytical thought. Finally I characterize the societal dimension of the unconscious.

Oriented towards both the critical theory of the Frankfurt school and Marxist criticism of political economy, Alfred Lorenzer's efforts to formulate a theory of materialistic socialization sought to interpret Freudian psychoanalysis to a certain extent. He was not a Marxist; not a representative of Marxism as a positive political ideology. What was important for him was the scientific understanding of economic production and reproduction. He attempted to establish close connections with interactions here, just as they form the foundation of the socialization of the mother-child relationship, the mother-child dyad.

Thus seen, socialization is a "molding," whereby a mother introduces her child – at first mainly within the family – step by step to social connections. The "molding" bodily movements of the mother may be "[c]onsidered as no different from the molding grip of a worker" (Lorenzer 1972, 50).<sup>1</sup> The latter works with "external" raw materials, changing them into consumer goods; the socialization work of the mother is concerned with the "internal nature" of the child, his or her bodily needs and desires. "The mother's day-to-day practical life with the child is not basically different from the physical movements found at the workplace" (50). Of course, the mother's physical movements related to her child are not regulated in terms of time planning and technical organization as is considered necessary by an industrial concern mainly interested in optimizing economic profit.

On the other hand, argues Lorenzer:

However stunning the difference is, [between industrial work and socialization work, Th. L.], that at work the worker is confronted by an external natural product whereas the child and his or her body indeed stemmed from the mother – this difference is made relative when we become aware that the worker is never confronted merely by nature, but that a product is always a part of a

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this article had been translated from German texts.

whole whose humanity is simply not visible for us due to the particular sight of everyday consciousness (51).

The critical intention of Lorenzer's argument is not targeted towards a devaluation of the socializing work of the mother. To the contrary, when we – with Lorenzer – study the subtle, “molding” physical movements of the mother-child relationship, the inhumanity and alienation of industrial work is shown in its reality.

Lorenzer characterized the early mother-child relationship immediately after birth or even before birth as a dyad, a sequence of “agreement situations” between the mother and her child. The term dyad, the twosome, is not to be confused with the term “symbiosis” as developed by Margaret Mahler (1967, 59) in her psychoanalytical developmental psychology investigations. From the developmental psychology perspective, a dyad precedes a symbiotic relationship between mother and child. A “dual entity,” a symbiotic relationship, may result from the dyadic unity of physical processes in the pre-lingual development phase of the child. With Lorenzer we can understand this as a consequence of the physical interaction between mother and child, a form of interaction, which may change and indeed disappear in the due course of the dyadic agreement situations. Mahler describes this process as a separation of the child from its mother.<sup>2</sup>

For a starting situation – consciously I am not saying starting point – of a psychological development, the term unity (or maybe even a dual entity) is not very helpful unless it is being used simply nominally as *flatus vocis*. Based on the early, prenatal dyadic constellation of mother and child, there is still a phase which can best be characterized as a physical-psychological “unseparation.” Certainly, the critical theory, as formulated by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (1969 [1944], 11), speaks very speculatively of the original condition of the human/nature relationship as an “unseparation”:

Evolutionary theorists, considering the embryo within the womb, talk about a ‘shortened recapitulation’ of man’s natural history. Let’s take this speculative biological principle and transfer it to the psychological-social development of the human child – why, then we can also speak of ‘shortened recapitulation’ of social history of humankind.

Many peculiarities attributed in Darwinian natural history of humankind may be easily established as a projection of human social history in nature (Schmidbauer 1974, 23).

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Stern, a developmental psychologist who evaluates results of research into infants (baby-watching), shows good examples for physical attunement with his concept “affect attunement”; physical interaction in the mother-child dyad (Stern 1994 [1985]). There are similarities between Lorenzer and Stern not only in observations and interpretations but also in theoretical constructions. Both refer to the language philosophy of Susanne K. Langer (1965 [1957], 86), who in turn bases on the language philosophy of Ernst Cassirer (1990 [1944], 17f.).

But it would be a great misunderstanding if we understood the term “mother,” as used by Lorenzer in his concept of the mother-child dyad only as referring to the birth mother. Mother means the person or persons who are involved in dyad, in the physical and in later development stages, linguistic interactions. Today’s society often sees the father completing motherly duties even in very early physical interactions such as washing, changing and cuddling. On the street we can observe the father with the baby strapped close to his chest, providing warmth and comfort, the birth mother happily trotting alongside, often puffing on her cigarette – a partial role change. The contemporary mother in the mother-child dyad is a social composition. She is a representative of society.

Interaction forms of mother and child are thus also patterns for social relationships, where general social and individual, personal aspects of relationships are interwoven. They affect the process of suppression, described by Sigmund Freud as a relevant area of the unconscious, mingling with the congenital unconscious it-areas. Suppression is, according to Alfred Lorenzer’s theory, the result of absolutely concrete, practical interactions between the mother and child. Formed by varied repetitions, establishing themselves as Interaction forms, they regulate not only the mother-child relationship, but also what is permitted and what is not permitted, and indeed what must be pushed into the unconscious. According to Alfred Lorenzer, suppression is part of the Interaction form and thus the way that society permeates the unconscious. This societal area of the unconscious is the basic field of psychoanalytical therapy and research. As suppression, the unconscious is embedded in Interaction forms and develops its own dynamics. Thus – to mention Freud again – through psychoanalysis it can be transferred into the area of the pre-conscious and made available to the conscious. The unconscious becomes a talking point. During the therapeutic conversation it is transferred into language in a process which may lead to practical changes in the Interaction form. Thus for Lorenzer’s concept of psychoanalysis, the relationship between interaction and language are especially important. More on this will follow in the next section.

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### 3. Interaction and Language in Early Childhood

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The drive of the child’s psychological development is most clearly to be seen in the mother-child interaction. This completely entwined dyadic constellation is the work and team-play of mother and child – physically, emotionally and cognitively. Dyad is in this case a psychological dual entity of mother and child “based not on two independent entities but on the prenatal “unseparation.” From this we can deduce that the subject of psychological development is not only the child, as simply presumed without great forethought by many developmental psychology theories. The individual psychological development is

from the beginning not only that of the child. The individual has its foundation in the dyad. Thus we can understand neuroses, whose source according to psychoanalysts, may be found in early childhood, as dyadic disorders. Therapy, accordingly, is a recapitulation of the dyadic disorder in the patient-therapist relationship, it must be worked through and conquered. Alfred Lorenzer defined psychoanalytic therapy thus with extensive, extremely sophisticated description and analysis in his book “Die Wahrheit der psychoanalytischen Erkenntnis” [The Truth of Psychoanalytic Knowledge] (1974, 105f.). Accordingly, the starting situation of a psychoanalytic therapy is the disturbances found in the mother-child dyad – a social phenomena and not primarily purely individual.

Early interaction between mother and child is physical. These interactions may be random and unrelated, but usually relate to the other. Often using repetition, the mother accompanies the interaction with articulated language, exclamations and sentences. These repetitions enforce relationship forms between mother and child, which Lorenzer termed “interaction form.” This is made up of a mixture of interactions called “interaction games,” after the Wittgenstein language philosophy which inspired Lorenzer greatly in his theoretical and methodological thought. “Language games,” the central term of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy (1960 [1953]) are the tight bindings between language and action. “Language games” are not only a form of speaking and writing but also characterize a “life form,” “interaction games,” which can best be grasped as a complex of interaction forms, describe pre-lingual communication, the interaction between mother and child. They are concrete sensual physical relationships, touching, seeing, hearing and moving with and towards each other, all in one.

But it would be a sociological misunderstanding if we were to presume that this molding of the mother-child interaction is only influenced by the mother – by her personality, her norms and values, her social *habitus*. The physical needs and desires of the infant have their own drives; an independence in their needs and demands which may seem very strange to an adult. A mother must be able to respond to these. Motherliness may be defined by an ego-syntone regression to the physical needs of the child. This involves an intuitive physical comprehension, the development of a language of physical gestures, a basis for language development.

The early phase of the development of the mother-child dyad is concerned with an attunement of physical gestures, a constantly recurring referencing, the production of an interchange of physical movements – the physical gestures. These are adjusted to each other in a process which may well be full of conflict. It is a process of molding of interactions in which the mother and child “agree” practically on their physical co-operation and separation. Lorenzer speaks here of agreement situations to interaction forms. These are situations where a physical recognition is achieved, which in turn becomes a self-understood habit. A

schedule is achieved for actions which are desired, developed, permitted or refused, forbidden and excluded. Examples for such agreement situations are nursing and, in time, weaning, sphincter control and the formation of the incest barrier. Daniel Stern's already mentioned examination of "affect attunement" (1994 [1985], 198f.), for instance the rhythmic acoustic accompaniment of the mother by the same rhythmic physical movements of the child, the higher and deeper, louder and softer voice of the mother which she coordinates with the movements of her child's hand as it plays with a toy on the floor, the mother's voice flowing with the physical movements of the child – this is an example for the production of interaction forms, as Lorenzer characterized them.

The establishment of interaction forms by the mother and child is in no way a circular process. No strict development logic is followed. It is open. Targeted educational intentions (of the mother) are bundled with chance, random activities mostly inspired by the wants and desires of the mother and child, who are constantly challenged into new starting attitudes by the psychological growth of the child. Central in the child's development is the "introduction situation of language," whereby the "affect attunement" of the sound and voice of the mother and the rhythmic movement of the child may be viewed as a pre-stage. In this introduction situation of language, the sound of the mother's voice becomes a complex of sounds, then an articulated word which points to an interaction form when connected with the deictic act of pointing. Lorenzer explains this using the introduction of the word "Mama" [mum] in the dyadic mother-child interaction:

- The mother says a word, e.g. *Mama*.
- The mother hints with an implicit gesture towards the interaction acquired by the child as a specific interaction form.
- The child hears the word as a part of the current interaction i.e. as denoting this interaction form.
- The child says a word – e.g. *Mama* – as part of the interaction. The sensorimotoric circle of speaking is formed as the child hears its own utterance. This mutuality of the child's experience (hearing and speaking) forms the basic unity of passivity and activity, from which the capacity for independent activity evolves. Thus the word is first introduced and then in a self-understood process becomes the symbol for *Mama* (1972, 67).

A language game has developed from the interaction game between mother and child. At first, words are added to physical gestures, later a phase of more elaborate speech replaces the gestures partly and later completely. The introduction situation links physical gestures with words. After the child can identify the meaning of the word with gesture, language will, step by step, make gestures unnecessary, indeed superfluous. So experience is gained in abstraction, in the ability to differentiate between physical gestures, words, the meaning behind the words and simultaneously connections. In this context we touch on aspects of cognitive developmental psychology. Jerome Bruner (1987 [1983]) de-



scribed the child-parent relationship in language acquirement as a fine tuning, parents constantly adjusting to the currently attained language level.

In his language theory concepts, Lorenzer always maintained close links to Freud, his differentiation between the “object perception” and “word perception.” He tried to reformulate them in his Wittgenstein-oriented concept of the “language games” of mother and child (Lorenzer 1986, 36f.). Lorenzer included in his interaction form theory Wittgenstein’s notion of language games, whereby not only the linguistic but also the action grammar rules are followed. This close relationship between speaking and acting becomes a way of life. Lorenzer places Wittgenstein near to his own “symbolic interaction form.” With Wittgenstein’s term, “[e]very mature completion of symbolic interaction forms (is marked), it is the starting and ending point of the critical-hermeneutical operation of psychoanalysis. If we are aligned to this we may formulate: psychoanalysis is a critical-hermeneutic change of language games” (Lorenzer 1977, 34). It is the way of practical change, the healing of psychological suffering which is simultaneously the suffering of society. It is the way of healing for neurotic symptoms, which Lorenzer (1970) analyzed as “language destruction.”

Language destruction, exhibited as neurotic symptoms, is a splitting of the interaction form from the connected “Wortvorstellungen” [word conceptions] – to use a term of Freud here – learned during childhood language acquisition. They are the partial splitting of speaking and acting, bound as “language games” and “life forms” (Wittgenstein 1960 [1953]). The unconscious is constituted here as wordless interaction forms, expressed as psychological and physical symptoms as well as mute actions. We can study the social dimension of the unconscious in the partial language disturbances which lead to neurotic symptoms. At the same time this is also the field of psychoanalytical therapy, where therapist and patient work together with the common aim of returning language to the patient, who will then be able to reflect and act consciously. Lorenzer (1970) speaks of de-symbolization of language symbols in neurotic symptom presentation, i.e., “Wortvorstellungen” [imagines of words] (Freud 1950 [1937], 47).

Thus we see that Alfred Lorenzer is consistent in his positioning of psychoanalysis within the “linguistic turn,” determining philosophical, sociological and psychological discussion. I have already mentioned not only Lorenzer’s relationship to the linguistic-philosophical theories of Ernst Cassirer and Susanne K. Langer, but have also examined more extensively his attitude to Wittgenstein’s linguistic philosophy. Lorenzer attempts, scientifically, to place psychoanalysis – which he understands as a hermeneutic science – within the area of human sciences. This attempt is in contrast to neuro-scientific efforts which define the science of psychoanalysis on a purely natural science basis using external methods.

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## 4. Religion and Ideology

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Lorenzer's work links to the first generation of psychoanalysts, wanting to understand non-therapeutic social phenomena such as religions and ideologies. For this purpose he developed his psychoanalytical cultural analysis, which we will consider in the next part of my essay. Here too we consider the social dimension of the unconscious, but in the non-clinical field. He developed the method of "in-depth hermeneutic," which will be discussed later. In this section I will interpret with Alfred Lorenzer the famous observation of Freud, the "wooden reel game" as the *fort-and-da* [here and there] game. Lorenzer (1981) interpreted the wooden reel game as the production of a "sensual symbolic interaction form," a pre-stage of the "symbolic interaction form," i.e. an elaborated, conscious "language game."

This "sensual symbolic Interaction form" is located in the area between the "unconscious" and "pre-conscious" (in terms of Freud). In the *fort-and-da* game, the wooden reel is a sensually-experienced object, a precursor of later "Wortbedeutungen" [meaning of a word] the wooden reel game is an unconscious-preconscious pattern, not only for many children's games but also in many relationship figures for adults. Lorenzer showed that this pattern also plays a role in religious rituals. As an example I will interpret a religious ritual which I personally observed at a Christmas Mass in Rome.

Psychoanalysts and social researchers are not usually people of faith, religious. They are interested in religion and belief – if at all – as social phenomena whose characteristics, effects and functions in society and on the psyche should be researched. Theoretically and empirically, religion and faith are the subjects of the enlightenment, of critical examination, common sense. Sigmund Freud's essay "Die Zukunft einer Illusion" [The Future of an Illusion], for instance, portrays religion as a "common neurosis" which may nevertheless be advantageous, avoiding or minimizing individual neuroses (Freud 1960a [1927], 323f.). Political ideologies – and psychoanalysis – also have such effects. Followers, both therapists and patients, can become believers; this in itself must be critically examined psychoanalytically. The formation of groups such as "Freudian," "Jungian," "Kleinian," etc. shows the phenomena of the need for ideology. Unexplained, or seemingly inexplicable, inadequately analyzed symptoms are simply corked up, ideology adding another brick to the wall of repression.

Alfred Lorenzer belongs to the small group of newer psychologists who examined – under Freud's influence – the phenomena of religion in his book on the second Vatican Council, "Das Konzil der Buchhalter, die Zerstörung der Sinnlichkeit" [The Council of the Bookkeepers. The Disturbance of Sensuality. A Critique of Religion (1981)]. According to Lorenzer, the Council had managed to make religious symbols, pictures and rituals abstract and stunted. In the sublimated form, religious symbols could and can be sensuous; the wish to

express this sensuousness can help gain satisfaction. This is an illusionary satisfaction, nevertheless coupled with the very real consequences of the psychological pacification, even though – as always – this illusionary satisfaction sooner or later comes to an end. Lorenzer describes such somewhat precarious satisfaction as sensual-symbolic interactions, which are cemented in religious rituals into sensuous-symbolic interaction forms.

Lorenzer demonstrated this with his interpretation of the *fort-and-da* game observed by Freud, the wooden reel game which may be found completely or partly in many variations in children's games. A sensory object – such as the wooden reel in the wooden reel game – appears in place of the word with its word meaning and conceptuality in the symbolic interaction form previously mentioned. Before I characterize this in Lorenzerian interpretation, I would like to briefly mention a religious ritual which I have experienced. The psychoanalytically aware reader will recognize the unconscious pattern of *fort-and-da* as shown in the childlike wooden reel role game.

Every year on December 24, a Christmas Midnight Mass takes place in Rome, not far from the Monte Palitino, which is mainly attended by Roma and Sinti. The setting is Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, the partly gothic, partly Romanesque church built on the ruins of a Roman temple. The women wear colorful, shimmering robes, the men are clad in black – the boys and girls too. There is an expectant silence in the church and the spellbound gaze of the visitors is almost palpable. They are all gazing at the small stone-hewn figure of Jesus, which stands on the altar, clad in a fine, transparent, pale blue veil. The central scene of the Mass is the dance of three priests, in their long, flowing monk's habits, around the altar with the veiled baby Jesus. In the background, Gregorian chant can be heard. The rhythmic dance steps of the priests become faster and faster until with the first stroke of the bell for midnight, the blue veil flies – as if thrown by a spectral hand – into the air and settles slowly back down to the ground accompanied by a collective shriek from the entire congregation. For now, the savior, the baby Jesus shining in the light of many candles on the altar, is born. The congregation has jumped from their seats; the colorful clothes shine in the light. The savior is there for the congregation, in a sensuous-symbolic interaction. It is a magical production, giving the stone baby Jesus the profound meaning of the birth of the Messiah.

Factually and precisely, Freud describes the scene of the wooden reel game. He describes a little boy, his game with a wooden reel, a cotton reel. He

skillfully threw the reel over the edge of his cot, holding on to the thread. The wooden reel disappeared. 'O-o-o-o', he said, and pulled the reel back into his cot saying each time it reappeared, 'Da!' That was the entire game, the disappearing and reappearing. Mostly you could only see the first act of the game, but it was undoubtedly the second act which was more fun (1972 [1940], 11).

In this game, while still in the pre-language phase of his language development, the little boy staged the disappearance and reappearance of the mother. One

cannot however presume that the wooden reel simply represents the mother, as at this stage in development she is anyway not perceived as a different, alienable object, as different person that can be isolated. Much more, this is a sensuous-symbolic expression of the entire scene, where the child takes a step from passivity to activity, from the dominance of the mother to a self-determination. The game with the wooden reel is still a sensual-intuitive symbolization and differentiates from language interaction by using abstract situational symbols. Thus Alfred Lorenzer describes the wooden reel game as a sensual-intuitive interaction:

The wooden reel game is set on the same stage as interaction with the mother – a sensual-intuitive interaction is replaced by another sensual-intuitive interaction. The handy wooden reel is accordingly seen as the real mother, and not experienced as fiction. That the fulfillment of needs has its limits – after all, the wooden reel cannot feed the child – does not detract in any way from the satisfaction gained from the game and does not put the wooden reel game into the region of real, unfulfilled daydreams (1981, 159).

I have shown the relevance of unconscious *fort-and-da* relationship patterns (interaction forms) in everyday life also in the medial use of the personal computers (Leithäuser 1997, 78f.).

Let us return to the ritual of the Christmas Mass. We cannot undertake an elaborate psychoanalytic or, as Lorenzer calls “in-depth hermeneutic” interpretation of this ritual scene. But let us consider a few moments of the scene, which point to an unconscious *fort-and-da* pattern. Some readers may find this connection somewhat far-fetched. But we can certainly ask to what extent the baby Jesus has taken on the function of the wooden reel in the wooden reel game. Couldn't the priests' dance be using a *virtual* thread, wound around the veiled Jesus figure? And couldn't the veil – thrown into the air and floating back to earth – be compared to the *fort-and-da* of the wooden reel? A sensuous-symbolic interaction form portraying the return of the mother, which may happen at any moment, awaited with suspense. Do we not find here unconscious parallels? The mother has been fetched. The veiled Jesus in heaven become temporal, is reborn, been fetched, through the ritual. He returns as savior. The ritual scenes of the Christmas Mass condense many religious motives as sensuous-symbolic interaction forms. These certainly could be open to a psychoanalytical interpretation, but such an interpretation would not be within the context of this essay.

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## 5. Psychoanalysis, Culture Analysis and In-Depth Hermeneutic

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Psychoanalysts who dare to leave the cozy shell of their therapy rooms, collecting insight into unconscious processes outside therapy often make the mistake

of simply transferring the methodological setting into the culture and society. This leads to individualistic, in best case familial, contortions in the understanding of typical patterns of the social dimension of the unconscious.

Cultural analysis and also scenic understanding of societal processes, which want to examine the unconscious in non-therapeutic connections call for their own methodological settings. Lorenzer talks, in his cultural analytical examinations, not of psychoanalysis but of deep hermeneutic. He leaves the term “psychoanalysis” to the area of clinicians. I want to explore in-depth hermeneutic and its connected methodological setting in this last section. Thus we, with Lorenzer, gain further insights into the unconscious caused by society.

Not least in his essay “Die Frage der Laienanalyse” [The Question of Lay Analysis] (1960b [1926]), Sigmund Freud showed that he understood psychoanalysis not only as a clinical science but also – as his culture analytical research shows – that it can offer important contributions in the fields of human and social sciences. Nevertheless, psychoanalytical therapy was, and still is, the “silver bullet” of psychoanalytical perception. The “package of healing and research” which Freud considered as a feature of psychoanalytical methods, and for which he still must be considered as the brilliant master, is used by only few under the very many psychoanalysts. Alfred Lorenzer was one of the few to practice this, as shown in his early work “Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion” [Language Destruction and Reconstruction] (1970). There again, based on Freud’s culture history, psychology of religion, and study of literature (1960b, 281) – to which these days we must add social sciences – , Lorenzer wanted to provide independent contributions from clinical-therapeutic work in psychoanalysis based on theory and empirical research.

Along with psychoanalytical therapy, which Lorenzer (1974, 123) characterized as a “critical-hermeneutic, practically changing process,” there may be other methods in psychoanalysis, e.g. psychological text interpretation. For Lorenzer it was crucial that this could not only mean simply taking the psychoanalytical process from the clinical setting and transferring it to a text. The text, or piece of art, picture, culture, piece of architecture, etc., cannot be simply treated as a patient. The scientific interaction form is on a different pivot. The accent is on the reader and the interpretation, his or her relationship to the text, life experiences and plans. The table on which the text lies and at which the interpreter sits is not a couch-armchair setting. A text interpretation is also not an psychoanalysis of the author. The point is far more the working out of typical interaction forms, the “inner panorama of middle class life experiences” (Lorenzer 1986, 67); the working out of unconscious social patterns, just as we tried to with the ritual scenes of the Roman Christmas Mass *fort-and-da* game in previous paragraphs. The staged understanding of a text interpretation is the understanding of typical scenes and not, as in therapy, the individual scenes found in personal history (Leithäuser and Volmerg 1979, 56f.).

Together with Alfred Lorenzer, let me define more precisely the methodical difference between a therapeutic analysis and a culture analysis.

Whilst the “cognitive axis” of therapeutic analysis is found between the relationship of the analyst, the analyzed and the infant experience (Infant life plans), i.e. “genetically” determined, cultural analysis takes a different direction. Here the life plans found in the literature are examined in connection with the collectively valid norms and values. In both cases analytical interest lies in the conflict between unconscious wishes and the values valid within society. In the case of therapy, the root is followed with the question: How did this conflict arise in this individual? In cultural analysis however, the question is: What sort of conflict is this?

“The issue is the dichotomy between unconscious wishes and conscious words” (Lorenzer 1986, 67). Lorenzer demonstrates the methodical steps of cultural analysis in comparison to therapeutic analysis using Freud’s analysis “Der Moses des Michelangelo” [The Moses of Michelangelo] (1963 [1933]), as already applied to all Freud’s analyses.

So we see that there are profound differences, both methodological and factual, between therapeutic analysis, i.e., analysis in the clinical area, and cultural analysis, which Freud also practiced *in nuce*. Thus it is not so easy to place both forms of analysis under the title of psychoanalysis. There one tends also to be confronted by difficulties from psychoanalysts working in the area of therapy, who of course must claim the term psychoanalysis for themselves, if only for occupationally political reasons. Last but not least, the term psychoanalysis is perceived by the public as closely bound with the practice of psychotherapy. It would be a good idea to follow Lorenzer and differentiate between psychoanalysis and cultural analysis not only in subject but also in terms and words. It is only consistent to follow Lorenzer further. The close connection between both forms of analysis may be maintained if we assign both the umbrella term, “in-depth hermeneutic.” This describes the access to the unconscious, which both analysis forms have in their own way, and the “critical-hermeneutic” path, on which both may be found.

But the term “in-depth hermeneutic” is not very convincing. To a certain extent it removes the object designation from the words “psychoanalysis” and “cultural analysis” and describes rather the process of analysis as “in-depth hermeneutic.” The objects of analysis, the psychological and cultural get somewhat lost in the vague spatial metaphor “in-depth.” This has the advantage that in the metaphor “in-depth,” the areas psychological and cultural cannot be misunderstood as being strictly separated. Even in the most profound “depth,” they can be woven together, as Alfred Lorenzer repeatedly tried to demonstrate. Freud (1950 [1937], 45f.) also spoke in some works of “in-depth analysis” and “depth psychology” instead of “psychoanalysis,” and compared this to archeology, which can certainly be pursued as “culture analysis” in the sense of Alfred Lorenzer. From the viewpoint of the process of “in-depth hermeneutic”

or “depth analysis,” psychoanalysis and cultural analysis (archeology) hardly differ.

Lorenzer adopted the following comparison of psychoanalysts and archaeologists from Freud. Freud writes:

His [the psychoanalyst’s, Th. L.] work or construction, or if you prefer reconstruction, has many similarities with that of the archaeologist, digging on a damaged, buried habitation or ancient building. Actually the work is identical, except that the analyst works under better conditions, has more materials at hand, is trying to help a living entity rather than a devastated object, and maybe for another reason too. The archaeologist builds the walls of his building on remains, decides on the number and position of columns from markings in the earth, revives wall decorations and wall paintings from the rubble. That is just how the analyst proceeds when he makes deductions from chunks of memory, associations and active expressions of the analyzed. Both undoubtedly have the right to reconstruct using supplementation and merging (1950 [1937], 45f.).

In-depth hermeneutic, psychoanalytic text interpretations should proceed no differently, according to Lorenzer as mentioned above.

The metaphor of depth, the theoretically, spatially and temporally embedded construction of the psychic device in psychoanalysis has its limits. The unconscious, according to Freud, does not know space or time or other cognitive structures. Thus it also does not know depth. There is no hierarchy of super-id, id and it. Indeed super-id and id have their own giant unconscious areas. The unconscious knows no individual, social or societal differences and certainly no hierarchical structures. In the unconscious there is no up or down, no left or right and no front or rear (Freud 1952 [1933], 80). Perhaps it finds itself best as an intermediary, between all structures.

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