

## Research methodology

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De particolare nulla scientia

There are two main epistemological orientations between which the psychoanalytic community has historically been divided: one of these assumes that – apart from the specific character which it derives from the distinctive nature of its object – psychoanalysis shares the same cognitive horizon as the natural sciences; the other holds that psychoanalysis has little in common with these, and cannot be included among them, or even that it would be deleterious to do so. If we endorse the first view, we will assume that the development of research will depend on our ability to respect the procedures of the scientific method; in the second case, we will regard our work as an *ars* – therapeutic or hermeneutic – and will thereby give up on constructing a *mathesis generalis*.

This was, for example, the idea supported by Habermas against Popper. While Popper held that psychoanalysis, having been conceived as a science, should submit to the demands of the scientific method, and to the extent that it did not do so it condemned itself as bad science; Habermas objected that, in attributing the status of a natural science to psychoanalysis, Freud had been the victim of a «scientific self-misunderstanding» which countered the original significance of his method; whereas his method of investigation was «self-reflective and paradigmatically hermeneutic», i.e. founded on nexuses of meaning.

And since his method, unlike that of the natural sciences, is characterized by its dependence on context and on subjective history, it must be accepted that it cannot give rise to universal laws that are valid outside the particular context.

These two positions in fact reproduce the old idealist distinction between sciences of nature and sciences of the spirit – the first nomothetic and universal, the second ideographic and particular: a distinction which is no longer sustainable today, not even from the viewpoint of the so-called «hard sciences», since these too participate in the discovery that every observational system is context-dependant and influenced by the observing subject. But despite this, they do not give up the search for valid laws beyond that subject and that context. Therefore, I do not think it acceptable that, sim-

ply because psychoanalysis is concerned with the psychic subject, it should be thought impossible for it to seek out general rules of psychic functioning, and hence that it must give up the nomothetic task which characterizes it as a scientific practice.

Freud had already posed this question. What, he asked, distinguishes psychoanalysis from art, mythology, and delusion, since they all draw their conclusions from the interpretation of subjective signs and clues? And his answer was that, in dealing with those subjective signs, psychoanalysis subjects them to the same method as the natural sciences: «the intellectual working-over of carefully scrutinized observation... to arrive at correspondence with reality – that is to say, with what exists outside us and independently of us» (Freud 1932, 159 and 170). Freud thus annexed psychoanalysis to the paradigm of scientific realism, on the basis of which knowledge is *adequatio intellectus ad rem*: regardless of what the *res* may be.

For Freud, therefore, the peculiarity of the object of psychoanalysis did not entail treating the object in a different way from the object of the other sciences. There is no «special status» to be claimed for psychoanalysis, since there is no single definition of science (the tribunal of science, said Feyerabend, was invented by epistemologists, not scientists). All sciences are «special»: that is, specialised according to the objects of their investigations, which are innumerable and to a large extent evade our direct observation. Furthermore, what distinguishes and unites them within a common horizon is not the nature of the special method applied to the particular object being investigated, but the nature of the general method, which is the same for all: «the intellectual working-over of carefully scrutinized observation»; in a word, the Galilean method.

Galileo sets out that method in *Dialogo sopra i massimi sistemi*. It consists, he says, of «three steps»: the first is «the collecting of *sensate esperienze*»; the second is «the discovery of laws which govern those experiences»; and the third is «the deduction through necessary demonstrations of the particular determinations which derive from the laws». And it is only in the cooperation between the three steps that the empirical method resides, as a combined device of observation, discovery, and deduction: where the first, the *collection* of experiences performs the work of acquiring and selecting the data; the second, *inventio* (discovery), allows their attribution to general laws; and the third, *ratio*, enables particular cases to be derived from these. The scientific method therefore demands as much correctness in observational procedure as it does in deductive procedure.

In the same way, our method consists of two interlocking procedures: the first is the observational procedure, the «psychoanalytic method», i.e. the *special method* capable of enabling the observation of the unconscious through its conscious derivatives; the second is the procedure of working over the observations, the «axiomatic-deductive method», i.e. the *general method* capable of constructing the theory of the unconscious in its relationships with consciousness.

But the cooperation between these two procedures is neither simple nor peaceable because, while the first, the psychoanalytic method, makes use of an associative (*dream-like*) thinking which is not directed, nor subject to logical constraints, and aims at the investigation of the particular; the second, the axiomatic method, makes use of directed thinking, constrained by logic aims at abstracting laws of general explanation from the particular. And I think that *the distinctiveness of the psychoanalytic method and its fecundity are due to the mutual tension between these two procedures*. But only as long as the distinction between these two steps and functions is preserved; whereas the confusion between them – by adopting the specific type of thinking we apply to clinical practice in the elaboration of psychoanalytic theory – leads to a structural weakness in our theories. And this makes it difficult for our theories to be accepted in the field of contemporary sciences: not because they lack empirical verifiability, but because it is impossible to *falsify* them empirically due to the defective construction of the theory. This defectiveness has often been pointed out, not only by thinkers who are critical of psychoanalysis, but by Rapaport, Holt, Wallerstein, and Bion who wrote in 1962, «I am convinced of the strength of the scientific position of psycho-analytic practice... but I do not consider the need less pressing to investigate the weaknesses that spring from faulty theory construction, lack of notation and failure of methodical care and maintenance of psycho-analytic equipment» (Bion 1962, 77-78).

Hence the question: since we practise psychoanalytic observation on a daily basis, are we able with equal discipline to practise the other step in research, the rigorous working over of that observation? And in this way, as Wallerstein reminds us (1989), can we pursue Freud's objective, which was «to construct a theory of the mind», in the absence of which we have no way of moving on from that stage where there is no criterion for asserting the validity of one idea rather than another and of one explanation rather than another, except faith or rejection.

What work is required if we are to achieve that objective? I will set it out in four stages.

## 1. THE WORK OF THEORY

In our work we make use, on the one hand, of certain theories, and on the other, a number of experiences which are, for the most part, neither organized nor explained. Both the efficacy of our clinical operations and the progress of our knowledge depend on the use we make of theories to order and explain these experiences, and on the use of the experiences to test and modify those theories.

The task of theory is to attribute the experiences which are presented in analysis to the psychic processes responsible for their formation; in other words, a «nomothetic» task: discovering if those particular, variable phenomena which are offered unmedi-

ated to our observation conform to «invariant» properties and relations. A theory is simply *a system of invariant relations*. «Science is a system of relations. Mathematicians do not study objects, but the relations between objects; to them it is a matter of indifference if these objects are replaced by others, provided that the relations do not change... it is in the relations alone that objectivity must be sought; it would be vain to seek it in beings considered as isolated from one another» (Poincaré, 2001, 20 and 347).

Theory therefore requires a process of abstraction: from the particular to the general, and from objects to their properties and relations. *The description of these properties and relations in a system of finite and logically coherent statements is the said axiomatic method.*

So I must say what this method consists in. The Greek adjective *axios* originally indicated the «right weight». The corresponding noun, *axiôma*, was adopted by Aristotle to designate a notion that is assumed to be a correct premiss: hence its Latin equivalent *postulatum*. Quoting Poincaré again, «Every conclusion presumes premisses. These premisses are either self-evident and need no demonstration, or can be established only if based on other propositions; and as we cannot go back in this way to infinity, every deductive science... must rest upon a certain number of indemonstrable axioms» (Poincaré, *ibid.*, 35). For this reason, postulates are assumed *a priori*; and there would be no good reason to admit postulates unless they turned out to be useful *a posteriori*: in other words, unless the deductive system which starts from them achieves the purpose of explaining a determined empirical domain.

All scientific theories are therefore based on certain propositions of a highly general character (postulates or basic axioms) which, for the most part, are not derived from observation. Those propositions are employed as premisses from which to derive lower-level hypotheses (inferences) which in turn function as second-level axioms, from which subsequent inferences derive. The nature of the axiomatic method is therefore *descending*. Lower-level hypotheses possess a gradually reduced degree of abstraction, until they reach a particular enough level for a correspondence with observations to be possible. Moreover, even when it is possible, the correspondence with observations is always partial; and this is the basis for its heuristic function, since this gap gives rise to further demands on the work of the theory, which must therefore be modified in such a way as to achieve a greater degree of approximation.

Furthermore, the articulation between observation and theory sets up an «epistemic cycle», which means that data and theories about the data do not exist as two independent realities. They constitute a mutually supportive system within which they are reciprocally determined. Paraphrasing a famous statement by Einstein, *it is theories which decide which observations can be made, and it is observations which decide which theories can be formulated.*

Which allows us to take a different view of the recurring dichotomy in our discussions, between theory and practice, and between theoretical and clinical research. This dichotomy reflects a naïve conception of the epistemic process. Clinical practice is, from the outset, interwoven both with the experiences we have in analysis and the theories which enable us to observe and understand them. Without theory practice is blind.

A theory, says Popper, functions like a lighthouse: it helps us see those things we would never have seen without it. And it helps us see those dimensions of things which, though decisive for their reality, *cannot be seen*. The photon, for example, is a reality which cannot be seen because it is at the origin of vision; the unconscious is another example: it is a reality which, being at the origin of the consciousness cannot be conscious. Both can only be seen thanks to the existence of a theory which *fore-sees* them. Thus, theory is not limited to the interpretation of data, but is also an observational instrument. Conversely, a clinical description is also an interpretative instrument.

As Benjamin Rubinstein demonstrated as long ago as the nineteen-seventies, all the terms used in clinical practice – transference, identification, unconscious phantasy, acting out, defence – are theoretical concepts. And even the most particular level of description, the report of a session, is a theory, since it is an ordering of facts, subsequent to the experience of the facts and inseparable from their selection and interpretation. Freud had already asserted this: «Even at the stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone» (Freud 1915a, 117).

In other words, the practice we can speak about does not exist except as a level of theory, which refers us on the one hand to other theoretical levels, and on the other to the immediate plane of experiences. The solution cannot therefore be to turn to one rather than the other, but lies instead *in their reciprocal correlation*. The criteria which regulate this correlation constitute *the method*.

And the lack of these criteria exposes us to the risk, dramatically present today, of progressive divergence between a field of particular clinical experiences – which are ever more heterogeneous in their observational «settings» and idealized *tout court* as the place of the «truth» of the analysis – and an ever weaker theoretical apparatus, deprived of its task of investigating the non-manifest levels: with the result that we find ourselves at the *ground zero* of psychoanalysis and the rebirth of «psychologies of the obvious»: the phenomenological subject of consciousness, the manifest text, the factual reality, the interpersonal relationship; i.e. moving from the explanation of behaviours and facts, to behaviours and facts as a criterion for explanation.

## 2. THE WORK OF OBSERVATION

I said that the axiomatic procedure is always descending: from  $a \rightarrow b$ . The consequence of this is that I can only derive statement  $b$  from a statement  $a$  at a higher logical

level than *b*: hence, I can deduce a clinical proposition from a general theory, but I cannot deduce a general theory from a clinical proposition. What then is the task of clinical practice? It is the converse move, from  $b \rightarrow a$ . Starting from clinical observation, I can make an inductive inference, and even a «discovery», the validity of which I must subsequently «justify» by means of theoretical work.

So we must not confuse the two processes: one, *the process of discovery*, follows a bottom-up pathway from the particular to the general, from the experience of facts to the laws which determine the facts; while the other, *the process of justification*, follows a top-down pathway, from the general to the particular, from laws to the explanation of facts. And in this stands the difference between clinical and theoretical research, in their respective procedures and operational gains – the gain of the work of the particular, the *inventio* (one case is enough to make a discovery, or to prove a theory false) and the gain of the nomothetic work, the *ratio* – since once the first move has been made (the invariant relation has been found), the second step from that point is much shorter, leading to the possibility of directly applying the law to all the experiences of the same type with no need to «discover» a new. If we know from Newton's laws that the relative motions of bodies depend on their masses and distances, we know that to find out the orbit of a comet it is enough to know their mass and distance, and it is no use following the comet with a telescope. In the same way, if we know from the laws of psychoanalysis that obsessional symptoms are the product of an affect being shifted onto an ideational content, we know that, in order to explain an obsessional symptom, we must find the affect, and it is no use pursuing the ideational content.

### 3. THE WORK OF FALSIFICATION

There is a third condition required by scientific method, a prerequisite for setting up that virtuous cycle between observation and theory thanks to which theories make it possible to orient observations, and observations make it possible to falsify theories.

We owe to Karl Popper the insight that in order for a theory to be proved false by observation, it must be «falsifiable» by observation: and this depends on its statements being logically «finite». An indefinite statement is in fact susceptible to the acceptance of any observation; therefore, it can never be proved false. If I say, «Swans are white», this is a *finite* statement, and hence it can be contradicted by observation (one black swan would be enough to falsify it). By contrast, assertions such as «analysis is an intersubjective encounter» or «analysis is the encounter of two “unconscious”» are always true because they can never be proved false. *Falsifiability* is therefore a logical criterion rather than an empirical one.

And this criterion is also the answer to the initial question – how can psychoanalysis be a science, distinguishing itself from literature, mythology, and delusion? – since, while these constructions possess limitless degrees of compatibility with expe-

rience, a scientific theory «must be able to exclude from the outset the infinite possibilities that are conceivable, and this depends on the ties posed by its axioms» (Popper, 1934, XX). This «excluding» character is the essential property of an axiomatic formulation which, far from being a dogmatic assertion, is thus a necessary condition of falsifiability.

A markedly obsessional patient, an engineer by profession, once presented me with the following objection: is it possible to put a psychoanalytic interpretation onto graph paper? If not, it would have no scientific value. And if this were required, we would have little hope of satisfying it since our domain is not that of the «calculable». However, I would turn the question into this one: can a psychoanalytic interpretation be put onto axiomatic paper? That is, can it descend logically from an underlying theory which allows it to explain that particular phenomenon which is the object of the analysis? And can it reciprocally be falsified by different phenomena observable in analysis? If not, it would have no scientific value. Which does not mean it cannot be true; it means it cannot be demonstrated as either true or false.

#### 4. THE WORK OF RESEARCH

Lastly, the work of research requires certain operational conditions to be observed; I will label them with the names of those honest servants, *What, Why, How, and To*, and then an additional one.

The first condition is the identification of the *object* of research – what exactly one wants to look for – since the object must be clearly delimited, «finite». The second is the *purpose* of the research: what demand does it arise from, why do we consider it useful, what contribution will it make to psychoanalysis? The third is the *method* of research, the most important and most difficult condition: the most important because *what* we find depends on *how* we look; the most difficult because the operational method must be appropriate to the specific nature of the object and the type of research.

Theoretical, empirical, and clinical research obviously require different tools and strategies. The operational method must therefore be specifically indicated. It must set out the procedures and tools it intends to employ, the criteria for collecting and elaborating the data, the ways in which the research will be carried out, and its stages. The fourth condition is the *goal* of the research, the result it is intended to achieve: the verification of a hypothesis, the development of a theory, the explanation of a specific clinical phenomenon, correlation with the results from another discipline. Lastly, there is the fifth servant: its name is *Suspension of belief*, since research entails our own psychoanalytic credo being placed in *epoché*: in other words, the decision to apply oneself to a search without already presuming to have found what one is looking for, keeping in mind the possibility of reaching different results from those we expected or

wanted, since research must be *disinterested* and not aimed at supporting an ideology or a pre-constituted thesis.

In the absence of these few but demanding conditions, speaking of research risks merely results in a nominalistic operation, giving a different name to what we normally do.

### **A RESEARCH PROJECT: «AN AXIOMATIC COMPARISON OF PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES»**

I will try to show how these conditions are represented in the research which I undertook with a group of colleagues in 2013 and which is still in progress. Having theory as its object, this is meta-theoretical research, so it starts from the *Up*; but if what I have said up to now is true, it has important consequences for the *Down*.

The purpose of the research is to initiate a systematic investigation of the state of psychoanalytic theory. In the present panorama of psychoanalysis several psychogenetic conceptions, pathogenetic conceptions, and conceptions of treatment cohabit, offering diverse and sometimes incompatible principles for explanation, from which descend clinical practices which are likewise diverse and incompatible. In the absence of precise formulations and criteria of comparability, this diversity does not take on the character of true scientific pluralism, but leads instead to a sort of «commensalism», thanks to which the various schools and currents live side by side without confronting each other or modifying themselves.

Faced with divergent hypothesis and theories, a scientific community addresses the contradictions not by invoking the sacred right to pluralism – that two mutually contradictory theories cannot both be true is a question of logic, not of pluralism – but by promoting investigation and comparison in such a way as to permit progress in the attainment of knowledge.

This exigency inspired the report «Beyond Pluralism» presented in the same year at the 48th International Congress of the IPA (Prague, 2013) by the Committee on Conceptual Integration.<sup>1</sup>

«At present we find in psychoanalysis a vast array of theories with associated theoretical terms and concepts at different levels of abstraction. Theories and concepts are determined by the perspective of the analyst looking at the clinical phenomenon. [...] This has particularly to do with the different underlying fundamental postulates and basic psychoanalytic assumptions. Therefore, different analysts' perspectives on the same phenomenon will lead to different versions of concepts and theories. The acknowledgement of this plurality of theories constituted a liberating advance within

<sup>1</sup> Werner Bohleber (Chair), Peter Fonagy, Juan Pablo Jiménez, Dominique Scarfone, Sverre Varvin, Samuel Zysman.

the analytic community, but it also had the potential to inhibit attempts to integrate concepts. In fact, to date, there is no consensus about how to decide between competing and sometimes mutually contradictory theories, and how to integrate divergent concepts and theories. [...] Another complicating factor is that close inspection of psychoanalytic work reveals that many authors employ familiar concepts idiosyncratically. One must therefore assume that alongside explicit, public definitions, there are also implicit ones that individual psychoanalysts draw on in their works. In view of the theoretical and clinical diversity of psychoanalytic concepts, we realized that we had to develop a method that would allow us to compare the different versions of concepts and their underlying theories [...]. Addressing concepts needs some rigor: How is the concept defined? [...]» (W. Bohleber, *Beyond pluralism*, IPAC Prague, August 2, 2013).

The principle had been stated with crystalline clarity by a logician of the last century, W. O. Quine: ‘No entity, without identity’. In other words, there can be no discourse if the entities of the discourse have not been identified. The task of identification – that is, of defining with sufficient precision and rigour the terms and concepts we adopt in, or more often implicitly subsume into, our discourses – is therefore a preliminary condition for being able to move on to a comparison between them, from both theoretical and clinical points of view. In the absence of a definition and a predicate, terms such as «subject», «relationship», «emotion», «transformation», «affect», can take on any meaning. The question is therefore, what subject, what relationship, what affect are we talking about when we talk about affect, subject, and relationship? In what sense is the term being employed? And from what theory does that sense derive?

Freud’s *Affekt* is not *Gefühl* or *Liebe*, feeling/affection, but (in Freud’s definition) an *Erregungssumme*: a «motor (secretory and vasomotor) discharge resulting in an (internal) alteration of the subject’s own body without reference to the external world» (Freud, 1915b, 179n). This conception of affect descends from Freud’s biological postulate<sup>2</sup>, and is at the root of the economic principle of explanation. It is not a trivial matter. What then, does this conception of affect have in common with Winnicott’s affect or Stern’s? Similarly, what does Winnicott’s concept of Self have in common with Kohut’s? And we can legitimately subsume these terms into one definition or another, but there is one thing we cannot do: abolish the differences between the two and use the same term to speak about different things, ignoring the fact that

<sup>2</sup> «Gerade das ist es, was die Psychoanalyse tun muss und dies ist ihre zweite fundamentale Annahme. Sie erklärt die vorgeblichen somatischen Begleitvorgänge für das eigentliche Psychische, sieht dabei zunächst von der Qualität des Bewusstseins ab» (Freud, GW, XVII, 80).

[«But that is precisely what psycho-analysis is obliged to assert, and this is its second fundamental hypothesis. It explains the supposedly somatic concomitant phenomena as being what is truly psychological, and thus in the first instance disregards the quality of consciousness» (Freud, 1938, 158).]

those differences have weighty consequences for the whole structure of theory and the conduct of the treatment.

This is why I regard the work of «identification of the terms of the discourse» as essential: not to confirm an *ortho-doxo*, but to allow an *ortho-logy*, a «correct discourse». In fact, this work enables us to make use of certain collections of axioms, and inferences derived from them, as premisses for our discourses, so that once the premisses have been established, it may be possible to test the conclusions and assess whether they are valid – *logically and clinically*. Indeed, only an agreement about the theories we are moving from can put us in the position of being able to confirm or change them.

A second, no less important effect of setting ourselves the task of *identifying* our theories is that this work requires a preliminary and careful study of authors and texts, a practice which we are neither trained nor accustomed to undertake: hence, the partial and approximate, when not manipulative, use we generally make of it. *Taking in the sources completely and faithfully is not a mere philological exercise: it is one of the conditions of the scientific method*. In this respect, the historical and scientific methods are the same. Taking in a theory, author, or text – whether to confirm or to confute – is no different from taking in a body of empirical data. Indeed, since both constitute the premisses from which we draw our conclusions, if the premisses are false, so will the conclusions be, and any conclusion will be possible. *Ex falso quodlibet*.

Therefore, the presupposition in research is that the necessary condition for being able to compare our theories is to establish what axioms they rest on; a very controversial task to which it is not possible to give a universally shared response. It is possible, however, to answer a more limited question: what are the axioms that Freud and the principal authors *set themselves*, and from which their respective theories derive? Answering this question has been the objective of the first phase of our research. In what way?

Freud himself came to our aid by having written in 1938 a text with an explicitly axiomatic purpose, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*: «The aim of this brief work is to bring together the tenets [*Lehrsätze*, theorems] of psycho-analysis and to state them, as it were, dogmatically—in the most concise form and in the most unequivocal terms» (Freud, 1938, 144).

So, we decided literally to pick Freud's axioms out of his text, just as he had formulated them, and to adopt the same criterion for the other writers as well; that is, confining ourselves to extracting the axioms from their works in such a way as to take them on board not as they are for us (or as we would like them to be), but *as they were formulated and proposed by those who formulated and proposed them*. Ultimately, research is a humble job.

We set limits on our field of research, taking into consideration those authors who have given rise to the main currents represented in the IPA: Freud, Klein, Winnicott,

Bion, Hartmann and Ego Psychology, Kohut and Psychology of the Self. And since none of these did us the favour of writing an *Outline*, identifying their axioms required the careful examination of a considerable number of writings and more than three years of work on the original texts. But this work has put us in a position to make use of a dependable «database», a reliable apparatus of statements onto which to anchor the comparison, keeping it free from arbitrary hermeneutics of the texts.

In the end, this is the function of the method: certainly not to claim the elimination of subjectivity, but the possibility of putting a check on its uncontrolled expansion.

The next question we set ourselves was, how do we make this comparison? In the nineteen-seventies, David Rapaport had undertaken a long-term research project which unfortunately was left unfinished: reviewing the *structure* of psychoanalytic theory. That project entailed a) isolating the «independent variables»: i.e. the statements which are at the basis of the theory (axioms); b) going on to compare them, distinguishing two classes of statements, *concordant* and *alternative*, and subdividing the second class into two subclasses: *compatible alternative* – statements which are able to coexist within the same theory, and *incompatible alternative* – statements which are contradictory and therefore unable to coexist within the same theory. The distinction between statements which belong to the first category and those which belong to the second has been the objective of the second phase of the research.

The method of comparison has observed a purely propositional criterion (the distinction between non-contradictory and contradictory propositions), making no value judgement about the content of the statements. Doing this made it possible to identify three types of theoretical assumption: those that are concordant or complementary; those that are non-concordant but not contradictory, and therefore amenable to representing axiomatic «developments»; and those that, being contradictory, imply two different axiomatic systems.

In conclusion, the idea which has guided the research is that the identification of the fundamental differences which have exploded in the present state of the psychoanalytic movement, is the premiss for integrating different conceptions, where possible, into a coherent evolutionary framework; and where it is not possible, to direct further research into points which, being the expression of divergent conceptions, demand further investigation. This requires that where contradictions exist, they are not ignored or resolved by means of ideological choices or affiliations, but are acknowledged and addressed with a scientific method: that is, by a comparison between observation and theory.

### SUMMARIES AND KEYWORDS

The development of research both in clinical and theoretical domains is indispensable if we want to pursue the goal that had also been Freud's: to build a science of the mind. The possibility of reaching this goal, however, requires that this development is consistent and based on a methodology. The question this paper is trying to address is: what are the conditions posed by the scientific method on the work of research? In the absence of proper criteria and the observance of those conditions, to talk about research becomes a simple operation of giving a different name to things we usually do. The first part of the paper is dedicated to illustrating the features of the method and the criteria that regulate the relations between observation and theory. In the second part I present a project of theoretical research currently underway: «An axiomatic comparison of psychoanalytical theories.»

**KEYWORDS:** Axiom, comparability, falsification, method, observation, pluralism, theory.

**MÉTHODOLOGIE DE RECHERCHE.** Le développement de la recherche, à la fois dans le domaine théorique et clinique, est une exigence indispensable si nous voulons poursuivre le but de Freud: construire une science de l'esprit. Cependant, la possibilité d'atteindre cet objectif nécessite que ce développement soit cohérent et méthodologique. La question à laquelle ce travail tente de répondre est: quelles sont les conditions fixées par la méthode scientifique pour le travail de recherche? Parce qu'en absence de critères adéquats et du respect de ces conditions, parler de recherche risque de se traduire simplement dans une opération nominaliste: appeler avec un nouveau nom les mêmes choses que nous faisons habituellement. La première partie du travail est consacrée à illustrer les caractéristiques de la méthode et les critères qui régissent la relation entre l'observation et la théorie. Dans la seconde, un projet de recherche théorique est présenté: «La comparaison axiomatique des théories psychanalytiques».

**MOTS-CLÉS:** Axiome, comparabilité, falsification, méthode, observation, pluralisme, théorie.

**METODOLOGÍA DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN.** El desarrollo de la investigación desde el punto de vista teórico y clínico, es un requisito indispensable si queremos alcanzar el objetivo que fue del mismo Freud: construir una ciencia de la mente. La posibilidad de alcanzar este objetivo requiere, sin embargo, que este desarrollo sea coherente y justificado metodológicamente. Este trabajo se propone contestar a la siguiente pregunta: cuáles son las condiciones que el método científico exige al trabajo de investigación? Porque hablar de investigación si no se dispone de criterios adecuados y del cumplimiento de esas condiciones, se corre el riesgo de hablar de investigación como si fuera una simple operación nominal: llamar con otro nombre lo que hacemos habitualmente. Se ha dedicado la primera parte del trabajo para ilustrar las características del método y de los requisitos que regulan las relaciones entre la observación y la teoría. En la segunda parte se presenta un proyecto de investigación teórica en marcha: «La confrontación axiomática de las teorías psicoanalíticas».

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Axioma, comparabilidad, falsificación, método, observación, pluralismo, teoría.

**METHODOLOGIE DER FORSCHUNG.** Die Entwicklung der Forschung sowohl im theoretischen als auch im klinischen Bereich ist ein unerlässliches Erfordernis, wenn wir das Ziel Freuds verfolgen wollen, eine Wissenschaft der Seele zu schaffen. Die Möglichkeit, dieses Ziel zu erreichen, gebietet jedoch, dass diese Entwicklung kohärent und methodologisch fundiert ist. Die Frage, auf welche diese Arbeit zu antworten versucht, ist: Was sind die Bedingungen, welche die wissenschaftliche Methode der Forschungsarbeit stellt? Denn in Ermangelung adäquater Kriterien und der Einhaltung dieser Bedingungen riskiert das Sprechen von Forschung, zu einer lediglich nominalistischen Operation zu führen: mit einem neuen Namen die gleichen Dinge zu benennen, die wir gewohnheitsmäßig tun. Der erste Teil der Arbeit widmet sich der Veranschaulichung der Eigenschaften der Methode und der Kriterien, die das Verhältnis zwischen Beobachtung und Theorie regulieren. Im zweiten Teil wird ein laufendes theoretisches Forschungsprojekt vorgestellt: «Der axiomatische Vergleich psychoanalytischer Theorien».

**SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER:** Axiom, Beobachtung, Falsifizierung, Methode, Pluralismus, Theorie, Vergleichbarkeit.

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