

Antoni Grzybowski, Dariusz Grabowski

**THE UNCONSCIOUS AS A MESSAGE FROM THE OTHER. THEORY AND PRACTICE
OF PSYCHOANALYSIS ACCORDING TO JEAN LAPLANCHE**

Institute of Psychology, Jagiellonian University

**psychoanalytic psychotherapy
therapeutic relationship
mother-child diad**

Summary

The purpose of this article is to present the most important aspects of Jean Laplanche's theory. The work is divided into three parts: the first concerns the critical method of reading Freud's works, which was a starting point for Laplanche's own theory; the second presents key aspects of the general theory of seduction and other theoretical postulates connected with it; the third includes aspects of the psychoanalytic method raised by the French psychoanalyst in a practical context. Deriving from the student community of Jacques Lacan, Laplanche proposed a new approach to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, which led him to critically read the works of Sigmund Freud and look at psychoanalysis primarily through the prism of its unique method. One of Laplanche's main postulates was the return to the Freudian theory of seduction, which the creator of psychoanalysis rejected at some stage of his work. This theory was intended to explain the etiology of neuroses by demonstrating that sexual abuse by an adult occurred in the early life of neurotic patients. According to the French psychoanalyst, the theory of seduction, though wrongly rejected, required extension and modification, so that it may have corresponded to the analytical experience and at the same time could form the core of psychoanalytic theory. To this end, he developed an original concept of the "general" theory of seduction, which could cover non-pathological childhood experience. This concept became the basis for a new way of understanding the theory and practice of psychoanalysis proposed by Laplanche.

Introduction

Jean Laplanche can be considered one of the most interesting representatives of contemporary French psychoanalysis. In Poland, however, his concepts are almost completely unknown. Probably this fact can be related to the wider phenomenon of the poor knowledge of the theoretical achievements of French psychoanalysts in our country. The only exception seems to be the theory of Jacques Lacan, often identified with the French version of psychoanalysis in general. However, in Poland, Lacanian concepts have been adopted primarily in the field of philosophy and literature research, and thus beyond closer to clinical psychoanalysis fields of psychology, psychiatry or psychotherapy. The reasons for this state of affairs can be traced to the differentness of the French way of understanding Freud's theory in comparison to the interpretation of the work of the creator of psychoanalysis, which is prevailing in Polish clinical practice, and to the complex and hermetic manner of Lacan's presentation of his theory.

Jean Laplanche's works, although they arise from a specific French tradition of psychoanalytic reflection (in particular from the Lacanian school), are characterized by clarity and transparency of the argumentation, which makes them inviting to become familiar with the reception of Freud's theory

in France. This is not the only reason why it is worth to read Laplanche's publications. The French psychoanalyst presents an in-depth reflection on the psychoanalytic theory, as a result of which he postulates the rehabilitation (albeit in a modified version) of the theory of seduction rejected by Freud and the recognition of it as a new foundation for the whole psychoanalytic theory [1]. This seemingly controversial proposal is connected in a coherent way with the understanding of the analytical process, in which - in Laplanche's opinion - the role of the psychoanalyst should not be to give meaning to the manifestations of a person's unconscious, but to provoke the patient to repeatedly attempt to reinterpret their experiences individually [2].

This article discusses the relationship between the three main components of the Jean Laplanche concept. These will be: the way Freud's work is interpreted, his authoritative general theory of seduction¹ (*théorie de la séduction généralisée*) in relation to the notion of translation (*traduction*) and the conceptualization of the psychoanalytic process as proposed by Laplanche. Due to the fact that the thought of the French psychoanalyst is practically absent in Polish works, the proposed article aims to provide a general overview of it, not a detailed consideration in relation to other concepts that are better rooted in the Polish intellectual landscape. In other words, it is not the intention of the authors to critically analyze the solutions proposed by Laplanche or to discuss them. The sources quoted in the article relate to English-language studies or translations of original Laplanche's papers into English, which is dictated by the availability of these sources for Polish audiences.

Return to the sources of the psychoanalytic thought

Among the publications of the French psychoanalyst, the "Dictionary of Psychoanalysis" created together with Jean-Bertrand Pontali plays an extremely important role [3], which is the only work of the French analyst so far translated into Polish. This publication, being the result of eight years of work, has become one of the basic encyclopedic studies of the psychoanalytic theory [4], but its significance is not limited to a systematic interpretation of the terminology of Freud's theory and its continuators.

The structure of the "Dictionary of psychoanalysis" allows to recognize the characteristic method of analysis of the psychoanalytic theory proposed by Laplanche, consistently used in his later publications. Descriptions of the individual terms of the dictionary exceed the scope of the encyclopedic definition, they are rather placed in a complex grid of other concepts within the dynamics of the development of the whole psychoanalytic theory with an indication of its internal difficulties and ambiguities [4]. According to Laplanche, this method is similar to the method of interpretation used in psychoanalysis. The basis is the tracking of internal connections within the patient's narration (including dreams, mistaken actions, etc.) without highlighting any of its elements.

¹ Apart from the proposed translations of technical terms used by Laplanche, original French terms have been placed in brackets.

The effect of such a work is the detection of the most basic, often hidden, threads of the analyzed material, to which other elements can be reduced. The use of this method of analysis in relation to Freud's work allowed Laplanche to discover a certain central difficulty within it, as which - simplifying - the relationship of the unconscious to the first contacts of a child with his or her caretakers can be considered [5].

Freud [6] believed that the theory he created was one of the three great blows given by science to human self-worship. Copernicus undermined the belief of humanity that the Earth was the center of the universe. After him, Darwin and Wallace criticized the view of the unique position of the human being in nature, recognizing it as one of the many species of animals that have evolved through natural selection. In the end, the results of psychoanalytic studies were to show that even the "I" of human is not a master in its own home, because the human mind is influenced by powerful unconscious forces determining its actions. Following this Freudian course of reasoning, Laplanche [7] interprets psychoanalysis as a theory that revolutionary decentralizes human subjectivity to the unconscious.

According to Freud, the unconscious should be considered as the source of all mental processes [8]. This claim seems to have a paradoxical character, because the unconscious appears to the self-aware "I" as a kind of "foreign body" [9], an intruder in the mental life, traditionally identified with conscious processes. Psychoanalysis, however, postulates that what happens in this unknown sphere, somewhat external to the consciousness, should be considered the key to understanding all mental processes.

This - as Laplanche calls it - Copernican revolution was not, however, in his opinion brought to its logical end within the psychoanalysis itself. Freud's tendency to decentralize, recognized in his work, is accompanied by the opposite tendency of reintegration, a secondary centralization of the sphere of the unconscious and mental life in general. The clash of these two opposing ways of thinking about the unconscious, according to Laplanche, is one of the main tensions in the psychoanalytic theory that can be seen in the history of changes taking place within it [7]. As a turning point in the development of Freud's theory, the French psychoanalyst recognizes the moment of departure from understanding the etiology of neuroses in the so-called seduction theory to emphasize the pathogenic role of unconscious fantasies [10].

The theory of seduction as the etiology of neuroses was born in the initial period of the scientific career of the creator of psychoanalysis. Freud, being heavily influenced by the traumatic model of Charcot's hysteria, and basing on clinical material derived from psychotherapy of hysterical patients conducted in 1895-1897, considered the experience of sexual trauma as the real cause of neurotic disorders [11]. In his opinion, the hysterical symptoms were to constitute a permanent effect of repelling out of consciousness certain sensations that could not be mentally worked out due to the excessive intensity of the affect which in this case took the form of bodily inertia. An in-depth study

aimed at identifying the most basic traumatic sensations important from the etiological perspective according to Freud showed that this basic factor was always early childhood experience of sexual abuse [12].

This model assumed the etiological significance of an adult's interference in child sexuality, and its traumatic and pathogenic dimension was explained by the characteristics of this type of abuse. The actions of an adult who used his self-willed authority for his sexual gratification against a helpless child, which is completely unable to integrate feelings associated with abuse, must, according to Freud, leave numerous permanent traces in the psyche of such a used individual, which in time become a source of neurotic symptoms [12]. According to Laplanche [7], psychoanalytic decentralization of mental life in this phase of the development of Freud's theory assumed a close connection of the psychic otherness of the unconscious with the foreignness of the traumatic external interference for the child. The unconscious at this stage of the development of the psychoanalytic theory is thus understood as a reservoir of repressed, traumatic memories.

However, the seduction theory seemed rather difficult to maintain due to the high prevalence of neurotic disorders, which would mean an unlikely frequent occurrence of sexual abuse of children. Freud decides, therefore, in 1897 to reject his controversial etiological model. There were probably more reasons for this decision. One of them could be the autoanalysis conducted at that time by the author of "Interpretation of Dreams", during which he began to appreciate the role that unconscious fantasies play in the mental life. Perhaps also the discovery of the phenomenon of transference, in which Josef Breuer's contribution is unquestioned, was not without significance. Freud's close friend and co-worker in the early 1880s led the therapy of Bertha Pappenheim, who began to show strong symptoms of hysteria when taking care of her dying father. The senior colleague shared with Freud reports about the state of health of the young patient and the progress in treatment using the method of releasing emotions in speaking. During one of the conversations, he confessed to him something that probably influenced the shape of the psychoanalytic theory, especially the concept of transference. One evening, when Breuer was called to the patient, she complained of severe abdominal pain caused by an imaginary pregnancy, of which he was supposed to be the alleged perpetrator [11].

Identifying transference, which played such an important role in the further development of psychoanalysis, could be another motive for Freud to abandon the theory of seduction for the concept of innate drives. If during the therapy the patient actively reproduces a sexual scenario, his completely passive role in the original situation of seduction is questioned.

Laplanche admits that the Freudian theory of infantile sexuality is a definite advance in the theory of seduction. He notes, however, that reducing the significance of the external interference of an adult into the child's psychological life in favor of a model stressing the role of libido, results in

some new theoretical problems that Freud has never fully solved. Along with the rejection of the theory of seduction comes a secondary centralization of mental life, and while the claim of the determining role of the unconscious still remains crucial to psychoanalytic theory, it begins to be conceptualized in a solipsistic manner. When Freud has stopped accepting that the contents of the unconscious come from a traumatic encounter with the sexuality of another person, he was forced to search for their source within the individual and, as a result, he identifies the unconscious with the sphere of primary biological drives² [13].

The model coming out of such assumptions must face the difficulty of explaining the genesis and forms that the Oedipus complex and unconscious fantasies take, and which in this theoretical framework would have to be endogenous. Freud tries to solve this problem by referring to the nineteenth-century theory of repeating phases of phylogenetic development in ontogenesis, the fullest of which can be found in his "Totem and taboo" [14] and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" [15]. According to the creator of psychoanalysis, men in the process of their individual development recreate the history of the whole species. Hypothetically, in the period of human prehistory, the rivalry of offspring with the ruling father of the primitive horde was supposed to happen, which according to Freud is the equivalent of the Oedipus complex experienced by an individual.

According to Laplanche, however, these concepts become problematic due to their poor correspondence with contemporary knowledge in the field of biology, constituting a certain speculative pseudobiology rather than a full-fledged scientific conception. The recipe for this difficulty may be an attempt to develop a theory of the genesis of the unconscious' content in relation to the external interference of another human being. This would allow going beyond the limits of the seduction theory, while retaining some aspects of its explicative potential. To this end, Laplanche postulates the transition from the "special"³ theory of seduction created by Freud to his proprietary general theory of seduction, which is to constitute a non-biological matrix of psychoanalytic thinking, focused on the relationship of the child with its first caregivers [16].

The general theory of seduction and the fundamental anthropological situation

Laplanche notes that Freud has made a mistake by underestimating the universality of his discovery. The original seduction would, according to the French psychoanalyst, be not only a domain

²It seems that this way of reconstructing Freud's theory by Laplanche is, in a sense, a simplification, because with the development of his theory, the creator of psychoanalysis did not completely abandon the etiological significance of traumatic experiences in relation to the formation of neurotic disorders. In Freud's mature theory, they constitute one of the factors responsible for the creation of neurosis apart from the constitutive aspects of child sexuality and the refusal to fulfill wishes in reality. It is also worth adding here that, according to Freud, the mental apparatus, apart from traumatic and drive factors, is also influenced by internalized cultural contents [6].

³This kind of transformation of the psychoanalytic theory Laplanche understands by analogy to the transition from the theory of special to general relativity, which took place at the beginning of the 20th century in physics [16]. Hence the decision to translate Laplanche's *théorie de la séduction généralisée* as «general theory of seduction» instead of the literal translation into a «generalized theory of seduction».

of psychopathology but rather would determine the basic situation in which every human being finds themselves at the beginning of their life. Freud initially believed that the origin of neurosis is sexual abuse of a vulnerable child by a demoralized adult. Laplanche postulates to extend the definition of seduction so that it includes completely normal and even necessary activities that an adult person performs in relation to a little child that is completely dependent on their caring.

Seduction understood in such a way establishes a fundamental anthropological situation (la situation anthropologique fondamentale) - the situation of an asymmetrical relationship with the first caregiver, which is typical for every human being [10]. A child coming into the world is completely unprepared for an independent living - biology has equipped it with basic self-preservation instincts, but they can only ensure survival if the child's caregiver provides him / her with protection. In addition to participating in meeting his / her basic biological needs, the child's carer also acts as its first guide in the world. Both functions involve the transmission of a huge number of messages - verbal and non-verbal - to the child, which must be read and understood by it. As a rule, this is not a problem and the child learns to recognize the meaning of the message coming from its caregiver very quickly. However, because the participation of both sides of this relationship is not symmetrical (the infant is primarily a passive recipient and has no influence on what the adult communicates to him/her), it is inevitable that parts of the message will not be absorbed. Those parts are a kind of noise, an excess, an unreachable surplus contained in the message.

According to Laplanche, the area in which the unreasonable excess is heard is sexuality. It should also be borne in mind that in this context, it is itself a kind of surplus contained in the activities that make up the ordinary care of a child. According to the French psychoanalyst's concept, children are not biologically prepared to understand sexual content in messages from an adult. Self-preservation instincts allow them to establish a relationship with the caregiver and respond to his messages at the level of adaptation and emotional attachment, but they are not suitable for translating what comes from the level of sexuality [17]. An example often mentioned by Laplanche is breastfeeding [7]. Freud devoted a lot of attention to the oral satisfaction of a baby's sucking its mother's breast, but according to Laplanche, what he did not pay attention to is what role this part of the body plays in the sexual life of a mature woman. The breast is not only an organ used for feeding children but also a particularly erogenous place. When feeding from this place, there are signs of excitement that the child sees but does not understand.

Of course, the described activity is absolutely natural, and even necessary - a woman is not meant to get sexual satisfaction from breastfeeding. Here, the difference between the Freudian - special and Laplanche's - general theory of seduction is clearly visible. Where Freud saw a deliberate act of an adult, Laplanche sees an unconscious action. In addition, Laplanche's theory copes well with the rather obvious argument that not every child is sexually abused or even breastfed. It is not a

specific, selected situation, as described above. Also, all other basic treatments that need to be subjected to an infant, including bottle feeding, may contain an excess that is incomprehensible to the child, because they involve the intervention of an adult who is not completely understandable for the child. What the adult does not even notice and not understand at the same time, is the sexual stimulation associated with the repressed libidinal desires that the child is awakening in him as a participant of bodily interaction. In other words, the excess, which carries the message sent by the caregiver in the form of all kinds of activities, including verbal ones, is also enigmatic for the sender himself, because it comes from his unconscious.

This is a key moment in Laplanche's theory. The French psychoanalyst claims that the unconscious is not innate, nor is it conditioned more biologically but in a sense passed on by another person - the Other who, by interfering with the child's body and psyche, gives him an enigmatic message. This point clearly reveals a strong relationship between the concept of the French psychoanalyst and the reinterpretation of Freud's theory proposed by Jaques Lacan, of whom Laplanche was once a student and patient [4]. While creating his theory, the latter probably profusely drew inspiration from the seminary teaching of the former master, but nowhere is this visible as clearly as on the basis of the way of understanding the unconscious.

One of the foundations of Lacan's theory is the attempt to conceptualize the unconscious sphere using the tools offered by the structuralistic theory of the language. According to Lacan, the unconscious in itself is structured like speech and has the logic of its own action, not resembling a biological instinct. Lacan defines the unconscious as the "discourse of the Other" (an abstract speech system) that the child assimilates by learning to use speech in relation to his primary caregivers [18]. The theory of the enigmatic parental message constituting the unconscious seems to be very close to these Lacanian concepts.

As Laplanche points out, it is not that the unconscious of a child is simply a replicated unconscious of its mother or another caregiver [19]. This is, firstly, due to the enigmatic nature of the message and, secondly, to the next key issue for the theory of general seduction, which concerns the concept of translation.

In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, from December 6, 1896, Freud outlines the concept of the psyche consisting of accumulating memory traces from successive periods of life. Psychic material would be subjected to change and rewriting in different periods of life. Between such "epochs" of life, it would have to be translated, which - in the case of neurosis - would not have been fully successful. The conclusion of Freud is: "Failure of translation - this is what is known clinically as "repression" [20, p. 208].

Laplanche uses this definition of repression and makes it the foundation of his theory. What he thinks a child translates, however, is the message from the Other, which a person tries to understand

and assimilate from the earliest age of their life. Interference, which includes the enigma associated with repressed sexuality - a specific noise accompanying the message, arouses the question in the child: "what does she / he want from me?" To be able to answer it, the child tries to translate the message from the Other, using available representations, fantasies or "infantile sexual theories." However, there is always some untranslated rest, "à traduire", as Laplanche writes, which can be understood as: something still to be translated [21].

The repression, through its close connection with the process of translation, is on the side of the child, who is trying to translate and understand the message from the Other and takes an active part in creating his unconscious. The part of the message that can be translated does not become unconscious [19]. Thus, the process in question has two dimensions: firstly, the dimension of translation, thanks to which the child within its abilities manages to make an understandable, conceivable version of what affects it in the asymmetric relationship with the caregiver, and secondly, the dimension of displacement, in which everything that can not be translated remains as an incomprehensible rest, obtrusively demanding a translation. These two dimensions are reflected in the division of the psyche into two areas. The first of them, arising from what has been translated and characterized by progressive integration, forms the core of the "I" (ego). The second one, establishing the unconscious, includes an untranslated remnant, the source of which is the repressed sexuality that comes from the Other [13].

According to Laplanche, men are characterized by passivity towards the unconscious. The source of this passivity is the attitude a child has taken in the primary asymmetrical relationship with the adult and the sexual enigmatic excess in the message from him. This is the consequence of the connection between the primary relationship of the external Other, called by Laplanche the fundamental anthropological situation, and the inner Other, which is the unconscious. The French psychoanalyst, to further emphasize this relationship, refers to the terms used by Freud: "der Andere" and "das Andere". The first means the Other as another person, the second - the Other as another thing. So we have to do with the two meanings of the word "other" that are related to each other: the other person who the enigmatic message comes from and the other thing that is the remnant of this message [19].

Laplanche calls non-translated relics of a message from an adult Other the source objects, thus referring to the genesis of the drive. The psychoanalyst postulates to definitely separate the drive (Trieb) from the sphere of biology. In his opinion, "the human sex drive is not originally biological, even if it becomes so in the later genital phase" [16]. This is a reference to the Freudian concept of the stages of sexual development. What Laplanche pays special attention to, however, is the postulate of Freud from "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", which distracts human sexuality from biologically determined, instinctive patterns. This involves a terminological distinction in which the

author of the concept of general seduction again refers to the writings of Freud. He notes that the creator of psychoanalysis uses two notions: "Trieb" and "Instinkt", the latter referring to characteristic behavioral patterns of animals, biologically programmed to achieve specific goals enabling survival (including reproduction) [16]. The Polish translation into "drive" and "instinct" allows to preserve the meaning of the original terms, but it happens that these terms are incorrectly identified with each other. The drive, as it is presented in the first two parts of "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", has no predetermined object or sole purpose, it is plastic and can be subject to aberrations [22].

According to Laplanche, the drive is not innate but has its origin in source objects. To outline this, the French psychoanalyst presents his version of the Freudian concept of the primary repression. According to him, it consists of two phases: the first one, passive, consists in the implementation of enigmatic representations, which are not yet supplanted but are already in some way saved. Their specifics could be defined in such a way that they are "dormant", both internal and external, or put differently, according to the term taken from Freud, sexual-pre-sexual. The second phase of repression involves the updating or reactivation of these representations, thereby gaining the intrusive, threatening character, which forces a child to try to assimilate them into what is known and understandable. This task is to be applied to the already mentioned and broadly described by Freud infantile sexual theories, with the help of which the child tries to symbolize and theorize dangerous and traumatic content. However, since the child suffers a partial failure in these attempts, the threatening representations are repressed, becoming representations of things (*représentations de choses*), representations as psychic things or similar-type representations (*représentation-choses*). In this state they are deprived of a context in which they could have a meaning, they do not longer serve communication and are isolated in what Freud called "das Es" (id) [23].

Laplanche writes: "The drive is therefore neither a mythical entity, nor a biological force, nor a borderline concept. It is the impact on the individual and on the ego (*le moi*) of the constant internal stimulation exercised by the repressed thing-(re)presentations, which one can designate as object-sources of the drive." [23, p. 191].

The psychoanalytic method

Jean Laplanche's thought is based on a close relationship between psychoanalytic theory and practice. Describing and analyzing the scientific achievements of Freud, Laplanche pays special attention to the innovation of the psychoanalytic method, based on the situation of the patient's meeting with the analyst. This meeting is accompanied by certain rules, among which the rule of establishing a method of free associations as the basic principle of psychoanalytic treatment is coming to the fore [3]. The basic rule (*Grundregel*) as Freud called it, means the recommendation that the patient talks about everything that comes to his mind. This allows the appearance of free associations, partly free from the yoke of resistance against saying things that have not been deliberately selected.

The psychoanalyst, however, is obliged to remain neutral and listen with equal care to everything the patient is talking about.

Laplanche finds the key assumptions of the whole psychoanalysis in Freud's rules setting the situation of the meeting in the analyst's office, which prompts him to develop his own concept based on the observations made on this ground⁴ [13]. The key thesis of Laplanche concerning psychoanalytic treatment is: the analysis makes it possible to recreate the fundamental anthropological situation. So starting from Freudian conclusions, he develops his own concept of the psychoanalytic method, the basis of which is his general theory of seduction. In this sense, the French psychoanalyst proposes to reinterpret and revise the therapy technique described by Freud.

In his opinion, the analytic situation is characterized by a combination of transference and analysis understood as deconstruction, breaking the material into separate elements that are to be interpreted [24]. The key concept that determines the attitude of the analyst is the Freudian *Versagung* - refusal (in the literature there is mainly a translation of the term into the word "frustration", but in these circumstances, the term "refusal" seems more appropriate) [3]. Refusal concerns both the ordinary needs and demands of the patient, as well as the field of knowledge of the analyst [10]. To illustrate this, Laplanche recalls a well-known principle by Jacques Lacan, according to which the key to the situation of psychoanalysis is to convince the patient that the analyst is in the possession of some relevant knowledge. In reality, however, it is the analyst's task to not only deny to share his knowledge with the patient but also to deny this knowledge to himself [16].

The second type of refusal involves not engaging in everyday matters, refraining from giving practical advice or setting goals for the patient. This is to enable the isolation of the realm of prosaic needs and of adaptation to the challenges of everyday life from what Laplanche defines as the field of sexuality, libido [16]. Also other rules for analytical sessions are designed to establish a specific area of analysis, separate from the rest of the world. In addition to the fundamental principle of free associations and the already mentioned refusal, it can also include such conventions as the regularity of meetings, the prescribed duration, and the due fee. Also the position of the patient lying on the couch and the analyst seated behind him plays an important role, limiting the field of analysis exclusively to speaking [10]. All this, according to Laplanche, is to designate a space of analysis that is organized to facilitate the manifestation of the unconscious.

The French psychoanalyst rejects the division into the realm of fantasy and reality, according

⁴It is worth mentioning here that the psychoanalytic method developed by Laplanche concerns first of all the therapies of non-psychotic people, irrespective of the intensity of symptoms and their suffering. Laplanche, following Lacan, distinguishes three basic personality structures: neurosis, perversion and psychosis. The concept of the latter and the possibility of undergoing their psychoanalytic therapy from the perspective of Laplanche's theory would require a detailed, separate study, which goes far beyond the scope of this article, the aim of which it is to introduce the theory of the French psychoanalyst.

to which psychoanalysis would rule in a conflict between them, prompting the patient to recognize the former's falsehood and adaptation to the other. His role is to enable the repetition of the situation of original seduction with the distinction of sexuality induced by the adult carer and what Freud calls *Selbsterhaltungstriebe*: the self-preservation instinct [10].

The author of the general theory of seduction writes: "I do think it is essential to keep in mind the asymmetry of the adult–child relation when it comes to thinking about the therapeutic situation. Therapeutic asymmetry, which was introduced by Freud's creation of the analytic situation, is the transposition and guarantor of the asymmetry of the adult–child relationship. Freud's genius was to invent the therapeutic situation and analytic neutrality. He developed this profoundly asymmetrical situation at the same time as he developed the theory of seduction. He then abandoned the theory that went hand in hand with the therapeutic situation. It is a very common consequence of the analytic set that the therapist may become the source of enigma. The enigma itself is seduction, and is at the same time the mainspring of understanding—the very mainspring of progress, one could say." [17, p. 712].

Key to the French psychoanalyst's theory assumption, already referred in the context of the fundamental anthropological situation, is that the message is not only enigmatic due to the fact that the recipient is unable to fully understand it - incomplete understanding lies also on the side of the sender. It is this part of the message coming from the Other, incomprehensible and alien to him, which induces the unconscious - internal difference - in the addressee. In the fundamental anthropological situation, this is every child receiving messages from an adult.

The French psychoanalyst sees a necessary condition of psychoanalysis and even a permanent human disposition resulting from the fundamental anthropological situation and confrontation with enigma in transference. He distinguishes two types of transference: full / filled and empty / hollow (*transfert en plein*, *transfert en creux*) [21]. Both are just as necessary and none of them is more or less desirable than the other. The first relates to what Freud himself understood, especially at an early stage of development of his theory. It is a form of repeating childhood types of behaviors, relationships, and ideas. The second one does not apply to ready-made forms or types of actions but to the relationship that originally occurred between the child and the adult caregiver. The relationship between the patient and the analyst, established through transference, reproduces the enigmatic character of that original relationship, leaving space for new interpretations [25].

The area of full transference is the place of the proper analysis: breaking the patient-created structures into smaller, separate elements, which are then subject to interpretation. This means that, in line with the method of free associations, the patient says everything that comes to his mind, either in connection with some previously raised topic or spontaneously. The material obtained in this way is subject to reduction to individual components, in which the interpretations of the analyst are helpful. According to Laplanche, the word "interpretation" does not fully reflect the sense used by

Freud "deuten", "Deutung": "deuten auf" means pointing with your finger or sight [24]. Therefore, the analyst is not going to give the patient any ready-made explanations or substitute for some meanings with others but opens the possibility for him to independently create new constructions based on the components obtained from breaking up the old ones. Like Freud [26], Laplanche believes that the desire to synthesize, to bind together, is a typical human characteristic that allows the patient to make a new translation in the area the analysis has opened for him.

The psychoanalytic session is to become the domain of the fundamental anthropological situation in which the unconscious has been induced in the mental life of every human being. Thanks to the repetition of the asymmetrical childhood relationship, the enigma, which was originally on the side of the parent / caregiver, in the situation of the analysis is assigned to the analyst by the adult patient. The speech, which the patient addresses to the analyst, contains the things that are incomprehensible to him. The analyst, though he is set up in a place that was originally looked after by a carer, does not give the patient any information. Thus, he acts as a kind of mirror in which the message coming from the patient is reflected together with the foreign, coming from the Other, who was originally the emissary of the enigmatic message. Thanks to this, the patient can reinterpret the incomprehensible and thus make new translations. Enigma, on the one hand, induces internal strangeness, on the other hand, it allows to reformulate fixed ideas or, in other words, to repeat a translation [2].

This way of understanding the analytical process allows Laplanche to talk about psychoanalysis as a kind of "anti-hermeneutics" [2]. In consequence, he opposes the reading of the Freudian method proposed by Paul Ricoeur [27] as a kind of hermeneutics, the art of interpretation. Laplanche's criticism of identifying psychoanalysis with the hermeneutic method assumes that the latter is always based on some form of pre-understanding and requires the use of a ready set of assumptions. They serve as a code enabling the formulation of synthesizing, meaningful interpretations by a psychoanalyst who, according to Laplanche, should rather allow the patient to confront the enigma of the original message. Thus, the criticism of Laplanche seems to go beyond a purely philosophical debate regarding the status of Freud's theory, also affecting a certain way of capturing psychoanalytic practice, which psychoanalysts often succumb to, including its creator himself. Psychoanalysis is often equated with interpreting the unconscious so that the contents contained in it can become available to consciousness. In other words, it would be to replace one psychic content with another, according to a certain interpretative key. In this understanding of psychoanalysis, the question of symbolism is important: certain representations are raised to the rank of universal symbols to indicate unconscious conflicts or complexes. The analyst recognizes them and interprets them, which he then presents to the patient. In an analogous way, Laplanche seems to interpret contemporary methods of analytical interventions based on the countertransference

experienced by a psychoanalyst, which in this case becomes the key allowing to give psychological content new meaning resulting from the psychoanalytic interpretation⁵ [16].

Meanwhile - according to Laplanche - the psychoanalytic method is based primarily on free association and deconstruction. These two elements, which can, in fact, be given a common denominator of "analysis", serve something completely different than offering the patient ready-made meanings. As a model example of the application of this psychoanalytic method in its proper form, Laplanche gives Freud's explanation of the dream of Irma's injection in "Die Traumdeutung" [28]. The creator of psychoanalysis carried out the deconstruction of his own dream, using free associations. At the end, however, he did not offer any synthesis in the area of the obtained material - this was supposed to happen spontaneously and without the participation of a psychoanalytic method.

Over time, Freud, followed by other psychoanalysts, began to pay more and more attention to the typical symbols appearing in dreams and universal meanings to which they would refer. According to Laplanche, it is not even necessary to go this way as far as Jung to get away from the proper understanding of the psychoanalytic method. If one code is set in place of another, a new meaning proposed instead of the old one - there will always be a re-synthesis of the material, which is to be subjected to analysis only and subsequently synthesized by the patient himself. According to this approach, every human being is a hermeneut who constantly interprets himself. The psychoanalyst, whose task it is to adopt the attitude of refusal of knowledge, has to prevent any theory (including the psychoanalytic theory) from being an obstacle to his own interpretations (translations) [2].

In consequence, from Laplanche's perspective, the question of the role of the theory within psychoanalysis seems inevitable. Laplanche is far from rejecting it - on the contrary, as has been shown earlier - his view of psychoanalytic treatment largely concerns theoretical solutions. According to the French thinker, the psychoanalytic theory, like other theories, was constructed as an attempt to explain the experience. In this case, it is about the experience of therapy. The theory that Freud started to develop was to allow the understanding of the reasons why patients behave in a particular way under specific influences. The so-called metapsychology, which is the fruit of these efforts, describes the mechanism of repression, genesis of the unconscious, its nature and manifestations. At this point, Laplanche also places his general theory of seduction. In this sense, the psychoanalytic theory allows to conceptualize the mechanics of the psychoanalytic process understood as the reconstruction of the enigma of the original anthropological situation but it is not a hermeneutic key to the interpretation of the specific meanings of the patient's narrative. At the same time, the same theory obliges the

⁵This does not mean, of course, that Laplanche rejects the existence of the phenomenon of countertransference but like Freud, he treats it rather as an obstacle in the way of psychoanalytic therapy.

psychoanalyst to adopt an attitude in which he refuses to share the knowledge with the patient, and refuses to let himself know. This refusal of knowledge is, according to Laplanche, a condition of transference and a mainspring of progress in psychoanalysis, which is measured in relation to the possibility of confronting the enigma of one's own unconscious and translating it in a new, bringing less suffering way [2, 16].

References

1. Fletcher J. Jean Laplanche: The Unconscious, the Id and the Other. *Brit. J. Psychother.* 2007; 33(1):105–124.
2. Laplanche J. Psychoanalysis as anti-hermeneutics. *Radical Philos.* 1996; 79:7–12.
3. Laplanche J., Pontalis, J.B. *Słownik psychoanalizy*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne; 1996.
4. Ray N. Forming new knots. Jean Laplanche, 1924–2012. *Radical Philos.* 2012; 53–56.
5. Laplanche J. Interpreting (with) Freud. *Psychoanal. Cult. Soc.* 2006; 11(2): 171–184.
6. Freud S. *Wykłady*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2010.
7. Laplanche J. The unfinished Copernican revolution. W: Laplanche J. *Essays on otherness*, London: Routledge; 1999, p. 53–85.
8. Freud S. „Ja” i „to”. W: Freud S. *Psychologia nieświadomości*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2009, p. 217–262.
9. Freud S, Breuer J. *Studia nad histerią*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2008.
10. Fletcher J. Seduction and the vicissitudes of translation: the work of Jean Laplanche. *Psychoanal. Q.* 2007; 76 (4): 1241–1291.
11. Gay P. *Freud: życie na miarę epoki*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo; 2013.
12. Freud S. W kwestii etiologii hysterii. W: Freud S. *Histeria i lęk*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2009; p. 43–71.
13. Scarfone D. A brief introduction to the work of Jean Laplanche. *Int. J. Psychoanal.* 2013; 94: 545–566.
14. Freud S. Totem i tabu. Kilka zgodności w życiu psychicznym dzikich i neurotyków. W: Freud S. *Pisma społeczne*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 1998, p. 241–376.
15. Freud S. Poza zasadą rozkoszy. W: Freud, S. *Psychologia nieświadomości*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2009; p. 161–215.
16. Laplanche J. *New foundations for psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; 1989.
17. Laplanche J, Danon G, Lauru D. Interview with Jean Laplanche. *Psychoanal. Rev.* 2015; 102: 709–718.
18. Lacan J. Instancja litery w nieświadomości albo rozum od czasów Freuda. *Psychoanaliza. Czasopismo NLS* 2014, 5: 9–46.
19. Laplanche J. The Kent Seminar. W: Laplanche J, Fletcher J, Stanton M. *Jean Laplanche: seduction, translation and the drives*, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts; 1992, p. 20–40.
20. Masson J.M, red. *The complete letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1887–1904*, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; 1985, p. 208.
21. Fletcher J. Introduction: psychoanalysis and the question of the other. W: Laplanche J. *essays on otherness*. London: Routledge; 1999, p. 1–52.
22. Freud S. Trzy rozprawy z teorii seksualnej. W: Freud S. *Życie seksualne*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2009, p. 27–131.
23. Laplanche J. The drive and its object-source: its fate in the transference. W: Laplanche J, Fletcher J, Stanton M. *Jean Laplanche: seduction, translation and the drives*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts; 1992, p. 179–196.
24. Laplanche J. Interpretation between determinism and hermeneutics: a restatement of the problem. W: Laplanche J. *Essays on otherness*. London: Routledge; 1999, p. 140–168.
25. Laplanche J. Transference: its provocation by the analyst. W: Laplanche J. *Essays on Otherness*, London: Routledge; 1999, p. 218–237.
26. Freud S. Konstrukcje w analizie. W: Freud S. *Technika terapii*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2007, p. 353–368.
27. Ricœur P. O interpretacji. *Esej o Freudzie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2008.
28. Freud S. *Objaśnianie marzeń sennych*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR; 2007.
29. E-mail address: antekg1@gmail.com