

PSYCHOANALYSIS IS A SCIENCE FICTION

THERESA GIRON

HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN THE RECENT INTEREST CRITICAL THEORY HAS TAKEN IN THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF SCIENCE? WHAT DOES SCIENCE OFFER THEORY THAT THEORY CANNOT FIND IN ITSELF? IN THE PAST 30 YEARS, MOST AREAS OF THEORY HAVE LABORED LONG AND HARD TO QUESTION ANY GIVEN ASSUMPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE, TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD ONLY VIA CATEGORIES THAT CAN BE PROVEN TO BE UNSTABLE, A LANGUAGE THAT WE DO NOT CONTROL, AND INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES THAT ARE SO RADICALLY RELATIVE AS TO BE SOLIP-SISTIC. IN A CLIMATE SO DEVOTED TO UNCERTAINTY AND RELATIVISM, IT'S NO SURPRISE TO FIND A CORRESPONDING SUSPICION, IF NOT UTTER REJECTION, OF SCIENCE. IT IS PROBABLY EVEN LESS OF A SURPRISE THEN TO FIND THE FLIP-SIDE OF THIS REJECTION IN THE EVENTUAL UPSURGE OF INTEREST IN SCIENCE. THIS "TURNING TOWARD" SCIENCE CAN BE EXPLAINED IN TWO WAYS: FIRST, AND MOST SIMPLY, IS THE FACT THAT VERY FEW CAN LIVE FOR LONG IN A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY OR RELATIVISM THAT CONSTANTLY THROWS ANY KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE WORLD INTO QUESTION. SECOND, IF THEORY WILL HAVE IT THAT EITHER ANY ASSUMPTION OF KNOWLEDGE IS IN ERROR (AT WORST) OR THAT THE ASSUMPTION OF KNOWLEDGE CAN BE MADE ONLY FOR THAT INDIVIDUAL (AT BEST), THEN WE ARE BOUND TO FIND A RETURN OF THE QUESTION OF CERTAINTY. AFTER EVERY-THING HAS BEEN DOUBTED, QUESTIONED AND PUT INTO PERSPECTIVE, THE PROBLEM OF CERTAINTY RETURNS: EVEN NOW, IS THERE ANYTHING LEFT OF WHICH WE CAN BE CERTAIN?

WITH THIS QUESTION OF CERTAINTY, AND HAVING TO LOOK BEYOND ITSELF FOR AN ANSWER, THEORY TURNS TOWARD SCIENCE. AND SCIENCE IS ABLE TO OFFER THE POSSIBILITY OF CERTAINTY, AS IT TRADITIONALLY DOES, IN THE DOMAIN OF KNOWLEDGE. FOR SCIENCE IS BASED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF FORMALIZATION; THAT IS TO SAY, FOR SCIENCE, THINGS IN THE REAL ARE VALU-ABLE TO THE PRECISE DEGREE THAT THEY CAN BE SYMBOLIZED. THIS MEANS THAT FROM THE REALM OF REAL OBJECTS, SCIENCE CREATES A UNIVERSE OF KNOWABLE (AND FORMALIZABLE) THINGS. IN THIS WAY, SCIENCE GIVES CERTAINTY BY EXCLUDING ANYTHING THAT CANNOT BE RENDERED KNOWABLE THROUGH FORMALIZATION AND THUS, SCIENCE SECURES CERTAINTY IN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE. THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES: IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OF BEING CERTAIN THAT IS

NOT THE WAY OF SCIENCE? THAT IS, IS THERE ANOTHER POSSIBLE DIRECTION FOR THEORY'S SEARCH FOR CERTAINTY?

FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS, CERTAINTY CAN BE LOCATED NOT IN THE DOMAIN OF KNOWLEDGE (AS PER SCIENCE), BUT RATHER, IN THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH; IT THEN BASES ITS CERTAINTY IN TRUTH ON THE VERY GROUND OF THE EXCLUSION ORIGINALLY MADE BY SCIENCE. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SCIENCE EXCLUDES THE IDEA OF TRUTH, BUT RATHER THAT IT EXCLUDES THE PLACE OF TRUTH INsofar AS THIS PLACE OFFERS THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCESS TO A MODE OF CERTAINTY THAT IS NOT THAT MODE ALREADY CHARACTERIZED AS PROPER TO SCIENCE: THAT MODE THAT IS LINKED TO KNOWLEDGE. FOR, IF SCIENCE OFFERS A MODE OF TRUTH, AND UNDOUBTEDLY IT DOES, THIS TRUTH DOES NOT OFFER ANOTHER MODE OF CERTAINTY; SCIENCE'S TRUTH REMAINS TIED TO CERTAINTY IN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE. FOR SCIENCE, TRUTH IS THE SUPERLATIVE OF KNOWLEDGE: TRUTH IS THE BUILD-UP OF KNOWLEDGE IN ONE PLACE, THE ACCUMULATION OF CERTAINTY AROUND A HYPOTHESIS. THUS, NEWTON'S LAW, THE "BEST CORROBORATED LAW IN HISTORY" RISES TO THE LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC TRUTH NOT BECAUSE IT SUGGESTS A CERTAINTY THAT IS NOT THAT OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT

BECAUSE THE LAW BECOMES THE VERY SITE OF THE COAGULATION OF KNOWLEDGE (AS EVIDENCE, CORROBORATED PROOF). THUS, TRUTH FOR SCIENCE IS ALWAYS ONLY ADDITIVE, OR CUMULATIVE; WHEREAS, FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS, TRUTH IS FIRST AND FOREMOST SUBTRACTIVE. IN PSYCHOANALYSIS, TRUTH CAN NOT BE BASED ON THE ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE BECAUSE TRUTH IS THAT WHICH MAKES A HOLE IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IT IS ON THE BASIS OF THIS HOLE IN KNOWLEDGE (AND THE MARKING OF IT AS ABSENCE), AS WE WILL SEE, THAT A DIFFERENT MODE OF CERTAINTY MAY EXIST.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCIENTIFIC UNIVERSE ON THE BASIS OF AN EXCLUSION CREATES NOT ONE DOMAIN BUT TWO: THE DOMAIN OF KNOWABLE (INCLUDED) THINGS AND THAT OF UNKNOWABLE (EXCLUDED) THINGS. IN THE SAME MOMENT AND WITH THE SAME GESTURE, SCIENCE CREATES TWO DOMAINS, TAKING ONLY ONE AS ITS OBJECT OF STUDY (AND CERTAINTY) AND LEAVING THE OTHER OPEN, TO BE FINALLY TAKEN UP BY PSYCHOANALYSIS. FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS HOWEVER, THE DOMAIN CREATED ONLY IN ORDER TO BE EXCLUDED BY SCIENCE, IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE VERY OBJECT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND THOUGH THIS DOMAIN MAY BE THE PLACE IN WHICH

KNOWLEDGE FAILS, IT IS NEVERTHELESS THE BASIS ON WHICH PSYCHOANALYSIS OFFERS A DIFFERENT NOTION OF CERTAINTY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT, IN TAKING UP THIS DIFFERENT NOTION OF CERTAINTY — A CERTAINTY IN THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH RATHER THAN KNOWLEDGE — PSYCHOANALYSIS IS NOT BREAKING WITH SCIENCE, BUT TAKING UP THE VERY TASK OF SCIENCE IN THE ONE PLACE FROM WHICH SCIENCE, IN ITS MOMENT OF CONSTITUTION, EXCLUDED ITSELF.

PSYCHOANALYSIS THEN HAS AS ITS OBJECT THE ONE OBJECT, CREATED BY SCIENCE, WHICH SCIENCE NEVERTHELESS COULD NOT TAKE AS ITS OWN OBJECT OF ENQUIRY INsofar AS IT WAS CREATED AS EXCLUDED BECAUSE THE OBJECT ITSELF MARKS THE LIMIT OF SCIENCE, THE PLACE IN WHICH THERE IS NOTHING TO KNOW. FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS, THIS OBJECT BECOMES NOT MERELY THE FAILURE OF KNOWLEDGE (WHICH WOULD LEAVE US RIGHT BACK AT THE RADICAL UNCERTAINTY WHICH THEORY WAS LOOKING TO ESCAPE) BUT ALSO THE PLACE OF A NEW CERTAINTY, THE CERTAINTY OF TRUTH. WHAT IS THIS OBJECT THAT PSYCHOANALYSIS TAKES UP IN THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH? PERHAPS IT IS OBVIOUS BY NOW THAT THE OBJECT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IS THAT CERTAIN ASPECT

OF THE SUBJECT THAT WE CAN CALL THE SUBJECT OF SCIENCE. IF SCIENCE SHORES UP CERTAINTY IN THE DOMAIN OF KNOWLEDGE BY SHUTTING DOWN THE PLACE OF TRUTH, PSYCHOANALYSIS ALLOWS ANOTHER CERTAINTY PRECISELY BY OPENING THE PLACE OF TRUTH UP TO SCIENCE.

PSYCHOANALYSIS THEN NAMES THE SCIENCE OF TRUTH. IT ALLOWS THE PLACE OF TRUTH TO BE MARKED, THAT IS, TO BE FORMALIZED OR SYMBOLIZED; THIS PLACE WILL ALWAYS BE MARKED AS AN IMPOSSIBILITY BUT WHAT PSYCHOANALYSIS CONTEMPLATES IS NEVERTHELESS THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS MARKING. IF, FOR SCIENCE, THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH IS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE (THE PLACE WHERE THERE IS NOTHING TO KNOW), THEN FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS, THE DOMAIN OF TRUTH IS FORMALIZED AS IMPOSSIBLE (THE MARK OF THE ABSENCE OF KNOWLEDGE). (PERHAPS IT CAN BE BEST THOUGHT OF AS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MERE ABSENCE OR EXCLUSION (SCIENCE) AND THE MARK OR TRACE OF THAT ABSENCE (PSYCHOANALYSIS).) THUS, WHAT IS SYMBOLIZED IN PSYCHOANALYSIS IS THE PLACE OF TRUTH INsofar AS THAT PLACE CAN ONLY BE MARKED AS AN EMPTY PLACE. ONCE THE PLACE OF TRUTH THEN IS HELD OPEN — THAT IS TO SAY, MARKED IN THE SYMBOLIC — IT CAN BE VARIOUSLY OCCUPIED FROM

MOMENT TO MOMENT BY DIFFERENT OBJECTS. PSYCHOANALYSIS DOES NOT FIX TRUTH ITSELF; IT FIXES THE PLACE OF TRUTH.

HOW DOES THE PLACE OF TRUTH COME TO BE, HOWEVER BRIEFLY, OCCUPIED BY AN OBJECT IN PSYCHOANALYSIS? IN ANSWERING THIS QUESTION, WE CANNOT POSSIBLY RELY ON PSYCHOANALYSIS' DIFFERENTIATION FROM SCIENCE; FOR, THE FIELD OF TRUTH AS CERTAINTY IS SIMPLY NOT A STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATION FOR SCIENCE. WE MIGHT, HOWEVER, TURN TOWARD SCIENCE'S BASTARD CHILD, SCIENCE FICTION. SCIENCE FICTION, LIKE PSYCHOANALYSIS, HOLDS OPEN THE PLACE OF TRUTH AS A HOLE IN KNOWLEDGE AND THUS DOES NOT SUBSUME CERTAINTY UNDER THE CATEGORY OF KNOWLEDGE. LIKEWISE BOTH SCIENCE FICTION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS ARE SUBJECT TO A CERTAIN FANTASY OF SCIENTIFICITY AND YET BOTH AT THE SAME TIME GO BEYOND SCIENCE. THE EARLIER QUESTION THEN BECOMES: HOW DOES SOME OBJECT COME TO OCCUPY THE PLACE OF TRUTH IN SCIENCE FICTION? THE ANSWER IS PRESENT RIGHT IN THE NAME ITSELF: THE PLACE OF TRUTH IS TAKEN UP ON THE BASIS OF A FICTION. SCIENCE FICTION, BY DEFINITION, CAN NEVER ASSUME THE TRUTH OF ITS WORLD AS MERELY GIVEN; IN EVERY

INSTANCE THAT TRUTH MUST BE CREATED, AND CREATED ANEW. IN SCIENCE FICTION, UNLIKE MOST OTHER LITERARY GENRES, THE BEGINNING OF ANY STORY REQUIRES THAT THE WRITER INVENT THE TRUTH OF THAT STORY'S REALITY, THAT IS, THAT THE WRITER DETERMINE THE FICTIONAL CONSTRUCT THAT WILL SERVE AS THE STRUCTURING PRINCIPLE FOR THE WORLD. IN ADDITION, THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITER CREATES THIS OBJECT (THIS CONSTRUCT) OVER AND OVER AGAIN EACH TIME HE OR SHE BEGINS A NEW STORY.

DOES NOT PSYCHOANALYSIS WORK IN PRECISELY THE SAME WAY? IN OTHER WORDS, IS NOT THE PLACE OF TRUTH TAKEN UP IN PSYCHOANALYSIS PRECISELY ON THE BASIS OF A FICTION? IF PSYCHOANALYSIS OFFERS A CERTAINTY IN TRUTH, IT IS INsofar AS THE EMPTY PLACE OF TRUTH, MARKED IN THE SYMBOLIC, CAN ACCOMMODATE AN OBJECT ON THE BASIS OF A FICTION, THAT IS, ON THE BASIS OF FANTASY. THE ESSAYS IN THIS ISSUE TAKE UP THIS VERY PROBLEM OF HOW THIS EMPTY PLACE OF PSYCHOANALYTIC TRUTH, THE TRUTH THAT MAKES A HOLE IN KNOWLEDGE, CAN BE MARKED IN ANY SCIENTIFIC SYSTEM.