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Truth and Interpretation: From the Enlightenment to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion

Abstract: This text discusses the relationship between truth and interpretation in modern hermeneutical projects. The first aim is to analyze the hermeneutic and aesthetic theories of the Enlightenment by comparing the concepts of hermeneutic truth and aesthetic truth. Both support a type of rationality in interpretation that has its sources in Leibnizian perspectivism and in the semiotic consequences of the ideas of resemblance and pre-established harmony. The second purpose of the text is to outline the history of discoveries concerning the unconscious, from the Enlightenment, through Romanticism, to the projects of the hermeneutics of suspicion in the 19th century (Nietzsche, Freud, Marx). Unlike Foucault, I argue that the idea of resemblance is not abandoned after the 16th century, but is found at the heart of the hermeneutic and aesthetic projects of the Enlightenment of the following centuries, especially in the way the question of the author's intention is discussed. The third purpose of the text is to nuance Foucault's thesis that the hermeneutics of suspicion rejects the idea of an absolute beginning of interpretation. The conjunction of interpretation and power makes use of an absolute beginning because of the utopian claim to scientificity that the interpretative techniques of Freud, Marx and partially Nietzsche have. Based on Sloterdijk's observations, I show that this claim to scientificity (which was intended to be anti-mythological and demystifying) remains, in fact, unfulfilled, with new mythologies emerging in its place. Starting from here, the final aim of the text is to question Foucault's thesis according to which, with Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, hermeneutics separates from semiotics, the infinite circularity of interpretations representing the weapon to fight against the prejudice of the absolute existence of signs. Although correct in principle, Foucault's thesis must be amended, since the new type of interpretation fights against semiotics by actually reintroducing the fixed world of signs into interpretation, as the basis or infrastructure, i.e. a layer of invented meaning used as the basis of reductionist explanations. Thus, the claimed scientificity of interpretation turns not only into mythology (Sloterdijk's thesis), but even into ideology.

Keywords: hermeneutical truth, aesthetical truth, suspicion, unconscious, resemblance, interpretation.

If modern thought begins with Cartesian doubt, it ends (fulfills and surpasses itself) with generalized suspicion, with its Nietzschean, Freudian and Marxist forms. The first is the method of discovering the truth of the

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self and, thanks to it, of organizing the world as measurable and calculable, in such a way that the self-assured subject (in fact, any rational subject) may formulate absolutely certain statements about things. The other, on the contrary, tries to penetrate beyond the universal essence of the ego, which is exposed as a mere illusion, in order to bring to the surface a structure that is considered to be deeper (instinctual, drive-related, economic). The three hypostases designate the main discoveries that define the hermeneutics of suspicion: the discovery of corporeality and instincts (Nietzsche), the unconscious (Freud), and economic domination (Marx).

After Foucault, along with Nietzsche, Freud and Marx, new suspicions arise concerning signs, in addition to those already present in Western culture. Language has always been suspected in two respects: 1. that it does not mean exactly what it says, but conceals a deep meaning; but also, that 2. it goes beyond the strictly verbal form of expression (Foucault 1998, 269-270). The emergence of the hermeneutics of suspicion in the 19th century is an event with contemporary consequences, imposing a type of interpretation that still defines us today. According to Foucault, it replaces the old interpretation techniques, which were widespread in the 16th century, and which had the idea of resemblance at their center. The understanding of reality through the many notions which were emblematic of the old type of interpretation (*convenientia, sympatheia, emulatio, signatura, analogia*, etc.) was based on the conviction that the world consisted of a vast network of resemblances. According to Foucault, Bacon and Descartes' criticism of the idea of resemblance contributed decisively to the disappearance of this type of interpretation. There is therefore a discontinuity between it and the new type of interpretation, which emerged in the 19th century. However, history can also be written differently than Foucault did. Because the Cartesian program, critical of the idea of resemblance, ends up coexisting with the Leibnizian program, which revitalizes the idea of resemblance, which it rethinks as rational harmony. Their intertwining is emblematic of the definitions given of truth in the hermeneutical and aesthetic projects of the 16th-18th centuries. Moreover, the first signs of a suspicious and detective-like attitude were already appearing at the time, due to the discovery of the unconscious within the Enlightenment, an attitude that was nevertheless nuanced by the Romantic reformulations of the unconscious. Let us therefore return to the explicit hermeneutical projects of this period. If we re-include them in the archive investigated by Foucault, we will have a more accurate picture of the transformations concerning the techniques of interpretation of the 16th-19th centuries.

Hermeneutic truth and aesthetic truth

In hermeneutics, the concept of truth appears when it is assigned the purpose of correctly interpreting obscurities. In his book *Idea boni interpretis* (1630), Joseph Conrad Dannhauer shows that, if we interpret unclear passages correctly, we will be able to distinguish between their true and false meaning. Dannhauer points out that, in order to identify the true meaning, we need to discover the author's intention. If there is only one correct meaning, the one intended by the author, then only one interpretation is correct. The ideal of univocity has, of course, proved to be unattainable, having already been challenged by other hermeneutic projects of the time. In his work *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften* (1742), Johann Martin Chladenius argues for a different theory, that of the "point of view", according to which understanding is perspectivist in nature. Depending on their circumstances, but also on their subjectivity, the participants in an event will understand it in completely different ways (Chladenius 1976, 71). The idea of hermeneutic truth is not abandoned in this approach, it acquires an obvious Leibnizian touch. Moreover, this program of hermeneutics also adopts the Cartesian ideal of rationality, particularly through Chladenius' idea of limiting the range of texts that are the object of interpretation to rational texts only.

The thesis of rationality is even further extended by Georg Friedrich Meier, referring not only to the texts to be interpreted, but also to the activity of interpretation itself. Its principles, Meier points out, must be purely rational, and decisive among these is the principle of hermeneutic equity, according to which we must interpret a text as if the author were right. This assumption about truth finds its justification also in the proximity of Leibniz's philosophy. The presupposition of Meier's hermeneutics can be seen as a form of semiotic Leibnizianism, according to which everything can be conceived as a world of signs (not just linguistic ones) whose significations must be understood through an art of interpretation with precise rules. According to Meier's definition, "the sign (*signum, character*) is a means whereby the reality of something else can be known" (Meier 1996, 7). For this reason, hermeneutics is identified with the knowledge of all kinds of reality. In agreement with Leibniz, Meier claims that signs can be natural, having God as their author, or artificial, created by man. The legibility of the world therefore depends on the thesis that all signs actually have God as their author, directly or indirectly. Truth, defined as the author's intention, is achieved when the interpreter thinks exactly as the author thought (Jung 2001, 50). There is therefore a perfect analogy between the order of natural signs and that of artificial signs, according to this philosophical conviction. In spite of Cartesian criticism, the idea of resemblance not only survives, but once again becomes defining for the

entire program of this new technique of interpretation, which combines hermeneutics and semiotics. However, the idea of analogy is completed by the idea that the divine author of signs is the guarantor of all signs and also of their truths. This idea, which is common in substance to Cartesianism and Leibnizianism, increases the philosophical tension between the thesis of analogy, perspectivism, and the principle of sufficient reason.

This tension is found in Baumgarten's treatise *Aesthetica* (1750), which devotes an entire chapter to the concept of aesthetic truth (Baumgarten 1983, §§ 423-444). Unlike metaphysical truth, which is natural and objective, aesthetic truth is subjective, Baumgarten points out. More precisely, it is the truth of the ego's representation of metaphysical truth (Baumgarten 1983, 52-55). It is the truth that is sensibly known, through the affection of the ego. Baumgarten attributes several hypostases to it. As the truth of representation, it consists in the correspondence or conformity of the representation to the object, and is therefore logical truth. Since it is subjective, it can also be called spiritual truth. But in the strict sense, aesthetic truth, Baumgarten believes (ibid.), refers to "the way in which metaphysical truth shows itself to the analogue of reason and the lower faculties of cognition" (the latter are: the lower faculty for insight into the concordances among things, the lower faculty for cognizing the differences among things, sensible memory, the poetic faculty, the faculty of evaluation). The criteria of truth that Baumgarten formulates also reflect Leibnizianism: non-contradiction, submission to the principle of sufficient reason, unity (which can be absolute or hypothetical). For the first two principles, the reference is to Leibniz's *Theodicy*. As to the first principle, Baumgarten shows that aesthetic truth claims the activation of three kinds of possibilities (1983, 58-63). The idea derives from the equivalence between possibility and the absence of contradiction, one of the hallmarks of Leibniz's thought. These possibilities include the moral imperative of approaching the truth of life (Baumgarten referring here to Cicero), as well as the principle of the adequation of signs to our state of mind, which determines truth as sincerity. The third criterion, that of unity, lies, according to Baumgarten, in the inseparability of the determinations of the object, insofar as it is sensibly perceived. Thus appears the aesthetic unity of the object, from which simplicity and coherence derive.

The aesthetician, Baumgarten notes, prefers determinate, less general and less abstract truths to general truths. The more determinate the object, he points out, the more of its differences are perceived. In other words, we perceive more metaphysical truth in particular (determinate) truths than in general truths (Baumgarten 1983, 68-74). This idea leads us to the conclusion that aesthetic truth, understood as the perception of truth, and therefore as phenomenological truth, provides us with metaphysical (natural) truth to the greatest extent.

The truth therefore lies in the relations between the determinations of the object. The theme is a Leibnizian one, as are the already mentioned criteria of truth. But the phenomenal relations, of sensibly perceived determinations, are much paler compared to the relations of intelligible, natural determinations, as Baumgarten calls them (whose harmony is due to God himself, according to Leibniz). In the case of sensibility as well, only the rational connections of the intelligible order can lead to truth, as much as it can be realized here (namely, more confusedly). The idea is worth emphasizing: the human point of view therefore remains imperfect because of finitude; only the divine perspective can be perfectly rational, i.e. unitary and complete. Aesthetics restores unity and completeness, but as much as it is in the power of man, namely as an order of the multiplicity of subjective perspectives. It is a unity in terms of acceptance and justification of perspectivist multiplicity (called aesthetic truth). The only unitary and integral perspective remains that of God, and that is what theology will deal with further on.

Baumgarten's attempt to give the sensible an autonomy from the knowledge of the intelligible is remarkable, even if it is by analogy and recognized as inferior to the other (Ferry 1993, 70, 76). However, it is an autonomy gained having reason and its order as a standard, and understood as a relationship between determinations. At the same time, aesthetic truth is subjective and thus perspectivist. It is therefore a truth of the individual. In fact, the truth that is found in the perception of beauty is different from the universal truth, while at the same time analogous to it. In this Cartesian-Leibnizian context, aesthetics meets hermeneutics, and the aesthetic and hermeneutic truth seem to follow the same path. The tendency towards the universal, even in the form of analogy, comes into tension with the individual character of aesthetic objects and also of their subjective perceptions.

The Enlightenment belief in the rationality of texts and interpretive activity favored the belief that the author's intention can be correctly identified because it is a conscious, controlled intention. The author knows with certainty what he wants to say, he has control over the meaning, but also over the expressions. Moreover, we should assume, for the idea to make sense all the way through, that there was an active belief in the continuity between the moments (stages) of creation, that it is a continuous process without great leaps or reversals. The initial point (the origin) is continued through its effects, without the risk of something unforeseen occurring, and the author manages not to deviate from the initionally intended meaning. But with the hermeneutics of suspicion comes another understanding of creation. Nietzsche talks about the history of origins, against the philosophical prejudice that everything can be explained by a single, miraculous origin, which is what philosophers have always done by

invoking the idea of principle. Therefore, in the act of creation there are modifications, shifts of perspective, sometimes reversals, intuitions and enlightenments along the way, which are totally different from an alleged original enlightenment. In other words, as Foucault points out following in Nietzsche's footsteps, creation is already an interpretation, i.e., a mastery of the pre-existing field of forces. Being himself constituted in the immanence of this field of previous discourses and signifying practices, the author is no longer the absolute source of meaning. The "death of the author", announced by Barthes, will be compared to the "death of God". The author's originality and authenticity are therefore no longer sources of discourses and texts. The problem of the author's intention, with all the questions that circumscribe it, becomes outdated: "And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking?" (Foucault 1984, 119).

Distances of the *ego*

The history of the shift from the episteme of resemblance to the hermeneutics of suspicion can also be written in a different way than Foucault did. The interpretive techniques rooted in the presupposition of similarity not only do not disappear after the 16th century, as Foucault claims, but they find their most precise formulation in the treatises on hermeneutics and aesthetics of the following centuries, deeply influenced by Leibnizian monadology and the theory of pre-established harmony.

In addition, the Enlightenment of these centuries is not univocal. Although Leibnizianism was predominant in hermeneutics and aesthetics, favoring a technique of interpretation that took reason as its indisputable model, the first discoveries regarding the unconscious were already being made. According to Sloterdijk, the discovery of the unconscious dates back to the 18th century, in the context of the Enlightenment: the theory of animal magnetism (Mesmer), the phenomenon of magnetic sleep (Marquis de Puységur), which in the following century would be called hypnosis (Sloterdijk 1987, 47-50). Foucault's reading notes prove that he was aware of these findings, even if he considers that the hermeneutics of suspicion only appeared with Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx. We could argue that these discoveries were reactions to the illusion of the full transparency of consciousness, maintained by the Enlightenment. Such experiences highlighted the fact that behind consciousness and reason there was something else, well hidden, that needed to be discovered, exposed and analyzed. When Freud came to the conclusion that the hidden element could be discovered through the interpretation of dreams, he encountered and even overturned the old Cartesian tradition, which privileged the ability of the rational ego to prove self-certainty, despite its nocturnal dreams and

its intermediate daytime states between dream and wakefulness, and even despite the hypothesis of the evil genius and the possibility of madness. The Enlightenment, as Sloterdijk points out, initially reacted to such a discovery, considered to be reactionary because it was seen as an attack on reason as well as on the scientific knowledge of the world and of our own self. The initial reaction was in fact a misunderstanding on the part of the Enlightenment about their own presuppositions, Sloterdijk points out. For the expansion of knowledge into the new truth of the unconscious does not at all contradict the illusion of full transparency, but merely postpones it, extending it into new territory and now promising greater transparency, even full knowledge. Those who believe that highlighting the unconscious is an attack on reason are under the impression that if it had not been discovered, it would not have existed. Obviously, the fanatical defenders of reason, as Nietzsche calls them, believe the same about corporeality, affect, history, etc. The hidden elements, the "negativity", with its "shadows", in Sloterdijk's words, expand more and more as the self-reflexive inquiry becomes more efficient. The late effects of this scenario are deeply unsettling, for it becomes "a chronic analysis of oneself and others" (Sloterdijk 1987, 51). Therefore, a "detective-like relation to reality" thus arises, which requires a necessary second look at reality, suspecting that the first impression can only be misleading (Sloterdijk 1987, 53). It suspects the ego's claim to know itself directly by virtue of a hypothetical closeness to itself, discovering its inner distance from itself (Sloterdijk 1987, 50).

There seems to be a continuity between the unconscious that had barely been discovered by the Enlightenment and its reformulations by the hermeneutics of suspicion. In both cases, the negative side of the unconscious, which is responsible for the shadows of the human being, is overvalued. However, the optimistic hypostasis regarding the unconscious, present in Romanticism, is interposed between the two moments. The hermeneutic and the aesthetic program of Romanticism make full use of the positive valence of the unconscious, seen as the place in man where the divine is present, as man's chance to return to the divine whole from which he was torn. In Romanticism, hermeneutics and aesthetics are based on the idea that, in order to understand the part, we must understand the whole (cf. Schleiermacher, for instance). But this whole is no longer under the perfect control of the author, and the interpreter can understand even what remains unconscious to the author (and thus he understands him better than the author understood himself). Although the Romantic invocation of this claim was intended to reintroduce the author and the reader into a benevolent world of signs and interpretations, the discovery of the unconscious is again used from the 19th century onwards to support the malevolent nature of signs, which led to the proliferation of the interpretative technique related to the hermeneutics of suspicion.

Obviously, suspicion manifests itself in the attribution of guilt. This may belong to the subject under investigation himself, who is unaware that he is enslaved, inadvertently displaying an erroneous image of the self, or who knowingly falsifies his self, but it may also derive from a somatic, drive, economic, etc. infrastructure, through which the reality of the self is deliberately distorted, with the interested support of a group, a class, an ideology. However, guilt is a secondary normativity that society, the group, tradition or even the state induces in the subject, causing him from the shadows to relate to himself as a being marked by an original sin, by a lack or an ontological precariousness, by a metaphysical malfunction or, perhaps, by a simple error in the flow of life. Guilt is learned. It arises where the relationship to the world is inevitably axiologically colored. Nietzsche showed that domination is greatest where there is good and evil, these formidable instruments of power. Once appropriated, guilt gives rise to a deepening tension which will lead to resentment if it fails to release itself (when revenge is denied, for example). Freud, Nietzsche, Scheler and others illustrated how deeply resentment takes root in man, becoming his second nature, dictating his (re)actions, thoughts and expressions. It is not by chance that Nietzsche makes genealogical detectivism a therapeutic means, a condition for the healing of culture, but above all for the healing of the self. The ego that, by taking major existential risks, experiences on its own the critique of the great illusions originating from its own past and from the culture to which it belongs, in fact frees itself from the burden of resentment, coming to conceive of its whole becoming as guilt-free. The positive aspect of the hermeneutics of suspicion is also emphasized by Ricoeur. Together with the critique of ideologies (of which Habermas is the main representative), the interpretive technique inaugurated by Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx is equivalent to the self-criticism of the ego, a necessary moment for the understanding of the self (Ricoeur 1986, 147-8). However, the same technique could also be conceived as a symptom of the phenomenon of desacralization, specific to modernity (Eliade 1978).

About the beginning of interpretation. Science as mythology

Another hallmark of the hermeneutics of suspicion, according to Foucault's analysis, is the refusal of the absolute beginning. The further we go into the interpretation, the more we reach the dangerous zone in which the interpretation returns to its starting point, disappearing as an interpretation, but at the same time the interpreter himself disappears (Foucault 1998, 277-8). Let us test this idea by returning to the hermeneutic problem of the author's intention, in order to then, through it, question Foucault's thesis that suspicious interpretation refuses any beginning.

Indeed, by shifting the focus of interpretation from the object to the author, whom he understands as an interpreter of previous interpretations himself, Nietzsche changes the very direction of hermeneutics. The question "who is the one who says something?", just like the question "who interprets?", makes us discover both a field of forces (the indistinct murmur, as Foucault will call it when he notes the disappearance of the author) from which the subject (author and interpreter) is formed, as well as a will to meaning (what we call the author's intention), which is the very will to power that brings order to this field of power (it is not absolutely prime, but results from the very field of forces in which the "subject" is formed). In Nietzsche, then, two kinds of origins combine to produce an effect: the plural but indistinct field of forces, and the ordering force (the will to power) that gives becoming its own meaning (cf. Bondor 2015). Within this new interpretative paradigm, creation always starts from somewhere, from the middle of a scene of pre-existing interpretations, from the layers of meaning that do not have a prior order, as in the Enlightenment aesthetic-hermeneutic scenario that followed Leibniz, which rather form a chaos, or even have the constraining character of prejudices or clichés, from which the author or artist tries to free himself. Thus, creation also involves a moment of decision, but not an initial one, rather a late one. Deleuze illustrates this interpretative technique both through the way he understands the formation of philosophical concepts (Deleuze & Guattari 1994) and through his understanding of art based on Francis Bacon's manner of painting, who erased images that were already on the canvas and then took their traces as suggestions for the configuration of some of the lines of flight of the work (Deleuze 2003). Apparently, the new understanding of creation should give credit to the author – if not to his controlled and well-tempered intention, at least to the decisional impulse that he expresses in his work. If this does not happen, it is probably because the interpreter himself is increasingly keen to impose his own meanings. The emphasis often placed on the text in the theories, but also in the interpretive practices of the last half-century, on filling in its blanks, most often hides a too sharp, and sometimes even heavy, emphasis on the participation of the receiver, whether a reader or viewer.

However, the hermeneutics of suspicion has an ambiguous attitude towards the question of the beginning. By rejecting the absolute beginning of interpretation and betting on the infinity of interpretations, this technique reintroduces an idea of the beginning and the end of interpretation. In different ways, Nietzsche, Freud and Marx each make a metadiscursive hermeneutic decision when they establish the level of meaning at which interpretation finds the meaning it seeks: the field of corporeality in Nietzsche, the one of sexual drives in Freud, and that of economic needs in Marx. By absolutizing a particular structure, the only one

that really produces meaning, Freud and Marx claim that their approach is purely scientific, unlike any other perspective (everything else is ideology, Marx claims). Apparently more temperate, Nietzsche actually proposes a complete redefinition of the idea of science, which becomes for him a *gaya scienza* with an existential purpose, aimed primarily at modifying the interpreter.

Fiction creates reality. Obviously, Freud exaggerates by reducing everything to sexuality. His reductionism probably stems from the claim that psychoanalysis is a pure science. For him, there is nothing but science. His error lies in equating scientificity and reductionist explanation. A thesis would only be scientific if it explained the phenomenon reductively. Freud compares the psyche to a city, as known by its current architecture, but also by archaeological reconstructions and historical information. But the comparison is meant to show precisely the fact that the evolution of the psyche cannot be captured through visual representations (Steiner 1997). The past of the psychic life cannot be understood through images, as we grasp the past of a city, says Freud. Other comparisons do not satisfy Freud either, such as the one with the animal or human body. Apparently, he does not want to approximate through images, but wants to explain as rigorously as the natural sciences do. However, as George Steiner observes (1997, 16-17), just when he claims to have irrefutable arguments, Freud deviates from science by resorting to a fictional, purely literary model. For example, Steiner notes, at the heart of his demonstrations of the Oedipus complex, Freud refers not to clinical evidence but to literature: to *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, to Sophocles and Diderot. Steiner's point is that psychoanalysis, but also Marxism or structural anthropology, therefore the "hermeneutics of suspicion", are mythologies that take the place of religion, feeding on its remains. Mythologies, in the sense that they try to provide total and definitive explanations of the place man occupies in the world, have their own language, and offer distinct images and representations (Steiner 1997, 4-5).

Conclusion

Foucault is right when he states that the emergence of the suspicious attitude in the practice of interpretation is equivalent to the separation of hermeneutics from semiotics. Hermeneutics relies on the violence and the infinity of interpretations, while semiotics believes in the absolute existence of signs, limiting the circularity of interpretations (Foucault 1998, 278). However, the claim to scientificity of the hermeneutics of suspicion, particularly present in Freud and Marx, profoundly sabotages the very hermeneutic nature of the new interpretive technique. The hermeneutics of suspicion criticizes the belief in the fixity of

signs, but it introduces semiotics into the very structure of interpretation. Interpretation has an ultimate layer on which meaning is sought, an infrastructure that is assumed from the beginning as the basis of interpretation, without being brought to phenomenological evidence and to criticism. Vattimo has a similar intuition, in his intervention after the conference that Foucault dedicated to the masters of suspicion (Vattimo, in Foucault 1994, 575). The drive layer of the unconscious in Freud, the economic infrastructure in Marx, and to a lesser extent the field of corporeality in Nietzsche are mere presuppositions about meaning. Once assumed, these layers of meaning are used to reductionistically explain extremely diverse phenomena, from psychic life and intersubjective relations to religious and aesthetic experience. The hermeneutics of suspicion is thus at war with semiotics only by adopting it in its own approach.

Nowadays, the generalized suspicion of any received truth, of everything that seems to be stable, the detective-like temptation to discover new and new layers of meaning, lying in depths hitherto unknown, and yet increasingly on the surface of the self, layers claiming to be the ultimate, the only authentic source of truth, resembles an endless race, a "war machine" in which the demystifications of the past are replaced, with infinite speed (Deleuze), by new mystifications. Apparently liberating, the ideology of radical newness, having its sources in modernity, can prove to be as totalitarian as the closed, ready-made ideological configurations. The critique of the old truths, proven to be mere illusions, is made in the name of new illusions that claim to be truths. Ideologies expand the world of illusions, and truth is increasingly demonetized, even if, on the surface, it is constantly invoked.

Suspicion seems to have become the watchword of the strange manner in which truth is sought in our age. Beneficial in the form of criticism, and especially of self-criticism, the technique of suspicion sometimes takes extreme, even monstrous forms, attacking any chance of discovering the truth, any possibility of social cohesion, of pre-established agreement, of collective memory or shared tradition. Useful for the dismantling of the narratives of power, imposed under the guise of alleged truths through manipulation, terror and ideology (cf. Arendt, among others), but also through institutions, social practices, and discourses (cf. Foucault), generalized suspicion can itself become a mythological mechanism for fabricating new narratives to serve certain interests. A veritable *camera obscura*, this fabulating machine presents its products as rigorously scientific or even metaphysically original. Without preserving the criterion of rationality, the current hypostases of the hermeneutics of suspicion feed on the Enlightenment's lack of appetite for mystery and the utopia of complete knowledge. Equated with a false liberating ideal, this

utopia increasingly becomes a rudimentary grid for interpreting the world, our own self, and others. Against the suspicious overbidding of these supposedly shadowy but actually invented layers of meaning, we should once again acknowledge that we will never know everything about ourselves. Hermeneutic truth is not about the utopia of complete transparency, but is achieved through dialogue with our own history. Therefore, it is not reached through neurotic battles with the shadows of the self, but through the calm acceptance of its mystery.

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