Significance and wild Wesen. The Interpretation of the Wolfman by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Marc Richir

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Abstract

Using the example of Freud's famous case of the „Wolfman“ this paper explicates the conflation between Lacan's theory of the signifier and Merleau-Ponty's notion of “rays of the world”, as found in a study of Marc Richir. In this analysis, Richir criticizes the pure symbolic interpretation subsequent to the psychoanalytic unconscious. Contrary to this, he shows, through Merleau-Ponty's ideas regarding Freud's case, a curious occurrence of phenomena beyond the symbolical grasp. This “play” of Wesen that over-determine one another is, for Richir, gateway to a “new style of eidetics” realized in his notion of wild Wesen which in terms of experience are essential for what he calls the “phenomenological unconscious”. Both registers of the unconscious, however, interact with one another as Merleau-Ponty points out. In Lacan we find the concept of “significance” as a different kind of a “slope of meaning”, which enables us to think of the “effects” of the unconscious not only as separated through a hiatus but as a tense diacritical field as pictured already by Merleau-Ponty – a methodological approach which László Tengelyi elaborated into a diacritical phenomenology.

Keywords
Signifier, wild Wesen, significance, rays of the world, eidetics, unconscious, psychoanalysis, diacritical phenomenology