

From Concept to Sign, and Back Again

The Soviet reception of psychoanalytic unconscious

In September of 1978, Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian Soviet Republic (GSR), witnessed an unusual event. An international symposium organized by the Academy of Sciences of the GSR gathered an unusually large variety of researchers in psychoanalysis, philosophy, psychology etc. who came from Central Europe and North America. However, what renders this encounter through the Iron Curtain so noteworthy is not so much its size or the importance of personalities involved therein (Louis Althusser, and reportedly Jean-Paul Sartre were both intending to participate¹), not even the considerable feedback it received from the academic world at the time,² but rather its very subject. Researchers were invited to address questions about the nature and function of the unconscious, and to discuss the methods applicable in its research (Bassin, Prangishvili and Sherozia, 1978).

Ten years before the ban on Freud's writings was lifted and before they became publicly available, the choice of subject was in fact surprising, especially since psychoanalysis was extirpated both in its clinical and purely theoretical aspects from the 1930's. But then again, by the term "public", we have to imply a number of intellectuals with insatiable curiosity about some limited *samizdat* copies put in a relatively free circulation. The oral history of this period abounds in stories and recollections of biographical character referring to that intense moment of discovering previously banned material. Take for instance testimonies according to which some of the copies of *samizdat* were handed over from person to person, but, due to a huge demand, could not be kept for longer than two days, which incited individuals to round-the-clock readings; in some cases, leading to a deterioration of the eyesight.³ Here one can hardly help thinking of the famous allusion: a person is literally dazzled like someone coming out of Plato's cave. The myopia emerges as a bodily inscription inflicted by the shock produced by the sudden outbreak of freedom of reading.

However, by recalling the anecdote I would like to question the very spirit it imparts and the simplified view it offers. Indeed, in spite of the ban on psychoanalytical practice and of the utter absence of Freud's theory from the Soviet cultural or academic discourse, which in turn was entirely occupied by Marxist ideology, the question of its impact on Soviet philosophy and psy-

chology has to be posed. Otherwise, we risk falling into a hardly defensible position of claiming orthodox Marxism to be a doctrine exerting a homogeneous power and influence on Soviet intellectual production, which would dehistoricize it and turn it into an abstract unity by subtracting it from any responsiveness towards concrete political circumstances. The abovementioned symposium is proof of the opposite, and in this article, I will try to shed light on some of the theoretical, as well as political developments, which prepared the ground for this kind of event to be authorized. In fact, psychoanalysis, in the Soviet Union, has traveled a rather sinuous path from developing strategies for integration into Marxism, to its utter interdiction, and finally becoming the preferred ground for Soviets in establishing contacts with their Western colleagues. These developments offer us a spectacle of intellectual cunning and craftiness of certain Soviet scholars in the face of challenging epistemic constraints, rather than in face of the threatening Soviet political establishment.

Focusing predominantly on the conception of the unconscious I propose to track several instances of the Soviet reception of psychoanalysis firstly, in the late 20's, just before its ban and, secondly, later in the 60's and 70's. Despite the fact that in both cases its reception has been effectuated on Marxist premises, we will observe some essential differences between the two. This, in turn, will help us to put into relief certain changes within general tendencies and specific displacements of discursive limitations in the Soviet human sciences from the first to the second of these instances. By articulating transformations of the notion of the unconscious in an ideologically saturated intellectual field, we can attain some peculiar results in what, with a slight Deleuze-Guattarian inspiration, can be called the ontology of the concept (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005). But this rather theoretical insight can also give us a better understanding of the criteria the Soviet censorship was based on, and in addition can provide us with a perspective on the endeavors of the Soviet commentators.

Before discussing the circumstances, which made it possible to reintegrate Freud back into the debates in philosophy and psychology, we need to first reconstitute the arguments which were called into play in order to condemn Freud's theoretical work and brand psychoanalysis as an illegitimate theoretical framework. In the 1910's and 20's psychoanalysis was very actively taken up in Russia before being brusquely and rather smoothly stricken from intellectual life. There are diverging versions of the exact circumstances of the ban of psychoanalysis in the early 30's, though what is surely known is that the ban was embedded into a larger struggle against the "Trotskyist bourgeois contraband" (Stalin, 1931) and was aimed at reinforcing Stalinism.

In the aftermath of the interdiction, the researchers, who were previously engaged mainly in psychoanalysis, shifted their interests towards new branches of Soviet science like pedology or psychotechnics. Pedology was provided with huge institutional support and was implanted into Soviet schools through 1937, which is when it was definitively banned and deprived of its institutional structure.⁴

Looking back at psychoanalysis just before its interdiction we can state that in the 20's it enjoyed great popularity: the totality of Freud's texts were already translated into Russian, the State Psychoanalytical Institute (ГПИАИ) was functioning, a number of psychoanalytical circles and associations existed in different Russian cities and a psychoanalytical book series were issued, with the chief editor I. D. Yermakov (Ovcharenko, 2000). One of the burning issues of the time was to bring psychoanalysis, or Freudism, as it was referred to at the time, to terms with Marxism. Early Soviet interpreters differed in attributing to Freudism different degrees of propensity towards Marxism. The Freud-Marxist debates of the 20's are well documented and investigated. It should suffice to highlight the main critical points and suggestions proposed by V. N. Voloshinov in his extended study titled *Freudism. Critical essay* (Voloshinov, 1927). In fact, the text, besides being acknowledged as one of the most synthetic, many-sided and in-depth accounts critically covering both Freud's theory and its Soviet appropriations (Etkind, 1993), contains claims, which remain relevant for later developments as well, and can be instrumental in demonstrating the transformations of the notion of the unconscious.⁵

Voloshinov's main objective was to dismantle Freudism both on its ontological and methodological levels and disclose its ideological core. He presented Freudism as being rooted in the "decadent European culture", which prompted it to assume and reflect certain elements of the sociological plane even on its methodological level. Qualifying these elements as constituent to the very theoretical framework of Freudism, Voloshinov puts forward the idea of the essential incompatibility of Freudism with Marxism. I would say, that Voloshinov aims at showing the impossibility of applying psychoanalysis (be it in a descriptive or in a clinical sense) to the type of subject, which populated the transforming society he belonged to, a society, which was to be devoid of class division.

As Voloshinov saw it, Freud uncritically took over the traditional categories of subjective psychology such as, will, sensations, psychic content, etc., and spread them to the unconscious. As these categories or elements are to be accessed only through self-observation, which, in turn, is a procedure related exclusively to the conscious, Voloshinov spots a methodological problem of

psychoanalysis. Freud baselessly transposes these conscious-related elements onto a newly discovered psychic dimension defined as the unconscious.

Further, Voloshinov points out that since Freud filled the conscious and the unconscious with qualitatively similar content, the only method we can rely on in drawing the cryptic content out is still the procedure of self-observation. Voloshinov claims that the necessary condition of Freud's method, according to which the only way for the repressed content to become knowable lays through consciousness, makes it impossible to establish a positive ontological definition of the unconscious. Due to its method, psychoanalysis is locked in the subjective paradigm and loses access to objectivity. The denial of objectivity is twofold: on the one hand, given the fact that an immediate access to the unconscious is impossible, it can be claimed, that psychoanalysis simply adds some further complexity to the already existing "subjectivist" psychological scheme, in which the psychic entirely coincides with the conscious. On the other hand, psychoanalysis fails in grasping the objective materiality and is doomed to ignore it unless it transforms it in to conscious material. As we can see, Voloshinov, in his use of these two arguments targets respectively the subjectivist and the idealistic characteristics of the Freudian conception of the unconscious. He goes on arguing that even in the case of psychosomatic phenomena, the crucial question psychoanalysis raises is not that of material or physiologic components, but the one concerning their psychic counterpart, capable of self-observation. He advances a similar type of critical argument against a biological interpretation of psychoanalysis, according to which, the theory of drive is rooted in biological reality, the latter being the guarantee of the objective basis for the whole theory. Voloshinov is inclined to see things in a different perspective, affirming, that it is Freudism itself, which is responsible for psychologizing and subjectivizing biology. Given the predominant subjectivist character of psychoanalysis, any biological notion it may resort to as a descriptive term for organic processes, necessarily loses its consistency, ending up in some kind of psycho-subjectivism.

Clearly, the psychology Voloshinov is pleading for is one, based on an objective method. Nonetheless, one could be misled in thinking that what he is implying here comes close to Pavlovian reflexology or Deweyan behaviorism. Quite obviously, he seeks to defend and keep to monistic materialism, which is imposed by orthodox Marxism and is a methodological imperative in the sciences. To do so, he needs to take issue with the Freudian psychophysiological parallelism. However, we need to ask what exactly is meant by materialism and the objective method. Voloshinov would not argue that the psychic is nothing else than an attribute of an organized materiality.

To clarify his stance we can examine a further critical attack Voloshinov directs against psychoanalysis after having demonstrated its persistent subjectivist character conditioned by its very methodology. This time he aims at disclosing its ideological essence. To this end, he focuses on the antagonistic relationship between the conscious and the unconscious as presented in psychoanalysis and examines this relationship in two steps. First, he reiterates the abovementioned point as to the qualitative homogeneity of the elements making up both the conscious and the unconscious content, the latter being nothing essentially different from the former except its repressed version. Second, and here we come to the crucial point, Voloshinov establishes, that the passage of content from its unconscious to its conscious state consists in the gesture of verbalization. As he puts it, verbalization is the cathartic moment of psychoanalysis. His account of the main premises of Freudism enables Voloshinov to present the antagonism between the conscious and the unconscious as a conflict between verbal and non-verbal reactions. In fact, for Voloshinov the difference between conscious and unconscious content lays in their different capacity to be incarnated into discursive chains. This capacity, for its part, varies according to the motives implied in those contents. So, for instance, content related to sexual motives are less prone to verbalization. Voloshinov puts a special emphasis on the constituent role that speech plays in the psychoanalytical practice and brings forth the sociolinguistic⁶ dimension of language. With this blind spot of Freudism uncovered, Voloshinov pursues a different criticism exposing psychoanalysis in its lack of sensibility towards the ideological reality in habiting language.

Instead of making the “psychic forces” accountable for the conscious/unconscious antagonism, Voloshinov relocates the source of the conflict into the variable capacity and readiness of different motives to be incarnated into linguistic expression. However, to be precise, “speech” for Voloshinov is not something that is simply uttered. We are dealing here with a notion, in which the internal (thought) and external (uttered) speeches overlap with each other. These two levels coincide with each other, but are still separate enough to maintain a distinction between them. This leads to the assumption that the incapacity to utter stands for the incapacity to think, which allows Voloshinov to qualify the unconscious motives, as described in the psychoanalytic practice, as those motives, which are inhibited by ideologically saturated language from taking the form of utterances, that is to say, from being brought to consciousness and rendered thinkable. The resistance of different content to manifesting in speech is not absolute, but gradual and the threshold in each case is defined by ideology. I would note that once speech, by virtue of its sociolinguistic dimension, extends beyond the individual level and enters

the realm of group relationships, the Freudian conflict between conscious and unconscious undergoes a requalification by Voloshinov: at this stage conflict is seen as a mere projection of certain objective (and foremost social) relations onto the psychic. This is how, through a peculiar conception of language, and foremost, through his notion of speech, Voloshinov repositions psychoanalysis on the bases of ontological monism. The inclusion of materialist elements, that is to say, of the social and the ideological dimensions into psychoanalysis enables him to reveal the conscious/unconscious difference as one, which far from being an inherent and an a historical characteristic of the psychic, is a provisional phenomenon produced by the contradictions intrinsic to the heterogeneous ideology of a society with class divisions. The divided psychoanalytic subject does not endanger the ontological monism, but on the contrary, can be explained through the latter as a local and historically situated aberration, conditioned by particular ideological and social surroundings.

All of the above can be summarized as follows: according to Voloshinov, the guarantor for a theory to be materialist and “scientific” is the openness of its object towards social and historical contextualization. The ontological monism does not consist in some sort of synthesis between body and mind, or between the psychic and physiologic, but in an uninterrupted, continual psycho-social vision of things. Finally, the kind of Freudism, which lacks access to the historical, contributes in reinforcing the existing social institutions (family, church etc.) by rooting them deep into the individual psyche, which is presented as an immutable unity, closed upon oneself. However, Voloshinov’s interpretation of the conscious/unconscious antagonism as conditioned by the social and ideological contradictions raises a question: should it be concluded, that the subject in a society without class divisions does not include a motivational contradiction? Assumptions about Voloshinov’s stance towards this problem would amount to speculation, however his interpretation, such as it is, helps us in understanding what was meant later, in the 1960’s by assertions concerning the inapplicability of psychoanalysis to the Soviet man and the unnecessary character of psychoanalysis in Soviet society.

Indeed, a few years after the publication of Voloshinov’s text, psychoanalysis was banned in the Soviet Union⁷ and academic debates were not the cause for its defeat. Virtually any attempt to trace the lines of different conceptual frameworks during this period of Soviet history necessarily comes up against the facts of drastic caesurae, externally caused radical interruptions and artificial suspensions designed for concrete political purposes, inflicted with authoritarian means. Curiously enough, when dealing with the history of psychoanalysis, Voloshinov’s text itself gives us an interesting insight into the real reasons of its halt. In the last chapter of *Freudism*, when Voloshinov

begins to expose and criticize interpretations of a number of Russian Freudist-Marxists, he mentions Trotsky as well, and specifically his book *Literature and Revolution* (Trotsky, 1923). However, Voloshinov disdainfully refuses to subject this text to any serious critical examination citing the extremely poor arguments elaborated therein. This shows, that Trotsky was far from being regarded as a respectable interpreter on par with his fellow commentators, who were rather neglectful towards him, and proves once again, that the ban on Freudism was nothing but an expression of a political combat and its transposition onto scientific ground, first of all resulting from Trotsky's political activity itself. As Stalinism started gaining ground, the ban turned to be inevitable given the larger context of the ongoing purification of science from the "Trotskyist bourgeois contraband," as was already mentioned. An unsophisticated and badly timed political use of psychoanalysis, prevented Freud from entering the Soviet pantheon of bourgeois thinkers, who, as fallen angels, had flirted with all kinds of non-materialist ideas, but ultimately, could be ennobled and presented as positive contributors to the historical eventuality of dialectical materialism. Even though the Marxist-oriented 1920's Soviet elaborations of Freudism could surely have served as the basis for just such an eventuality.

After the disappearance of psychoanalysis from all domains of Soviet life it first reappeared in 1958, when a scientific council was summoned in the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR in order to address questions of ideological struggle against contemporary Freudism (Bondarenko and Rabinovich, 1959). Results and conclusions of this meeting are of great interest, because they set the guidelines for the treatment of Freudism and shaped subsequent theoretical elaborations in this direction. As one could expect, all of the various developments of the 1920's were left aside without a mention, whereas the absence of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union was presented as a natural state of affairs resulting from the noncompetitive character of psychoanalysis in the face of materialist and physiological approaches of Soviet scientists. However, what is important here are the reasons for this need to refocus the attention on psychoanalysis, as well as the recommendations, which followed. The council observed that psychoanalysis was losing its position in the capitalist world, which incited the Soviets to play an active role in its worldwide defeat. At the same time, they were obliged to admit that arguments, with which they tried to face their colleagues from the capitalist world, were considered by them to be obsolete, useless or sheer products of incomprehension. This led the council-members to set recommendations, which in a way, repeated the famous slogan of Khrushchev: "catch up and surpass". This recommendation appears quite contradictory if we consider the fact that the

advancement of the knowledge of Freudism, coupled with the obligation to disavow it, had to be stimulated in the context of heavy censorship and the ban on psychoanalysis as well as on all of Freud's oeuvre.

Filipp Veniaminovich Bassin, a psychologist, present at the abovementioned meeting, found a formidable solution to this contradictory demand of simultaneous convergence and divergence. By distorting the psychoanalytical concept of the unconscious, paradoxically enough, he prepared the ground for it to be adequately grasped in a long run. Already in the report from the council meeting, as well as in his article dated from the same year (Bassin, 1958) Bassin claimed, that Freud, before taking on the idealistic and subjectivist perspective, tried to find support in the neuro-physiological data. A decade later, Bassin issued the book titled *The Problem of the unconscious: On the unconscious forms of the highest nervous activity* (Bassin, 1968), which combines Freudian and neuro-scientific overtones and introduces a peculiar version of the concept of the unconscious. It is, indeed, a curious fact, that the rehabilitation of this notion in the Soviet academic discourse of the 1960s takes place in a way, which is diametrically opposed to Voloshinov's respective stance on the issue. For instance, the latter, considered that synthesizing reflexology with psychoanalysis had nothing to do either with Marxism, or with science. According to claims of those, who, contrary to Voloshinov, shared this approach back in the 1920's, this kind of synthesis was capable for producing a new version of Freudism, purified of all the metaphysical elements and providing it with objective, biological foundations. Moreover, this was considered to be a convenient means of putting psychoanalysis in conformity with ontological monism. Voloshinov, on his part, insisted, that translating a theory into the terms of another theory is a vain and worthless task. In doing so, one loses its object (which is nothing but what is constituted by means of the method itself) and there is nothing that the result of such a synthesis can apply to. In fact, in this case, the two objects of synthesis mutually destroy each other.

In spite of the obvious difficulties, Bassin, in his book, nevertheless aims at shedding light on the phenomenon of the unconscious by converging the "new achievements in neurocybernetics" and the "new approaches in the physiological theory of brain function". He strangely insists on the notion of the unconscious by joining it to the theoretical positions of a number of philosophers and scientists (ranging from Wundt to Pavlov, from Brentano to Freud etc.) and tries to demonstrate the existence of this concept, or, at least, that of its prefiguration, in their respective work. Not surprisingly, the abusive usage of the notion ends up eroding its very core, even if Freud remains the landmark figure throughout the book and the reader is consistently remind-

ed of the psychoanalytical notion of the unconscious. We can clearly sense here the author's attempt to ennoble this disfavored concept. But the reasons he is driven by seem enigmatic, given the fact that his goal of reinstating the psychoanalytical concept of the unconscious, in the Soviet context, cannot be achieved without destroying the very identity of this concept.

Before trying to elucidate the enigma, the differences between the intellectual environment in which Voloshinov and Bassin worked must be considered. Voloshinov approaches Freudism as a theory one should first penetrate and understand, and then transform it from the inside. Bassin, on the contrary, staying outside the theory, goes after it with ready-made postulates and conceptual notions wholly accepted and legitimized within his contemporary academic discourse. Moreover, Voloshinov stresses the importance of the historical and the social conditions and considers them as the aspects, which secure and uphold the methodological objectivity and the ontological monism alike. Bassin keeps both of these imperatives, but, contrary to Voloshinov, situates their source in the domain of physiology and, more generally, in that of science. Lastly, Bassin does not consider Freudism as a source of a conceptuality, which has to be subjected to a productive appropriation and elaboration, but rather as a negatively marked unity, which one should integrate and render acceptable at all costs and still keep the appearance of opposition and rivalry.

In explaining Bassin's strange approach in which his method goes against his very objective, it would be instructive to evoke the memoirs of his colleague and one of the co-organizers of the Tbilisi symposium, Vadim Rotenberg. Rotenberg thinks that not only is Bassin's book pure and simple mystification, in which the author utterly falsifies the conception of the unconscious, trying to present the activity of neurons and diverse physiological elements of the body as an activity of the unconscious, but also he claims, that Bassin did it deliberately (Rotenberg 2014). He did it purposely, knowing, that by mobilizing a legitimate frame of reference (physiology, objectivism, monism, etc.) he could push the notion of the unconscious into Soviet academic discourse and provide it with a certain degree of legitimacy.

Considering all of this, the enigmatic gesture of Bassin and the effect his book produced can be clarified this way: after the ban on Freudism, at the beginning of the 1930's, the concept of the unconscious lapsed into disuse. For decades, the only possible perspective the term could be mentioned in was a negative one. This constraint, combined with the difficulty (or indifference) during the 40's and 50's to keep up-to-date on further philosophical or psychoanalytic developments of Freud's theory and the notion of the unconscious, annulled all the motivation for regarding the unconscious as a

valuable concept. In this atrophied and uncultivated quasi-conceptual field, all the conditions were ripe for the concept to lose its exo-consistency and be transformed into a mere sign, or to be more precise, into a negatively marked sign. Here is a case, when the signifier detaches from its signified and mutates into a sign, which does not signify except its own negative value. However, the concept dissolves not only due to the hollow arisen in its interior, liquidating its endo-consistency, but because of the disintegration its respective conceptual network was subjected to. After the concept of the unconscious was, first, roughly evacuated and then, in the aftermath of the ban, gradually brought to dissolution, a virtually unlimited space unfolded for the manipulation of the quasi-concept that the psychoanalytic unconscious had been reduced to. A quasi-concept, being highly compromised in its identity and lacking its conceptual network, can be easily associated with nearly any concept or inserted into nearly any frame of reference. This is the tactic Bassin resorted to in order to convert the quasi-concept from a negative into a positive or at least a neutral sign, preparing it to be introduced into Soviet academic discourse, leaving behind the tenets of censorship and being gradually refurnished with its conceptuality. The fact that a symposium dedicated to the questions on the unconscious was actually authorized a decade after the publication of Bassin's book, attests to the fact that he succeeded in this enterprise.

Obviously, this kind of conceptual shamanism was not solely Bassin's privilege, although he may well be the one who presents the most compelling example of it. Soviet commentators often resorted to an excessively extended usage of concepts, which albeit detrimental to the consistence of the concepts itself, helped in constructing unusual conceptual genealogies, which, in their turn, could normalize some out of line theoretical elements. In terms of the 'unconscious' we could mention, for example, a Georgian philosopher, Prof. Guram Tevzadze, who asserts, that the Kantian passive synthesis is a prefiguration or a previous theoretical occurrence of the unconscious, later elaborated by Freud, thus banalizing the psychoanalytical concept of the unconscious while trying to impart the capital of the classical Kant to the yet highly compromised concept of the unconscious.

Freud's criticism had a political aspect as well. As I have pointed out, the main aim consisted in defeating psychoanalysis all over the world and was illustrated by the slogan "catch up and surpass." However, even if through the suspicious endeavors of Bassin an inappropriately presented problem of the unconscious could at least be reposed and re-launched, how was it to surpass the existing work in psychoanalysis? In this context, the only viable strategy was to surpass it with an alternative theoretical approach. *Qua* the instrument in the rivalry against the bourgeois psychoanalysis, the set theory of the

Georgian psychologist Dimitri Uznadze proved to be perfectly fitting. Correlating the Uznadzian set with the Freudian unconscious and representing it as the Soviet alternative to the latter, guaranteed that, on the one hand, a minimal common ground could be found between the two approaches while they were instituted as each other's alternatives, and, maintained, on the other hand, the possibility of their radical difference.

The main reason Uznadze's figure could become of paramount importance is, that his psychological theory rendered compatible a certain notion of the unconscious with a non-divisional version of the subject. Contrary to psychoanalysis, in which the conscious and the unconscious are presented as two radically separated topological points, Uznadze proposed a set theory in which the set is an unconscious function of the psychic (Uznadze, 2006). In opposition to the Freudian unconscious, which can be extracted and partially rendered conscious, Uznadze's scheme does not allow this sort of passage for reasons analogous to those which make it impossible in Kantian epistemology, to experience the conditions of possibility of experience. The "set" is not an instance, which, as a partition, would cause the psyche to internally divide. The set embraces the psyche in its totality, determining it through and through, and expresses itself through the instances of its entire modification. This non-divisional unconscious was well conformed to the postulate of ontological monism and, as Soviets pretended, could be presented as a genuine alternative to the psychoanalytical view of the subject. Uznadze's psychology, finely adapted to ontological monism, was meant to secure the unity of the subject.

However even more interesting is the concrete way in which the differences between the Freudian and the Uznadzian versions of unconscious started to be articulated in the late 60's. Intense elaborations specifically aimed at articulating this question were indeed not long in coming. The first and the most noteworthy effort in this direction was made by the Georgian philosopher and later one of the organizers of the psychoanalytical symposium in Tbilisi, Apollon Sherozia, who, in 1969 and 1973, published two volumes with the title *A contribution to the problem of the conscious and the unconscious* (Sherozia, 1969, 1973). In opposing psychoanalysis and the set theory to each other, Sherozia situates them in a larger double scheme of what he calls respectively the Soviet and the bourgeois systems of sciences. But before defining the role of the set theory in the system, interestingly enough, he decides first to oppose these two systems by means of presenting Pavlov as the objectivist opposite to the subjectivist (and introspective) Freud. Soon, his choice to proceed in this way becomes understandable. In fact, after having set this oppositional configuration, Sherozia gets Pavlov to say (through a citation),

that the objective method is well applicable both to animals and humans, although in case of humans it proves to be insufficient and the need for introducing the aspect of self-observation imposes itself. In this way, Sherozia uses the unquestionable authority of Pavlov to personally legitimize the introduction of a subjectivist element into the system of Soviet sciences. Therefore, the position of Uznadze's theory in the system can be defined as a subjectivist complement to the Pavlovian objectivist psychology.

The monistic character of the set theory is seen in the fact that its method mobilizes both the objectivist and the subjectivist components. In fact, the subjectivist part of the method, i.e. the self-observation is understood as a "secondary signaling system" which is nothing else than an internally objectifying system. Therefore, according to Uznadze's claims, the set (the unconscious component of the psyche), that is to say, the psychological predisposition towards a perception or an action, can be experimentally observed by means of transversal grasping of the objective characteristics of a given phenomenon or a situation and its subjective "meaning". Strangely enough, in order to guarantee monism, the set theory introduces the internally objectifying subjective procedure, which cannot but imply a divisional linguistic system, in which what is comprehended stands in an external, i.e. unnecessary relation to the means that objectified it. By contrast, for the sake of monism, Voloshinov rejected the model of discernibility between these two moments, because he could not support the idea of neutrality of means of expression. Voloshinov would likely estimate the set theory to be a prisoner of the idealistic division between objectivity and subjectivity. In fact, Soviet psychology, contrary to its presumed Marxist character, tended rather towards an ideologically sterilized, uncritical and ahistorical form.

In presenting the Soviet reception of Freudism in two stages, separated by the Stalinist caesura, we can see that the first period was characterized by free and creative Marxist appropriations no matter if it was part of the Freudo-Marxist or anti Freudist tendencies. The second stage is completely different from the developments of the 20's, and it seems that *ad interim* they were forgotten or deliberately effaced. A close study and insight into psychoanalytic literature do not appear any more as prerequisites for assuming a critical standpoint. The approach was automatically defined by the obligatory postulates extrinsic to the object of scrutiny. As to the concepts, they function as signs, which appeal to the 'correct' – that is to say, to the expected or previously known – responses. Freud and psychoanalysis are immediately drawn into the primitive logic of political rivalry with the capitalist world. This, in turn, finds expression in two further aspects distinctive for this period. On the one hand, it is obvious, that the interest in the question of the unconscious

is hinged on the possibility of balancing “bourgeois” psychoanalysis with its socialist counterweight, the latter being presumably a wholly original theory, having no common theoretical premises with psychoanalysis. On the other hand, we can clearly observe the degradation that the objectivist, monist, and dialectical methodological imperatives underwent. To be more specific, the imperatives stayed immutable, but their grip on the actual intellectual work loosened, bringing about relatively less controlled spaces for conceptual creativity, but at the same time making them more vulnerable to political conjecture. Instead of serving as stimuli for a historic and social contextualization, these imperatives were applied only in terms of a strange physiological, psychic or psychosomatic synthesis, perfectly echoing with the tendency of suppressing all germs of political thinking and not being essentially distinct from the subjectivist and ahistorical psychology Voloshinov was so eager to denounce.

Post-Soviet depictions of the Soviet period as an intellectually dry stage, especially when it comes to human sciences, has its own ideological reasons. But, there is a need to do justice to the Soviet intellectual heritage. In this article, while trying to treat the question of conceptual aberrations in the context of intellectual atrophy, I have attempted to make an exemplary case of one of the possible ways of doing this. Attention needs to be focused on the way in which concepts are driven by forces of certain normativities and are pulled out of their native conceptual web, responsible for securing their internal consistency. The described mechanism can be helpful in shaping a better understanding of Soviet censorship, as well as the means of interpreting Soviet commentators, since it enables us to grasp the moments in which authors try to maneuver between a concept and its corresponding quasi-concept or between contradictory epistemo-institutional imperatives

Notes:

- 1 Although Louis Althusser could not visit Tbilisi due to his acute mental health condition (at least this is the explanation he gave to his Georgian friend, philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, in their private correspondence), a slightly censored Russian version of his paper about Marx and Freud is included into the symposiums materials and is to be found in the French edition of his writings as well. As for the case of Sartre’s in-

- tended participation, we are basing here on the oral report of Prof. Guram Tevzadze, who was involved in the organization of the symposium. Sartre passed away before the date of the symposium.
- 2 The symposium received thousands of mentions in Western reviews. Four, bulky, multilingual volumes containing the symposium materials were printed in a huge number of copies, and became a precious item in Soviet bookshops.
 - 3 The source of this testimony is a private interview with the author of this article (the name of the interviewee is undisclosed).
 - 4 A separate article could take on the task of tracing the ways that psychoanalytic theoretical tools were twisted, contorted and rendered suitable for pedagogy, helping to lay down the basics of its methods, which bore quite concrete normative intentions in terms of sorting into segments and educating the young population of the country in the context of social transformations.
 - 5 It should be noted *en passant*, that Voloshinov was a close collaborator with M. M. Bakhtin and the complete or partial authorship of this text was often attributed to the latter author. However, definitive proof of this is missing.
 - 6 Of course, Voloshinov does not use this term, which will be coined a decade later by C. Hodson.
 - 7 There is a consensus among historians, that the interdiction of psychoanalysis was decreed, but there are contradictory versions as to the exact circumstances and the date. Some think it is 1930 (Brenner, 1999), others suggest 1934 (Etkind and Espérionner, 1992).

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