Freud’s Preference of Media and His Theory on Telepathy

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The purpose of this paper is to clarify connotations of an assumption proposed by Jacques Derrida “if Sigmund Freud had used E-mail, instead of writing thousands of letters by hand”.

Firstly, I confirm that this assumption relates to our contemporary life from the perspective of archiving and point out that Freud was ambivalent about the value of almost all media: he not only used new media invented in his lifetime but also frequently applied what these media implicate into his theory; at the same time, he regarded them as what bring down the sense of separation related to death from intimate persons. However, he estimated high value on the letter and postal technology. The differences between those media and them are the speed and assurance of information transmission. So we have to solve a question “What kind of impacts do these differences make on Freud’s theory on archive and the way of archiving in our contemporary life?”

To clear up above question, I focus on Freud’s papers on telepathy which can be considered as the fastest and the most direct medium which implies the separation from intimate persons. In these papers, he explained that someone’s memories of telepathy are derived from his/her repressed desires and are constructed ones which satisfy them by use of core concepts of psychoanalysis, like Oedipus Complex, the unconscious, and transference. He treated telepathy not as subsistent but as phenomenon, and pointing to “Jenseits des Lustprinzips”, he did not admitted other explanations on telepathy such as occultists regard it as the medium by which someone can communicate to departed souls. So I analyze “Jenseits des Lustprinzips” and “Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus” to figure out the differences between psychoanalysis and occultism, and the reason why the phenomenon of telepathy implies the sense of separation in Freud’s explanation.

As the result of above analysis, I indicate that the characteristic of Freud’s explanation on telepathy is to reconstruct his theories to suit it, and this reconstruction shows the differences between psychoanalysis and occultism and the reason why the phenomenon of telepathy implies the sense of separation. Finally, from the consideration of telepathy, I
conclude that faster and the more direct media makes Freud’s theory on memory and the way of memorizing in our contemporary life ambiguous, and for this reason, psychoanalysis which is willing to reconstruct its own theories is required today in our societies.