

How can the analyst "carry the speech" today?

(intervention at the Barcelona Congress, on behalf of the Freudian Circle)

The title of the colloquium includes three terms that specify the question asked about "psychoanalysis": ethics, practice, today.

. To say (analytic) **practice** is to underline that the very exercise of "psychoanalysing" is involved here, and not an academic discussion on "theory". To say practice in the singular, when we know that there are all sorts of *practical* analytic modalities and that we did not wait until today to get rid of the stereotype of the "standard treatment" (cf. Lacan: "Variations on Standard Treatment"), is to refer to what is supposed to be the invariant of analytic practice through its "technical" varieties, its places and devices. If, therefore, we question it in relation to "today", it is not simply because a new context would lead us to contemplate a new "technical" variation, but because it could call into question the *orientation* of analytic practice itself, which is not only a "technique" but also implies an ethics.

. **Ethics** (of analytic practice): it was Lacan who imposed the term (seminar "Ethics") by means of a double rupture. A rupture with societal *morals* of all kinds that do not concern a particular practice but rather the lines of conduct of subjects in society and that, beyond their variety (of form and content), are all reducible to "services of the Good". And rupture with the professional *deontologies*, insofar as these only draw a more or less rigid "framework" which remains ultimately technical, made up of procedures at the service of externally determined and unquestioned ends, either ignored or implicitly reflected in the framework in question.

To question the *ethics of the analytic practice* as the Congress invites us to do in the light of *today's* times supposes *first of all* that we take the trouble to specify again for ourselves what this already supposedly established ethics consists in. We obviously have answers, formulas like "ethics of desire" or "ethics of the real", but they are not so clear and simple (fortunately perhaps!). It is not easy, in particular, to extract from them axioms or

principles that are not mere reiterations or generalizations of modalities related to epochal contexts or concrete situations. This question implies, more radically, asking ourselves if and how *today*, the current context of our practice, could call our ethics into question, and if there would therefore be a need to modify or supplement what has so far been developed in terms of ethics of practice.

In any case, it is important not to get bogged down between, on the one hand, a rigidifying tension on acquired assumptions that would lock us into a defensive posture, a new "orthodoxy", and, on the other hand, an absolute "openness" to the trends of the time. The first being at the risk of disconnecting ourselves from the "world" in which, whether we like it or not, psychoanalysis takes its place societally, for although it is "eccentric", it is not "extraterritorial"... The second could be seen as a new adaptation to the "reality" of the moment, a "post-modern way of life", comparable to the one that Lacan fought against in the 1960s.

. **Today** especially is to be questioned, i.e. the societal or even "civilizational" context in its direct incidence on the modalities or even the possibility of existence of our practice itself, and indirectly on the psychic modalities of the societal individuals that we are and that we receive. There again we can take it in a more or less radical way.

We can focus on particular aspects, or even "details" or circumstances that may have profound effects on the work, as for example the question that often comes up (rightly but in my opinion short-sightedly) of the use of the telephone or other means of communication during the pandemic: but we would be left with "technical" difficulties, not so different from those that the analytic movement has encountered since its beginnings and that have led it to evolve and diversify its ways of working.

But we can also hear in the "today" a civilizational (or barbaric?) mutation that goes much further in calling into question what served as the societal bed for the "divan". After all, Lacan seems to have had the apprehension, if not the conceptualization, in the 1970s, in particular with the invention of the *5th discourse*, the so-called capitalist discourse (to which the argument alludes), which is not just an addition to the four but seriously disturbs their

"round". This round was to be ensured by the newly arrived discourse of the analyst, the 4 discourses not being without making room for the impossible (a real), whereas the capitalist discourse (associating the discourse of the master in power and techno-scientific power) pretends to "run smoothly" without a stop and, says Lacan, "to consume until consumed". This does not necessarily mean the non-existence or the obsolescence of the analytic discourse, but it does force us to rethink its effectiveness in this new context, or it risks disappearing (the death of psychoanalysis that Lacan could contemplate).

Does this affect the ethics of practice? This is our open question.

What can we say about it a priori and in brief?

First of all, that it is a question of highlighting the *function* of the speech in our practice. This is nothing new, and we can rely in particular on *Variations on the Standard Treatment*, and this key formula of Lacan that the analyst "'carries the speech' of the analysand". Not new, but to be renewed with regard to the new world that is emerging, the one where the inflation of images and "icons" dominates more and more, which not only short-circuits the speech and its attachment to the symbolic register but also cuts short the imaginary register itself as a space-time where a subject can find a way to sort himself out *between* the capture in the alienating image of the body and the reference to the voice-gaze of the Other *in echo*. Let us recall that narcissism in the Freudian sense is not reducible to what happens to Narcissus in the myth as it is most often told, who, deaf to Echo, loses himself in the pure scopic of his reflection. It is this *game*, proper to the narcissistic operation in the Freudian sense of the imaginary register itself, that tends to be forecluded by the prevalence of imagery, not only in the internet networks, but in the profusion of advertising or the big machineries of ready-made imaginary like Disneyland...

But, to come back to speech, that's not all, because our new world is also, "at the same time", one in which "talk-talk-talk" is promoted, notably in the so-called "crisis cells" where psychologists rush in after supposedly traumatic events; or in the media where the listeners are invited to express themselves "with total freedom", that is to say "without a

stop", as the capitalist discourse of Lacan is said to "run smoothly"; or even in the meetings or seminars organized by the management of companies or even the State so that everyone can "let off steam" by talking. Talk, talk, they say, and then what? Nothing, nobody really listens. What psychoanalysis can put forward is not this "free speech", free of any echo making stop and from which to "return the message in an inverted form", it is an *addressed* word, an address that, although it does not respond to the demand to "understand it", to give it a "like" or its opposite, it does respond *for* it, returning to it not so much consistency by being approved in its sayings, but rather by accrediting the ex-sistence of the saying: one will only have spoken for having been heard, even when giving rise to a misunderstanding. It is in this sense that the aforementioned formula can be understood: *the analyst carries the speech*. Not as a media that scatters it to the wind, the supposed speaker seeking in the greatest number of *signs* of "followers" an assurance that is always disappointed (if not sometimes financially profitable), but as a support of the symbolic.

And clinically, I see it: patients come nowadays, beyond "therapeutic" experiences of all kinds, including behaviorist ones, and in spite of a prefabricated language that will have "pigeonholed" them, and can find a completely different listening, neither silent nor loquacious, rather, as an analysand used to say to me, someone who "speaks the silent", that is to say, makes his voice heard by the analysand. The speech that can be asserted is not the license to "express oneself", to empty one's juice like a lemon on the lemon squeezer, it is an access to the ex-sistence that concerns the saying, including in the gesture.

And it is also through this that we can return the question of the so-called presence of the analyst, which has been mentioned in relation to the use of the telephone, Skype or SMS messages, because this speech that is addressed supposes an other who, as an incarnation of the Other of the speech, is there *in body*, even and especially if he or she is only there to be absent – understanding it in its *verbal* form, that is to say, a *process of absenteeism*, and not without mobilizing affects circulating between them. From this point of view, the specificity of the analytic experience is not simply to constitute a duo that acts as a virtual

mirror but a "dyad", where the "two" are in dissymmetry, the being-there of the analyst emerging as an object-voice *carrying the speech* of the other, in the sense of becoming "*pentagram*"¹ as in musical writing and not of setting himself up as "spokesman" for it... and the other-there analyzing assuming a voice that "auto-names" it. I use this neologism to highlight the *naming* dimension, in contrast with what tends to represent in today's world the promotion of "autonomy" conceived as full individuation of oneself, self-enterprise of oneself or self-creation of one's own life by excluding the Other and reducing to rivals the others who could symbolize it, and which even borders on the libertarian ideology - cf Elon Musk as a delusional figure...

A second dimension of the method-ethics of analysis is that of *time*. Here I will only outline two aspects of it.

One of the characteristics of our time is the speed, the celerity to the point of immediacy promoted for any activity, and feverishly expected from a therapy. It seems to me that ethically in our practice we should not give in on the analytical institution of a *time to elaborate*, a non-accountable time, which besides a space (dyadic, cf. above) offers an indeterminate temporality a priori, if not without scissions of the sessions, where the numerical obsession is evidenced: the time it takes. It is not easy clinically to achieve this with those who come with fixed requests and demands for a short-term "result", and this undoubtedly implies inventing ways of doing things in the "preliminary interviews" to which we were not accustomed in the "glorious years" when the demands of analysis were already pre-formed by a culture that prepared them for it, and where the sense of a "work" to be done was not denigrated a priori.

Another aspect of the dimension of time would be what I would like to call the *real of time*, that is to say its irreversibility. It is not new that we try to deny it, but our new world and the "subjectivity of today" it produces seem to me to accentuate the denial of it, either by trying to prolong indefinitely the course of time up to the transhumannist frenzy that takes over from religions by techno-scientific means, or, more commonly, more neurotically, by

¹ NdT: *portée*, pentagram, or carrier

subjectively trying to make as if everything that happens is reversible, that one can always maintain that "everything is possible", or that it remains so even after an event that has made us move on to something else. Again, nothing new, but it now finds support in the dominant discourse... But a psychoanalysis neither denies death nor encourages a "return", these two limits of human existence...