

Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association

The Analyst Position: Avant-garde in Act

We underline in the ethics of the analyst a restlessness articulated in the metaphor of the “littoral”; the strip of land which acts as an edge that is both within and without and indicates different topologically knotted dominions. In its common usage, littoral refers to that area of the shore or coastline; that transitional zone “twixt land and sea” that is claimed in turn through more or less regular and predictable movements of the tides. But also, a precarious border that can be altered when an advancing storm generates dramatic ocean drawback exposing large swaths of unseen sea.

The position of the analyst implies a constant move in the encounter with the unknown and the unfamiliar, according to the formations of the unconscious and the sliding of the signified under the signifier:

Lacan underlines that the psychoanalyst needs to be “at least two”: the analyst in the analytic act, who produces some “effects” in the treatment and the analyst that “theorizes these effects”, pointing out the knotting between analysis in intension and the analysis in extension – two aspects of the same moebius circuit, where psychoanalysis in intension is in a littoral position vis a vis its position in extension and vice versa. This limit point is the ground of an ethics that reckons with the separation between knowledge and truth and develops a listening attentive to the logical time of the act in the singularity of each clinical case, in the here and now, unique to each transferential situation - deconstructing claims for a totalizing knowledge in the manner of a religion or modern science. Bypassing the binarism of interior versus exterior, within or without,

the topological figure of the interior eight subverts the sphere as symbol of totality, the figure of an enclosed unity which operates in the foreground of dominant social-symbolic discourses.

The analyst operates in the place of knowing/not knowing that sustains the inventiveness of the object little *a*, that void in the structure indicating that which has always already been lost: the real lack of an object situated both within and outside the perceptual field that articulates each and every symbolic /imaginary constellation and fuels the perpetual motion of desire.

This implies an intrinsic opening towards, tuning with, the present, both that of the act and that of the social/historical transformations occurring in the symbolic environment where the transference takes place – so prominent in these days with the questioning and deconstructing of the patriarchal epistemology. In approaching the suffering of the subject in the here and now of the clinical act, the analyst intrinsically reckons with the effects of the symbolic order and its transformations, constantly open towards actuality and its future. We distinguish *actuality* as the particular social-historical circumstances that affect the subject, from *reality* as an immediately accessible empirical given, the knowledge of which is supposedly assured through the generalized protocols of evidence-based practices - but which only serves to keep everything as it already is.

The analyst operates in an Avant-garde position, both rigorous and in evolution, like that of a ballerina “dancing on one toe”, to use the metaphor Freud employed in the second preface of *The Man Moses and the Monotheistic Religion*. It is not by chance that he describes in this way his own writing process while in permanent exile from

Vienna. He goes on saying that prior to moving forward with the publication of the concluding essay of his book, he had “inner misgivings as well as external hindrances”, given the dramatically changing political conditions, but that the “convictions of his conclusions” required such publication. Would it be possible to evoke a clearer example of the littoral position of the analyst in intension and extension and the ethics of the analytic act? The analyst “on one’s toes” is opposite to the “nostalgic” flat footedness expressed by some practitioners confronted with the social transformations of our times.

In the particularity of the act, the transference space progressively designs a sort of lagune, a littoral site created by a separation from the open sea. Resulting from the unfolding of the cure, it serves as a protective environment against storm surges and provides a safe passageway between land and sea. As Aristotle indicated in his observations of the lagoon of the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea, these littorals are *trans-formational* sites that allow a change from one condition to another, a crossing-beyond where life can emerge, can teem.

The articulation of a cure entails a subjective *transformation*: the dismantling of identificatory illusions, the progressive reckoning with one’s own subjective debt, the letting go of the idea of an object that could allow for completeness or correct our original fault, the repeated encounter with *Das Ding*, with the unknowable in the other and oneself, leading to a progressive collapsing of the subject supposed to know. It is a trajectory towards a new psychic economy and a new subjective position informed by desire.

The space of *transference* allows for a subjective *trans*-formation, where the ethic of the analyst inhabits a position in transit. The term ‘trans’ needs to be underlined,

since it has a relevance in the particularity of the analytic trajectory, both on the side of the analyst and the analysand, relating to the divided subject and the “not all”.

The nature of the signifier is relational and oppositional, precluding any form of essentialism; its effects introduce difference and otherness causing the division of the subject, irreducible to a binary logic, since such effects convoke the Other and leave a remainder in the object *a*. *Object a*, object cause of desire and support of the subject's jouissance, is heterogeneous to the symbolic. In the relation between One and the Other, as well between the subject and its jouissance, between one subject and another, there is a hiatus, a lack of commensurability that grounds the principle of the non-sexual relation. Therefore, the subject's relation to jouissance is not fully inscribable in the symbolic, does not have a 'designable identity'. “Each time we talk about something called a subject we turn it into a One” . But what we have to realize is precisely this: “the One with which to designate it is lacking” (*il manque l'Un pour le désigner*)”¹.

Beside the political and social struggle that justifies it, always specific and transient according to the civil rights at stake in it, the reference to “identity” is pervasive in our times. Today's society of spectacle generates both relativism (to each one's own truth) and nihilism (a cynic or pessimistic rejection). In our clinical practice, we see many young people confused by the multiplicity of the interpellations and offers in media communications, by their contradictions and dissipation, which often generate a reaction of enclosure and isolation.

¹ J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XIII, L'objet de la psychanalyse*, December 15th, 1965.

We can raise the question to what degree the need for constructing, declaring and performing an identity is a symptomatic response to this condition, a narcissistic display in line with the general spectacle, but one that makes up for the absence of shared values and visions, of common goals that could generate hope, and engage purposely in the social link. The imperative of individual liberalism – success, money and visibility- mostly feeds identity declarations enhancing competition and isolation.

The tendency to performing nourished by the society of spectacle and its endemic consumerisms, brings to the fore the dialectic between the position of the spectator and that of the witness. Citizens confronted with the brutality of certain social events, find themselves oscillating between these positions, raising the question of their role in the social link. The case of the murder of a 29 years old black citizen by five police officers in early January 2023– the last one in an endless series of racist crimes perpetrated by police force in USA – well illustrates the perversion intrinsic in the relation between performance, protection and surveillance. People anxiously waited for the released of the video made by the cameras worn by the police officers involved in the actions, only to be confronted with a murdering *performance*. The officers' voices recite a series of stereotypical orders obviously addressed to the public who will judge of their filmed actions, *acting for them*, while their violent actions contradict their reasoning. The vicious murder of a helpless and complying citizen, -who, if anything, just asked for help - involves at once the *spectacularizing of the performance* offered to surveillance and *the radical negation of facts*, pervasive in today's society. Needless to say, the police report written hours after the officers beating was starkly at odds with what videos have since revealed.

The loop between performing, truth and denial of facts needs to be carefully evaluated in light of the constant, pressing call for *freedom* proposed by the free market. Freedom is exalted and goes end to end with the call for an 'identity'. The myth of individual freedom at the expense of the collective, informs consumeristic exploitations according to lobbying powers; at the same time, it perpetuates new forms of segregations.

We listen to the suffering of these new forms of segregations in our practice. As Lacan pointed out, the analyst's listening operates according to a logic articulated in such a rigorous chain of letters that, at the condition of not missing any of them, the not-known orders itself as knowledge. If this defines the ethics of the desire of the analyst, its position requires both an awakesness towards the saying and towards the symbolic, imaginary and real universe in which such saying operates. Returning to the subject the responsibility of its action, the analytic trajectory allows for a relaunching of the subjective engagement with the collective.

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