

International Congress of Convergence 2023

What ethics for clinical practice today?

Dedicated to Héctor Rupolo

Beginning with a quote from J. Lacan's Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis:

"Ethics to which psychoanalysis leads us, the relationship between action and the desire that inhabits it."

A question remains essential and current: Have you acted in accordance with the desire that inhabits you?

If Freud says desire is indestructible and Lacan states that ethics is related to desire, is there "a currency" in ethics linked to the subjectivity of the time?

I finish with another phrase by Lacan: "The only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one's desire."

"Desire and writing, what cannot be extinguished"

*"Dream, it is a rolled up book, it smokes,
as if it were a large oven..."*

Juan Gelman –Be Worthwhile

"They are in front of me, their eyes wide open, and I suddenly see myself in that look of horror: in their dread. For two years I had lived without a face."

In this way Semprun begins his text "Literature or Life", 50 years after his exit from the Lager. Inaugural writing, while it is named, traces of writing of the sayable of the experience in the concentration camp.

Back in Buchenwald, in 1992, he is amazed to find the card with the information required by the clerk during registration at the camp.

*"No, the unknown German comrade had not written **Student**. Undoubtedly influenced by a phonetic association, he had written **Stukateur**. I contemplated the card, my hands shaking".*

*"The mere fact of having been registered as a 'stucco worker' saved me from transport to Dora. I held my card, half a century later, trembling. That absurd, magical word, **stukateur**, which had perhaps saved my life".*

Substitution is not equivocal in writing.

The haphazard encounter with the clerk, not with an absolute Other, owner of life and death, but with a similar other, who by substituting 'student' with 'stucco worker' assigns him a trade, he is an other who saves him from being sent to forced labor. Did avoiding Dora (a camp with a woman's name) imply an attempt to save life?

This signifying pun, place of splitting, is founded on the existence of the signifier, whereas the speaking being is immersed in the language. The signifying game is what saves him, or at least gets him away from the possibility of real death. It is what marks his debt.

"At Petit Schubert, at Boulevard Montparnasse, a few days after my return to Paris, I held Odile in my arms."

"Rather, it was me who belonged to her, because she was life and wanted to belong to life fully. She reinvented the gestures of life for me, with me. She reinvented my body, a use of my body, at least, that was no longer a strict economy of subsistence, but the gift of squandered love."

*"I woke up... I left, shocked, the reality of the dream, only to plunge into the dream of reality: **the nightmare**, rather.*

Just before, I was lost in a rough, opaque, turbulent universe.

A voice had resonated in those confusing counties, putting things back in their places. A German voice, loaded with Buchenwald's truth, which was still too close."

What follows is the text from a dream, writing that ciphers, according to Lacan, "when Freud approaches the subject to tell them, here in the field of dream, you are at home."

“KREMATORIUM, AUSMACHEN!, said the German voice. “Crematorium, extinguish”

The following associations were elaborated later:

“A deaf voice, irritated, imperative, resonating in my dream... it made me believe that I had finally woken up, again –or still, or forever– in the reality of Buchenwald: that I would never leave, despite appearances, despite the drills and affected scrupulosity of existence.”

“Odile’s body offered itself to my gaze in the languid plenitude of rest. But the soothing certainty of her beauty had not distracted me from my pain.”

Crematoria extinguish! These signifiers –resonating like the echoes of an order in the words of an Other who subdues him to pleasure– taken from the recurrence of the chains that appear through memories are the text of the dream.

Only these two signifiers appear in the dream’s statement, **crematoria, extinguish!**

Why does this dream cause an abrupt awakening? As no more burning bodies could imply relief, unless they are other bodies, not the ones in conscious memory (of companions in the bunks, of the death rattle).

What is the dream’s wunch?

There is an articulated desire, a formulated desire, that which implies verbal satisfaction, it is there where the subject of the wunch is satisfied, satisfied in saying: Crematoria extinguish!

The formula of wunch is: **“to extinguish the fire”**

Therefore, **“Burning bodies”**, results from the statement’s **extinguish**, that reappears creating a new signification by joining **sexuality and death**, which is articulated at the level of the dream’s desire.

Why doesn’t this dream bring relief? “Because trauma reappears in the dream, sometimes barefaced. How can the dream, the bearer of the subject’s desire, produce that which makes the trauma emerge repeatedly –if not its very face, at least the screen that shows us that it is still there behind? (J. Lacan, Seminar The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis).

What is this dream's desire?

The dream's desire includes two aspects:

To extinguish the fire of sexuality and to extinguish life, as desire of death.

First aspect:

In the narrative, Who was life? Who represents life?: A woman, Odile.

This encounter of the burning, flaming bodies, those who are saved, not the body that bears the condition of survivor; in a failed encounter, in turn, because recovering the erotic body implies something terrifying, recovers the traces of pleasure, but does not distract him from the pain.

We read an articulation of sexuality and death: "*Only voluntary death could distract me from my pain. I left Odile, terrified by that experience*".

Second aspect:

Desire is the desire of death. That desire is the unsayable –not from the experience in the Lager anymore– but "*of the demise, that which cannot be lived*". Except to ease a pain, being it the essential investiture to cover something unbearable for the subject.

What does the dream tell us, in its different levels, that of the statement, that of the wunch, in elision and in enunciation?

This dream, articulator of the passage of being a survivor –that is, not remaining in the Other's enjoyment, in the condition of object to which they were reduced– and a possible attempt to have an encounter with a woman, without being so imbued with the real of death, so that he can bear "squandered love".

Does "extinguishing" tell us that it is necessary to process something else, between the real of the crematoria's ashes and the real of sex? Is it in the recurrence of **extinguishing** that we could locate an attempt to a symbolic articulation, through a formation of the unconscious, between life and death? Does it tell us anything about a passage between dying and living recovering the joy of life?

Drills and affected scrupulosity, necessary investitures to endure the pain of existence.

“In the final term of existence, there is no more pain than the pain of existing; of being subjected to the effects of castration”. Jacques Lacan, Seminar VI

The pain of existing, life and death change in the world of the signifier, which implies the effects produced by the signification of castration in a subject.

Finally: *“Nothing distracted me from my pain”.* *“The pain is linked to the pain of existence, when there is nothing else in him but existence itself, and when everything in this suffering tends to abolish this ineradicable term which is the desire to live”.* J. Lacan

In conclusion:

For Jorge Semprun, *“Writing would never erase this sorrow from memory; quite the contrary, it sharpened it, deepened it, made it unbearable... only forgetting could save me, only through writing can I assume this death, but writing literally forbids me to live”.*

There was not enough elaboration, connection between the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, those three dimensions of speech, could not be articulated yet.

The impossibility of writing in the third person, even more so in the first, carried the proximity of the deadly in writing, of those severe joys in each stroke.

Ha says in *Literature or Life*: *“The essential truth of experience is not transmissible, except through literary writing, through the artifice of the work of art, literature, not the mere description of horror but human exploration in the horror of evil”*

Later, through the creation of stories, through the characters in his novels, which will carry his “other names”, the names of war, the pseudonyms of secrecy, which hide another name, one’s name. This literary re-creation prevents him from being tied to the enjoyment of the real, something about the subject is written, recovering the traces around the hole.

For J. Lacan, writing is a trace where the effect of language can be read, therefore, is writing a support for enjoyment, when it is no longer deadly?

There are traces of that real that, being impossible, carves, only in the interlock with the Imaginary and the Symbolic the unbearable is bordered.

There is an ethics in which desire is at the center, from there, writing, which cannot be extinguished, informing the non-extermination of the traces of the subject, which can be letters, even so, there is a real which does not cease not being inscribed.

“The Real is the possible waiting to be written” Lacan tells us in Seminar XXIV

Novelization –in the different reconstructions through the journey of his work– the necessity of fiction, that slope of truth, causes the gap between the Real and the articulation in literary production to shrink, as an expression of the Symbolic, also connecting the Imaginary.

Does novelized writing inform the Symbolic of death?

In Semprun’s words: *“I have to create life with so much death, and writing is the best way to do it”*.

“To be distracted from yourself, from the existence that inhabits you, that takes possession, stubbornly and also obtusely: an obscure desire to continue existing, to persevere in that stubbornness, whatever the reason or no reason”.

This informs the title of this work: “desire and writing, what cannot be extinguished”.

Mónica Soledad Vidal

AME- Triempo, Institución Psicoanalítica

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