

## INHIBITION, SYMPTOM, AND ANXIETY IN TIMES OF PLAGUE:

### REFLECTIONS ON THE DEVICE.<sup>1</sup>

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"It is necessary for the plague to spread in Thebes so that the 'all' ceases to be purely symbolic and becomes imaginable."<sup>2</sup>

The "for all" of the COVID-19 pandemic reintroduced into discourse a signifier that humanity, at least in the West, supposed was a signifier of the past: Plague.

The "for all" of death is revealed especially as anxiety, "(...) the feeling that arises from the suspicion that we are reduced to our body."<sup>3</sup>

The anxiety of the pandemic is not a fear of fear. It is the impact on the *parlêtre* of a real that "forallmens" death.

An epidemic that affects bodies in the biological realm and the subject in the field of *lalangue*. Epidemic as a fact of discourse. Pandemic, coronavirus, confinement, social distance, new normality; these signifiers infect discourse. Inoculating a sense that burdens, inhibits, prevents the subject from linking to the enjoyments of life.

The traces of prolonged confinement are read in a deep difficulty in returning to everyday paths.

On the reverse side, one hears the dizzying frenzy of the manic exit, which risks renewing the party where the enjoyments of the market are consumed, before the next confinement.

What can analysts offer in the face of the reality of the pandemic and confinement?

If the clinic is the impossible real to bear, the challenge of our practice is to renew the bet on the analyst's desire that supports the cure transference by betting on the emergence of desire in a subject overwhelmed by confinement and isolation of the "new modernity".

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<sup>1</sup> VIII Congreso Internacional de *Convergencia, Movimiento Lacaniano por el Psicoanálisis Freudiano*. Barcelona, May 24, 25, 26 y 27th, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan. *RSI: Seminario XXII (1974-1975)* —inédito— Versión crítica. Establecimiento, traducción y notas de Ricardo Rodríguez Ponte para la *Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires*. Class N°. 2 (December 17th, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Lacan. *La tercera*. En: *Intervenciones y textos 2*. Buenos Aires: Manantial, 1988. p. 102

The call to this Congress challenges us. Online sessions have become more common. What are the consequences on our act and on the elaboration of our analysands?

Since Several years ago, I have included the resource of virtual sessions in certain situations in the analytical device.

Analysands who return to their cities after years of living in Buenos Aires, analysands who settle abroad. I accept the request to maintain the transference installed after years of analytical work.

The virtual session is a resource that I also value in certain moments of the journey, in situations that prevent the analysand from approaching the scene of the consulting room. Faced with the confinement imposed by the lockdown, I did not hesitate to offer the possibility of maintaining the cure in the virtual space.

A bond to the word in a time of generalized confusion, a bet on the intention to sustain ongoing analyses, in a circumstance of uncertainty and perplexity.

Freud analyzed in different circumstances outside the classical device. Lacan scandalized the practice by flexibilizing the rigid framework of the IPA. He also warned "that whoever cannot add to their horizon the subjectivity of their time should give up." <sup>4</sup>

A time where life on the screen threatens to reduce the possibility of a cure for the subject to a chatbot application. I began my practice in a general hospital inpatient psychiatric's ward. Many years spent with great interest in a clinic that does not conform to the device that Freud devised for neuroses gave my practice a flexibility that I value.

Reinventing a strategy every time to support the clinical treatment of madness has enhanced the craftsmanship required for every new patient, regardless of his structure.

I moved forward with virtual work with the conviction of a practice that was familiar to me. The analysand reinvented the scene: connecting from his attic, car, office, or some park. The possibility of meeting with the analyst allowed him to escape, at least for a moment, from the oppressive confinement and sustain his cure.

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan. *Función y campo de la palabra y del lenguaje en psicoanálisis*. En: *Escritos 1*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1985. p. 310. The translation is ours

What ethics should guide psychoanalytic practice today?

Within a politics that is the politics of desire, the politics of symptoms, the analyst can operate more freely in their tactics than in their strategy.

Lacan modified the timing of sessions by flexibilizing the established framework and provided the foundations for it.

The virtual space variant forces us to question the reasons that could authorize us to support this practice.

The variation in the framework requires us to interrogate, within the analyst's function of desire, the concepts of presence, *semblant*, and body. How can we think about presence in the virtual space?

Presence in virtuality is not in *absentia*.

What do we mean by presence? The presence of bodies?

The presence of the analyst is a manifestation of the unconscious.

"(...) the important thing is the confrontation of bodies" - Lacan teaches - Precisely because of starting from that encounter of bodies, they are out of play once we enter the analytical discourse.

If something called analytical discourse exists, it is because the analyst *en corps*, with all the ambiguity motivated by that term, installs the object *a* in the place of the *semblant*." <sup>5</sup>

Does virtual presence enable the same operation as real presence as support for the analytical act? "The capture of the analyst himself in the hollow of *a* that precisely constitutes the uninterpretable. Everything uninterpretable in the analysis is the presence of the analyst." <sup>6</sup>

Is this presence only verified if the analysand and analyst meet in real space?

The analyst *in corps*, with all the ambiguity motivated by that term, says Lacan.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan. *...o peor: Seminario XIX (1971-1972)*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2012. 224. The translation is ours.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*. p 226.

What body are we talking about? The body in psychoanalysis is not equal to the organism. Lacan offers writings to think about the body in psychoanalysis from the beginnings of his work.

"Body" is written in the Borromean knot in the ring of the imaginary. An imaginary body tied to the symbolic and the real. Three rings, three cords of the same consistency.

There is a body of the imaginary, a body of the symbolic, which is *lalangue*, and a body of the real.

The body is a topological matter. Knots, bulls, fabric, warp, and weft to intervene in an analysis. The body in psychoanalysis is a body that enjoys.

A speaking body where the narcissistic body is threaded to the pulsional body.

A body where traces of *lalangue* nest. A body that reacts to the impact of the voice.

"Pulsions are the echo in the body of the fact that there is a saying"<sup>7</sup>, which requires a sensitive body that responds to the imprint of the voice for this saying to resonate. The invoking drive shapes the drive body. Because I hear, I enjoy.

The voice also resonates in virtual and phone encounters.

It's the analyst's instrument that aims to modulate, temper, lighten, and attenuate the enjoyment that the superego orders.

The analyst's wager is to occupy the place of the *semblant* and make object *a* reign there.

It's from the place of *semblant* that enjoyment can be interpellated, evoked, harassed, and elaborated.

The voice, object *a*, in the place of *semblant* is the instrument for this operation.

The virtual space houses voice and gaze. The gaze is deposited, only requiring a turn of the camera.

The other drive objects are outlined in the plane of saying. We don't operate with them; they are condemned to abstinence. We can only operate with words, with the voice.

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Lacan. *El sinthoma: Seminario XXIII (1974-1975)* —inédito— Versión crítica. Establecimiento, traducción y notas de Ricardo Rodríguez Ponte para la *Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires*. Class 1 (November 18th 1975).

Analyst and analysand only exchange words.

Something is said, opportunity for an event on the plane of saying. An event that shakes the body, to undo with words what was made of words.

After confinement, it's time to return to real space. It remains the question of the analyses that cannot return to the in-person scene.

It's time to read, time to understand the effects of our act in the direction of the cures we lead.

Holding the questions that our practice raises, betting on the fruitful dialogue that the extension allows; every day, we bet on reinventing psychoanalysis.