

Ethics and Magna Moralia are still relevant?

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Lacan makes ethics the main focus of analytic practice, which in itself will produce the truth about desire, which is what subconsciously holds existence together. This is because ethics alludes to 'the exquisite singularity', whereas morals refers to 'the common or public good'. To do this, he begins with differentiating ethics from morals. In addition, in that seminar Lacan proposes that analytical work does not entail removing a symptom, instead it shows the complex unconscious web that links this symptom with other aspects of life, even with other symptoms making it a subjective positioning responsible for the way in which symptoms appear and affect life.

In *'Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue'*, Sade presents two sisters that faced against orphanhood decide to choose different paths. Juliette allows herself to live her desires, unlike Justine that runs away from everything that is socially unacceptable. Sade wants to show the double moral that rules the lives of all people; even those considered pure and good. Thus, Justine has a terrible and vile life as a result of not accepting 'life as it is' but trying to live it as 'it should be'. Sade's style criticises this fake and hypocritical social ways veiled by the halo of morality. Sade found himself in the 'french moralists' current that criticise those 'good habits' that are in reality fake and hypocritical. Sade spearheads this perspective alongside Jean Lafontaine, François de la Rochefoucauld, and Baltasar Gracián among not many others. Sade proposes several thesis in which he confronts the desire of the characters against societal prohibitions, the public against the private.

Taking 'Justin's virtue' as a pretension originating from her suffering, and the issue of if self-censorship is worth it, Lacan shows that suffering has a worth, but not on the measuring unit of desire, but in that of jouissance.

Of course, being 'good' is the profit (in terms of *jouissance*) of suffering, of not listening to oneself's desire. It will be the super-ego who will reward sacrifices, the one who applauds and uses the guilt to keep its hegemony and submit to *jouissance*, in the way that it is the measurement of life. Morals is the reign of *jouissance* imperatives, but there is also a protagonist which is valuing the subject of enunciation, the *Moi*, the acting of the person understood as the mask, the character that follows a script, the Ego that delights in *jouissance*, and that looking at itself says: 'what a lovely person I am', 'so self giving and good',

Hence, Confucius, Kant, and Sade, show the ways of this submission and the way of legitimising it. But, as with everything, dialectics (as Hobbes says) makes 'man the wolf to man'; this is why they try to defend themselves from those akin to them. This is exemplified in more depth in the text 'Discourse on Voluntary Servitude' by Étienne de La Boétie, that puts in evidence 'herd's morals' as Nietzsche called it; without forgetting that if there is a herd, so do wolves and shepherds. The herd makes its members think that protection comes from becoming one with the group: fear is an important component of being a member of the herd, which necessitates founding oneself in the current of *jouissance* and in the ways of administering it, but that way of facing life is guarded by morals. Which, among historical changes (as Giacomo Leopardi suggests), morphs to appear different but being the same in its core.

According to Sade, a libertine is one who perceives societal trickeries, and doesn't fall victim to them.

But Hegel should also be considered. He says that it is not the master that makes the slave, but the slave that legitimises the master. It is the slave that creates their own position of slavery due to fear; and the master can exponentiate it and transform it into slavery. And thus both assume their places in those asymmetric roles.

Following this line of reasoning, Lacan disputes the paradoxical situation in which Antigone is, which on the one hand can follow the instructions of her despotic uncle and father in law,

Creonte, that reigns creating the city's laws, and that blocks the funerary tramits of her brother Polyneices; on the other hand she can follow the 'Diké' laws (of the moral tradition) and bury him. The letter's price is death and as we know this crossroads makes Antigona face a simple question: 'Could I continue living knowing that my brother is a restless spirit roaming for the rest of eternity? The answer isn't clear, she can't survive obeying the mandate of the tyrant, that wouldn't be living. Therefore she faces the dilemma of her two possible deaths, one in which she obeys and lives (comparable to slowly dying in permanent agony) or the other in which she dies, burying her brother.

Symbolic and physical death lead Antigona outside of the realm of morals in service of the jouissance that means to obey the laws of the city, and instead faces it, her desire leads her to oppose the tyrannical mandate: thus realising that living is much more than just being. Things are but they do not exist. Where should she place herself then? On the side of the common man, the Dasman, the character? Or on the side of the hero, the Dasein, the subject of desire?

For this reason it should be clear that ethics concerns the passage of the person to be able to notice his moral submission; and, thanks to this, change their subjective position and place themselves held to the truth about their desire.

Consequently it is the job of analytic work that the analyzand finds their empty word, their hollow speech, their place as a person, their vassalage to the jouissance's imperatives, their place in the world as a *Moi*; so that, originating from psychoanalysis, their full word can come forth, that is to say the truth about desire that holds an existence together. Or as Lacan suggests in that seminar, a 'good speech', to be interested in being concerned with this speech, in this subsumed ethics of going deeper than just symptoms to understand that those are not the real problems, but the effect of others so that it can lead to a change in subjective positioning, hence making them face their life problems in a different way. Any change in subjective positioning necessitates an ethical attitude.

Of course there is a moral psychology proposition that creates a series of ideals around the medical confrontation with the symptom, but, as with any ideal, it doesn't have any other purpose than making the super-ego stronger. Lacan's proposed ethics in this seminar is not related with the ethics that main objective is protecting health, as it happens in the hippocratic oath, whose main objective is the positioning of the health professional; it is a moral oath. Analysts promote a device that allows whoever pays for the session to analyse their symptoms, their discomforts, their inhibitions, etc. Discover the way of a subjective positioning, that allows them to get out of the ever static '*furor analizandis*'; so that they can change the way they live their lives, because this is the reason for their discomfort. This is the ethics plane that allows positioning oneself in a different way faced with the symptoms, knowing what to do with them, even in a plane of sublimation (as Lacan proposed), of giving the object the place of the Thing. This requires a transubstantiation of sorts faced with the Thing, but also faced with the symptoms, allowing them to stop being an obstacle and the origin of suffering, to transform them into even an art, from the brokerage of a contraption, an artefact (*arte-factum*), that, at another time, will be called *Sinthome*. The 'cursed poets' exemplify this process of transmutation of pain into poetry. A face off against the Thing and the Other, that doesn't go any further than the senses, not further than proportion, of the relation of complementarity, that is the effect of a constituent active lack; noticing the compulsion of filling it with anything, because the emptiness is unbearable to the 'character we want to be', the one that gets scared and hides their own violence. It is an ethic and an aesthetic (in the freudian and aristotelian sense) that services the truth about desire; which is why Lacan said: 'I propose that the only thing that can cause someone guilt, at least from an analytical perspective, is having renounced to one's desire' (Lacan p.379)



