

Psychoanalysis and Alienation

The invitation to this meeting aroused in me the interest to write on Psychoanalysis and Alienation.

My own clinical practice, which I carry out in the city of Buenos Aires, led me to this point in research when, upon receiving a 50 year old man in dread and under the influence of others, I went back to thinking over and reviewing the alienation mechanism.

In his adolescence, the man had attended a prestigious school in the city. At the time, he was carried away by the *influence* and, at the same time, the *shelter* afforded by a classmate who would later on become a political leader. What one might call a leader of masses, according to Sigmund Freud's concepts in his 1921 text.

There, the author reconsiders the term *suggestion*, studied repeatedly in social psychology, to contribute a psychoanalytical approach going beyond the descriptive characteristic known until then. Freud underscores the *libidinal* issue present at the heart of suggestion, a matter which is at stake every time that the leader is able to capture the mass as a result of his prestige, understanding prestige mostly in connection to power. I would like to point out that *mass* is a relational modality which may even be constituted between any two persons whenever there is a perfect fitting between them, that is to say, no gaps, they fit hand in glove. This happens when one of the subjects allows the other to engulf him completely.

In the above text, Freud says that in suggestion there is a *primary affective induction*. He affirms: susceptibility to suggestion is a primary phenomenon of any subject's psychic life.

It is all about libido, sexuality, and, ultimately, love. Libido derives from *Liebe*, which means love in German.

During panic phenomena, such as may be observed in army mass dissolutions, for example, what may be noted is that given the lack of leader authority and protection, a man must take charge of himself. The orders of chiefs lose their value, stop being obeyed, and each individual is on his own. At that point, a tremendous, senseless fear appears.

This is exactly what this man reports when he mentions that his parents evicted him, considering that, as an adolescent, he was ready to fend for himself; his life starts to be ruled by this classmate turned into a leader who cared for him, oriented him, and commanded his steps.

He would contact his leader friend in the middle of the night if he felt confused, destitute; his friend would listen and calm him down.

This alienation, he keeps saying, continued for quite a while, until their own academic and work interests entered into collision. At that time, and on the basis of political-philosophical principles, the "leader" admonishes him, threatening with cutting off his support and protection, with leaving him in distress.

This might set us thinking that this man was a sort of "Zelig".

You will surely remember the famous film by Woody Allen where, back in the 1920s, a man becomes famous as a science object of study because he changes his appearance to suit who he meets on his way.

It is someone who keeps adapting continuously, astonishingly, to the environment in which he lives, like a chameleon. If in Harlem, he appears like an Afro-American singing Gospel. He is then seen in military parades imitating Hitler, or otherwise converting to Buddhism in a Buddhist surrounding... Thus, his extreme lack of self-assurance leads him to camouflage among people in order to fit in the different groups.

Finally, when he falls in love with Dr. Fletcher, his psychoanalyst, he makes progress in his recovery, so the film depicts.

The film-maker's wit and humor recreate exquisitely what in medicine has been dubbed the ZELIG syndrome –what in psychoanalysis we might think of as the state of alienation where a subject finds himself at the point of not having been able to effectuate thoroughly the separation operation.

Alienation, and separation are both discussed by Lacan in Seminar 11. He describes to us how a subject comes from the Other, but, at the same time, must separate from the Other,

that is to say, be able to attack the signifying battery stemming from those Others in those interstices which render separation possible. A matter which the author defines, in the same seminar, as halting, birthing oneself, providing for oneself with the necessary to be cared for by others.

Conversely, in the field of neurosis - the way we refer to it today - we would be stranded in the *false self*, such as defined by the great psychoanalyst, Winnicott.

The question that has brought us to this point is:

Is the Subject supposed to Know as *tromperie*, a way to alienate oneself in order to be cured?

What kind of bond does psychoanalysis offer, given that the work is done on the basis of transference?

In fact, occasionally, I have heard people say that they do not analyze themselves because they do not wish to depend on anyone.

However, the purpose of an analysis is most certainly not the one of leading a subject to alienation. Much to the contrary, being able to live better, each their own way, is a possible sense for any given psychoanalysis.

But why, then, the suggestion that transference is necessary to enter into analysis – a sort of turnaround to the other based on the trust and devotion granted?

The key lies with the analyst's stance. The analyst will never use transference as a tool for his own sake, but rather as a lever for analytical work.

Leading a horse to water is an expression we find in "The Direction of the Cure", describing this situation like an aphorism. You cannot do a job without the necessary preparation.

How could someone bear the dessaisissement (disengagement) of the other's authority, thus abandoning the object position, without holding on to transferential love for a while?

Freud warned us already: nobody gives up a symptomatic position if there is no benefit to be obtained somewhere else.

The substantial difference between the transference proposed by the analytical device to get work started, and the alienation proposed by the leader of masses, is that in the former the *tromperie* will not be used to abuse the Enjoyment of the other.

Whereas the commander of a mass only wishes to obtain the subject's obedience and submission, the analyst does not argue his own position to the alienated subject.

We point out that the only guarantee to preserve abstinence, -the position of the analyst in the direction of the cure – will be given by the analysis the analyst will have done, having worked to the best of his ability the distinction between *object a* and the Ideal of the I.

What does the above mean?

Unlike the leader of masses, the analyst does not position himself in the place of the Ideal. He does not stand there as Socrates describes in *The Banquet*; that is why he is in a position to *interpellate the object that the subject is*. If at all possible, he does so until it has been emptied of being. The road taken is the road that leads towards mourning, whereas the work involves the loss of the object.

Let me insist that it is not about melancholization but bereavement, and at this point, we once again go back to Freud and his essential distinction between one and the other. If in melancholia the object falls on the ego by the weight of the crushing ideal, in mourning we talk about consenting to the loss of the object. Based on this psychic work, desire will advent - the libidinal source for creation within each person's scale, unique, singular.

Let everyone grow his own garden – Freud's hinting to Voltaire in *Civilization and its Discontents (Das Unbehagen in der Kultur)*; hence, the ethics of psychoanalysis moves contrary to the direction in which masses are created.