

BARBARIAN INVASIONS:

what can Psychoanalysis do?¹

SUMMARY

The need to work on the ethical dimension of the psychoanalytic act today brings up the question about the limits of its action, in a time when the insistence on veiling the *Real* and the confrontation with the impossibility of doing so shows the narcissistic wound of humanity. There is a hole in the knowledge! A pandemic exposes this truth and the tragic effect of wanting to go beyond this limit.

INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis burst into the world by a subversive act. It emerges as a field permeable to the clinic, which was the fertile ground of its foundation. However, Sigmund Freud, its founder, hoped that his invention could

1 Text presented at the VIII International Congress of Lacanian Convergence-Movement for Freudian Psychoanalysis, *WHAT IS THE ETHICS FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC PRACTICE NOW?*, May 24, 25, 26 and 27, 2023. Work group: Psychoanalysis today: Poetics, Ethics and Politics. Members: Norton Cesar Dal Follo da Rosa Jr - APPOA, Nathalia Figueira - ELP-RJ, Maria Teresa Cristina P. Nazar - ELP-RJ, Darlene V. Gaudio Angelo Tronquoy - ELPV, Caroline Fabrício - ELP-RJ, Maria Cecilia Oliveira - ELPV, Maria Celeste Faria - ELPV, Eliana dos Reis, Betancourt - ELP-RJ, Filipe Leitzke Leme - ELP-RJ, Flávia Chiapetta de Azevedo - ELP-RJ, Lucia Serrano Pereira - APPOA, José Nazar - ELP-RJ, Renata Conde Vescovi - ELPV, APPOA, Marta Pedó - APPOA.

contribute to the understanding of culture and its perpetual discontent. Freud did not isolate the "individual" from his time, on the contrary, he takes him as subject passing the events in the social and vice-versa, that is, there is not one without within the other. Hence the Lacanian statement that the psychoanalyst's "ethical duty" is to be able to welcome/listen to the Real of the subject in his experience, which is not without this of his contemporaneity. Therefore, in its subversive vocation, psychoanalysis - the psychoanalysts - need to be equally permeable to what is happening in the social of their time. Thus, an interrogation on the ethics that guides the analytic praxis becomes indispensable to the survival of psychoanalysis itself, for, contrary to the logic of the current discourses, it is an ethics that does not foreclude the impossible and points to the fact that there is a hole in the knowledge that can interrogate totalitarian/totalizing truths.

We have just gone through a pandemic that, with its terrible immediate effects and its after-effects, caused something of the unrepresentable object to invade the scene of the world, opening a window, just as we talk about the window of fantasy, forcing us to reflect about what has no possible representation there, like a picture without an image, a void without a story around which time has been suspended. This traumatic point of the unspeakable, inaudible and unrepresentable, tragic, to name it, erupted in life, reminding us of our extreme vulnerability and transience, violently shaking our certainties about all fields of knowledge, politics, science, about

our "civilization"! And it shook us, shaking the foundations of our daily practice, putting everything, absolutely everything, in question. We were invaded, barbarically!

THE BARBARIC AND THE TRAGIC

In the common language of our times, the term barbarian is opposed to the term civilized, just as the word barbarism is considered to be opposed to civilization. When we go back to the origins of the word barbarian, we find it in ancient Greece. There, people who didn't speak the Greek language, didn't share the same culture, customs, social and political organization practiced by the Greeks; however, the "barbarians" had their own language, traditions and culture.

For the Greeks, and later for the Romans, the *foreigner* was seen as uncultured, uncivilized, that is, not following their ways of life. However, we will start from the assumption that the "barbarian" inhabits every human being: it is the dimension of *hybris*, of unrestraint, condition of the tragic and, at the same time, what destines man to live in a group, to experience the conflict, the discontent in the culture (un)oriented by the effects of history and politics of his time. The tragic experience, for psychoanalysis, is distinct from the common conception of the tragic as "disastrous". From a psychoanalytic perspective, this constitutes the very condition of the subject, of its constitutive division.

Although we do not find in Freud a clear reflection on the concept of tragic, we know the influence of Goethe and the ancient tragedies in the Freudian text, especially the dimension of the irreconcilable presented by the tragedy *Oedipus Rex*. Goethe (apud VERNANT, p. 54-61), in turn, was based on the idea that the tragic is contradiction, this irreconcilable, conflict that does not admit solution: "terrible, unavoidable event of human action within an accommodated and familiar situation" (GOETHE apud VERNANT, p. 54-61). It is a familiarity governed by *hamartia*, the profound ignorance, or even the impossible to know. By revealing the face of the Real, the tragic event questions and subverts the realms of human understanding with its excesses of knowledge and judgment, just as the Ancient Tragedy taught us, which established, notably through the function of the chorus, a limit, an impossible between *ideal* and *real*.

Stefan Zweig (2013, p. 14), for example, when clarifying that the tragic tension in someone does not result from the greatness of his action, but from the impossible harmony between his humanity and his destiny - voted to death - reminds us that the personal tragedy that results from this promotes learning about the practical wisdom, *phronesis*, coming from a unique and untransferable experience. Therefore, the tragic experience has an ethical and political dimension, since experiencing it creates a sense of life that is both shared and unique. Choosing to act responsibly about one's act is only possible when one extracts from personal tragedy some knowledge, revealing certain patterns. One of the patterns of action is the result of the

opposition between the passions and their limits, a common point between the tragic experience and that of an analytic journey. Thus one psychoanalysis gains its action and potency because it includes the tragic dimension in a subject's experience as a possibility for the subject to bear the Real of life, the *Unheimlich*, and acts out the ethical aphorism: "did you act according to your desire?", instead of being carried away by your passions?

The idea of the limits of desire - since there is no desire or freedom without Law - is only possible through an act that implies the tragic dimension capable of barring the phantasm of an endless jouissance that, today, permeates the most private phantasms, although marked by social symptoms.

The "to act according to one's desire" supports, on the analyst's side, the ethics of a praxis that allows him to approach questions about the passages to the act today, about the destinies of hate and jouissance in the clinic and in society. On the analysand's side, it gives him a certain margin of choice that he overcomes with imaginary and alienating identifications.

Therefore, in the structural and structuring tragic perspective, we have the original hatred that feeds exclusion and segregation processes for those who present themselves as different to a certain collective. This is what makes the barbarian no longer a "nomad/stranger", a point of the Real unknown in ourselves, but a threatening enemy that "comes from outside", and therefore must be excluded or eliminated. The "barbarian" presents itself, at each time in history, as remedy or as poison of the human condition. When, in culture,

the predominance is that of hate without possible symbolization, it is poison, it instigates segregation, the "politics of enmity" in which the other assumes the face of the enemy who I must exterminate/cancel.

In the remedy strand, the barbarian is the *ex-timo* that inhabits us, it is the dimension of what is strange/familiar to us. So, if we can bear to listen to the voice of the barbarian as an echo of our own voice without expelling it as an invader, it is possible to make room for the diversity, the uniqueness of its culture, the musicality of its language, which can set us to reinvent by saying better what we didn't even know existed in us.

Our time seems to experience a certain predominance of living under the aegis of primary narcissism, which works with the logic of "either me or the other", time of the psychic constitution of the expulsion of what is unpleasant, of the "good inside and the bad outside"; time of a paranoid logic inherent, however, to every psychic constitution, which invades the social bond producing the annihilation of the dissonant, of those who do not conform to the "hell of equals", of the so-called "angels, civilized" who believe that countries end in the lines of their borders, as Eduardo Galeano shows us (1979). Our time - and there is no lack of evidence of this - seems to insist on the abolition of the tragic.

WHAT CAN PSYCHOANALYSIS DO?

Can psychoanalysis, today, maintain its vigor and virulence in the face of the so many resistance already faced and, currently, in front of the profound

changes in its the setting imposed by the confinement of the recent pandemic?

Can psychoanalysis sustain itself in the face of the incidence of countless discourses that promise to suture the impossible, the incurable wounds of the real of death and sexuality?

In order for it to survive, which paths, should we, analysts, follow?

Freud had already warned us that the "progress" illuminated by democratic ideals and scientific advances does not walk sheltered from the darkness of destruction, apart from the *Todestrieb*. But what is currently shown in the social bond - and symptomatically, in clinical practice - that has fomented hate?

We should ask ourselves about psychoanalysis and the act that implies the psychoanalyst in his function. Correlated to the *poetic act*, the *psychoanalytic act* equivocates and produces holes and porosities in the totalitarianism of equals, producing, whether in the social bond or in subjectivity, the stripping away of the narcissism of small differences, letting us hear the singularities and sound dissonances without having to destroy them. How to insist on the Real that resists being embraced by a single language, code, or even by a policy that claims to be universal and that supports itself on the expense of segregation and the fabrication of an enemy, the barbarian to be eliminated?

The Cameroonian writer Achille Mbembe (2021, p. 12-13), in his work *Políticas da Inimizade*, tells us that the expansion of ultraliberal capitalism and imperialism on a global scale culminated in the beginning of the twenty-

first century, within liberal democracies, endorsing and provoking habits of exception and exclusion of those who are at odds with the ideals of the Other. Exercising, "the dictatorship against themselves and against enemies", this new world order has fostered direct relations between *legitimated violence to the enemy and the law, between the norm and the exception, between the state of war, the state of security and the state of freedom*. The logic of this expansion collapsed the democratic projects aimed at preserving capital, engendering what Mbembe named "politics of enmity". Immersed in anguish and annihilation, many fear invasion by the enemy. Whole peoples no longer believe in an outside world, and so they multiply enclosures to protect themselves from threat and danger. Not wanting to remember anything else, much less their own crimes and transgressions, they create "bad objects" that come to haunt them, and then try to get rid of them: of refugees, of colonized people looking for better conditions in the land of their colonizers, for example, Mbembe reminds us (2021, p. 12-13).

The subjectivity of our time does not widen - even though, as never before, the welcome speeches of inclusion proliferate - the circle in the bid to include the one who is different from us. Borders, brutal elements today, have often become primitive ways of keeping enemies and intruders at bay. They are no longer lines that can be crossed: instead, militarized, they separate, immobilize, and electrocute (MBEMBE, 2021, p. 12-13).

Considering that this is the way our times have been going, questions arise: in the face of what we are experiencing, can the other, the support of our

humanity, still be considered similar? If the *extimate* otherness that inhabits us, the *Unheimlich*, the barbarian in us has been reduced to the dimension of an enemy to be exterminated, can we still consider another person and watch over him if the one I take care of aims at my ruin? the Cameroonian author makes us reflect (MBEMBE, 2021, p. 12-13).

It is a fact that the pandemic has profoundly shaken the certainties about the current state of so-called "civilization" and, at the same stroke, the pillars of our current practice - how is it to analyze today? - perhaps like never before after the introduction of the "logical time" by Lacan. At that moment, however, the "cause" of the shake-up came from the clinic itself. Now, we were forced to question our "habits" by a crossing of Real that came "from outside" and woke us up! Each one of us had to reinvent our way of receiving and listening to our patients, remembering the Freudian maxim, and its Lacanian consequence, of the "impossible to psychoanalyze". It was necessary to keep going!

For these and other reasons, these post-pandemic times have made indispensable, and urgent, a deepening about what we have been approaching, namely: the proliferation of hate speech, the totalitarianism of identities, the "virtualization" of life, the difficulty of new generations of parents in transmitting the law of renunciation that allows the bond with the other - remembering the old and always current Freud -, the transmission of the law of the interdiction of incest. Today, far from this, what tends to be in force is the "right" to renounce nothing, much less our impulses to aggressiveness

and to "possess an object", as if it existed. These new times are thus propitious to rethink the question of the psychoanalyst's training, considering all the changes in the analytic setting that we have not yet stopped listing: how can they have a teaching effect?

It takes courage to transform the struggle between Tânatos and Eros into some harmony, rhythm, and image - at least those that Art, for example, provides us -, as the poet Octavio Paz suggests when he takes the title of his book from Heraclitus' philosophy. The bow and the lyre are not opposites, they are two ways of saying that the instruments need to be operated by agents instructed in how to make them vibrate, which implies extracting from each one the semi-saying of its truths. A psychoanalysis carried to a good term, can franchise a small margin of freedom to the subject making it possible to take back something of the original rhythm of *lalangue* that repeats the poem of life in act, without any anticipated sound, introducing the possibility of an invention. "Man pours himself into the rhythm, the mark of his temporality; the rhythm, in turn, declares itself in the image; and the image returns to man whenever some lips repeat the poem" (PAZ, 2012, p. 123).

ETHICS/AESTHETICS/EROTICS: POETIC ACT VS. PSYCHOANALYTIC ACT

By no means it wasn't by chance - one year of Lacan's seventh Seminar is devoted to ethics. Starting from Aristotelian ethics, subverting it, Lacan introduces it from the perspective of psychoanalysis, that is, he goes from the

field of *morality* to the field of *desire* and, in this wake, he tells us about sublimation, aesthetics, and erotics as important clinical indications.

We will not develop this theme, but we will highlight what Lacan says (*Staferla* Version, p. 9) in the mentioned *Seminar 7*, in which he questions psychoanalysis taking into account the numerous new symptoms in the field of erotics of our time. His question is: "Why did psychoanalysis not take things further in the direction of the investigation of what we should call *an erotics* properly speaking?", in view of the fact that it was able to bring an important change of perspective concerning the problems of moral experience and love in relation to philosophical and moralistic approaches by placing them at the center of the ethical experience?

In fact, it was about what Lacan spent the rest of his *Seminars* inventing, whether from the formulas of sexuation, logic, or topology. This was even what the Freudian experiment unveiled: the relation *in absentia* between the symptom and the real of sex and death. We can, then, reflect on what Lacan proposes with his interrogation, but considering our initial question: in the face of the barbarian and the irreconcilable of our condition that, not infrequently, either in clinical or social settings, appear in their faces of hatred and destruction, what can psychoanalysis do?

We want, in this way, to include something of the aesthetic dimension, sustaining that the ethics of psychoanalysis is also nourished by Art, making an approximation between the *poetic act* and the psychoanalytic act, considering, of course, their distinctions. We bet on the importance of a

reflection from an ethics of the Real that should guide an analytic path considering this proximity because, even if the analyst is not a poet, his or her act, insofar as it equivocates, as the poetic act equivocates language, puts on the scene the unspoken: *l'une bévue*, the unconscious.

We affirm that, like the Art that is built around, better, that creates a void, the ethics of psychoanalysis and the act that sustains it is the practice of not veiling that void. What Lacan presents as sublimation is that it tries to close the edges of the real hole, creating it, highlighting them, with signifiers: the *void* and the *impossible* to suture it! The ethics of psychoanalysis is the ethics of saying good things as a fertile field for creating emptiness.

Having said this, we ask ourselves: do the current changes in the analytic setting to which the pandemic has led us, question or not the statute of the analytic act? To what extent do they "alter", intervene or not, in the position of the analyst in his act in that which depends on transference, on the strength of the analyst's desire, on the ethics that guide him? "Outside of what I have called the management of transference, there is no psychoanalytic act", says Lacan (1967-68, p. 29), because it is the act that intervenes in the symptom, breaks with the meaning in it, bringing out the dimension of its truth, making a hole in the knowledge from where something of its fearful jouissance may flow. The bet is that we can, as best we can, virtually or presentially, *maintain the conditions of the analytic act*. It seems evident, but this remains in the order of each case, of the one to one, yet it has taken us out of a certain comfort, perhaps even out of a sleepiness...

But *what makes an act an analytic act* thanks to which psychoanalysis, "it does something" (LACAN, 1967-68, p. 4)? even if this "it does" is not enough? Poetry, Lacan will tell us, also "does something. However, the "it does something" of psychoanalysis would not be in the same sense as poetry, because the act that characterizes psychoanalytic work profoundly implies the subject whose dimension, introduced by psychoanalysis, has renewed what was enunciated as subject as such and that is called the unconscious... and in such a way that it, there, is put into act, hence its dependence in relation to transference, which is nothing other than the "putting into act of the unconscious" (Idem, p. 4). The result of the poetic act is poetry, whereas that of the analytic act is a *saying*: "*Saying is an act*" (LACAN, 1974-75, p. 80) that implies the dimension of the subject.

In spite of this distinction, in *The Seminar, book 24, L'insu...*, Lacan brings together the *analytic act* and the *poetic act*, linking them in their functions of equivocation, of breaking the meaning that both operate on the discourse, being able to "awaken the truth", because it, the truth, can fall asleep, for this reason, "it depends on the tone in which it is said" (LACAN, 1976-77, p. 93). Taking into account what he could "learn" from Chinese poetry, its calligraphy, Lacan invites analysts to also extract a seed from it, referring to the "forcings" triggered by the *analytical act*, which requires a singular form of incidence of the presence of the analyst, who will operate with his *savoir y faire*, with his *know how there*.

Even if psychoanalysis does not constitute progress, as Lacan states, we cannot fail to consider that the subjectivity modifies itself depending on the symbolic/imaginary conditions to which humanity tries to submit, tame, and even outflank the Real that supports our human condition. In this way, we cannot stop questioning our practice before the ebullitions of the current discontent forgetting that an analysis does not necessarily produce poets, but can turn a subject, himself, into a poem, addressing the Real with its unique musicality!

So, if the *poetic act* reduces and breaks into the language and thus poetry emerges, the *psychoanalytic act* reduces, breaks into, and equivocates the symptom, being able to cause to resonate, through the equivocation, the Real of *lalangue*, allowing a subject to poetize his experience, being able to give value of *sinthome* to what before, *jouissantly*, was only pain and suffering.

And if we can approximate *the poetic act* to the *psychoanalytic act* on the psychoanalyst's side, on the other hand, it is necessary to observe the function of poetic making, of *poetic writing* on the side of the one that surrenders to analysis. Perhaps this is a possibility so that a subject may, going at least a little beyond what his original fantasy allowed him, (re)invent *one, his own*, erotic!

REFERENCES

GALEANO, Eduardo. *As veias abertas da América Latina*. São Paulo: LPM Editora, 1979.

LACAN, Jacques. *Le Seminaire, livre 7: l'éthique -1959-60, versão online Staferla* (Inédito).

_____. *Le Seminaire, livre 15: l'acte psychanalytique-1967-68, versão online Staferla* (Inédito).

_____. *Le Seminaire, livre 22 : RSI – 1974-75, versão online Staferla* (Inédito).

_____. *Le Seminaire, livre 24 : L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre-1976-77, versão online Staferla* (Inédito).

MBEMBE, Achille. *Políticas da Inimizade*. n-1Edições, Abril 2021, p 12/13).

PAZ, Octavio. *O arco e a lira*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2012.

VERNANT, Jean-Pierre e NAQUET-VIDAL. «Édipo sem Complexo», in: *Mito e Tragédia na Grécia antiga*, São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2005.

ZWEIG, Stefan. *Maria Antonieta*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2013.