

For an ethics of a singular practice

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Psychoanalysis is not a science, it is a practice.

Lacan, December 2, 1975

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At the end of his seminar about ethics, Lacan questions the reason for a request for analysis. What can be asked of the analyst? He answers straightforwardly: happiness. Such an accepted commitment is not without ethical consequences. In a crossing of this relationship to the unconscious, to this question of happiness as the heart of the request for healing, what promise can the analyst give? Nothing other than his desire. An unprecedented and informed desire. A desire of the Other directed towards knowledge. A desire tied to that famous Lacanian imperative "not to give in on one's desire".

As we know, ethics cannot be reduced to a simple question of morality or social norms. It concerns the way in which the subjects, in analysis, position themselves in their relationship to their desire and their jouissance. Ethics in psychoanalysis, the ethics of the psychoanalyst and positions that we must not cease to question: such a meeting of several analytic associations is an unparalleled moment to take up this question once again.

First of all and on behalf of the European Foundation for Psychoanalysis, I would like to recognise this congress as a major event for psychoanalysis. More than thirty associations gathered from all over the world, which is certainly an achievement considering that our discipline has the particularity of having several institutions in each country. This gives plural approaches, sometimes even divisions on doctrinal points as demonstrated by the numerous splits we experience within the same association or between societies, the conflicts and the ruptures. When this is not the case, there is another path to follow: that of group ideal, where the risk of ideology is high. With, as Maud Mannoni reminded us, its sacrificial victims, its violence, its tyrannies. One might think that with the experience of analysis, analysts would be better able to spot the issues at stake and in particular those related to tensions, conflicts of status and power rivalries. But we have to note, in the light of the history of psychoanalysis, that this is not the case and that *frérocité*, to use Lacan's good word, is never very far away. Not to mention what Jean Clavreul reminded us in a text entitled *Ethique*: "Psychoanalytical societies communicate poorly with each other and end up adopting a language of their own, which ultimately functions as a metalanguage accessible only to the initiated and which thus becomes a language of mastery.

However, in *L'Eau et les Rêves*, Gaston Bachelard wrote that "In the battle of mankind against the world, it is not the world that begins". We can wager that mankind, and for this congress, the psychoanalyst, will be able to take initiatives, to make good use of his knowledge, his creativity and his perseverance to overcome the challenges. That we can share, enrich ourselves and, why not, argue (in the noble sense of *disputatio*, the keystone of the transmission and production of knowledge). For this reason, I would like to warmly thank the Convergencia movement, the initiators and organisers of this congress for allowing us this fruitful moment of encounter.

Within the framework of these institutional presentations, I found it difficult to position my intervention as the result of our association's political orientation taken in recent years. I would like to emphasise that, in line with the proposals of Gérard Pommier and a few others, the FEP has supported, defended and committed itself, through its initiatives, to putting the question of the repressed feminine and violence against women at the heart of its work, its colloquiums and its writings, as well as restoring the centrality of what makes structure for a subject, the prohibition of incest and denouncing the growing hegemony of neuroscience.

Amongst all our work in relation to the theme of this congress, I have chosen to take up two often debated ethical points centred around the authority of knowledge.

We know that there is no universal of knowledge. Freud and Lacan never ceased, in their teachings, to question, think about and shake up psychoanalysis and its concepts. Thus, in 1937, Freud wrote: "analysis does not work with unlimited powers, but with restricted powers", reminding us that the unconscious is defined as a knowledge that is not known.

The therapy makes us pass from the love of knowledge to the desire to know. And it is undoubtedly from this desire to know that the teaching of psychoanalysis is nourished. The transfer of work, as Lacan calls it, underlining how much this desire is the motor of a possible teaching from one subject to another.

With this ethical transmission goes a knowledge, as it has always been the case at the F.E.P. A questioned knowledge, far from total and absolute which hence allows a psychoanalysis that is linked to the unexpected: an afterwards clinical theory happening later rather than beforehand. A fictional theory, so that it does not become a defence against what the subject says, which is an essential condition for something to be able to emerge from the unconscious.

In the footsteps of Lacan, we continue at the FEP to defend that psychoanalysis does not have to take its place among the sciences, but without ignoring the way science perceives psychoanalysis. And this is no easy task. It must be noted that many voices are being raised to question this over a century-old practice. A practice that made one of the most eminent figures of European literature of the first half of the 20th century, Thomas Mann, say that once the Freudian discovery (of the unconscious) had been made, "it could never disappear again".

And yet, to quote just one of these voices, a neuropsychologist and professor at the Collège de France very recently hammered it home that "there is unfortunately in France an enormous residual influence of psychoanalysis (...). You have to know that it is an old theory. (...) it has been overtaken by the recent discoveries of cognitive sciences and neurosciences. (...) our country must overcome this state and be able to take into account the data of the sciences (...)".

The result: a virtual foreclosure of the *psychoanalysis* signifier in favour of research findings limited to the neurosciences and artificial intelligence. In France, following the 2021 conference on mental health and psychiatry, 80 million euros have been earmarked for a psychiatry of the future based on three research axes: genetic risk factors, the redefinition of the functional modules involved in mental disorders, and pharmaceutical repositioning. A programme focused on therapeutic responses, centred on transcranial stimulation, psychoeducation, and cognitive and behavioural therapies. On behalf of a knowledge authority, on the one hand a pure and simple exit from the importance of psychoanalysis in the advances of today's psychiatry. On the other hand, a limitation of the psyche to the simple function of the organ and to a functioning of chemical interactions. An unacceptable orientation that amounts to silencing the subject and his desire.

With psychoanalysts, we should be careful not to give in to the illusions and attraction of constituted knowledge, or even an idealised psychoanalysis. In the moment of culture in which we find ourselves, with the current war events, criminality, state repression, sexual violence, the violence of insults and humiliation, psychoanalysts are invited to provide answers. They are invited to give their interpretation, to shed light on one social and political phenomenon or another, sometimes without much caution. During his North American conferences, Lacan even went so far as to say that "we have no way of knowing if the unconscious exists outside of psychoanalysis".

Let's not forget the Freudian answer is clear and unequivocal: psychoanalysis is above all a practice. In 1923 Freud wrote: "But we also demand that anyone who wants to practice analysis on others should begin by undertaking one themselves." Lacan, for his part, recalled in his *Écrits*: 'Whether it wants to play a part in healing, training or probing, psychoanalysis has only one medium: the word of the patient'.

Today it is the theory of gender that divides analysts, as it did in its time for homosexuality, the Civil Solidarity Pact, same-sex marriage, and homoparentality. Following a congress of analysts, the philosopher and psychoanalyst Mathilde Girard wrote in an article that the philosopher Paul B.

Preciado rocked “the boat of a psychoanalysis with ageing frameworks, thus revealing the political need for the discipline to evolve.”

But why should the psychoanalytic theory reject gender theory? Why should we be for or against the Queer movements? Why should we have to find, by forcing, that this question was already taking shape in Lacan's teaching?

There is a need for the psychoanalyst to hold a place in the social link, through commitments and especially through the transmission of this knowledge that our treatment and that of the people we receive teach us. But it can only be a question of an unclosed knowledge.

Patrick Guyomard, in *Le désir d'éthique*, writes that "Before aiming at the universal, ethics imposes the diversity of perspectives". Shouldn't our proposals and discourses remain working hypotheses? Hypotheses carried by some, refuted by others. Without losing sight of this Freudian, Lacanian imperative stating that psychoanalysis is a practice regulated by the play of a patient's signifiers, a practice of this impossible profession, that of the psychoanalyst which welcomes speaking out beyond what is said.

After all, when we receive a request for analysis, we are not receiving a homosexual, a transgender, a heterosexual... but a subject who comes to undertake a journey to be a little more enlightened about what is going through them, ultimately a real work of commitment for the cure.

Sheltered from the will of a knowledge authority and with a discourse on desire, a work of theorization done with our analysands, a duty to improve the position of the subject, a practice of case by case, a freedom for each analyst with his or her style in the direction of the cure, a welcome as close as possible to the knowledge taught by our patients, a position of being there to hear the word, where each patient can become a subject according to his or her own way of being, singular, original... Could these few points of reference not be an effective compass for an ethics in the practice of the psychoanalysis?