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LACANIAN REVIEW ONLINE

Reading of Thomas Svolos' "The Aims of Analysis"

The Aims of Analysis: Miami Seminar on the Late Lacan, a book by Thomas Svolos published by Midden Press, represents a doubly auspicious moment: the Lacanian Compass, in the US, has its own publishing house, and this book is the first to be published there, in 2020. *The Aims of Analysis* is based on a seminar that Svolos gave in Miami, Florida, on October 25th, 2019, for the Lacanian Compass and the present commentary is based on a conversation I had with him, organized virtually by Midden Press on March 21st, 2021.

At first glance, the book seems to me, an effort from beginning to end, like an arrow that is shot to hit its 'aim', to locate, formalize and transmit the experience in his own analysis, of an interpretation that, according to Svolos, "hit the mark". An unforgettable interpretation, with multiple reverberations, that finally seems to have inscribed something for him of the mysteries among the body, affects and signifiers.

This interpretation, along with others that Svolos gathers from colleagues who have gone through the pass, that aim at the real, seem to have the quality of a Witz, the structure of a joke. The kind of interpretation he describes, from his own analytic experience, that doesn't go from an S_2 to an S_1 , but rather an S_3 that touched two different S_1 s that resonated the same, where each S_1 had its own diachronic chain of signifiers. The S_3 is in that sense something new that resonated in the equivocation of the two S_1 s: "weight/wait". This kind of interpretation is the type that surprises or baffles us. It's an effect that touches a fixed jouissance in relation to our own bodies disturbed by words, where signifiers commemorate a moment of an irruption of jouissance. This type of interpretation also produces a reduction of the unconscious.

The book leaves us with a reminder of Lacan's work in Seminar XX, where he develops the idea that in pre-modern science, knowledge was linked to a 'fantasy of harmony', in which the sexual relation was possible between the subject and the world, the subject and the sexual other, or with one's own body. In sum the fantasy of harmony is a search for a prior natural state without taking into account the speaking nature of human beings and its effects of jouissance. Nevertheless this pre-modern approach to knowledge seems to continue to contaminate modern science. Svolos gives multiple examples of this today even when modern science has overcome the 'epistemological obstacle', as Bachelard calls it, with a leap in knowledge, as when

physics, for example, formulates gravity. Svolos takes examples from the medical field, which he is familiar with as a psychiatrist. We see these everywhere in our culture as well, in the form of ubiquitous pursuits toward “wellness” and “balance”. In this context, Svolos describes the false aims of certain talk therapies, in contrast to the aims of psychoanalysis, which are far from any ideals of harmony, as Freud himself elaborated even in his own time.

Svolos extracts from Lacan’s teaching the signifiers “catch hold” and “easy handle”, which allude to a difference in value of the concept of interpretation when it has to do with the apprehension of the real at stake in analysis. This apprehension of the real, in the forms of “catching hold” or gaining an “easy handle”, is marked in part by an impossibility of the “lost object of language”, as Jacques-Alain Miller calls it, but are also conditioned by the real of the sexual non-rapport. These terms allude more to a “know how to do” with those reals.

Following Svolos’ detailed development of the “impossibles” of the three registers, comes an elaboration on love. Love in the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Once symbolic love as related to the ideal and the narcissistic love of the imaginary are unveiled, we find that love in the real does not demand anything from the Other. Thus he proposes that love in the real is a way to do with the impossibility of the sexual rapport.

By Liliana Kruszel | April 7th, 2021 | LRO 285