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History and the Link of the Analytic Act with Civilization

The axis of work of the Tenth Study Days of the Escola Brasileira de Psicanálise on “The Analytic Act and Civilization” at once raises the question about the relationship of our work as analysts with the civilization in which we work.^[1] Lacan, of course, made use of topology for a unique way to approach the relationship of civilization with the unconscious. Unlike Freud’s model of a bag, with an inside and an outside, as a model for the speaking being in the world, for Lacan, there is a special relationship of the subject with their civilization that he figures with the mobius strip and the Klein bottle. This is a very different figuration of the interior and exterior, in which we recognize that that which is most intimate for the speaking being might be perceived as from the outside, or *vice versa*, this notion of *éxtimacy*, connecting the speaking being and civilization without the strict boundary of Freud.

We might ask the question of the relationship of the analytic act with civilization on this basis. And, to that end, I would like to propose that we might look at aspects or dimensions of the analytic act in an historical manner and query their very relationship to civilization, not civilization as a monolithic and enduring entity, but civilization as an historical phenomenon.

Thus, we might start with the first and basic Freudian analytic act of interpretation—in which the analyst provides meaning, which is extracted from the analysand’s unconscious in the analytic experience, to an unconscious formation of an analysand. There is, at least, an echo of this in Lacan’s rereading of this at the earliest moment of his work, using linguistics. The symbolic dominates the imaginary, and the symbolic itself is ruled over by the name-of-the-father. For the purposes of this little paper, I will characterize this as a first dimension of the

analytic act and assert that it is linked to a moment of civilization in which the name-of-the-father dominates.

We might characterize a second dimension of the analytic act as the way in which analytic act introduces equivocation in all of its forms. This second dimension of the analytic act follows the first and correlates, we might say, with a moment of civilization in which the name-of-the-father is plural. The universalism of the first moment has been broken, and new structures of meaning are introduced. Phonemes in civilization itself take on a different value. In literature, this is the moment of modernism.

A third dimension of the analytic act is what I will designate its senseless character. This is the analytic act without meaning, or an interpretation or act disconnected from meaning. This is an interpretation of the analyst that does not have symbolic value or some other act of the analyst that is not a verbal interpretation as such. Sometimes, we hear and read in testimonies of the past the effects of the analyst's bodily acts in some way in the analytic experience of the analysand: perhaps, a look from the analyst; some grunt or other noise from the analyst; or, the analyst slapping a hand on the table. All of these acts are, I assert, disconnected from the symbolic, but have their force or their impact through their ability to catch a hold of the real in some way or another. This characterizes yet another historical moment in our civilization, that moment in which, as Jacques-Alain Miller put it in "A Fantasy," the object *a*, that bit of the real, is in the dominant place in society. The analytic act is no longer interpretation related to meaning, but something else. We can recall here all the conversations about the post-interpretive era or post-Oedipal interpretation. That dimension of the analytic act, which grasps a bit of the real, comes into psychoanalysis at this moment of civilization. Our act, in this moment that many name post-modernity or hyper-modernity, correlates with this historical structure of civilization.

Indeed, this is the very argument that Miller makes in this paper from 2004, namely if the discourse of the analyst is the other side of the discourse of civilization, which has for long been the discourse of the master, secured by the name-of-the-father, what about today, where civilization is no longer structured according to the discourse of the master, but the discourse of the analyst. Miller makes one subtle, but I think important, point about this. He states that in civilization's discourse today, while the elements may be structured like the discourse of the analyst, with the object *a* in the position of the agent, the elements themselves are disconnected. Thus, it is not a true discourse, but rather a fragmented discourse, a kind of pseudo-discourse. The act of the analyst in connecting the elements into a true discourse is characteristic of what I will term a fourth aspect of the analytic act, the interpretation in its *sinthomatic* dimension, the way in which an interpretation might resonate in the registers of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. I gave an example of this from my own analysis in a seminar I gave in Miami, published in a book as *The Aims of Analysis: Miami Seminar on the Late Lacan*. An interpretation from my analyst had multiple reverberations in the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real dimension of my lived experience—connecting to an image of my body, a kind of symbolic mandate, and bits of the real that were repeating themselves in my mind. Furthermore, it was immediately after this interpretation that I was able to see for the first time, as a kind of veil was lifted (itself, another link to the interpretation), my object *a*, the semblant of being that I cherished that had been driving my life and about which, before, I was completely blind. It was most transformative moment of my experience of analysis, whose impact, I assert, was a function of it connecting elements, like a *sinthome*, a dimension of the analytic act for today's civilization.

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Reference

[A Fantasy : August 2004 \(Comandatuba-Bahia, Brazil\) : Jacques-Alain Miller](#) : See [here](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12413)
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