

THE ETHICS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, TODAY

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What meaning could the choice of such a title have, 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today'? That looks like a theft of ideas! *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* is the title of a Seminar that Lacan gave at the start of the 60s, and to choose as a title that of an already existing seminar is a theft of ideas. I nuance it slightly by this little addition of 'today'. Because it is true that we are still reading this Seminar by Lacan thirty-seven years later. In this sense, one can say 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today', because since Lacan said it, this dimension has been imposed, although not by an effort to interpret what the ethics of psychoanalysis are at any given moment according to different contexts. Jacques-Alain Miller has shown that this Seminar sets the theme of the dimension of the real in its fullness in psychoanalysis, even if it was already in place at the beginning of Lacan's teaching at the time of a conference in July 1953 called *The Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic* when these three agencies were proposed, though until *Seminar VII* the real was presented as dominated by the symbolic dimension. In this sense, to say 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today' — *hoy* in Castilian, *avui* in Catalan, which resonates in French, (more in its written form than in its pronunciation with the accent on its last syllable) with *aveu* — allows one to put this *aujourd'hui* into a relation with the dimension of guilt. The ethics of psychoanalysis in its approach in this matter in effect tries to keep guilt and *jouissance* separate, in this way distinguishing them from the morality and the ethics that were in existence before science; in *Seminar VII* Lacan insists on Freud's radical originality in keeping himself apart from the moral point of view without falling into a permissiveness which is a way of leading the subject to its death. Freud's point of view was rather to alleviate the subject of its ideals in order to allow it to point itself towards the labyrinth made by the tying and untying of the life and death drives to indicate that man's destiny can but situate itself in relation to the radical death drive that Freud discovered on the basis of repetition.

The seminar on the ethics introduces the Thing, and enters the problems of sublimation, of the paradox of *jouissance*, of the essence of tragedy and of the tragic dimension in analytic experience. In the trajectory which goes from the Thing to tragedy, numerous readers have gone off course, losing the thread of the real which is in play in the repetition of the failed encounter with the real of *jouissance*.

Towards the end of this Seminar Lacan isolates a maxim: 'Have you acted in conformity with your desire?' Taking its bearings on it, the analytical community has given it diverse interpretations, which have given occasion for misunderstandings and have been the object of numerous reformulations even in the teaching of Lacan at different moments. One has taken one's bearings on 'Have you acted in conformity with your desire?' from its formulation at the beginning of the 60s like a *vademecum*, announcing the years of liberalisation in the West. Often reduced to the phrase 'do not abandon your desire', it has been read like a call to an identification with a desire, often confused with some *jouissance* or love. The mortal consequences that have flowed from it became evident in the 1970s such that a pendulum motion, after a disillusion, led to the return of conservatism in the 1980s. And this first of all in the disguise of an individualising enthusiasm which hardly lasted and which now gives that atmosphere particular to our civilisation, the break at the end of the 1980s with the fall of the Berlin wall.

The admonitions of Lacan in the 1970s whether in the Seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (1969-70), or in *Television*, have not been well understood. This extraordinary Seminar, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, read in conjunction with *Radiophonie* lets us see how Lacan reinterprets or re-reads in many of its aspects *Seminar VII*. *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* has an exceptional character since, at a certain level, it is a commentary on the deep structure of the events of May 68 in the very moment they are being produced. In the history of ideas few works are comparable: the work of Marx *On the Class Struggle in France*, with direct commentaries on the events of 1848, and the *coup d'état* of Napoleon Bonaparte has this exceptional character that can decipher facts in structural terms at the very moment they are happening. At another level, one can also compare it with Freud's work that announces the victory of the totalitarian party in the 1920s which will develop rapidly in ten years time.

In this way, to say 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today' — after Lacan himself during those years reinterprets the position of the real, of *jouissance* and of guilt in the analytical experience — is to question politics today. It is to question oneself on the actual distribution of guilt in that civilisation in which cohabit discourses on the social sublimation of neurosis with its bottomless guilt, but also on the social sublimation of psychosis — particularly the paranoid sector — exposing the manner in which the

Other enjoys, and also on the social sublimation of perversion in which are claimed life styles in the name of a specific *jouissance*.

To say 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today', is to examine the forms that the nostalgia for love of the father takes in all its versions and modalities that remain inveterate in our civilisation. If there is a beyond of the Oedipus, a beyond of love for the father, we are beginning to perceive the precise horizon on which to orient ourselves and to go in that direction.

To say 'The ethics of psychoanalysis, today' supposes the decisive contribution made by Jacques-Alain Miller with his formula of partner-symptom which states clearly and in a way utilisable by psychoanalysts that the bond to the Other is not to be sought along the pathways of love but along those of the drive. It supposes that the solution, to tie together the products of modern narcissism and contemporary solitudes, is to consider an ethics which emphasises that *jouissance* is not autoerotic — in which case the bond could not but emerge on the side of sublime love — but in the repetition itself of the failed encounter with *jouissance* the relation to the other as couple is articulated. The solution to the accusation of *jouissance* as autoerotic and the hope of love as solution had been stated before psychoanalysis not only in religions but in the treasury of literature with their commentaries on the forms of love. To say partner-symptom is a perspective which allows us to draw the consequences of Lacan's formulations in the 1970s and to dismiss love from its function of constituting the bond to the Other, thus eliminating the ambiguities of the ideal that Freud has left us in two contradictory formulations: on the one hand the statement that at the end of an analysis a subject must be able to love and work — yes, but exactly in what sense? And on the other hand, the formula *Wo es war, soll ich werden* in which it does not concern so much love as it does the drive. By saying couple-symptom one can reestablish in its just perspective what seemed to be almost a spiritualist deviation that after the crossing of the fantasy and the experience of the pass one had access to a new sublime love in liberating oneself from the traps of fantasy and of love, of an old love. As for knowing if after the crossing of the fantasy one could finally give oneself up without any limit to work, becoming a workaholic without guilt, let's not speak about it. No, the Lacanian orientation is very explicit on this point: it says that in what contains the signifier of the break, in its overture, that is where the discovery is produced; that although *jouissance* separates us from the Other, that very same *jouissance* is also what alienates us in the couple encountered in the very place of a vaguely glimpsed emptiness. This doctrine — that we shall develop once its perspective is established — is not a doctrine of mistrust or of scorn for love. One must never be scornful of powerful gods, for they will thereafter play with your destiny. Eros is without a doubt a powerful god and has to be taken seriously. But let's say that it is not till after the crossing of the fantasy that one gains the freedom to consecrate oneself to new love but one has responsibilities a little more clearly established about what one can do with a love which is always a love with limits, not without limits, a love with the same limits as our relation to truth or to the real, that is, a relation to bits of the truth or bits of the real.

I shall draw the consequences from the notion of partner-symptom in three points. The first is the opposition between love and symptom. The second is the politics of guilt and love of truth. The third is the feminine position and love.

The symptom and the opposition between love and symptom

Freud's text on identification, in chapter VII of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, was often read by Lacan thanks to which I believe his readers know it almost by heart, but there is in his reading a before and after the establishment of the doctrine of the symptom. At the time of the Seminar on *Identification* one was reading the movement in Freud's text like a reading of primary and tertiary identifications with the support of the second. I will review the text for those of you who do not have it in mind. The first identification in Freud's text is stated to be an identification with the father by incorporation — I will remind you that this perspective is scandalous, for in sum it means that the child whilst drinking the breast milk of its mother is devouring cannibalistically its father. It is something that psychoanalysts did not go in for too much, and once the transference to Freud was forgotten, a rebellion of the women reminded us that the relation to the breast was much more primitive than these cannibalistic fantasies. But Freud in this text does not surrender by one millimeter, considering that the first identification introduced by incorporation of love for the father is the foundation of identification. The second identification is an identification with the symptom: not with love but with the symptom. Freud says that what is curious is that this symptom can involve an identification with the loved person or with the hated person, giving as an example the cough of a young girl who can at the same time identify with the hated mother by taking her place and with the loved father, like in the case of Dora. The symptom consequently is functioning with a cer-

tain lack of difference between love and hate, but what is essential is that it is partial, based on a trait. The third identification is the famous hysterical epidemic where there is a total lack of difference since it is not necessary to love the other; a class mate from college is enough.

Before the doctrine of the symptom one read that the first identification with the father was massive, untreatable, and analysts did not take their bearings on that much too massive relation to the father. By reading this first identification with the aid of the second, one could note that the identification with the father was rather an identification with the Name-of-the-Father, with a trait of the father, then with the Names-of-the-Father, which allowed for an articulation of the first massive identification to the place of the father in the Other, that is with the unary traits, signifiers, the name. After the doctrine of the symptom in Lacan we can read this same text of Freud as a progressive distancing from the love for the father, as the description of an exit, a way out. At the beginning there was no other recourse than that of love for the father, at the end we have a lack of difference at the price of an identification with the symptom. In the middle we have the introduction of the symptom which operates as a mediation between love on entry and lack of difference at the exit.

In this way, Freud's text is one that Lacan reinterpreted according to successive formulations that he gave of the paternal metaphor in steps described by Jacques-Alain Miller, from the Name-of-the-Father presented as a guarantee by the Other, the paternal metaphor, then in *The Names-of-the-Father* which treats an Other without guarantee, a barred Other, till the second paternal metaphor which is also about an Other without guarantee but where localisation, the intersection between signifier and *jouissance*, beginning and end, allowing the signifying chain to stop, is not situated in a Name-of-the-Father but in a symptom. If one reads it in this way, one sees that identification is the inscription of the unary trait, that it is an erasure. In the place of the definition of an identity is the inscription in the subject of its being-for-death. This also supposes the possibility that the subject might read in the inscription that he carries most intimately, in what is presented as external in its intimacy and so might meet, as Freud shows us, in the bungled actions, faults, fissures of its identity, of it is self-control, of its knowledge of itself, something different which needs realisation in such a way that when the gap opens up, discovery is produced.

Lacan shows this to us at the beginning of *Seminar XI*: the discovery of something which will function as a couple, something the subject encounters, not in the dimension of hope but in the place of what he might hope for. And what Lacan emphasises is that this discovery is always a 'refinding' which, moreover, is always ready to escape again, installing the dimension of loss: "If you will allow me to add some irony in the matter, the unconscious is on the side strictly opposite to love which is, as everyone knows, always unique, for which the formula *one lost, ten more found* again achieves its most fitting application".¹ *Seminar XI* opens on the doctrine of opposition between symptom and love by way of which the partner-symptom is stated so that we can read the entire Seminar from that perspective and see how its peculiarities, often labyrinthine — for different things have to be reconciled at the same time — present themselves as a treatise on the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis. Jacques-Alain Miller emphasises that in the teaching of Lacan, this is what comes closest to a treatise. It is sparked by an urgency throughout the Seminar, and its main point demonstrates how transference is based on the drive.

One cannot read it with all of its consequences without forgetting that just before this Seminar Lacan had given a lecture on *The Names-of-the-Father*. It criticised love born for the father, and as he promised himself not to touch upon this point again, there is something like a hidden thread in this Seminar: the point of view of mistrust in the doctrine of love as love for the father had to be joined up with the attempt to base transference on the drive. It was not possible in this form before a perspective on the partner-symptom was formulated.

The politics of guilt and love of the truth

I read with much interest the texts of the working document for these study-days which remind us of the link between guilt and the evaluation of efficiency which every judgment raises. Truth exercises an extreme seduction on the subject. Why not become passionate about this: research on the truth of the effectiveness of psychoanalysis! Through love of the truth one enters that perspective about which we must be careful, or we will find ourselves tangled up in research on a system that would demonstrate to the Master that we are effective, as effective as the others. We should not forget that through love of the truth we can find ourselves in a worrisome research for the justification of our existence in a period in which the ideal is reduced to an ideal of good functioning — everyone must function as effectively as

possible. Wittgenstein's phrase 'meaning is use', not only states a doctrine of mistrust or even of rejection of the dimension of meaning to favour the side of good functioning, but also realises the psychotic operation in which meaning is evacuated, Oedipal meaning linked to love for the father, only to retain the ideal of good functioning. This is coherent with our doctrine of psychosis in which the ideal occupies the place of the Name-of-the-Father. That all of this is functioning in our civilisation as ideal is especially demonstrated in the field in which we are registered, the field of Mental Health, because it is a field in which in numerous ways the limits of effectiveness are demonstrated.

The so-called equilibrium between the approach by pharmacological treatment, social treatment and individual psychotherapeutic treatment is reduced more and more, for strictly economic reasons, to treatment by medication, which at the limit can do without any human presence whatsoever. At a time exactly when the modern master no longer believes in the hopes for effectiveness, one has reached the limit. As one acknowledges in the course of debate, if there is a consensus, that we have reached the limits of effectiveness. So, within these limits there remains only one thing to do which is to keep the expenses down, and in order to keep the expenses down, there is one sole formula: reduce the wages and human presence. The horizon is a horizon of distribution of automatic diagnoses in supermarkets, more or less computerised. It is the horizon of psychiatry which has an industrial future. Eiras recalled the joke: "The future of psychiatry is the future of the pharmaceutical multinational". This technological future is in the field of psychiatry the only way to keep hope up to the status of religious hope which promises everything.

In reality there is a growing dissatisfaction after thirty-five years of distributing pharmaceutical products at all levels. No system guarantees to its habitual users a satisfaction that serves as model or guide for another system. The future system of distribution of medical care which will affect all of us, the system of coordinated networks of care, is a system that undoubtedly allows expenses to be controlled but which produces dissatisfaction, rebellion, resistance. The advantage is that no one knows who has the right to complain legitimately. Our love of truth leads us to note that there are truths in combat with each other. But who really pays for the others beyond what is legitimate, who uses the system beyond what is legitimate, who are the habitual users who abuse it, who are the ones who profit? Is it the people in good health, the patients, the seriously ill, those with minor illnesses, the doctors, the citizen, the hospital doctors, the doctors of private medicine? Who knows? Everyone complains, everyone has his or her truth. How to orient oneself?

The only solution is to set up an ethical committee in order to define how to orient the debate, and, probably, to define the minimum norms in order to situate this service industry in the problematic of the rights of man. The universal right is a right, or rather an obligation, to be assured; the rest has to do with the social distribution of guilt: who will have the right to blame oneself for what always becomes the symptom in the field of mental health.

Psychoanalysis, which has contributed a lot to focusing on secular guilt feeling in civilisation, can prove its effectiveness and the effectiveness of transference, but we must expose any attempt to accuse us of being amongst those who promote and identify with the ideal of effectiveness.

The politics of guilt of our time consists in trying to obtain from a subject, from an institution, from an agent or from a discourse an expression of repentance. The fascination for outcome studies, innocent studies, consists in occupying the place from where one can demand from the other the expression of repentance for not having been sufficiently effective and this out of the love for truth. The politics of repentance is a world symptom in politics and is part of the millennium climate at the end of this century, like a fever around the world. As a political observer noted, the Universal Catholic Church is preparing an act of contrition, of repentance, for the attitude of the Church towards the Jews. They might perhaps include an act of repentance for the inquisition. And why not for its battle against freedom of conscience until Vatican II? Beyond all of that, what has to be watched, given its significance, is a change in discourse in the relation of a grand institution with the world.

The church is not the only institution to bear this act of contrition about the history of the century which has just closed: each one in turn has born this act, French society for Vichy, Swiss society for the ambiguities of its neutrality during the war, the United States for slavery — President Clinton is preparing an act of repentance for next year, the centenary of the disappearance of slavery. We also have the extraordinary example of South Africa where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, presided over not by a judge but by a bishop Desmond Tutu, giving an extraordinary description of the crimes committed by the one side, the others bringing these crimes to light, a truly very curious happening. In Israel the leader of the labour opposition, Ehud Barak, has sought pardon from the Sephardic Jews for the humilia-

tion they suffered in the 1950s, and I believe that in Spain the King has sought a pardon from the Jews for their expulsion from Spain.

These acts of generalised repentance emerge at a moment in which the political space has so many difficulties in holding its own; that may be necessary, but it is not enough politically. A commentator of this movement was saying that in order to read correctly the impact of these declarations it is not only necessary to refer to the emotional dimension, to affect, but to Spinoza who thought outlook on the basis of an ethical dimension. I am in agreement in thinking that the appropriate perspective is the Spinozist one, but it does not seem to me that these acts of repentance have in any way a Spinozist dimension in relation to history.

It seems to me rather that from the point of view of psychoanalysis, we can consider it like a nostalgia, a nostalgia that Lacan situated in his *Seminar XVII* where he spoke of the affect of shame. He noted that dying of shame is not an effect of language that occurs at all frequently. It seems to me that in our perspective of the partner-symptom, let's say of the politics of the symptom, we can say that these acts of repentance are like a call occupying the place of a disillusion: disillusion that one does not die of shame, and that, therefore, one cannot obtain the sign of the efficiency of guilt, since being-for-death is inscribed in the gap of signifiers. Consequently, despite the horrors that have been committed, there is no guarantee that being-for-death touches the subject who perpetrated them. Hence the fascination caused by the encounter with the affect of shame in the criminal, by the effect of to die of shame. What one encounters is the banality of life that continues after this point is crossed.

The politics of the symptom is to keep itself at a distance from the love of truth and from seeking in the name of that love the act of repentance or the demand for pardon. The true Spinozist perspective is that on this point, like on the others, one has to re-establish the *jouissance* in play which supports a viable desire beyond these observations.

Love and feminine identification

How is one to continue these fundamental debates on the new position or the position of feminine identity, particularly when women appear as protagonists of the discourse of love in our civilisation?

In the first place amongst the selection of cases that Rithée Cevasco exposed for us, three seemed to me crucial, one particularly, where the action of the psychoanalyst consisted in not identifying the subject with its life-style. The problem was not to know or to define being between hysteria or homosexuality but to keep open the question on being at the level of a certain contingency in the object of love — that can be a man, that can be a woman — keep this point open. It seems to me that it could have been interesting to include this problematic in the series of discussions which took place with the title of *The Homosexual Unconscious*, especially because in the distribution of certainties about the object of love, women, not certain about having the organ, have rather the certainty of knowing what love is. Introducing here an interval in certainty allows the subject not to get fixed to a routine or to an imaginary object of *jouissance*.

What is fascinating in cases of women as they often present is that it is the subject of love who suffers at all levels; the relation of the couple occupies a place more or less remarkable and constant, much more than in the complaints of men who characteristically have no complaints on this point. As Jacques-Alain Miller has pointed out, what men speak about is the mistake they have made in the choice of couple, that it is not the right choice of couple; they speak about a deficit produced in the couple by this error and in *jouissance* as well: with another woman they might perhaps dream of better perspectives on *jouissance*. That is how it is, particularly in our time where the women occupy the place of the superego, and all the more in that the Other does not exist. What gets reinforced for both sexes is the necessity to enjoy embodied by the feminine exigency which, liberated, that is from the phallic organ, can go much further in embodying the identification with the object a and with the exigencies of an *jouissance* that has to be sought.

The perspective is different than the one on the equality of the sexes which was the perspective of the 1970s, that of egalitarian feminism represented in France, for example, by Elisabeth Badinter who wrote a book called *L'un est l'autre*. It was the best way to define a singular future: we are equal. And in the name of this universalism, she struggled against the perspective of difference because from the universal point of view the one is equal to the other. The contemporary perspective and sensitivity is rather on the side of Carmen Lafuente who accepted parliamentary quotas. The wife of Lionel Jospin, for instance, Sylviane Jospin, who is a philosopher, convinced our French prime minister to name someone in the government in order to see how measures were being taken on positive discrimination that assured

quotas at all levels amongst other measures. In the more modern perspective of feminism of difference there are differences, and equality has to be re-established from other points of view. Badinter was from the era of Mitterrand, Sylviane Jospin is from the era of Jospin.

What bearings do we use to situate and to have an opinion? We can consider that in this debate for opinions our bearings must be the same: our bearings are the symptom, the partner-symptom. It should be known that if one thinks the problem is resolvable in juridical terms, if one holds to this illusion, or if everything is reduced to this level, the result will be a call to some obscure surplus *jouissance*, a call to obscure gods. This call is not only due to the horrible conditions the population lives under, but beyond them in this call a parity takes shape. There is a search for the Other *jouissance* at all costs.

I will say that from the perspective of identification, of identificatory feminism, or from the perspective of difference, that of the feminism of quotas, juridical measures are necessary, they have to be discussed at this level. But we have to insist on the fact that this has to be accompanied by a conversation following the politics of the Freudian Field. Conversations in Arcachon, Paris, Buenos Aires, Rome have taken place... If there is no conversation between the sexes equal to the task, these changes at the juridical level will drag with them a call to an obscure *jouissance* to plug up the gaps that will be opened by the new deal. Consequently, a conversation on the partner-symptom. The International Encounter in July will be that conversation. This Encounter is not only a turning point for the Schools, not just an Encounter of great interest. I will add this: the Encounter is our politics at a moment in which are being defined new forms of relation between the feminine position, identification and love. Faced with the nostalgia for love and also with the love that would guarantee the well functioning of communities, what arranges this from our perspective are discussions and conversations on the amorous contest, on the endless conversation between the sexes. Not war, but conversation which allows the correct politics of the symptom to be defined.

Translated by Richard Klein

1. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A Sheridan, Pelican, London, 1977, p. 28.

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