

Éric Laurent, “Thoughts about the current forms of the impossible to teach”, 21st September 2000, <https://www.lacan.com/symptom12/thoughts-about.html>

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Citation

Preface to section : ‘Lacan, at the Moment’, by Cristina Rose Laurita, ‘It is akin to what Éric Laurent refers to as “the transmission of the way in which the unconscious has to be read, not as a dead thing [...] but as a living thing that has the need for the contribution of each one of its practitioners to find its proper place in the world.”’ p140 of The Lacanian Review No 12 (2022). See notes to Meeting the Subjectivity of our Time : 6th June 2022 : Thomas Svolos at www.LacanianWorks.org /5 Other Authors A-Z (Svolos)

Thoughts about the current forms of the impossible to teach Éric Laurent

1. To say that it is impossible to teach is to say that we continually have to put into question what, at a given moment, seemed to be the answer to this aporia. The difficulty that we perceive in the current teachings in the Clinical sections today is the sign that something has come to an end. We have encountered one of the forms of the impossible to teach. It is by starting from this encounter, from this failure, that we can put our methods into action again. We are limited by the wall of language, we have to start to re-learn again.

2. With the emphasis placed on teaching in the Lacanian orientation, it is necessary to distinguish between two separate registers. On the one hand, there is the transmission of the disciplines necessary to the knowledge of the psychoanalyst. On the other hand, there is the transmission of the way in which the unconscious has to be read, not as a dead thing, or a given signification, or a handbook of psychology, but as a living thing that has the need for the contribution of each one of its practitioners to find its proper place in the world.

At the same time as Lacan defined, in a very precise way, the necessary knowledge for the psychoanalyst in the continent of the logo-sciences, he also showed his interest in the oriental traditions of the master, in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition as well as in the transmission of the exacting Zen sect which originated in Japan and also in the Chinese Taoist tradition. Lacan not only disturbed the contents that had been agreed upon to teach psychoanalysts but its method of teaching as well. Let us start then from

this observation, the psychoanalyst, when trying to “teach what psychoanalysis teaches,” disturbs the accepted teaching methods, and in doing so the psychoanalyst disturbs the re-grouping of the established knowledge of the university, and this also disturbs the method by which this knowledge is transmitted.

Nowadays the question is twice as much a red-hot issue. We have to awaken the University and its teachers from the error of the perspective that groups together psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, when they think that the justification for such regrouping is the existence of the neurosciences outside the University.

3. The University pushes to conformism, to a certain death of thought, of which we have the best testimonies. One example is that given by Nietzsche in 1872, two years after the victory of Germany over France, that would produce a trauma in our University from which it has never recovered. This victory set the German University as the model to copy from, never attained, judging from the reality of the results. Nietzsche saw in this University triumph of the time, as the triumph of “the anatomic” point of view. “The historic way,” he said, “has become at this point habitual to our times, to the extent that the living body of language has been sacrificed for the anatomical studies, but culture commences exactly when we endeavor to treat the living as the living”^[1]

4. Effectively, he detected the great harm of the German University in the fact that it was a Prussian university and, as Hegel, he could notice that behind the academic freedom there was the presence of the State. He would refer to this in a very funny way: “How do you think that a student is linked to the university?” And we answer: “By the ear, he is a listener.” The foreigner is surprised, “Just by the ear?” he asks once again. “Just by the ear,” we answer again. “The student listens” [...] “Very often the student writes while he listens, this is when the student is hanging on the umbilical cord of the university.”^[2] There are some who can nearly say what they want, that is the freedom of teaching, and others who nearly understand what they want, “only that close behind those two groups, and at a regulated distance, there is the State which holds on to them with the same sweetness for both of them, with the tight expression of a warder, to remind them that the State is the aim, the end and the unity of those strange procedures of speech and listening.”^[3]

What Nietzsche said is written with the formulas of Lacan ^[4]:

S2 a

S1 \$

What is at play in teaching consists in articulating S2 and a with the good arrow.

5. All kinds of consequences can be deduced out of the modalities of the teachings of psychoanalysis itself. The first forms that were adopted in the experience at Vincennes in France turned out to be disastrous. The stake was enormous. It was the opportunity, for the first time in France, to teach psychoanalysis at the University under the light of psychoanalysis. The Department of Psychoanalysis did not want to occupy a minor position in a Department of Psychology. This meant putting into action a new

regrouping of knowledge, of drawing on the consequences of the teachings of Lacan about the subject matters which are appropriate to the knowledge of the psychoanalyst.

6. To demonstrate what was the other side of the discourse of the master, most analysts adopted the position of indolence. They became silent, to show that they were the ones who enjoyed (*jouissaient*) in silence.

It was necessary for Jacques-Alain Miller to provide a solution, to act. It took six years to provide the result of this initial mode of experience and to remind us that to put "antiphilosophy" on the right track, as Lacan said, was to teach these knowledges in a lively way. To prove this, it was essential to work, and from then on we have continued on that path. J.-A. Miller carried out the counter-experience of the reform of the Department of Psychoanalysis at Paris VIII in 1974, and the creation of the Clinical Section followed it, to demonstrate that we effectively wish to teach and also, that we ourselves, are subjected to the division between the teachings of a dead knowledge and of a live one.

To awaken the interest of the students of psychoanalysis is also to make the demand of psychology appear as a social symptom. It is a social symptom linked to the ideology of the cult of science. If there are so many young people who want to have a "psyche," who want to have a mental functioning, as everybody does, and want to be ensured about it, it is because of the anxiety which the ideology of the suppression of the subject engenders.

The demand for clinical knowledge can also be reduced to a technical variant. The craving for clinical knowledge can be flattened by the know-how (*savoir faire*). For that reason, the success of the Clinical Sections is dangerous. It can dissolve us as we found ourselves dissolved in the success of the ACF.

To what master signifier are "the procedures of speech and listening" linked to? Now, they are linked to the work market and the anxiety of exclusion which it conveys. To go on answering to the demand of authorization on technique, right alongside it, implies keeping the desire, in what we teach, alive. Let us give a concrete shape to the "living desire."

7. To find again the chances where lively and demanding debates can take place, is to find the right relation to face the demand for technique that assails us. We cannot simply say "No!" and get lost in splendid isolation. We have to be able to say "Yes!" and "No!" at the same time. Heidegger spoke of "serenity," *Gelassenheit*, to refer to what he imagined as a solution to face a technical world. He proposed to keep "the spirit open to the secret". It is something of the same order as that which Lacan indicated when he proposed to us to teach by starting from non-knowledge (*non-savoir*). That is not a gift that comes from Heaven. We have, from time to time, to touch that non-knowledge, to regain strength, like the giant Anteo who had to touch the earth.

Let us describe two of the paths that are possible to achieve this purpose. One is the study in depth of a text or of a question that can open a structured conversation. It is the path of an encounter like the first

Clinical conversations or like the one that gathered us together around "Aimee's case."

The other path is that of a critique of an important book in a related discipline. Something like the presentation of J. Searle's book by J-A. Miller in his 1997 course.

The critical reviews of the journals of our field measuring up with "connected" debates, in the field of science or philosophy could also contribute to the "aggiornamento" of the references.

The essential thing is to make one's way towards learned ignorance (docta ignorantia). It is crucial in the times of the diffusion, of "anything goes."

21 September 2000

NOTES

[1] *Ecce Homo* cited Derrida (J.), in *Otobiographies*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1984, p. 79.

[2] Derrida (J.), op. cit., pp. 108-109.

[3] Ibid., p. 112.

[4] Lacan (J.), *Radiophonie*, in *Scilicet*, ni 2, p. 99.

Translated by Susana Tillet

Availability of references & notes

-Reference [4] Radiophonie : 9th April 1970 : Jacques Lacan

a) Radiophonie recorded : 9th April 1970

b) Radiophonie : Seminar XVII Session of 9th April 1970

c) Radiophonie the broadcast : June 1970

d) Radiophonie written version published : December 1970

See www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19700409 or Index of Jacques Lacan's texts)

Possibly referring to p3 of Jack W. Stone's translation of Radiophonie : If I succumbed now, the only work I would leave would be these scraps chosen from my teaching, of which I have made a buttress against the news (*l'information*), of which it is to say everything that it diffuses it.

What I have stated in a confidential discourse, has nonetheless displaced common audition, to the point of leading to me an audience that gives me evidence of being stable in its enormity.

I remember the annoyance with which a boy interrogated me, who was mixed in, in wishing himself a Marxist, with a public made up of people from the Party (the only one) who had rushed (God knows why) to the communication of my "*dialectic of desire and subversion of the subject in psychoanalysis*."

I gently (gentle as I always am) pointed out what followed in my *Écrits*, the daze that answered me from this public.

As for him, "Do you believe then, " he said to me, "that it suffices that you have produced something, inscribed with letters on a blackboard, to expect an effect?"

Such an exercise has carried however, and I have had proof of it, were this only that from the scrap that made for it a right for my book--the funds of the Ford foundation that motivate such meetings from having to sponge them up, being then found unthinkably dried up for publishing me.

It is that the effect that is propagated is not of a communication of speech, but of a displacement of discourse.

NOTE : The reference to the Ford foundation is probably to the Conference at Baltimore, October 1966. See

The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man - the Structuralist Controversy : 1970 : edited by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato at www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19661018 or Index).

& Jacques Lacan cuts between the real(ly)-symbolic (RS) & symbolic(ally)-real (SR) (a cartel ending/work-in-progress presentation) : 17th July 2019 (London) : Julia Evans. See www.LacanianWorks.org /5 Other Authors A-Z (Evans Julia or Index of Julia Evans' texts)

-‘It is the path of an encounter like the first Clinical conversations or like the one that gathered us together around “Aimee’s case.”’ See On Paranoid Psychosis in its relationships with the personality, followed by first writings on Paranoia (Aimée) : 7th July 1932 : Jacques Lacan. See www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19320101 or Index of texts by Jacques Lacan)

-The essential thing is to make one’s way towards learned ignorance (*docta ignorantia*). It is crucial in the times of the diffusion, of “anything goes.”

From Bibliography of Seminar I, p299 of John Forrester’s translation : The bibliography contains full references to all works cited in the text, including some works that are only alluded to in passing : Cusanus, Nicholas, ‘De Docta Ignoranti’ (Of Learned Ignorance) (1440). Translated by Germain Heron, Introduction by D. J. B. Howkins, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954

7th July 1954, p278 of John Forrester’s translation of Seminar I. :

Psychoanalysis is a dialectic, what Montaigne, in book III, chapter VIII, calls *an art of conversation*.² The art of conversation of Socrates in the *Meno* is to teach the slave to give his own speech its true meaning. And it is the same in Hegel. In other words, the position of the analyst must be that of an *ignorantia docta*, which does not mean knowing [*savante*], but formal, and what is capable of being formative for the subject.

Because it is in the air these days, these days of hatred, there is a great temptation to transform the *ignorantia docta* into what I have called, and this is hardly a novelty, an *ignorantia docens*. If the psychoanalyst thinks he knows something, in psychology for example, then that is already the beginning of his loss, for the simple reason that in psychology nobody knows much, except that psychology is itself an error of perspective on the human being.

I will have to use banal examples to make you understand what the realisation of the being of man is, because in spite of yourselves you put it in an erroneous perspective, that of a false knowledge.

[2] *'un art de conférer'*.

See Seminar I, Freud's Papers on Technique (1953-1954) : from 18th November 1953 : Jacques Lacan at www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19531118 or index of Jacques Lacan's texts)