

A Guided Extravagance : 6th February 2024 : Éric Laurent

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A Guided Extravagance

That's it, it's understood! Everyone is mad. I, who speak to you, I am mad. But that does not stop me from talking to you, nor from believing to be reasoning, nor from always being overtaken by what I am saying. Like all speaking bodies, I am always on the verge of ignoring it, this body, and believing that it is a spirit speaking, or a dreamer.

Dream and Madness, in What Order?

In his aphorism, Lacan first evokes the dream, then the delusion: "Freud considered that nothing is but a dream, and that everyone is mad, that is to say, delusional." In contrast, in the First Meditation, Descartes first makes sure that he has a body. For this purpose, he first rules out the madness of those who do not have a body. "But they are mad, and I should not be any the less insane were I to follow examples so extravagant." Only then does he talk about dreams. Does madness envelop the dream, or does the dream envelop madness? Is the dream not the most hyperbolic, since it is for everyone? This question gave rise to a quarrel and a famous controversy between M. Foucault and J. Derrida. Lacan brushed aside the debate by asserting that madness is also for everyone.

Dan Arbib, speaking at the ECF's Journées, emphasized the extent to which Descartes takes time to awaken: "Since in my dream I believe that I am awake, when I am awake there is no reason why I should not suspect that I am asleep... I think we can perfectly well admit that the Meditations I-V are performed in a state of sleep." Dan Arbib's emphasis on sleep and the difficulty of the awakening brings us back to Lacan's injunction, issued six years before the aphorism we are concerned with here: "Learn to read Descartes as a nightmare." If Descartes wakes up, it is because anxiety is there. It is the avoided encounter with the real.

The Reality Test and the Real

In 1979, in his text "For Vincennes," Lacan not only separated the psychoanalytic discourse from the philosophical or academic approach, but also separated Freud's unconscious from the supposed knowledge of the subject of the unconscious according to Lacan. In his presentation of the theme of the Journées, Jacques-Alain Miller highlighted the opposition between the place of the Realitätsprüfung for Freud and the instance of the Real for Lacan. Freud tried to negativize jouissance through the reality principle, but failed. The pleasure principle, which sought Lustgewinn, is replaced by the reality principle. It composes but gives in on nothing. "What it is a question of obtaining via the pleasure principle, then via the reality principle, is always... surplus enjoyment." Lacan gives jouissance a new status. He recognizes that it is impossible to negativize. It is real. Following this new articulation of the unconscious and the real, Lacan comes to propose an unconscious distinct from the Freudian unconscious, a real unconscious.

The Immanence of Psychoanalytic Practice

One of the challenges of our Congresses is to learn how to better speak about our practice oriented towards the Real. We do so with renewed inflections from the facet of the experience that the title chooses to highlight. This Congress is an opportunity to go a step further, knowing that the jouissance impossible to negativize is a consequence of the "Everyone is mad."

It is vain to want to speak of our practice from the position of the clinician who thinks he can separate himself, in the name of his knowledge, from the phenomena of madness of which he speaks. Through transference, we are included in the discourse of the subject of the unconscious. The clinic under transference is an immanent clinic. The experience of the Pass, at the centre of the School, shows us the way. We can only speak of the psychoanalytic clinic if

we include ourselves in it. We need to extend this immanence ever further when we talk about our practice from the perspective of the subjects who come to us. The Challenges of the Congress This will be the challenge of the multiple rooms and the exchanges between practitioners from so many countries and in five languages translated simultaneously. It will also be the challenge of the plenary sessions where we will talk about extraordinary subjects who have had a more or less evident relationship with their madness. Despite the warnings and prohibitions of the Philosophes, as Philippe Sollers would have said, we continue to speak about the madness of others, because we deal with it on a daily basis. We had to resist the warnings.

How dare you talk about poets, artists, scientists, anyone who has a body of work? You do not have the right to spoil their work. But yes, but yes! And we were right to insist, what a diversity of remarkable follies! Philosophers, psychiatrists, writers, artists, politicians, mystics, scientists, the unclassifiables. They come from all over Europe, North and South America. They speak all the languages of the Congress.

The case we make of their madness takes into account our own. What, in each case, is madness carries us, in an unparalleled way, to the edge, to the transparent sheet that separates us from it, according to Joyce. We do not eulogise madness, because we know the suffering it entails, which we are responsible for tempering. But we also know that it can't be negativized.

You should not miss a single one of our Congresses. Each one is an opportunity for anticipatory assertions, provoked by its title. This time, from February 22nd to 25th, let us try to speak like mad about the madness of the times, and the madness of each one.

Translated by Amal Wahbi

Reviewed by Florencia F.C. Shanahan

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"Learn how to read Descartes as a nightmare, it'll help you make a little progress."

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