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Lacanian Interpretation

There is a pragmatics of Lacanian Interpretation. It produces observable effects on the suffering of symptoms, on the jouissance of the body and on the subject's position in the social link. I propose that we take as our task for our next congress to present these results. Indeed, interpretation untangles the subject's confusion in face of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real of the body. Its aim is to bring the subject to 'know how to deal' with what remains after the conclusion of a cycle or after a treatment brought to its end. Interpretation thus leads to a form of satisfaction.

1) The Raised Finger of St. John

In 'The Direction of the Treatment', in the *Écrits*, Lacan brushed aside the interpretative grids of the post Freudians by asking: "What silence must the analyst now impose upon himself if he is to make out, rising above the bog, the raised finger of Leonardo's "St. John the Baptist", if interpretation is to find anew the forsaken horizon of being in which its allusive virtue must be deployed?" (2006/p.536).

Freud of course was the exception because he did not apply any pre-established grid, he invented. He invented in a certain solitude, which was probably why he questioned until the very end the constructions he elaborated for the Wolf Man, and in particular what he should communicate to his patient.

It was through the post-Freudians that interpretation was fossilised, that it became a 'technique'. Lacan endeavoured to prevent his teaching from becoming a technique, and we try ourselves to be equal to this ambition, since this was also a recommendation on his part. This is why Lacan first advocated the analyst's silence, a silence that is not a closed mouth, because he also said that the analyst must pay with his words and with his person in order to be up to the task. The intervention by the analyst has to stand out on a background of silence. It plays on the poetic resonances of what the analysand says and thus 'deconstructs' the intentionality of his discourse. It empties it out, it makes a hole in it in the same way as a poetic metaphor does.

2) The Art of Isolating

There is still something else in Lacan's sentence of Heideggerian allure, concerning the raised finger of St. John by Leonardo da Vinci. Lacan indicates there that interpretation is not a knowledge the analyst possesses before the encounter with the patient and that therefore "there is no metalanguage", there is no Other of the Other. Interpretation has its source in what the analysand says and reverts back to it. The analyst must therefore operate 'between citation and enigma', by isolating the analysand's signifiers or by the interruption of sense. This is a second trait of Lacanian interpretation, it goes against meaning. In this respect it goes against the transference that pushes towards the search for the meaning of the formations of the unconscious, which also pushes towards the deployment of the demand and can lead to the kind of madness that gives 'preference to the unconscious no matter what'. Let us not neglect the transference however, because it indexes the carnal investment

of the analysand in the process, putting the analyst in the place of any usable object whatever. Under the pretext of going against meaning it would, however, not be appropriate to prevent free association in the hope of precipitating what Lacan calls the moment to conclude.

Seminar XVIII specifies what Lacan already formulated in ‘The Direction of the Treatment’ by indicating that, what is really opposed to sense is not non-sense, but what he calls the Letter. Analytical interpretation, seen from that angle, rather aims at separating what is deposited as a letter; that is to say the signifier or signifiers to which the subject finds himself subjugated because of the contingencies of his encounter with jouissance. From whence Lacan’s effort to accentuate the cut that produces ‘what is read in what is heard’ for the analysand and this against the background of what cannot be said.

In this way the analyst is in the place of editor of what is said by the analysand (according to an expression by Jacques-Alain Miller, which was spot on). The cut, the scansion and the short session all go in the same direction, the reduction of meaning that the unconscious, once the transference is installed, tends to proliferate. However, the cut is not arbitrary. It attempts to bring an anchoring point to the encounter: it finitises at the same time as it separates. It claims to be conclusive.

3) The Act That Changes the Subject

From 1967 on, Lacan substitutes the Freudian concept of interpretation with that of the act. This is a turning point in his teaching, even if it seems at times that Lacan goes back to an earlier conception. As J-A Miller reminded us in sensational fashion (which caused a sensation) in 1995: the unconscious interprets (and lies on occasion).

Psychoanalysis has changed as a result: what falls to the psychoanalyst is the act, that is to say what on the side of the analyst allows for modification, the sometimes spectacular reduction of the subject’s relationship with jouissance, a relationship we call the symptom. On the other hand, the task of interpretation of the symptom falls to the unconscious, which is on the side of the patient himself, in his quest for truth and in his handling of meaning even if it is mixed with jouissance. Nothing speaks against the analyst’s act being a language act (in the sense of the British philosopher J-L Austin), but nothing prescribes it either. I see it, above all, as an act that makes of the patient’s unconscious a place of address (Eric Laurent says this in the LNA no. 8 with regard to autism, in “The Code of Autism”)

Thus, Lacanian interpretation essentially seems to be a matter of taking note of a statement of the patient, which changes the symptom. Here, the person of the analyst, his supposed knowledge, steps aside in favour of his ‘knowing how to deal’ (‘savoir y faire’) with the transference of the analysand, with the investment of the drive at work in the session. Every analysand is, before everything else, a homeless person, a subject in a state of precariousness, and psychoanalysis gives him an address, a residence, a place to lodge his lalangue. It has to become clear to the analysand who commits himself far enough into the experience, that his lalangue is a veil thrown over the hole of the trauma, a S1.

4) Beyond the Transferential Unconscious

The last Lacan puts us on a path that J-A Miller, for several years now, has invited us to follow, in the last and the very last Lacan. It indicates that the unconscious as interpreter, which allows the modification of the symptom (that is to say, the regulation between body, jouissance and the social link), has itself a limit. On the one hand, the knowledge that the unconscious deploys is of little use other than to analyse oneself, which means rectifying under transference one’s own symptom, and on the other hand, any univocal polarisation of

unconscious knowledge by the truth 'for all' is put in question by Lacan. Where then is the place of interpretation?

I will examine this first under the aspect of the experience that concerns the analysand. When the unconscious touches the real (becomes real) it seems to me that this designates the final outcome, when the symptom has been sufficiently reduced so as not to give the unconscious formations the value of an oracle anymore, when the suffering from the symptom has become bearable for the body. Lacan evokes this, for example, by speaking of the 4th ring, the Sinthome.

On the side of the analyst, I would like to propose the following relationship to the act: 'Act in such a way that the maxim of your act is to not put yourself in the place of the unconscious'. Aim at incarnating the empty place that Leonardo's St. John designates, let the analysand, as long as he can, have confidence in the Sinthome he has invented.

The heads or tails wager, as Pascal says, is in this case, that the Sinthome, the analysand's own invention is the best possible way to articulate the symbolic, the imaginary and the real and especially to make the real of the jouissance of the body consist.

We can say that this is the miracle that operates in the Lacanian interpretation. It produces in the register of speech, supported by the encounter of two bodies in the Freudian setting, and under transference, the specific body event that appeases and which renders jouissance acceptable and lively. It therefore permits the unsubscription from the search for meaning that the transference inaugurates and guides. And we say it once more, after and with Lacan: it procures for the analysand the means to know how to deal with his Sinthome.

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(Translated by Natalie Wulfging)

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