

REVISITING FORMATION¹

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Abstract: Lacan emphasises that in the formation of the analyst, intension and extension are two faces of the same Moebien circuit. It is important to distinguish the different logical moments in formation, and distinguish an analysand's decision to practice from the time of the end of analysis. This emphasises the crucial function of supervision as an essential part of analysis and its transmission.

Over the years, we have several times addressed the topic of formation in analysis (Mieli, 2007, 2009, 2011). Taking up the question now again at the request of Erik Porge and the journal *Essaim* and republishing it here in translation in *Lacunae* gives us an opportunity to revisit previous ideas and to return briefly to three points (the act, the studies, supervision) in relation to this still current topic. Formation remains an open topic, aspherical by definition, and crucial, because the very transmission of psychoanalysis and its survival are at stake.

Lacan says that the analyst has to be “at least two, the analyst who produces effects, and the analyst who theorizes these

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effects” (Lacan, 1974-75, Session: 10 Dec, 1974). But if “the analyst who theorizes” is “indispensable” as Lacan strongly insists, if she² is an analyst who has a rigorous and constant engagement with an analytic ethics, then extension implies intension, two aspects of one Moebian circuit.

What can we say then when an analysis in intension does not take place, or stops well short of its conclusion, while still far from the point which should support the analytic act? I’m not only referring to situations where the “analysis” consists solely in a practice intended to produce diplomas, normative convictions and stereotypical practices, but also to the effects due to the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis in general and to the mannerisms or nonchalant attitudes of certain Lacanian groups.

We notice that the analytic non-act is widely transmitted. In the United States, for example, we see that the new generation of “analysts” who have come from an orthodox or Neo-Freudian tradition are reproducing the impasses of their own mentors, and it matters little if you call yourself Lacanian in order to feel up-to-date and consider yourself a non-conformist. Analyses still aim towards an identification with the analyst, with the idea of *being* an analyst, as was the case for the preceding generation, which reinforces narcissism, ambition, and normativity, and unleashes all sorts of media performances

² In order to avoid redundances and the confusing use of the pronoun “they,” I have decided to employ the feminine pronouns she, her, herself.

which fit in well with the society of the spectacle in which we are all immersed.

Happily, the extension can re-launch the intension. However, personal analysis is essential in order for there to be an analytic act and in order for a transmission to take place. And so that the enthusiasm may come to fruition. Without enthusiasm, “there may well have been an analysis, but no chance of an analyst” (Lacan, 1974/2001, p. 309), as Lacan says. But the enthusiasm in question is one of arrival, not of departure.

With Regard to the Act

“Thinking, says Freud, bars the entry to knowledge” (Lacan, 1968-69, Session: 23 April, 1969). That’s at the heart of the analytical experience, but it’s also the challenge for its transmission. Freud constantly stresses it from the time when he begins conceptualising the psychical apparatus until the end of his life, right from his separation of the primary process and the secondary process, and from his realisation that thought, which by definition is the result of censorship, articulates itself by moving away from subjective truth. The fundamental rule which governs the experience is an invitation to suspend thinking.

We know the asystematic attitude that is set forth in the principle, regarding both the rule called analytic imposed on the patient—not to omit anything of what comes to his mind and abandon, to this end, any critical activity and any choice—and regarding the attention

termed floating that Freud expressly assigns to the psychoanalyst as none other than the attitude corresponding to this rule (Lacan, 1956/2001, p. 3).

On the side of the analyst, the counterpart to free association is a listening directed by an evenly suspended attention, where having an ear finely-tuned to unconscious processes, as Freud describes it, implies a suspension of any acquired knowledge. This is a difficult posture to transmit, situated between rigor and humility. Faced with the alienating alternatives “I do not think” or “I am not,” Lacan places the analyst on the side of the “I do not think.” That is what situates her act from the topology of object *a*.⁴ Thus the analyst finds herself occupying a particular position, like that of a ballerina balancing on one foot, to use one of Freud’s metaphors, a position both rigorous and evolving, constantly shaped by the uniqueness of the act, by its singular logical temporality and its structural difference.

³ “On sait l’attitude asystématique qui est posée au principe, tant de la règle dite analytique qui est imposée au patient de ne rien omettre de ce qui lui vient à l’esprit et de renoncer à cette fin à toute critique et à tout choix, que de l’attention dite flottante que Freud indique expressément au psychanalyste pour n’être rien que l’attitude qui correspond à cette règle” Lacan, “Situation de la psychanalyse et formation du psychanalyste en 1956” (Lacan, 1966/2001, p. 462, trans. J. Houis and P. Mieli).

⁴ “Il est dès lors à avancer que le psychanalyste dans la psychanalyse n’est pas sujet, et qu’à situer son acte de la topologie idéale de l’objet *a*, il se déduit que c’est à ne pas penser qu’il opère” rendu du séminaire 1967-1968 (Lacan, 1966/2001, p. 377). “It must then be advanced that the psychoanalyst in psychoanalysis is not a subject, and that by situating his act in the ideal topology of the object *a*, it can be deduced that he operates by not thinking” (trans. J. Houis and P. Mieli).

Analysis in intension implies that there is an analyst who can conduct and sustain it, an analyst who has experienced the end of her own analysis and who can bring an analysis to its conclusion; an analyst who acts from the position of the object *a* and not from that of the subject supposed to know. It is important to distinguish between the moment when an analysand decides to practise and the time which punctuates the end of her analysis. Lacan remarks that if the aim of the analysis is merely to be satisfied with an identification with the analyst, or to reject the analyst as other, “here indeed is the pathetic finale of the analytic experience” (1964-65, Session: 3 March, 1965). The analysand who begins practising is lured by a siren song that pushes her to act. To the collapse of the attribution of knowledge to the analyst, she responds by setting herself up as subject supposed to know; but in so doing, she identifies with “the subject of deception” (1964-65, Session: 19 May, 1965). It’s a case of a singular act of faith, Lacan observes, during which the subject *rescues* the subject supposed to know (Lacan, 1967-68, Session: 7 February, 1968).⁵ And in rescuing it, she incarnates it.

⁵ “L’analyste, lui, ne sait pas qu’il y a un sujet supposé savoir et sait même que tout ce dont il s’agit dans la psychanalyse de par l’existence de l’inconscient, consiste à rayer de la carte cette fonction du sujet supposé savoir. C’est donc un acte de foi singulier que ceci qui s’affirme de faire foi à ce qui est mis en question, puisqu’à engager le psychanalysant dans la tâche on profère cet acte de foi, c’est à dire qu’on le sauve.” This translates as, “The analyst, for his part, does not know that there is a subject supposed to know and even knows that everything involved in psychoanalysis, because of the unconscious, consists precisely [in] eliminating from the map this function of subject supposed to know. It is then a singular act of faith that is affirmed by putting one’s faith in what is put in question, since by simply engaging the psychoanalysand in the task one proffers this act of faith, namely, one rescues it” (Lacan 1967-68, p. 11, trans. J. Houis and P. Mieli).

What collapses on one side establishes itself on the other. If it is a process of truth which supports the analysand in this act of faith, if in this moment of the act “one is this truth” (1967-68, Session: 17 January, 1968) as Lacan highlights, this incarnation, far from situating oneself on “non thinking”, is quite far from constituting the place from which one can operate as an analyst. It’s a question of a time of the cure which foresees a later logical time, “another stage of the analysis” (Chaboudez, 2019, p.106).⁶ The analysis must continue, leading to a new cut in the act, a subjective shake-up which will question this renewed belief. A mourning process in order to separate from it will follow.

With Regard to Studies

Therefore, the logical time for a formation is always unique, singular, unpredictable, an effect of the analysis in intension, which is a *conditio sine qua non* for there to be an analytic formation. This is in contrast therefore with any kind of time-frame fixed in advance.

In this sense, the numerous psychoanalytic study programs, which are mainly based on academic models stretched out over a specific number of years, contrast sharply with subjective logical temporality. And they produce all sorts of impasses, including finding oneself practising a profession far

⁶ In her remarkable article, Gisèle Chaboudez develops with precision the different scansion of the psychoanalytic act (Chaboudez, 2019, p. 106).

removed from one's own desire. The fact, for example, that the "orthodox" institutions affiliated to the APsaA (American Psychoanalytic Association) require that their "candidates" already have a practice related to mental health (and the rare exceptions must immediately conform to very precise requirements), institutionalises the choice of becoming an analyst even before the analysis has taken place. They turn a professional choice or a field of interest—elements to be analysed among others—into a condition for entering into training. Once selected, candidates have to follow a program of studies stretching out over a specific number of years. If you conform to the directives—that's what they call the training: conforming—you end up with an official diploma. Elsewhere, in Italy for example, as a result of the appalling Ossicini law which was greeted nonchalantly by numerous Lacanians, in order to become a "psychotherapist" (the word "analyst" having been eliminated by law), the students, who all have to have a degree in psychology, now have to register with a school of psychotherapy and follow specialised classes for four years. They emerge with the title of psychotherapist and may practise. Or, in the United States, university programs in clinical psychology or in clinical social work prepare the students for practice, and place the graduates in clinics, hospitals, institutions, etc. Overnight they will be expected to take responsibility for tens of patients; their anxiety and confusion is something to behold when they come to talk about it in supervision. Elsewhere, eminent voices are raised to rescue the transmission of psychoanalysis thanks to

specialised university programs—which may well be fruitful, as long as it’s recognised that they do not guarantee transmission and that the discourse of the university is not analytic discourse. One way or another, either personal analysis remains the corollary of a symptomatic choice, or it takes a back seat and its temporal aspect is set aside.

This reality is food for thought. It shows the necessity of separating the domain of mental health, with all its biopolitical implications, from that of a psychoanalysis worthy of the name, making a radical distinction between the relation to knowledge of a professional and university kind and the analytic relation, and constantly insisting on the fundamental difference between conformation and formation. And likewise insisting on the difference between knowledge and truth. It’s a question of transmitting a not hypothesised relation to knowledge, which allows one to get rid of it in the course of the act. And to develop a practice of reading which is both textual and rigorous. By contrast with the “rebound between truth and lie” (Ginzburg, 2000, p. 38) of a certain deconstructionist drift, which suggests that any reading of a text is good if the text offers the opportunity for it, it is essential to promote the philological approach to the reading of texts. And to remember, as the clinic shows, that if you consider the truth effect of a given letter, a plurality of readings is not possible. But treating a text as dogma is also a way of betraying a reading which is both philological and lay, one which returns to the texts in order to study them, to understand them

and unpack them—a practice which animates the transference of reading essential to formation.

The journey which leads someone to her analysis will always be a unique and singular one. The course of one's own formation will be original, not the result of norms or pre-constituted studies, but the result of an experience in action. Profound and rigorous studies will be essential of course. Freud underlined the importance of the vast field of studies necessary for analytic formation—science, medicine, philosophy, literature, anthropology, art, etc.—much broader than any university or institutional course. He also denounced vigorously the claim that one needs to obtain a medical degree in order to become an analyst as being the most dangerous form of resistance towards psychoanalysis, a resistance which, at the present time, has re-emerged and intensified with the spreading requirement to have a degree in psychology. He strongly supported the importance of “secularism” in analytic formation, the importance of coming to it through different fields, and the necessity of protecting the singularity of the journey which leads an analysand toward practice. Oddly, with the recent regulations that require pre-established university studies, in Europe in particular, one no longer hears anything about the crucial question of lay analysis, which is intrinsic to any psychoanalysis worthy of the name. Conforming deforms.

It is therefore desirable that formation in psychoanalysis remains distinct from standardised institutional and academic programs and that it continues to take place within analytic

associations freed from institutional logic, thus ensuring that programs may be both rigorous and in progress, always capable of being revised in the aftermath of experience, with programs that allow the analysand to articulate her own trajectory in the formation, to invent her own particular modalities in it. These associations need to renew themselves and to maintain, at the heart of the social link which is specific to them, the modalities of relation between analysis in intension and analysis in extension necessary for the transmission of psychoanalysis. It will be immediately objected that there is nothing to prevent psychoanalytic associations from transforming themselves into centres of institutional power grouped around local chieftain, or associations that are irresponsible where formation is concerned.

It wasn't by chance that Lacan in his "Proposition of October 9 1967" drew on the horizon of psychoanalysis in extension a perspective with three vanishing points: a symbolic one relative to the oedipal myth, an imaginary one relative to the institution, and a real one, that of the concentration camps. Each of these points was tracing the direction for a reflection on the responsibility of the analyst and on her indispensable ethical engagement, whether it's a question of unmasking the way in which oedipal ideology participates in biopolitical logic, of deconstructing the imaginary identifications that reinforce the totalitarian structure of the institution to the detriment of analysis in intension and in extension, or indeed of confronting a real that is invading our social reality, the consequence of the managing of social groupings on the part of science and the

universalisation it produces. This ethical engagement must keep renewing itself according to the different contexts and the different social bonds. It's a question of denouncing the mystifications of the oedipal ideology and its current normative applications, and continuing to deconstruct the identificatory mystifications of institutional groups. A re-reading of Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921) would be useful. By situating in it the object *a*, the very one that concerns the analyst, Lacan unveils the two faces of the crowd (of which the Church and the Army are, according to Freud, examples): one face pledged to the *all*, the other to the *not-all*, revealing the plural nature of the identificatory relation between individuals and the ideal, opening up a prolific path for a subversion of all discourses with unary, and totalitarian, inclinations.

With regard to segregation, it would be a question, among others, of attentively considering the manner in which mental health and its corresponding therapies themselves participate in the machine of segregation. Perhaps this is even more obvious in a country like the United States, where the most advanced forms of global neoliberalism converge, where formulas are developed which—although challenged and considered scandalous in the Old Continent and throughout the entire world—end up spreading to the international market and being adopted everywhere. The DSM V, the diagnostics dictated by the pharmacological industry (ADHD and so on), behavioural psychology and neuropsychology, are examples among many

others. The “State of Well-being,” very obviously a disciplinary one, implies a control of the body and the mind, as well as the democratic normalisation of individual conduct, clearly visible in this period of the pandemic. The alliance between industry, technoscience, medicine and law transforms technological innovations into products of consumerism and exploitation. There are scores of examples; just think of sex-change practices and the euphoria surrounding them.

Being in the middle of an immense triage centre as we are, we can clearly see that the logic of the state of exception leads to new camps and new persecutions (refugees, sick people, old people, and so on). And it is often accompanied by the indifference of members of our “profession.”

About Supervision

The difference between the moment when an analyst decides to practice analysis and the end of the analysis shows the central function of supervision. Supervision is an essential part of analysis in intension and of its transmission. It reveals different moments of the formation: on the one hand, the transmission of the framework in the treatment, putting the accent on the analytic technique and the elements of its competence; on the other hand, the listening to the position of the analyst in the direction of the treatment. This last aspect sends the analyst in supervision back to her own analysis, reinvigorating the analytic work in a plural and fertile way — which underlines the difference between clinical practice and the end of an analysis.

If, in agreement with Lacan, we consider as an “act” the entire course of treatment—the change of the subjective position which implies the very possibility of the end of treatment and the encounters with the collapse of the subject supposed to know—we must see that this act, both in its uniqueness and as a whole, is, in fact, governed by discrete punctuations concerning the logical time proper to each session, or series of sessions. Each one of these punctuations will mark a moment to conclude, an effect of the temporal function of the *objet h(a)té* - the hastened object *a*. In so far as they involve a displacement of the position of the analysand or of the listening by the analyst, these scansion will be logical steps which conclude a time of repetition in order to open up a new space in the treatment, allowing something to collapse. Each scansion being a discrete element of the analytic act, it will be *one step in the act*: a “*pas d’acte*,” which is also a “*pas de sens*,” the emergence of a not sense and a step towards a new meaning effect.

We know to what extent the dimension of astonishment is crucial during an analysis. It is an effect of the moment of swinging between the “I don’t think” and the “I am not” which marks the logic of the act. It’s often talked about on the part of the analysand, when astonishment punctuates the recognition of a formation of the unconscious, when it accompanies the lightning flash which the saying (*le dire*) produces beyond all that is said (*les dits*). This, as Lacan puts **it** in his *Preface to Seminar 11*, takes place in the *l’esp d’un laps*, the space of a lapsus, where meaning ceases to have any impact, there where we are only sure

that “we are in in the unconscious” (Lacan, 1966/2001, p. 571). That also does not fail to cause astonishment on the part of the analyst. While the desire of the analyst is based on the wager of the unconscious, this does not mean that the emergence of the effects of such a wager do not cease to surprise. To allow for surprise is the fundamental element of formation.

How can we transmit something of the logical step which regulates a moment of the treatment by extrapolating it from the transference reality of which it is, in fact, an ongoing effect? In order for that to happen, it is perhaps necessary for the analyst witnessing it to still be caught up in the effects of this act, in the astonishment which accompanied this unexpected production—and thus be able to make a step of transmission. How then to support the quality of the journey made by an analysand in her formation? These are questions we asked ourselves in our association. They led to a new procedure whereby it is the supervisor who commits to transmitting a step in the act.

The program of formation of our association in New York⁷ (which offers seminars, reading groups, cartels, presentations by members, interdisciplinary meetings, etc.) arranges for a supervisor to make a presentation to a Council—one formed ad hoc for this occasion.⁸ In this presentation, the

⁷ Our association, *Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association*, counts among its members and participants not only analysts or analysts in formation but also people practising in other domains (from literature to art, to law, to the sciences, etc.) and its activities are open to all participants. The Formation Program is devoted to those who wish to practice psychoanalysis.

⁸ The presentation by the Supervisor takes place twice, with two different Supervisors, at a time, and with different Councils, chosen ad hoc each time. The

supervisor gives evidence of something specific of her experience: on the basis of one step in the act, selected from the supervision work, she will engage in transmitting it, and transmit what she heard that is new and unique about the analytic act in the transference work with this analysand in formation. This amounts to an account of transmission that is itself a transmission.

This procedure, which was adopted in the last few years, has been productive. The experience of the presentation of a step in the analytic act is often illuminating: that of seeing a testimony produce effects in the act, in the listening of the different members of the Council and in the work of transference thus produced. In many cases it becomes a novel experience, but in any case it is an experience which prompts a reflection on the ethics of analysis and its transmission. From the point of view of the supervisor, the challenge of this transmission becomes a scansion which knots together analysis in intension and analysis in extension and highlights the position of analysand of the supervisor. From the point of view of the association, the process allows one to distance oneself from a value judgment about the work accomplished by the analysand in formation and to place

Council—made up of four analysts of the association and an analysand in formation—is chosen by the analysand and approved by the Formation Committee. AF, Analysand in Formation, is the title given to those following the Formation Program, while following it. An AF chooses her Presenting Analysts and introduces them to the Formation Committee. They are either Supervisors of the Association or they become so, if they accept the terms of the presentation format of the Association. Each time a Council gives its views on the presentation by a Supervisor, the members of the Council transmit the result to the Formation Committee, which communicates it to the AF.

the emphasis on the listening to an analytic position in act, which one recognises as such if there is a transmission.

We conceive the formation program as a journey and a punctuation in a permanent formation. It does not lead at the end to a nomination. The association takes on the responsibility of a formation vis-a-vis the social bond; but the nomination is an affair which concerns the analyst, the analyst who authorises herself, “on her own authority and on that of a few others”—nomination being part of the analysand’s task. Thanks to her engagement in the association and to the transference work undertaken and in progress, the one who authorises herself will be recognised by others.⁹ The Association will be able to nurture the bonds among analysts, indispensable for the analyst to sustain her own position as analyst and her work in extension. Once the formation program is completed, supervision remains a subjective choice, rekindled by the transference of work in intension and extension.

The corollary of the fact that the analyst should be at least two is that formation must remain permanent. Only, it has to be felt; or better, inhabited—which entails that the experience of the end of the analysis is able to take place.

⁹ It does not end in a nomination, nor in a certificate giving the title of analyst (as is the case in the Institutions in the United States). The Association, on the contrary, gives a letter of confirmation of the completion of the Formation Program.

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