

SAVOIR-FAIRE AND THE ANALYTIC ACT

By Lillian Ferrari

Lacan's savoir-faire is a notion that belongs to a late stage in his teaching, and its utilization differs according to the different context in which it is used.

This year we have the opportunity to approach it in our Association through the notion of savoir-faire in relationship to the frame of the cure, to a knowing that pertains to setting up the conditions that are specific to psychoanalytic practice, and that makes it different from any other therapeutic approach.

By combining two terms, knowing and make, the notion of savoir-faire indicates to us that there is a particular kind of knowing in the practice of analysis. It is a knowing that cannot be exhausted with the learning of a number of theoretical and technical postulates, susceptible of being universal and systematized in a coherent corpus. It also requires to recognize an additional dimension which may be displayed in the endeavor of the analyst, consisting for instance, in bringing to a 'good end' the task he has been entrusted with.

The analyst' resources to accomplish this task are not without relation with the resources that she has been able to elaborate and extract from the experience of her own analysis and her own unconscious.

Thus, almost since the inception of analytic discourse, the most important condition for becoming an analyst is to undergo her own personal analysis. The reason for this important condition lies in its being the only way in which the analyst can gain a conviction of the existence of the unconscious, impossible

to obtain from merely intellectual means: “...impressions and convictions will be gained in relationship to one self which will be sought in vain from studying from books and attending lectures.”¹

Throughout his papers grouped together as “Technical Writings”², Freud insists in saying that the efficacy of the analytic interventions does not reside in its theoretical or intellectual value –which can be rather taken as a resistance- but rather in its value to produce effects. And that is the reason why he subordinates the revelation of interpretation to the putting into play of the transference conditions.

But the question is, what type of learning an analyst acquires in his own analysis? What type of knowledge and how? The condition *sine qua non* of undergoing an analysis in order to become an analyst suggest that one learns in one’s own analysis something that cannot be acquired through other means. This condition reveals also that there is a kind of knotting between the theoretical and the practical dimension in the analytic experience, there where an ordinary prejudice would conceive them as separate. This necessary knotting between the practice of analysis and its theory invite an epistemological reflection about the mutual incidences between the two.

In my view, there is an abiding and traditional epistemological division between a supposedly theoretical level, and another, distinct pragmatic or experiential level. This dichotomy echoes another philosophical prejudice that originated in the famous Cartesian dualism, between the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*. The cogito is identified as the thinking substance, supposed to be immaterial and interior, and the body as matter that occupies a place in space is identified with the *substantia extensa*, which is the predominant model for the body. As a consequence of this division, that promotes a supremacy of the cogito and of conscious thinking, the body is ‘thrown out to the extension’ where it lies objectified and exterior to subjective experience.

¹ Freud, S. *Recommendations to Physicians practicing Psycho-Analysis*. S.E. Vol XII. Pag. 117

² Freud, S. *Papers on Technique*. S.E. Vol. XII.

As a result, the mission of all moral philosophy becomes the mastery and the tame of the body and its passions, through its subjection to a transcendental order --be this God, Supreme Good, and more recently the Medical and Mental Health Sciences. It is quite apparent how, on behalf of ideals of 'good mental and physical health', the medical order has taken an increasing role in the control and normativity of the individuals and their bodies. Current trends of control need not be so overtly 'moral' in purpose, but are equally repressive.

In this regard, Descartes' latest work, "Passions of the Soul"³ published in the year before his death is noteworthy because he tries to explain how the two substances, though being separated, interact and influence each other, as when, for instance, the mind causes the body to move. Descartes' intention was an attempt to respond to a moral concern, namely how to strengthen the power of the mind to rule over our passions and moods. But what is interesting is that the text establishes a mind-body causality that in some way anticipates modern developments in psychology, by using a psycho-physiological model in which the brain, through the 'pineal gland' becomes the site where both substances connect. In the end, passions and moods are largely explained by how our brain and nervous system affects our soul, setting the bases for modern conceptualizations of the subject such as those sustained by the neurosciences. Psychology in general, and the discipline of psychopharmacology in particular are inscribed within this tradition, a fact that reveals their moralizing origin and their normative and controlling purpose.

Today, this division mind-body pervades almost all theories that approach the question of the subject and its sufferings. But what is understood under the concept of body is the 'pure scientific body', the one described by biology, anatomy and now neurosciences, and not of course the libidinal body, touched by the signifier and inhabited by the drives. Even when is accepted an order of causality in

³ Descartes, Rene. Passions of the Soul. Hackett Publishing Company. Indianapolis/Cambridge.2013.

which the psychological disturbances may affect the body, the concept of the psychic finds its reference in the mental (e.g. cognitions), and the physical has its reference in the body as it is conceived by the medical sciences.

By contrast with these traditional parameters of mind/body supplied by a Cartesian neuro-scientific outlook, the introduction of the concept of the unconscious and its effect of *jouissance* in the body, introduces a fundamentally different notion of the body and its boundaries and parameters. That is, the unconscious redefines the very terms of *extensia* by positing a notion of space that is different from metrical space, from the intuitive notion of space as a three dimensional, unlimited extension that the individual has the illusion of apprehending as exterior to himself. Indeed, within the analytic experience, the psychical space where the subject subsists as a desiring subject is structured around his relationship with the Other, and is thus conditioned by the logic of the signifier.

That the subject is constituted within this signifying dimension means that the subject, by being represented by a signifier for another, is inscribed as a cut, as a lack, as an effaced trace, Lacan says.⁴

We can understand this question of the effacement as the loss that the living organism experiences as a consequence of its inscription within speech, more specifically, as a consequence of its dependency to the maternal Other, who with her words and cares introduces the register of demand and its impossible satisfaction. It is for that reason that the lack of the subject at the level of the signifier has a libidinal correspondence in the different object losses that elicit the function of object *a*. The inscription of the subject in the Other implies what Lacan calls “an exclusion of *jouissance*”, in the sense of a *jouissance* that could be considered total and complete, while at the same time it leaves traces of the subject in the constitution of the different libidinal objects that the psychoanalytic experience promotes: the gaze, the breast, the voice, the feces. In a certain sense, says Lacan, the privilege of these objects to

⁴ Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*. Éditions du Seuil. 2006. Class 20.

give support to the lack of the subject is given by the fact they are apt to represent the function of the cut, of a separation between the subject and the Other that can be localized in the orifices of the body. The emergence of the desiring subject as a result of the signifying cut is literally 'embodied' through the different object losses, engendering a psychical space that is marked by relations that Lacan defines using the neologism '*extime*'. With this neologism, Lacan wants to combine what is extreme and exterior with what is intimate and interior, defining it as "that which is closest to us without ceasing to be exterior. We should invent the word *extime* to designate what is at stake"⁵. The psychical space of the subject includes this plane of what is *extime*, where the subject is in "internal exclusion"⁶ with respect to its objects of jouissance or enjoyment. Excluded and separated from them, but in an intimate connection.

Through the concept of "extimity" Lacan recreates a notion of space wherein it is not possible to clearly distinguish between an interior and exterior, between inside and outside, between what is intimate and familiar, and what is strange and unfamiliar, as the experience of the uncanny shows. This is a zone that is constantly revealed by the analytic experience, there where the most intimate could coincide with what is strangest as in the experience of the uncanny, and where is also possible to put in continuity the exterior with the interior, a fact that can most precisely be conceived in terms of a topological space.⁷

This is indeed what takes place in the famous case Wolf man, where the fixed gazes of the wolves that terrifies him in the dream, represent his own libidinal gaze at the moment in which he had witnessed –fantasmatically- the *coitus a tergo* between his parents, as it was deduced by Freud.

⁵ Lacan, J. op. cit. class XIV.

⁶ Lacan, J. *Écrits*. Editions du Seuil. English Translation by Bruce Fink. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2006. Pag. 731

⁷ Porge, E. *Transmettre la Clinique psychanalytique*. Éditions érès. 2005. Spanish Translation: Transmitir la clinica Psicoanalitica. Nueva Vision. Buenos Aires. 2007

The analytic work puts in play this logic of psychic space in the transference-space. The analyst's position is not outside, but rather 'part and parcel'⁸ of the effects of truth of the unconscious. On the same vein, the statements of an analysand can be compared to a trajectory of a Mobius band that has only one side and one edge, but separated by torsions. The analyst operates on this surface of the discourse producing punctuations and cuts that introduce a different 'reading', and thus a new perspective on things. The analytic intervention, which aim at the emergence of the subject of the enunciation within the interior of the discourse and not in its beyond, introduces new threads of connections and new neighboring relations that shakes fixed and rigid significations on the part of the analysand. At the same time, these changes modify the libidinal distribution of the subject, permitting him to experience a change in 'space'.

A patient who suffered a more or less severe symptoms of anorexia, complained about not being able to assert himself, and especially, not able to say "no" to others. The analyst' reply "in order say no, one has to open one's own mouth" corresponds to an intervention that, while putting in continuity her anorexic rejection and her refusal to say 'no' to others, is able to open up new streams of thoughts and associations that permit him to experience a subjective "change of space".

Another advantage indicated by Freud concerning the personal analysis is that it produces an effect of openness towards the encountering of the new, promoting an attitude that looks forward to effects of surprise. This disposition towards newness, which should be distinguished from the vain hope proper to the phantasm, is no doubt an effect of analysis. Freud says: "Anyone who can appreciate the high

⁸ Lacan, J. *Position of the Unconscious*, in *Écrits*, op. cit.

value of knowledge ...will continue the analytic examination of his personality in the form of a self-analysis and be content to realize that within himself as in the external world, he must always expect something new.”⁹

This attitude of aperture that an analyst has taken from his own analysis, doesn't indicate that in the very different activities that an analyst performs (activities of research, of transmission, and exchange with colleagues) he/she still maintains in a certain way his position as analysand?

The concept of transference appears in Freud very early on related to language phenomenon that prevails in the unconscious, where the psychological mechanism of displacement consists in the transference of a quantum of excitation –the economical point of view- from one representation to another. This mechanism of displacement is equivalent to the rhetorical procedure of metonymy, will say Lacan, and consists in the transference of libido from one representation to another that is sufficiently distant from the repressed to be able to elude censorship.

Thus, in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud says that indifferent impressions of the day on account of their distance to the repressed material may become the day residues by receiving the libidinal cathexis from the unconscious processes, which finds in them a disguise expression that permits its manifestation in the dream. *“We learn from the latter (psychology of neurosis) that an unconscious idea is as such quite incapable of entering the preconscious and that can only exercise any effect there by establishing a connection with an idea which already belong to the preconscious, by transferring its intensity on to it and by getting itself cover by it.”*¹⁰ This elemental way of conceiving transference as a displacement of a libidinal amount from one representation to another allows us to understand the

⁹ Freud, S. *Papers on Technique: Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis*. S.E. Vol. XII. Page 116

¹⁰ Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. Vol V. pag. 562.

phenomenon of transference as a 'knot'¹¹: on the one hand, it mobilizes the signifying chain, and on the other, it puts at play a libidinal satisfaction in which the analyst is taken as object. This is the reason why transference is at the same time, an obstacle and the motor of the cure.

Moreover, given the often absurd appearance of the dream content, Freud contends that what promotes the associations and connections between the representations in the dream are 'superficial relations', that is, relations based on sound and verbal assonance more than relations of meaning. Indeed, he says that ideas in the dream "*seem to be interrelated in what is described as a 'superficial manner- by assonance, verbal ambiguity, temporal coincidence without connection in meaning, or by association of the kind that we allow in jokes or in play upon words'*"¹²

We have thus the basic schema of the unconscious functioning constituted by signifiers that are linked together in lieu of their differential value, their phonic assonance or temporal contiguity, without any subjective intention behind them, without any subject that manipulates its movements.

But the existence of the unconscious as a knowledge is not to be taken for granted, and it is part of the responsibility of the analyst to place it in a position of cause.

In this regard, the notion of act seems to be related to the notion of savoir-faire, be it that we take the notion of act in a broader sense as that which informs the interventions of the analyst (handling of money, frequency of sessions, handling of the transference, etc.), or be that we consider the notion of the psychoanalytic act in its specificity, as that which concerns the emergence of the analyst desire, that is, as the passage from the position of the analysand to the position of the analyst. The inauguration of

¹¹ Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre principes fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Class X. Editions du Seuil, 1973

¹² Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, op. cit. pag. 530.

the analytic cure as an act requires that the analyst be responsible for making present the unconscious in the cure, by aiming at the level of the enunciation in the speech of the analysand, by pointing out to an enigma in his/her statements that, in spite of their opacity, addresses the subject of the unconscious.

The act of positing the *ex-sistance* of the unconscious corresponds, I think, to the *savoir-faire* of the analyst in so far as she maintains what Freud designated as the ‘evenly suspended attention’¹³, a position whereby the analyst listens without attempting to understand. The analysand responds to the latter by consenting to follow –up to what is possible- the fundamental rule, and in so doing to say more than what he knows.

Through this act of aperture, analytic transference is shaped under the structure of the Subject Supposed to Know imputed to the analyst, a structure which in reality covers up the structure of the unconscious knowledge as a knowledge without a subject. “ce que le psychanalyste couvre, parce que lui-même s’en couvre, c’est qu’il puisse se dire quelque chose sans qu’aucun sujet le sache.”¹⁴

Lacan argues that because the post-Freudian’s analysts had forgotten the inaugural act of Freud in the sense of his having postulated the existence of the unconscious, they promoted a sort of ritualization of the frame, by imposing a rigidity in the frame and universalizing certain technical rules in the direction of the cure and in the formation of analysts. From thence on, questions relative to the technique acquired a relevance that did not have for Freud, becoming a sort of ceremonial or protocol that made the subversion of the Freudian discovery more and more irrelevant.

According to Lacan the analytic act corresponds to the moment of the emergence of the desire of the analyst, the moment that entails the passage from the position of the analysant to the analyst. It

¹³ Freud, S. *Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-analysis*. Op. cit. pag 111.

¹⁴ “that which the analyst covers, because he himself covers himself with it, is that something may be said without any subject knowing it”. Lacan, J. *La méprise du sujet supposé savoir*. Autres écrits. Éditions du Seuil. Paris. 2001. Pag 336. Our translation.

supposes both the punctual moment when the shift occurs, as well as the entire analytic trajectory taken as a passage, as a pass.

The notion of the analytic act as a passage that comprises the whole analytic work and primarily the task of the analysand, contains as such a connotation of a doing that approximates it to the question of the savoir-faire. Moreover, In the seminar 16 Lacan says **‘Vous sentez bien que la question autour de l’acte psychoanalytique, c’est –comme je vous l’ai dit tout a l’heure- celle de cet acte décisif qui fait, du psychanalysant surgir, s’inaugurer, s’instaurer le psychanalyste. Si comme je vous l’ai tout à l’heure indiqué, le psychanalyste se confound avec la production du faire, du travail du psychanalysant, c’est là qu’on peut bien dire que le psychanalysant fait –au sens fort du term- le psychanalyste.**¹⁵ *“...You sense well that the question about the psychoanalytic act is, as I told you earlier, that of the decisive act that from the psychoanalysand makes there arise, be inaugurated, be established the psychoanalyst. If, as I indicated to you earlier, the psychoanalyst is confused with the production of doing, of the work of the psychoanalyzand, it is here that one can really say that the analysand makes (fait) in the strongest sense of the term, the psychoanalyst.”* The French verb ‘Fait’ in this context has two meanings: to make something, and to ‘play at being someone’, in the sense of pretending to be someone, as when someone represents a character or a role.

This statement suggest the idea that there is in the process of becoming analyst something of the order of an endeavor, of a working that should be distinguished from today’s alienated modes of production that are the result of the conjunction between the scientific discourse and capitalism. Indeed the work of an analysis, which aims at the effects of truth in the articulation of knowledge rather than at the development of knowledge *per se*, is closer to the ancient sense of the word ‘poiesis’, which means fabrication and it is also the etymology of the word ‘poetry’. *“Is it not apparent that in order for*

¹⁵ Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVI: D’un Autre à l’autre*. Class XXII. In <http://saterla.free.fr>. The translation in English can be found at <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/published-works/seminars>.

production as such to be distinguished from what was always poiesis, fabrication, work, the level of the potter, it is necessary that there should be made autonomous as such what is very well distinguished in capitalism, namely, the means of production?”¹⁶

Similarly as in the work of the potter when he fashions the vase and its emptiness at the same time, the analytic work is not accomplished without the *object a*, that is, without the analyst being in the position of *object a* as placeholder of the lack. This position of the analyst as being the placeholder of the lack around which the libido gravitates and constructs its phantasies, is what prepares and allows for the falling of the *object a* at the end of the cure as the object support of the transference-fictions.

To conceive the analytic trajectory as that which permits to draw a contour in the hole of knowledge, does it not approximate its work to a drive-trajectory, an approximation that is reflected in the expression ‘to make of oneself an analyst’?

Lastly, these ideas also suggest that the process of becoming an analyst requires, to some extent, a certain amount of creativity and even artifice on the part of each analysand that could become a *savoir-faire*, a resource in her own work as analyst, there where the universal concept ‘The analyst’, is lacking.

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¹⁶ Lacan, J. *ibid.*