

## LACAN AND THE PLACE OF THE ANALYST

*Notes on the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real*<sup>1</sup>

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*"We can only regard teaching as true if it can actually arouse an insistence on those who can hear this desire to know, a desire that can only emerge provided they take ignorance as their own measure and this is precisely why it is so prolific – and this is also meant to those who teach."*

*Jacques Lacan*

### INTRODUCTION

First of all, I want to thank the APW and, especially the organizers of the event, Marcos Cancado, Rolf Flor and all the colleagues who belong to the Boston Lacan Study, for the invitation to participate in this annual meeting. It is a pleasure to be here and share this moment of work with the North American colleagues. I should apologize for any possible mistake you might find in my English to which I had dedicated many years of study before I met Lacan. What is curious about it is that now I must thank

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<sup>1</sup> Conference presented at the Boston APW (Associated Psychoanalytic Workshops) Meeting in October 2013.

Lacan for leading me to resume my former studies so that I can be here today to share my experience with you.

The convocation of this meeting sounded very interesting because it already brings in it an analysis of the Lacanian thinking regarding his major contribution to psychoanalysis: the structural tripartition, real, symbolic and imaginary. The idea that "the imaginary is a minor register that should be depreciated or even eliminated" was also widespread in Brazil at the beginning of the diffusion of Lacan's teaching. At that moment, it was even divulged the idea of the existence of two sorts of imaginary, a higher one which should be more emphasized because it was regarded as a good imaginary, and a lower one, that should be discarded, once it was taken as a bad one. However, Lacan's ideas concerning the three registers shows there is not such hierarchy. With the introduction of the topology by Lacan and his theorization regarding the knots, we can regard the three registers as a tripartite unity trespassed by the property of the structure: each register cannot exist isolatedly and the elimination of one of them implies in the disruption of this tripartite structure. Therefore, what really matters is to emphasise the different possible articulations in our psyche among these three dimensions which are completely heterogeneous.

It is important to emphasize that these three registers can be found in Freud's own work although they were not conceptualized that way, but each one comprehends, as we can see, a vast segment of Freud's theory. As Lacan himself taught us, nomination changes everything and that was exactly what he did: to deal with some aspects of Freud's legacy, Lacan used these three words. Just by having done so he went further beyond because ever since he created these registers we have been using them to tackle both theory and practice. It was such a definite turning point as regards the theory that it makes it practically impossible for the analysts to do without it. As Moustapha Safouan pointed out in an article published on the occasion of Lacan's death in 1981, without such a concept it would be really hard to understand the essence of Freud's thesis on the psyche.

R.S.I.

Lacan presented this tripartition on two different occasions. He firstly talked about this issue in the conference "The symbolic, the imaginary and the real" which was pronounced at the French Psychoanalytic Society in July of 1953. In September, just two months later, he went on working on the same topic in the Congress of Rome where he presented his long essay "The Function and the Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis". It is

interesting to observe that in the conference of July, Lacan had already posed some questions that, later on, were dealt with in "The Function and the Field".

In that conference, Lacan said that "the essential registers of the human reality were named the symbolic, the imaginary and the real". He then posed a question about the analytic experience pointing out that it could certainly produce deep changes in the subject. Implicitly referring to Lévi-Strauss, he also talked about the "effectiveness" of such an experience, saying that it was only likely to fully succeed so long one made use of words. At that moment, the focus was on the symbolic in its relation to the imaginary. As for the real, Lacan regarded it as part of the subject although it could not be apprehended.

From the 1950's until the end of his teaching, Lacan revisited this tripartition in different ways, articulating it with several segments of both the psychoanalytic theory as well as its practice. In the seminar R.S.I, he summarised his own theoretical course by pointing out that he had firstly initiated it by tackling the imaginary, then spent some time on the symbolic and finally got to the real. As such terms have a rather colloquial use, it must be made clear from the very beginning that the real is not the reality, the imaginary is not the imagination and the symbolic is not

reduced to any set of symbols and, therefore, it has nothing to do with the Jungian symbolic.

The symbolic is a term that condenses the Freudian theory regarding the unconscious which is completely exposed along the three major books that inaugurated the work of Freud and that Lacan regarded as "canonical concerning the unconscious". The formations of the unconscious - the symptom, the dream, the lapsus and the joke - are symbolic and show that the unconscious is structured as a language. It was somehow tautological for Lacan to say that, as he would insist on the idea that there was only one structure, that is to say, language itself. We must remember Lacan stated that clearly in a conference he presented in a symposium on structuralism at the John Hopkins University, in 1966. Such theoretical contributions show that structure is language and that being so, language is 'structurezing'.

The imaginary is a term that gathers Freud's contributions on the narcissism and on the concept of the ego. The narcissism constitutes one of the greatest Freudian discoveries as it situates the own ego as an object that can be invested by sexual drives.

The real is the name Lacan gives to the segment of the Freudian work related to the question concerning jouissance, no matter if it is related to the first drive dualism - the sexual jouissance (which will be renamed

as phallic jouissance by Lacan as it is limited by the language) - or if it is related to jouissance concerning the second dualism, that is to say, unlimited jouissance of the death drive. The imaginary is essentially related to the body image.

To sum it up, the symbolic is the register of the language, the imaginary is the register of the body image, and the real is related to the lack of words or images, it is the thing that bears no possible representation, it is the "unthinkable". The real is not the reality because reality is a weave which has been pulled together by the threads of the symbolic and the imaginary and that is consequently made of words and images. Actually, the real is something that is situated beyond every subject's reality and which might as well be written like the following formula:  $R[S-I]$ . The real corresponds to the things that cannot be assimilated by the subject and its two major clinical representatives are the trauma and the anguish (anxiety). The latter will be dealt with more carefully by the end of this presentation because between the real and the imaginary there is a sort of war which is constantly fought inside the subject.

However, I think that the simplest form and, yet, the most precise way to conceptualize the three Lacanian registers is to go over his teaching as this notion can

be found all along it. If we put it together, we will be able to understand what this notion means and also to realize that it bears a wide range of articulations. This notion has to do with the following ideas: the real is related to the non-sense, the symbolic to the double-sense and the imaginary to the sense. Further on, we will see how these definitions can be useful as regards the theory itself.

Real - Non-sense

Symbolic - Double-sense

Imaginary - Sense

The real is the non-sense, a blank which is not likely to be filled in by any sense, an *ab-sens*, and a radical lack of sense. As Lacan alleged once, we can be sure we are confronted with something related to the real when such a thing is completely meaningless.

The symbolic is the language itself with its characteristic ambiguity, it has to do with the polyssemy of words which can get to its highest point when, for instance, it deals with the antithetical significance of words. Freud fully examined this issue in 1911. The symbolic is essentially bifid and its most precise

characterization is the double-foreheaded image of a Roman God called Janus who had two opposite faces, each one of them representing a given side of an opposite pair. The month of January - *January mensis* - owes its name to this divinity. It is interesting to observe that in January we can both look backwards, into the past year, or forwards into the one which is to come. The sculpture of Janus used to be placed at the entrance of ancient towns, at their porticos, and its function was to take care of the city in such a way that it would both watch over its inside as well as its outside preventing it from being threatened by any sort of menace.

Similarly, in Ancient Greece, Janus frequently represented the unity which was divided by its own duality. This image fascinated Freud in such a way that he used to keep a replica of it on his desk, probably because it could represent the subject of the unconscious, always divided by conflicts and contrary to any sort of definite or unified representation. That is why Lacan represents the subject by writing \$ (the 'S' cut in half) which shows that the subject is represented between two signifiers, but never as an integral unity. Freud had already written to Fliess: "We operate on the reign of the inbetween". Thus, it is no surprise that Freud thought there was a sort of Janus' head within every formation of the unconscious.



The imaginary is the sense; it is the given sense, closed and congruent to the unity of the body image just as it was assimilated in the mirror stage (*stade du miroir*). We can see through this formulation that the real is the opposite side of the imaginary, and that the symbolic with its ambiguity is the register that allows us to articulate the non-sense of the real with the sense of the imaginary.

We all know that Lacan's formulations concerning the mirror stage were based on the observations made by the psychologist Henri Wallon about the moment the human baby - between 6 and 18 months - can recognize his own image in the mirror. This experience anticipates the realization of a functional unification of the body within the baby's psyche but which, in fact, does not correspond to the premature stage of its neurologic and psychomotor development.

With this theory of the mirror stage - which Lacan be regarded as "the broom with which he entered psychoanalysis" - he essentially produced an analytic response to the rigorous question extracted from the exposition made by Wallon concerning the baby's attitudes before his image in the mirror. We can see the psychoanalytic method operate when Lacan - who was really curious about Wallon's observations on the babies - questions himself something about this and is faced with

his not-knowledge regarding the issue. Wallon described the intense joy the baby had undergone when it saw its image in the mirror. But Lacan questioned himself, 'what was this jouissance due to?' Supported by the Freudian theory on the narcissism, he answered: it was due to the unity that had not existed so far and that would lately correspond to the 'ego' in the subject's life, an illusory unity that showed that the ego is structured under a mirage. As a result, identification takes place, that is to say, "this is the transformation that occurs inside the subject when he conforms to an image". And the mirror image is "the intuitive way through which the subject searches for his own unity.

Besides that, Lacan had also emphasized the importance of the active participation of the language in this imaginary constitution. He pointed out that for such a constitution to take place it was also necessary that the other person who was together with the child assented to its perception so that this impression could be internalized as such. In fact, the baby's reaction of joy depended completely on the adult's recognition of its perception, that is to say, the adult had to explicitly reinforce such a perception by showing his/her approval of it. Lacan came to a precious conclusion regarding this point: for any speaking subject, the imaginary is supported by the symbolic otherwise this operation is

precariously supported. After having gone over carefully Melaine Klein's Little Dick case study, Lacan came to the conclusion that Klein operated the introduction of the symbolic on that child who was submerged by the indistinct real.

The large scope of the mirror stage within the psychoanalytic theory has added up some consistency to the Freudian's hypothesis concerning the narcissism. It has also helped distinguish schizophrenia from paranoia; the former is a type of psychosis that is fixed to the real in a period prior to the mirror stage whereas the latter is a type of psychosis which has gone through the mirror stage but which has got stuck to it and that is why the sense of the imaginary prevails in this type.

#### LOVE, HATE AND IGNORANCE

We can exemplify this Lacanian formulation by his initial definitions concerning the three fundamental passions of the being: love, hate and ignorance. Love is a combination of the symbolic and the imaginary; hate is a combination of the real and the imaginary and ignorance is a combination of the symbolic and the real.

Love: S-I [R]

Hate: R-I [S]

Ignorance: R-S [I]

Love is a production of sense which is drawn from the symbolic and its consequence is the exclusion of the real, of nonsense. Love does not want to know anything about the real; it does not want to know about splitting up, incompleteness, loss or death, once they are all its rivals. Love is essentially a discourse, a love discourse that is also a literary genre. Love is expected to be really powerful just like in the "Chants of chants" where we can read: "Love is strong, it is like death".

Love does not want to know anything about impossibilities. As Lacan says: "Love is something that comes up as a temping [suppléance] of the non-existence of sexual relationship". It is precisely the real of the non-existence of the sexual relationship that love means to fulfill and, in this case, it can be regarded as belonging to the imaginary. We all know love gives some sense to life but when this is lost death drive arouses. In men, such death drive is shown on its sadist side and in women on the masochist one. We know love and hate come together; they are two horns on the same bull. As Lacan states, "True love always ends in hate". Hate excludes the symbolic and substitutes it for the real. Hate is the failure of the symbolic and due to this the real and the imaginary get into a fight. Right after this, the discourse of exclusion can be noticed; it is either him

or me. Hate leads to confrontation without any possible use of words. Violence, aggression and war are its major representatives.

Ignorance is the only passion that excludes the imaginary and leads to a confrontation between the symbolic and the real and it is the latter that produces a question without an answer but which can only be imaginarily answered through love and hate. Ignorance as a passion is the basis of transference as the *subject supposed to know*, as Lacan explains in the beginning of his teaching. Ignorance brings up a mystery that love and hate want to answer. When the symbolic is associated with the real, it becomes a question, when it is associated with the imaginary, it becomes an answer.

#### THE SYMBOLIC AND THE IMAGINARY: THE SUBJECT AND THE EGO

In fact, right from the very beginning of his teaching, in 1953, with the *Roman Report*, Lacan made an important shift from the imaginary to the symbolic and, by having done so, he promoted an acute criticism of the North American ego-psychology current. It was really a turning point in the psychoanalysis discourse mainly because the approach he criticized based the direction of its treatment on the ego, promoting a massive imaginization of the practice, disregarding the fact that the subject

is beyond the ego. However, as we have learned from Freud and Lacan, the ego exerts a function of permanent and active ignorance of the subject which is expressed by the term *méconnaissance*.

It cannot be forgotten, as Freud pointed out, that the ego is the instance which is responsible for the repression of the incompatible drive motions. That is why the resistance is originated in such an instance once repression is followed by resistance itself. At the beginning of the seminar Book 20, *Encore*, Lacan defined the repression by using a formula that can be found in the *Studies of hysteria* - as a not wish to know anything about anything.

To denounce the deception which is inherent to the analytical practice centered on the ego and the consequent alienation it promotes, Lacan placed some emphasis on the imaginary dimension of the ego in his first seminars. The book *Psychoanalysis - the impossible profession*, written by the journalist Janet Malcom, pictures the comic effect that this conception of the analysis has produced in the psychoanalysts themselves. Her interviewee, a psychoanalyst from IPA, told her the following story: once he had a sudden impulse to buy a check jacket to go to a party of his psychoanalytic society. As soon as he arrived there, he realized the

reason why he had had such an impulse: all the analysts who were at the party were wearing the same jacket!

In the seminar Book 2, *The ego in Freud's theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan revisited the *Beyond the pleasure principle* and noticed that Freud wanted to draw the psychoanalysts' attention back to the unconscious once they had abandoned it. To sum up, he wanted "to resume the meaning of his experience." "Back to the unconscious" might as well be the motto of this essay, according to Lacan. This is so because with such a text, Freud pointed out that under the automatism of the repetition in which he situated the *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, it was also situated the significative insistence that constitutes the root of speech itself.

Lacan states that "for anyone to understand the function designated to the concept of 'ego' by Freud and to read his metapsychology entirely, it is essential to distinguish the schemes and the relations that are expressed by the concepts of the symbolic, the imaginary and the real." According to Lacan, in the 1950's, it was a big mistake to place the ego in the center of the analytical perspective as well as to make it the possibility of the renewal of an alleged new humanism. By having done so, the ego psychology's analysts went against Freud's own movement that has always showed us

that the ego is nothing but a mirage and a sum of identifications.

In 1955, in "Variations on the Standard Treatment", Lacan tackled the distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary in several different ways and also gave special emphasis to the question related to the end of the analysis and to the training of the analyst. He was critical about the conception of the end of the analysis that "implies the identification of the subject with the ego of the analyst", because it would surely presuppose the suppression of the listening concerning the subject's speech and the subordination of the practice to the knowledge of the analyst, not to mention the most subtle imaginary mechanisms, like intuition. Lacan pointed out that there was a great problem when the question of the ego of the analyst extrapolated the field of the analytic practice. Firstly, the analyst is led to operate by using his own knowledge. As regards this point, Lacan said the following: "However, what must be understood is the fact that no matter the amount of knowledge that has been transmitted this way, it does not have any training value for the analyst. This is so because the accumulated knowledge in his experience is related to the imaginary."

In the analyst's training, it is the dimension of the *learned ignorance* (*docta ignorantia*) that must be firstly taken into consideration; it is a paradoxical



expression (just like many others in psychoanalysis, for instance, the free floating attention) that comprises in it two opposite poles of knowledge - its maximum and its minimum . The analyst must "recognize the symptom of his ignorance in his knowledge" and turn this ignorance into a true passion of his own being, just like love and hate. Lacan says that it is the passion of ignorance that must make sense of the whole analytic training once it is ignorance that organizes its situation. And he finishes by saying that "the result of ignorance is the not-knowledge which is not a denial of knowledge, but its most elaborate form".

Every reflection made by Lacan on the distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary will take us to his following concept of the *subject supposed to know*.

In Vienna, right afterwards, still in 1955, Lacan presented his conference "The Freudian Thing, or the meaning of the return to Freud in psychoanalysis". It was on this occasion that Lacan quoted the famous sentence Jung said to Freud on their trip to the United States: "They don't know we are bringing the plague with us".

As we know, Lacan read Freud under the influence of his previous reading of the structural notion introduced by Saussure and Lévi-Strauss. Due to that, Lacan adopted the term "symbolic" which had previously been used by Lévi-Strauss in his magistral article "Symbolic

efficiency" in which he not only emphasized the power of the language used in shamanistic rituals but he also compared it to the action of the analyst. With Saussure, Lacan acquired the tools to build up the logic of the signifier which was already present in Freud's work but which was not named as such. This is so true that, late in his teaching, Lacan paid special honours to Freud by stating that "not only had Freud anticipated Saussure but he had also surpassed him."

At the beginning of his teaching, it was really important for Lacan to make a clear the distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary so that he could emphasize the importance of the symbolic in the analytical experience which, as we know, is exclusively based on words and on their transformative power.

Thus, Lacan's first seminars basically dealt with "the canonical Freudian texts concerning the uncounscious". In other words, Lacan's return to Freud satarted with a careful revision of Freud's first three major books concerning the dreams, everyday life, and the jokes - things that Lacan himself interpeted with the following aphorism, "the unconscious is structured like a language".

As Lacan stated, the function of speech and the field of language are both situated in the analytic experience. Whereas the symbolic is the language, the big Other, the

imaginary is the body image, the little other. By the end of his second seminar, Lacan designed the L scheme through which he made the distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic.

*Enter L Scheme (Seminar 2 - page 284 french edition)*

Such a distinction is still so fruitful that it guides us to the reading of some fundamental aspects of our practice. For instance, it reminds us that once the ego is situated in the imaginary field where resistance and repression take place, the direction of the treatment should be exclusively based on the symbolic dimension and not on the imaginary one. Due to the misuse of such concepts, mainly the ones regarding some important aspects of practice, Lacan made severe criticisms on the counter-transference theory just to show that, throughout the analytic process, we must focus on desire and not on resistance. Thus, the interventions of the analyst should be based entirely on the analysand's free association of words because this is the way any interpretation can truly emerge: "the interpretation comes ready from the Other", says Lacan in the seminar 11.

His acute criticism on the abusive use of the notion of counter-transference was surely justified once it was clear that the analysand's words aroused some feelings in the analysts themselves. Janet Malcolm's book, *Psychoanalysis - the impossible profession* is an excellent example to be drawn here once more. In an interview with a psychoanalyst from the New York Institute he tells her he has some feelings towards a patient and she reacts by saying: "But this belongs to you!" And he answers: "No, it's amazing but it isn't so. These feelings belong to her". Under such circumstances the analysis easily becomes an emotional thing which evokes all sorts of ferocious interventions from the part of the analyst.

#### RESISTANCE ALWAYS COMES FROM THE ANALYST'S PART

The whole theory on the distinction made between the imaginary and the symbolic focus directly on clinical practice which is the situation where the analyst locates the imaginary dimension inherent to transference and to resistance. Lacan starts from the premise that resistance always derives from the analyst, that is to say, when the analyst focus on resistance and not on desire, he inflates it and makes it even stronger. When Lacan states that resistance always comes from the analyst, he does not mean that the analysand does not resist. What he

means to say is that the emphasis put on resistance leads it to increase. In other words, depending on the analyst's approach towards resistance he can make it stronger or not.

To Freud, resistance is likely to take place at the very beginning of the treatment if the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis is disregarded. As we know, according to the rule of free association, the analysand must say everything that crosses his mind without any sort of criticism.

According to Freud, the main objective of free association is to make the subject produce unconscious derivatives, bringing them out from the repressed instance and that is why resistance can be regarded as an extension of the action of repression. While the goal of resistance is to maintain the level of repression, free association aims at promoting the emergence of the unconscious through its different formations. The function of the intermediate representations - named as such by Freud in the *Interpretation of dreams* (1900) to tell us about the significative intersections that participate in the conscious target-representations and in the unconconscious target representations - this function of the intermediate representations bears a special interest here because it allows the analyst's listening to isolate the double sense of homophony in the

analysand's words, which also allows the unconscious to emerge in the speech, as Lacan states.

*Enter scheme of the intermediary representations*

If we think over the way Freud figured out the concept of resistance, we can easily understand Lacan's simple ideas regarding this issue by stating that resistance always derives from the analyst.

If we take the case of Elizabeth Von R. in the *Studies of hysteria*, we can see that Freud only managed to name her resistance precisely at the moment he resigned from it. As we can recollect, her analysis had been stuck for some time so far and her associations were no longer productive. However, there was a moment when Freud said he started to behave as if he knew that something had not been revealed yet. At the moment he realized that, he started to insist on a new perspective and, in fact, if we pay close attention to his text, we will verify the number of times Freud used the word "insist" instead of "resist". What we can infer from this is the fact that Freud opposed the insistence of the analyst's desire to the resistance of his patient and that was why Elisabeth's analysis could exist. It was right at the precise moment Freud decided to insist on the direction

of the insistence of the desire of the analyst that he named resistance as a concept. That is why we can clearly say that Freud named resistance as a concept at the very moment he himself stopped resisting.

Based on an imaginary relationship, the ego-analysis has been regarded as a practice of domination and adaptation in which the analyst's ego represents a model to be followed by his analysand.

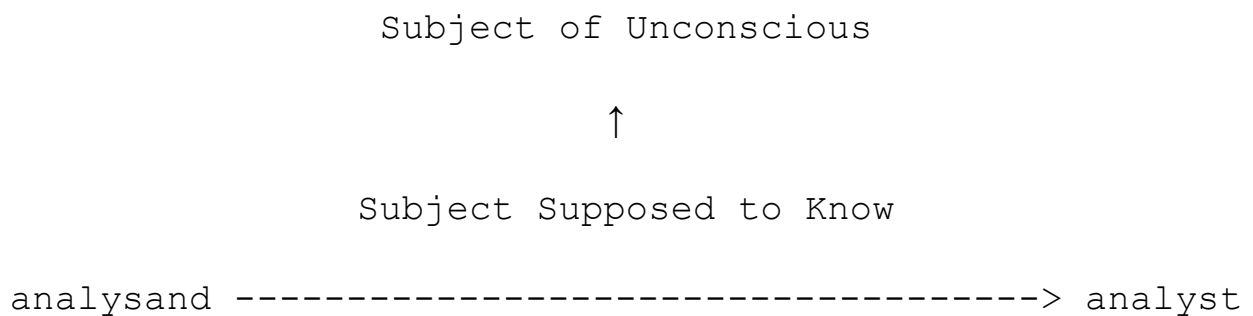
There are several notions that derive from this point of view, for instance: the notion of therapeutic alliance whose definition is based on the alliance between the healthy part of the analysand's ego with the analyst's so that the unhealthy part of the analysand's ego can be treated; the notion of conflicts; the notion of a strong and a weak ego. Not to mention a sort of practice which is focused on countertransference in which the listening concerning the speech of the subject is deviated to the affection of the analyst as if it was a compass that would guide both the interpretation and the diagnosis.

#### TRANSFERENCE AND INTERPRETATION

Taking into consideration that interpretation is essentially a sort of punctuation in the analysant's speech, Lacan approaches the analyst's intervention in a completely different way. With his approach, Lacan means

to teach the analysts how to prevent themselves from producing any sort of imaginization with their misused intervention. He also wants to place the emergence of the otherness in the subject's own speech, that is to say, in the real of the subject's enunciation because, as Lacan always contemplated, the subject says much more than he knows.

As a consequence of Lacan's outstanding points of view, there is a series of formidable expressions. For instance, with Lacan, we can say that the analysis is not a dual relationship, but a ternary relation once the unconscious is always placed between the analysand and the analyst. Thus, the big Other's presence is part of the subject's language. This relation designed by Lacan can be organized in the following way:



Transference is present in every human relationship, in friendship, in love and especially in those relationships in which a sort of knowledge is expected



to be expressed by the other. The history of hysteria is a good example of how this type of neurosis has always orbited around the prevailing knowledge and the consequences of this domination. The discourse of the hysteric has always been directed to the master with a continuous demand of a production of knowledge about her suffering. This has always happened, from the time of the fire of the inquisition until nowadays in the physicians' psychiatrists' offices.

But the hysteric has always showed the limits of the master's knowledge, indicating his impotence before the three essential dimensions of human sexuality, that is to say, love, hate and jouissance: "The hysteric wants a master over whom she can reign", Lacan said in the seminar 17, *The other side of psychoanalysis*.

Actually, Lacan says that the other side of psychoanalysis is the discourse of the master because the master regards the other (his fellow) as knowledge whereas the discourse of psychoanalysis sees the other like a subject. The great turning point produced by Freud's discovery led to the creation of a new discourse, which is the discourse of psychoanalysis. But that was only possible because Freud had never responded to the hysteric's demand as he never placed himself in the position of the master. But he responded to it from the position of the analyst, which means that he had never

answered the hysteric from the position of knowledge, but from the place of not-knowledge.

The analysand's transference towards the analyst as the subject supposed to know is an important effect of the considerations made by Lacan regarding ignorance as passion and the position of the analyst as "not to know". Besides that, the nomination of the position of the analyst as the Subject Supposed to Know is derived from the Lacanian conception which states that "the unconscious is a knowledge".

Freud had nominated love and hate as two transferential dimensions, a positive and a negative one. However, both of them may work in such a way that resistance can take place. Freud mentioned the existence of a "neutral point" in transference which is situated halfway between love and hate and that just from this point onwards the analysis of the transference is possible. This third place which is present in transference and which makes an analysis possible to happen was called Subject supposed to Know by Lacan, SsK.

The knowledge of the analyst is a supposition from the part of the analysand and it is exactly such a supposition that supports the beginning of the imaginary transference. The analysand chooses his analyst under the effect of transference - the SsK, according to Lacan - but the analyst does not answer such a demand from the

imaginary position he was placed at by the analysand. In other words, the analyst does not respond from the position of knowledge but from that of non-knowledge. By doing so, he sends the analysand's speech to the unconscious dimension which is inherent to the analysand's own words that have come up as an effect of the free floating attention which has been requested by the analyst.

As Freud points out, free floating attention aims at the production of derivatives that come from the repressed dimension and that is why it is possible for the interpretative word to emerge. Such a word that comes right from the analysand's own speech has an interpretative value because it points to the subject of the unconscious.

The dimension of "truth on its birth state", in the analysand's speech is actually what matters in an analysis. When Lacan wrote the mathemes of the discourse of psychoanalysis, one of its major characteristics was the fact that this discourse is the only one in which knowledge is located in the position of the truth. As Lacan stated in the conference about "The Freudian Thing", "Freud's discovery questions the truth and there is nobody who is not affected by the truth" (*Écrits*, p. 406).

With Lacan, I believe we should conceive interpretation by taking into consideration the innovation the R.S.I. structure has brought to our practice. In the seminar *R.S.I.*, Lacan revises some important notions concerning practice which are: inhibitions, symptoms and anguish ('anxiety', in James Strachey's mistaken translation). He redefines such notions by referring them to the three registers, following the logic of movement within such tripartite structure where there is a constant invasion of one register by the other. Thus, inhibition is the result of the invasion of the symbolic by the imaginary, the symptom is the result of the invasion of the real by the symbolic, and anguish is the result of the invasion of the imaginary by the real.

*Enter R.S.I. Scheme*

*Seminar 22 leçon of 17 december 1974*

From the scheme above, we can infer that the inhibition, the symptom and the anguish are opposed to the vector of the RSI structure. Their definitions can be clearly indicated if we start from the opposite vector, I.S.R. in the following way:

R <..... S <.....I <..... R < ..... S < .....I

Anguish < Symptom < Inhibition

In the inhibition, the subject has the symbolic invaded by the sense which paralyzes him. The more the subject gives sense to his action, the less he can act and this is an important aspect of the neurotic structure. The protocol of the British Court, for instance, is a good example of inhibition: visiting the queen is an experience which is pre-established by rigorous sense and rules.

In the hysterical symptom, the real of the body is invaded by the language; the body starts to express a truth which is inherent to a symbolic conflict.

In the anguish, the imaginary is invaded by the real, that is to say, the homeostasis furnished by phantasy where the subject lives is seriously damaged by the lack of sense. This situation has to do with an acute confrontation between sense and non-sense which the dialectics between anguish and phantasy evince.

In one of his main theoretical formulations on interpretation, Lacan stated that interpretation in psychoanalysis must have the structure of the wit (*Witz*),

as it opens up the closed imaginary sense. According to Freud, irony is the most supreme form of wit because it produces a sort of wave, a void: "Interpretation is made so as to produce waves".

We can say that interpretation re-organizes the vectors that go from R to S and from S to I. However, interpretation always includes the symbolic, no matter if it trespasses such vectors by the non-sense of the real, raising their power, or if it opens up the sense of the imaginary through the symbolic which is trespassed by the real. Actually, we can regard this entire interpretation process as an example of the true "symbolic effectiveness". Just by observing the sequence of this process, we can notice that the real is once more trespassed by the imaginary and this is the point from which the absence of the symbolic emerges. But this point is also where the 'war' between the real and the imaginary is produced. We feel as if we were in the 'reign of silence' where no words are possible to be uttered, where it is either all or nothing, "either a word of life or the blunt silence of death", as I have once heard from Moustapha Safouan.

According to Alain Didier-Weill, this sequence that goes from R to I, where the symbolic is absent, reflects the limit that each register establishes between each another: the real is limited by the symbolic, the

symbolic is limited by the imaginary and the imaginary is limited by the real.

#### TRUTH IS ALWAYS BLOCKED BY AN IMAGE

We should now reflect upon the important difference Lacan made between the sign and the signifier. He pointed out that whereas theoretical knowledge is eminently referred to the sign, the unconscious knowledge is referred to the signifier. The Lacanian conception regarding the unconscious as knowledge introduced some fundamental determining distinctions: "Analysis has come to announce that there is a sort of knowledge that is not known and which is based on the signifier as such." In the seminar book 20, Lacan considers the following: "The unconscious is the testimony of knowledge as it escapes to its great extent from the speaking being." And a bit more: "If the unconscious has taught us something, it was firstly the fact that the 'id' knows somewhere within the Other."

In the *North-American Conferences*, Lacan stated that the discovery of the unconscious "is the discovery of a very specialized sort of knowledge which is deeply intertwined with language itself." Regarding the unconscious as a sort of knowledge, Lacan says that the Freudian slip is a successful act as it is through this slip that the subject's truth is unveiled regardless of

the ego: "The idea supported by Freud is that the unconscious is always supposed to know and such knowledge is to be spoken up. The fact that the unconscious can be interpreted implies that it can be reduced to a sort of knowledge."

The unconscious knowledge is an attempt to fill in the gap of an instinctual sort of knowledge which mankind lacks once instinct can be regarded as a sort of knowledge that has been inscribed into the living organisms. The unconscious knowledge represents a point of non-knowledge over which the whole structure orbits: it has to do with the sexual difference which is not acknowledged by the unconscious itself. While his teaching along these conferences, Lacan tried to explain the relationship between the unconscious and the lack of instinct in the human subject and he did so by saying that: "Knowledge is the fundamental substance of what the unconscious is all about. The unconscious does not comprise an instinct in it, as we might wrongly conceive. In fact, we lack instinct completely and the way through which we react to things is not linked to any sort of instinct but to the knowledge that is associated with the signifiers."

The Lacanian theory on the signifiers gave some consistency to the Freudian discoveries concerning the unconscious/language which can be found all along Freud's work. In the *Psychopathology of every day life*, he had



already mentioned that the unconscious works by means of condensations and displacement of words "disregarding both their meaning and the syllables acoustic limits". As he had already pointed out in *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* (1916), the unconscious seem to show some preference towards words in which the sound may lead to different meanings".

The difference established by Lacan between sign and signifier allows us to better understand what is at stake in the unconscious. If the sign is the thing that represents something to someone who can read it (like a clinical sign of a disease or the traffic signals for the driver), the signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier. In other words, the signifier is placed in a dimension of representation where the subject's singularity is implied and due to this it cannot be generalized. Therefore, as we can see, the symbolic bears two representative sides that always come together as they cannot be separated; one side concerns the signs, referring the symbolic to the imaginary, and the other one concerns the signifiers, referring the symbolic to the real. When the analysand speaks, he utters several signs with the intention to communicate something to the analyst but the analyst just hears the signifiers in the analysand's speech. In other words, the analyst disregards the signs to prioritize the signifiers

and this is the secret of the psychoanalytic interpretation.

As we know, Freud highly valued the ability to interpret dreams regarding them as the royal road to the unconscious. The first rule to be followed by any analyst when it came to the interpretation of dreams was to regard the image as a word just like a rebus where the sounds of the words combine bringing up some hidden meanings. That is why Lacan said that "An image always blocks the truth", in the North American conferences.

Artemidorus' method of interpretation, mainly the one concerning Alexander's dream was mentioned by Freud several times along his work as an example of a true analytic interpretation. As his army advanced, Artemidorus had already besieged the city of Tyros resisted the siege for seven months. One morning, Alexander dreamed of a dancing satyr. An interpreter was called to unveil the hidden message in his dream and that is what he said: "it is your Tyros". He did not interpret the image of the dancing satyr but the sound implicit in the signifier, that is to say, "Sa Tyros", literally, "Your Tyros". Alexander summed up his army and conquered the city.

GUILT IS ALWAYS PREFERRED TO ANGUISH

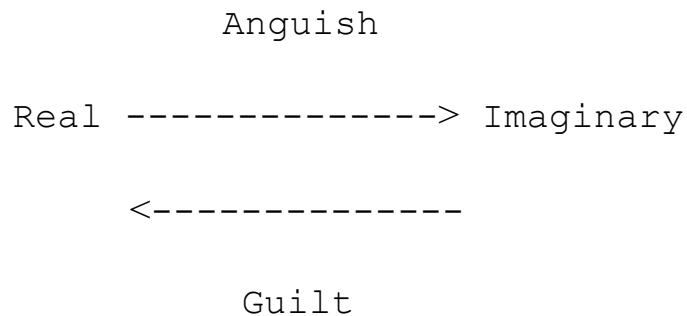
In the psychoanalytic practice, the dialectics between guilt and anguish along the mourning process indicates the way through which the imaginary and the real confront the subject. In the conference of 1953, Lacan mentioned twice the dialectics between guilt and anguish to highlight that the subject would always prefer guilt to anguish. In the obsessional neurosis, for instance, anguish prevails firstly but then, secondly, guilt takes over. This way, anguish is reduced or even avoided by the register of culpability.

The analysis of two women who went through mourning labor has taught me important things about this dialectics between the imaginary and the real. The first woman had been married to an older that died of cancer some months before she started her analysis with me and a bit after she had quit an analysis process with another psychoanalyst that probably could not stand her talking about her grief. She told me that some time after her husband had died, her analyst started to approach the situation in such a way that really bothered her. One day, when she had just started to say how miserable she felt, the analyst said: "Here you come with your melancholic side again!" On a different occasion, she was speaking about her deep sorrow and the analyst said: "How long you going on with this hysterical discourse?" Our attention is drawn to the fact that in both cases the

analyst's interventions were entirely based on the psychoanalytic knowledge. The first intervention was based on the knowledge concerning mourning and melancholia and the second one on Lacan's theory of the four discourses! After her husband's death, this analysand established a sort of relationship with people around her which was entirely based on guilt as if the whole world was to blame. Therefore, blaming everyone for her husband's death was a way to minimize her pain.

The other analysand was someone who was resuming her analysis after having interrupted it for some years. The first time she searched for an analysis her demand was basically focused on the difficult relationship she had with one of her daughters. However, the reason that made her return to her analysis after so many years was really cruel: the daughter she had troubles with had died at the age of twenty. It was a sudden death. At the moment she resumed her analysis she started to say how she felt guilty for her daughter's death because some months before this event the girl had told her she had been feeling bad and that she had even sought the emergency service at a hospital to be seen by a doctor. Once she did not care so much about her daughter's complaint she felt guilty for her death. It was such an unbearable sort of pain, as she said, but why didn't she hear her?

We can notice that guilt is present in both cases although it happens in different ways. But what is clearly indicated here is the fact that guilt is necessary for the subject to give some imaginary sense to the non sense of death. It seems that culpabilization works in such a way that id produces some mental homeostasis. Once Lacan said that anguish the result of the invasion of the imaginary by the real, we can see that guilt is an attempt to protect the subject from the real of the anguish.



A very important clinical indication can be drawn by this dialectics: we should never try to minimize the analysand's guilt because if we did so we would be preventing the imaginary to defend him from the invasion of the real. As we should know by now, it really takes ages to go through an analysis process and to get to its end. This is so because it is really difficult for anyone to face the radical nonsense of the real. Last but not

least, it must be said that when it comes to the nonsense of the real noone is actually to to blame.