

THE LACK IN TRANSMISSION: VARIATIONS ON PSYCHOANALYTIC TRAINING¹

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It would be dishonest and retrograde to begin this spoken text to you, with anything other than the declaration that the psychoanalytic institution, writ large, holds the biggest shovel out of all the attendees at psychoanalysis' funeral. The sheer number of ideologues and company-men produced by these institutions is boggling, but what is undoubtedly worse is that this institutional production serves to silence other variants of transmission in our field, what I would call, following Deleuze and Guattari's work on Kafka, 'minor traditions' (Deleuze and Guattari 1975). This declaration and note on 'minor traditions' might be the only conclusions you take from my intervention today. So be it, but I would urge you instead to stay with my loosely-connected provocations, my doubts dressed as full-throated convictions, my desperate attempts at cobbling together different bits of Lacan's words in a vain yet necessary attempt to arrive at his saying, a saying that erupts from a lack in transmission.

Transmission is a manifold beast, in that there are a great many things transmitted, not just what we might want or feel comfortable with. These more unsavoury and hard to chew bits and pieces, the gristle as it were, of the transmission that occurs down a line, these parts that we would rather spit out and leave on the plate, haunt us in our work, and rob our practice of power and vitality. And even more so, as we well know from our clinical work, we often come to perversely inhabit precisely those lacks in what was handed down to us. Which is to say that Lacan as transmission and transmitted haunts us here in North America now as we re-invent psychoanalysis anew. This text, then, that I read to you today is an initial attempt to, at the very least, name this lack (as if that

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were possible), to call it by its name (whose name?), and see what we come up with together. And please forgive any lack of polished sophistication, as what I am doing is following a scent, a certain kind of stumbling in the dark by a someone that is himself part of a line of transmission, which necessitates a disjointed stumbling over my own shoes.

Institutionally speaking

Lacan's 'L'Étourdit' says:

...it has been demonstrated without exception by those I called my 'dandies': there is not the slightest access to Freud's saying (his *dire*) which is not foreclosed – and with no return in this case – by the choice of one or the other analyst.

The fact is that there is no conceivable formation of the analyst outside of the maintenance of this saying, and that Freud for want of having forged with the analytic discourse, the bond that would have held psychoanalytic societies, situates them from other discourses that necessarily bar his saying.

Lacan 2010 [1973]: 44

The original sin of the psychoanalytic institution, from Freud to those of us now sitting in this room, traces its dreadful lineage, its lack of rapport. Freud's fumble haunts us still. By establishing the psychoanalytic institution on a firmament other than the analytic discourse, he ends up withdrawing his *dire* or saying from those whom it would hold. A *coitus interruptus* that, we could argue, led (paraphrasing the early Freud) to a surplus of unconsummated excitation *qua* anxiety, and which Lacan would later reveal in Seminar 10, as an interruption of the sexual relation as such (S10: 168).

A little later in 'L'Étourdit', Lacan remarks: 'In the confusion where the parasitic organism that Freud grafted onto his saying, itself makes a graft of what he said, it is no easy matter for a cat to find its kittens, nor the reader a sense' (Lacan: 2010 [1973]: 52). Of course, it would be easy, and it would certainly be useful to consider what Lacan is saying here about his own school at the time, and the psychopathology of its everyday life. But I would like to bring it to our turn, our moment. For I sense that the same could be said of Lacan's saying now. In fact, it strikes me that some of his most boisterous and torturous texts in the *Écrits*, along with his mathemes and topologies,

were Lacan's attempts to throw (*tirar* in Spanish) his saying, his *dire*, into the future and past the self-styled Lacanian groups/schools/institutions (the *dit*) of his day and ours that might come to bar it.

To be sure, this *impassibility* of the psychoanalytic institution is not something that can be gotten rid of. As Lacan himself points out, 'the impossibility of the psychoanalytic group is moreover what grounds, as always, its real. This real, is this very obscenity: moreover "it lives" on it as group' (Lacan 2010 [1973]: 2). Which is to say, the group is something for us to work with, under, and even through, if we understand through as *via* or organ, not as terminus. For, despite his prohibition of the group-life from his School (Lacan 2010 [1973]: 22) not even Lacan was able to abolish the group-effect.

So, the question arises by what means does the question of psychoanalytic transmission situate itself vis-à-vis and from Lacan's four-plus discourses so that it may open our listening towards this incongruence, which is to say, how do we bring forth Freud's saying in all its impossibility so that it may hold us in our listening?

As anyone in analytic formation will readily attest to, psychoanalytic institutions, no matter their protestations to the contrary, are seemingly forever implicated in the establishment and fulfilment of normative obligations. 'This must happen; that must happen; this is how it's done'. This is in sharp distinction to Lacan who obstinately, albeit unsuccessfully, struggled to remove such normative burdens from the realm of psychoanalytic transmission, to 'establish a social bond cleansed of any group-necessity' (Lacan 2010 [1973]: 22). This persistent proclivity towards the eradication of normative obligations shows up in Lacan's stance on women in *L'etourdit*, when he says:

I will not impose on women the obligation of measuring by the yardstick of castration the charming sheath that they do not raise to the signifier, even if this yardstick, on the other hand, helps not only the signifier but also joy (*piéd*)

Lacan 2009 [1973]: 70

Which is to say, that in the eyes of the analyst, 'the only thing that is obligatory is what it is impossible to avoid' (Soler 2006: 30); that impossibility being none other than the Real.

And yet, formation does exist, at least of the kind that we are used to. Perhaps it is not overly situated from the capitalist's discourse (although it's easy enough to realize that most of what passes as psychotherapy outside of the Lacanian field functions and turns entirely within the discourse of the capitalist. Providing to the 'client' or consumer that which would fulfill them: be it a corrective emotional experience, empathy, or a relationship they previously lacked. Therapy as *Mommy-Direct*).

That as Lacanians we can dispense with such an unseemly sourcing for our position and the elaboration of our *savoir* is certainly a remarkable event. But I hasten to add that institutionally we don't stray too much from the mark(et). Which is to say that the discourse of the Master and even that of the hysteric, turn our psychoanalytic institutions as much as they have any other group formation.

In our institutions, our groups as Lacan refers to it, we collectively take on our destinies. We elect our masters and make ourselves hysterics so as to lord over them, demanding a knowledge that would make us master-psychoanalysts in turn, so that the turning may continue. In this infernal revolving, the function staged by the discourse of the capitalist plays out in two directions. First, as 'Lacanians' we often fancy ourselves as different than everyone else, and offering of a something quite unlike what others propose. There is a positive sense here, as in a something that can be given. And in this sense, we are no different than the petit-bourgeois hawking his wares, for what must be specified in our every analytic act is that we provide a present absence, or better yet, a vacuum.

Second, in the U.S. at least, we all too often refuse to engage in the kind of attempt at a larger cultural rapport that might allow ground for an analytic discourse counterposed to that of the capitalist, thereby providing an aperture, an opening in an otherwise closed horizon seemingly bereft of castration and its generative possibilities.

As I frequently emphasise to my students and collaborators, Lacan elaborated his positions in a discursive landscape exceedingly different than ours. He did not operate in a vacuity as we do in the U.S. And that he was able to isolate an essential component of the capitalist's discourse, namely the illusion that castration could be foreclosed from the symbolic, is due in large part to

the fact that he was witnessing a transition. We live on the other side of that transformation and are thereby often deaf to its implications.

What if we were to expand the bounds of the clinic such that the question of psychoanalytic transmission approached those in formation in much the same way as I have asked you to do today: listening to a *dire* that haunts a *dit*, a saying irreducible to what is said, on the part of those attempting to work with the impossible, namely the ‘saying’ of the *Écrits*, and ultimately the saying of Freud, which may come to hold us. This could be a transmission shorn of the imaginary obscenity of the group-effect, foregoing both the Master’s and the Capitalist’s discourse, and thereby revealing the lie that turns capitalism ever faster. A psychoanalytic ‘associational’ firmly ensconced in the discourse of the analyst as social bond that opens up to the ‘impossible so that there could be ejected the “that’s not it” which is the wail of an appeal to the real’ (Lacan 2009 [1973]: 40).

We should make no mistake. This is a question of ethics. Of the wall and the hysterical wail that we must continually move past in order to take up our position as analysts, thereby opening up a space where others can come to confront their own ethics. Yes, what I am proposing is yet another confrontation with the impossible. Nothing is being resolved here, but we do resolve to turn within the discourse of the analyst, so as to not turn away from the Real.

But in speaking this, I despair. For I simply do not see the psychoanalytic institutions in the U.S. occupying the realm of the impossible in such a way that they can help those in formation turn toward the Real. To put it simply, ideology is the *mamilo*, the pacifier that psychoanalytic institutions turn to, in order to plug this lack in transmission, thereby effecting a lack of transmission.

For myself, I put my eggs in the baskets of our minor traditions. From warm hand to warm hand, the possibility of a future for and of psychoanalysis is bet on, waged. We might even call it, transmission in a minor key.

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