THE RHYTHM OF THE CURE
TRANSFERENCE, REPETITION, AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC ACT

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An impossible profession

What happens in analysis? The analyst's work has often been mistakenly associated with a search for truth. The analyst listens to the patient's words, interprets them, and the resulting reconstruction would be all the more accurate the more it corresponds to reality. Yet Freud realized very early on – at the very outset of his psychoanalytic journey – that what patients recount is not always true, and this does not invalidate the analysis. At the end of his career, he admitted that even the analyst's words are not necessarily true. What matters is the effect they produce. He clarifies this in one of his last writings, *Constructions in Analysis*. From the very first lines of this text, we are introduced to the theme: the status of words in psychoanalysis. More precisely, their use in clinical practice. If this is a talking cure, as the first and most famous patient who underwent it defined it – a treatment through words – what value do such words have and what does the analyst do with them? Does the analyst tell the truth, weave myths, tell tall tales? What is the method at play?

A first indication may come from a contemporary text, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. Here Freud says something disconcerting that at first leaves readers confused. In 1937, having reached the end of his career and nearly the end of his life (he would die two years later), he candidly admits something that could bring all of psychoanalysis crashing down, causing the collapse of that same profession he had devoted most of his life to building. In short, he says that there is no method. Psychoanalysis is an impossible profession. He literally writes:

> It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those 'impossible' professions in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government.
>
> Freud 1964a [1937] SE XXIII: 248

Healing, education, government are indeed impossible jobs, but, of course, absolutely necessary. Now, the fact that there is no method – no abstract, codified procedure universally valid for every patient – does not mean that the analyst proceeds blindly and speaks at random. So, let us return to the question: what on earth does the analyst do with words?

First and foremost, the analyst distrusts them and keeps them at a distance. At that minimum safe distance that prevents one from falling into the worst of traps: the hunt for meaning. This is how one would respond after reading *Constructions in Analysis*. Here, indeed, Freud warns psychoanalysts against the allure of words and the pitfalls of interpretation. The beguiling charm of interpreting, comparing, making connections, uncovering hidden reasons, finding the keystone of an existence, is what flatters and seduces the analyst's ego. But it is also what can easily lead to a misdirection of analytic practice, transforming it into an infinite hermeneutics that satisfies the analyst's interpretative zeal but has no therapeutic effect on the patient.
Freud is blunt: the psychoanalyst does not interpret; they construct (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 261). They do not search for a hidden truth already constituted and complete, simply

waiting to be uncovered. They do not retrieve the patient's past like someone pulling a dusty object out of a drawer to put it back on the table. They do not decode a message that is already written, as an enthusiast of puzzles might do with a rebus. The analyst's word is transformative. They construct a dialogue with the patient in pursuit of effects. Which ones?

Dominoes

The text opens with a critique of psychoanalytic technique. A 'well-known man of science' (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 257), whose name is not mentioned, argues that when the analyst puts forward interpretations to the patient, the exchange follows the infamous principle 'Heads I win, tails you lose' (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 257). It is like saying, Freud notes bitterly:

> If the patient agrees with us, then the interpretation is right; but if he contradicts us, that is only a sign of his resistance, which again shows that we are right. In this way we are always in the right against the poor helpless wretch whom we are analysing, no matter how he may respond to what we put forward.
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> Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 257

This is not entirely false, the father of psychoanalysis immediately admits. It is true that a no from the patient does not suffice to convince the analyst that the proposed construction is ineffective. Just like a yes is not enough to convince them of the opposite. But if the patient's yes and no responses are irrelevant, what roles do the patient and the analyst have in the dialogue that develops between them? And how does one know whether a construction is effective or not?

Construction in analysis can be conceived as the structure built from tiles in the game of dominoes. The roles of patient and analyst described in the following paragraphs are not very different from those of a player. The patient's task is to recall, writes Freud. In other words: they spill a series of tiles on the table. The analyst's task is to construct, Freud writes. That is: they arrange the tiles into a figure. But the figure is not an interpretation of the patient's memories or life: it represents nothing, it's just a pattern. Like a player's move. In dominoes, each tile bears markings similar to hieroglyphics that, by themselves, have no meaning. They may be stylized drawings or, more often, black dots on a white background indicating numbers. But these signs can be interpreted however one wishes because they actually represent nothing, their value is purely positional. The same could be said of the tiles with which the analyst works – that is, the patient's words. To interpret these words would be like interpreting the little drawings on dominoes: it would mean moving on the plane of the imaginary, as Miller suggests in his commentary on Freud's text (Miller 2010/2011). So, what does one do with those tiles? One must play.

As Charles Sanders Peirce, the father of semiotics and American pragmatism, might say, a sign has value solely for the consequences it makes possible in practice: in the case of dominoes, the subsequent moves of the players. When faced with a tile bearing certain hieroglyphs, the other players can attach other tiles, but only some and not others, namely those displaying the same signs. In this pragmatic horizon should also be placed the patient's direct responses regarding the correctness of a construction proposed by the analyst. As Freud writes, the patient's 'Yes' or 'No' can always be hypocritical and, in the final analysis, is completely useless (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 262-3). Indeed, if a *no* can conceal a resistance, a *yes* can be used to continue hiding what one does not want to bring to light. The truth effects of a construction reside rather in indirect confirmations, consisting in the fact that the patient reacts

with the return of the repressed. That is, with another domino tile, another hieroglyph that fits together with those already on the table. Freud almost seems to have dominoes in mind when he writes that a valid confirmation from the patient occurs 'when the patient answers with an association which contains something similar or analogous to the content of the construction' (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 263). Shortly after, he adds that these associations produced by the patient in their response, thanks to similar or analogous elements, 'fit in with the content of a construction' (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 264). A game of fits and linkages.

Delirium

Construction in analysis, therefore, deals with hieroglyphs – which in themselves mean nothing, but fit together with other hieroglyphs, which in themselves mean nothing and which in turn open the way for further moves. It is essentially what Lacan refers to when he suggests that the analyst must handle knowledge without being ensnared by the hermeneutic temptation to understand its meaning. If there is a sense in analytic construction, it is not hidden in some depth that the analyst should reach but runs along the surface. It is a matter of orientation (sense as direction): to construct does not mean grasping meaning in a signified but making it slide from one signifier to another, from one tile to another. These are movements that take place on the mute plane of the tiles in their materiality. And the analyst must be skilled at this game, except that they pursue the opposite goal of a domino player: to offer tiles that allow linkages – that is, to move forward in the construction – rather than tiles that turn out to be dead ends, which is how the domino player defeats the opponent.

Aim of the game? To allow the patient to slip from one tile to another, moving by creating new chains. In other words: to produce in the patient, through these movements, a change of posture. It is, literally, about delirium – etymologically, 'to go off the furrow', to shift the patient by leading them off the beaten track. For example, off the tracks of the compulsion to repeat. It is not by chance that, in the last pages of the text, Freud weaves a striking analogy between construction and delirium (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 266-9).

It is all a matter of drives and shifts. The neurotic patient is stuck in a hellish merry-go-round that goes on inexorably. If the return of the repressed is a drive that tends to traverse the same circuit repeatedly, the task is to capture that drive in order to shift it a little further. This is what moving tiles is for. It is not a matter of interpretation, of descending into unknown dark caves armed with a lamp, or of investigating the patient's childhood and past to uncover alleged truths supposedly lying at the bottom of the psyche. It is simply a matter of constructing alternative circuits in which to let the drive gradually slide, playing at the surface with what emerges each time. At the bottom, there is no ready-made truth, no knowledge locked away like the pearl inside the oyster, no secret: there is nothing substantial, just a certain rhythm. That is what emerges, what comes back, and what must be detected on the surface.

As Lévi-Strauss wrote, inspiring Lacan, the unconscious is empty, devoid of content (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 203). At the bottom of the psyche there is only a force to be pragmatically put to work. From there, in fact, rises a reverberation, a vibration, a rhythm of more and less, of fullness and emptiness, of beats and suspensions. The abyss of primal repression (*Urverdrängung*) thus manifests on the surface as ordinary repression (*Verdrängung*) in the form of voids (gaps in memory, shortcomings, slips of the tongue) or whirlpools (contradictions, inconsistencies, unresolved knots) accompanying the fullness of words and actions. We are aware of the significance of these stumbles in psychoanalysis, these tears in the patient's discursive fabric. They are symptoms to which the analyst must attend. One must pay attention not so much, or not only, to the fullness of the patient's words, following their logical thread, but also and above all to the emptiness that inhabits them and which sometimes

surfaces, where the logical thread breaks, stops, or gets tangled around a hole. The void that thus emerges is not an obstacle but a resource: it is what allows movement, it is an opportunity to reorganize the rhythm, the play space to give a different twist to the push of the drive.

The analyst, like the domino player, cannot know in advance which tiles will be most useful to intercept the rhythm, to then allow the patient to actively remodulate it by leveraging the play of full and empty. They cannot know beforehand whether a construction – a specific arrangement of tiles – will produce the return of the repressed. Everything depends on the subsequent moves of the patient and the analyst. 'Only the further course of the analysis enables us to decide whether our constructions are correct or unserviceable' (Freud 1964b [1937] SE XXIII: 265). Nothing guarantees the outcome of an analysis *a priori*. However, this does not mean that the analyst lacks, or cannot acquire, a certain level of expertise.

Nomad science

The analyst must be good at moving the tiles that the patient puts on the table. How and from where does one gain this skill, which is related to montage, to constructing linkages? It is one of the great questions that has always accompanied psychoanalysis. It is both an epistemological problem (it concerns the scientific status of psychoanalysis) and an ethical one (it concerns the analyst's professionalism and know-how).

To show how montage is a matter of rhythm – and thus how skill is a matter of musical exercise that trains the ear and the aural practice – it is first necessary to turn to another problem: the functioning of this game is always singular and therefore never replicable.

As every analyst knows, even if their construction is able to reach the patient's unconscious, producing the return of the repressed, the truth effects thus obtained are not repeatable in another analysis, nor in the same analysis, nor even in the same session. If neither a law nor a method can be established, how then to proceed? Analysis always involves a certain '*je ne sais quoi*' (Thanopulos 2018), an ineffable dimension founded on feeling and gesture. But this does not mean that nothing can be said about how to proceed. Here, an epistemology of singularity is necessary.

In this respect, an insight can come from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. In that volume, the authors discuss an epistemological model: the 'nomad science' as opposed to the 'royal science'. They take as an example of such science a particular way of constructing: the construction of Gothic cathedrals in the twelfth century. How were these cathedrals built? Not by following Euclid's theoretical geometry, but by Archimedes' operational geometry. The former proceeds from theorems, applying a universal rule to a specific case. The latter is a practice that starts from the ground, from the traces already present in the material, and works the stones accordingly through successive approximations.

Nomad science therefore proceeds in an immanent and abductive way, rather than in a deductive manner. Not unlike the butcher who cuts meat along its joints, according to a famous example from Plato's *Phaedrus*. Not unlike the ship's pilot who, instead of trying to tame the stormy sea, follows its waves, according to another famous Platonic example from the *Statesman*. Not unlike, one might also think, the *bricoleur* Lévi-Strauss speaks of, who does not shape a supposedly neutral matter but makes do with the already-formed material to hand (the odds and ends present in the tool shed) and establishes a peculiar 'dialogue' with them (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 29).

Nomad science relates to an immanent field, but it relates to it in a unique way: by capturing a thrust. The operational geometry with which Gothic cathedrals were built – Deleuze and

Guattari note – does not exclude the use of equations; indeed, it employs them and takes them into account, but it assigns them a different role: instead of being forms that organize matter, 'they are "generated" as "forces of thrust" *(poussees)* by the material, in a qualitative calculus of the optimum' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 364-5). Here there is the idea of being driven, of letting oneself be carried by a wave that must be intercepted. The operator of nomad science is like a surfer or a jazz musician during a jam session, who do not apply a technique studied beforehand to the field but, moving in the field, learns a certain rhythm and, from this, become able to intercept the wave – whether of water or of sound.

Now, that psychoanalysis is also a nomad science is what Freud seems to suggest when he defines it as the third of the 'impossible professions', alongside education and government. It is impossible to formalize according to standard rules and procedures. But the impossibility of a universally valid method – Freud clarifies in the lines immediately following – does not exclude the possibility of some know-how. We could even put it this way: the origin of the construction and its truth effects belong to the order of the event, something that cannot be artificially generated or controlled. The event blows where it will, but the analyst's job is to intercept it, like a lightning rod during a thunderstorm.

Variations

If it is a matter of intercepting a wave, then it is worth asking how far the wave extends – that is, how wide is the field that generates it and to which the analyst must pay attention. This is a question Freud asks himself in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, precisely when he speaks of analysis as an impossible profession. In short, how vast is the sea whose movements the surfer-analyst must heed?

First, the wave must be extended to the entire setting: gestures, body posture of the analyst and the patient, tone of voice, pauses, silences, etc. An entire emotional, tactile, sensory dimension, irreducible to words, contributes to forming the sea or the pre-existing rhythm onto which the analyst must graft the construction (or from which they must intercept something that serves as a construction, hoping it produces truth effects). Similarly, the jazz musician introduces a variation starting from a pre-existing rhythm, listening to the reactions, movements, and subtle sound inflections of the accompanying musicians who, in the best of cases, will follow along.

Truth in analysis – as we suggested – is about shifting, about moving. It is a game of linkages. Lévi-Strauss thinks in similar terms when he compares the psychoanalyst to the shaman: shamanic healing consists of a genuine rhythmic montage that connects the parts in a different way, generating a new symbolic order within which the disruptive or wavering element (the initial malaise) finally finds its place (Lévi-Strauss 1963; Leoni 2019: 69-70). For example, an unbearable pain for the body finds a justification becoming bearable to the mind. How does the shaman work this miracle? Through dances, chants, and ritual gestures that are true displacements or rearrangements of parts of the structure, made to vibrate and slide elsewhere. One might say: playing with the rhythm of fullness and emptiness, exploiting gaps and differences of potential, acting as a conduit for these tensions and forces, assimilating to them. If every subject is immersed in a symbolic structure (social roles and rules, the Lacanian Big Other), the shaman operates by handling this network of signs. Like the player of the Red Donkey (a game of Chinese origin similar to a puzzle missing a tile) who makes use of the empty space to move the other tiles (Lacan 2007: 607).

In musical terms, it is not about interrupting the music to introduce a sudden variation, but about letting oneself be carried by the rhythm, giving rise to subtle shifts, playing on full and

empty, on downbeats and upbeats, on thesis and arsis. The psychoanalytic clinic is also a matter of rhythm (Lippi 2018; Redaelli 2025). The symptom the patient presents to the psychoanalyst, hoping to get rid of it once and for all, does not go away and never will. Psychoanalytic therapy consists rather in introducing rhythmic variations that allow the symptom to shift onto other circuits, making it fruitful instead of harmful. This is what construction in analysis is for: to generate a shift. At the end of *Constructing Duration* – an essay on the image in which Freud's *Constructions in Analysis* is also cited – Didi-Huberman talks about analytic construction exactly in terms of rhythm. Construction in analysis is a montage, and 'montage is rhythm' (Didi-Huberman 2007).

Repetition

While the surf instructor teaches a certain posture that allows one to intercept and ride the wave, the psychoanalyst has nothing to teach the patient – least of all how to ride the drive so as not to get ensnared by it. However, through transference, they can trigger a play space that allows the patient to autonomously produce such a change of posture. This is what Elvio Fachinelli suggests in his essay *The Paradox of Repetition*, where the issue is presented in terms we could define as rhythmic (Fachinelli 2010; Recalcati 2020: 84 ff.).

For Fachinelli, everything hinges on the way repetition repeats itself. In short, it is a matter of introducing a rhythmic variation that allows one to transform the endured rhythm – to which the patient is initially subject – into a desired rhythm, of which the patient is eventually the active executor. The variation intervenes on the drive's trajectory, first locked in the hellish circuit of the compulsion to repeat, putting it back in play along fruitful paths (love, affection, work, art, sport, etc.) or at least compatible with a peaceful life. But how does the analyst, via transference, introduce this variation?

Transference can trigger the transition from a passive to an active rhythm because it is itself rhythm. It is, in turn, a form of repetition, as emphasized by Fachinelli when citing Freud's *Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through*: 'the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation' (Freud 1958 [1914] SE XII: 151). In relating to others, the neurotic patient is forced, as on a merry-go-round, to continuously repeat the same failing patterns, always casting themselves in the same roles and falling into the same mistakes. And they relate to the analyst similarly, involving them in that same repetition. In such a theatre of masks, different in shape but equal in function, the analyst, precisely because of their position, can represent a novelty capable of throwing the repetition off balance. However, this does not happen through words, but rather through gestures. Or rather, it can also happen through words, but words as gestures, not as carriers of meaning: simple tiles in a game of fits, moves that call for other moves, generating slides or slight slips. Sometimes, though, one simple gesture suffices. This is what Fachinelli points out at the end of *The Paradox of Repetition* with an illuminating example of transference drawn from his professional experience.

But let us proceed step by step. First, the psychoanalyst clarifies that repetition is not a mere accident of life in which one might happen to get caught, like the neurotic with the compulsion to repeat. Rather, it is a fundamental structure of subjectivity. It is triggered, in fact, from an originary event, the same from which the subject emerges. Which event? In Lacan's terms: the signifying cut, when the child is inscribed in the symbolic circuit of the law and thus constituted as a subject. In Fachinelli's words: the 'relationship with the other' as constitutive of 'the individual's unity' (Fachinelli 2010). The symbolic circuit of the law (the modality of relating to the other), which gradually comes into being along with the subject, has a libidinal underside,

namely the circuit of the drive (the modality of enjoying). Law and drive, we might say, both revolve around the void introduced by the cut. Therefore, subjectivity is like a merry-go-round powered by a constitutive imbalance: a rhythm of more and less, full and empty, excess and lack[1]. At this level, a 'logic of repetition that has its necessary foundation in the very organization of the individual' is triggered (Fachinelli 2010: 306). The merry-go-round goes around.

Though common to all, the cut that gives rise to the merry-go-round is tailored individually. In Lacanian terms, everyone is cut by language from unique and entirely contingent circumstances. The signifying cut marks the infant's body in a singular way, thereby producing a first form of enjoyment that the drive will seek to repeat[2]. To each their own merry-go-round. The drive draws energy from a variety of objects, depending on the subject's experiences and encounters, but it tends to satisfy itself by always repeating the same route. However, one is not condemned to repeat the same exact path, observes Fachinelli. Precisely because the repetition repeats itself, one might say, it re-opens the game (Fachinelli 2010).

As Deleuze writes about transference, 'if repetition makes us ill, it also heals us; if it enchains and destroys us, it also frees us' (Deleuze 1994: 19). Here one must think of healing repetition in terms of Nietzsche's eternal return and the way Deleuze interprets it in *Difference and Repetition*. Or, to use a common reference cited by both Fachinelli and Deleuze, one must think of it in terms of Kierkegaard's repetition. In short, the repetition is identical, but what is repeated returns in ever-changing forms, because the occasion on which it recurs is different each time – perhaps even for a small discrepancy. And it is this discrepancy that the psychoanalyst relies on to induce *delirium*, that is, to allow the patient to go off the furrow.

One can thus distinguish, following Fachinelli, different modes of repetition or different rhythms. First, there is a passive rhythm, what Fachinelli calls *reduction*. It is the deathly, harmful, infernal repetition of the compulsion to repeat. Here the movement of the drive, which always returns to the same place, is endured. But there is also an active rhythm, what Fachinelli calls – drawing on Kierkegaard – *ripresa* (an Italian word for 'repetition' but also for 'recovery'): it is the vital, creative, fruitful repetition. Here the drive is ridden, allowing something new to be generated. To understand how transference triggers the transition from the first to the second, let us consider the example proposed by Fachinelli.

Transference

One day, a patient recounts a dream to Fachinelli. After a weekend spent alone, abandoned by yet another man, she dreams of him leaving her. As her ex-partner walks away, she spitefully throws a key with a small ball attached to it on the ground. He runs to reach it but finds her with a friend, chatting while walking.

What captures Fachinelli's attention is the key with the ball. It is the element of the dream that recalls a traumatic episode in the patient's childhood, showing that we are confronting a repetition of a pattern. The recurring theme is abandonment. When the patient was still a child, her father, newly separated from her mother, tried to commit suicide by jumping out of a hotel

[1] Fachinelli refers to this rhythm as 'the alternation and modulation of presences and absences', which 'contributes to giving a definite, *and often definitive*, shape to the individual's relation to desire and death', and later as the 'experience marked by lack or excess' (Fachinelli 2010: 278-9, 305)

[2] In Fachinelli, this originary event is outlined as a fullness, whereas Lacan's 'originary repression' (*Urverdrängung*), as well as Deleuze's 'pure difference', is outlined rather as a void. Better yet, as a cut that is neither full nor empty in itself, establishing their own game, namely the circuit of repetition.

window. She went to the scene with the mother, entered the hotel lobby, and her gaze fixed on the room keys that had a peculiar ball-shaped keychain.

The father's attempted suicide, the patient recounts, was a desperate attempt to hold on to the mother who had left him, a kind of emotional blackmail. Twenty years later, the same pattern is repeated in the patient's dream: abandonment, blackmail, return. The patient is abandoned like her father; she throws the key on the ground as the father threw himself from the window, with the result of bringing back the person who had left.

However, in the dream, there is an element of novelty relative to the abandonment pattern. The key with the ball returns as an element from the past but leads to a significant variation. In the dream we find not only the motif of the abandoned woman, which recurs repeatedly in the patient's romantic relationships. In fact, when the ex-partner returns, he finds her chatting with a friend. Fachinelli senses it is himself. Not only because the patient refers to the friend as a *persona cara* – which can mean 'expensive' as well as 'beloved person' in Italian – but also because the dream comes after a remarkable episode between analyst and patient in which the key appears again. And here we arrive at transference.

A few days before the dream, the patient arrives and rings the doorbell. Fachinelli cannot open the door. As he goes to open it, the lock cylinder comes loose. There is no way to receive the patient; the session risks being cancelled. But Fachinelli has an idea. He tells her to go to the courtyard: he will throw the key down to her from the window, and she will come back up with it. Thus, she manages to enter the office and the session can take place. In this episode, in addition to the key, the window returns, but with a significant variation: with the gesture of throwing himself from the window the father seems to want to abandon the patient; with the gesture of throwing the key from the window the analyst does exactly the opposite. A few days later, in the dream about abandonment, the analyst returns in that same role as the friend who does not leave her alone. Here we see transference in action: the relationship with the analyst has introduced a rhythmic variation that makes the repetition slide towards an unexpected outcome. And here is the gesture: the variation is triggered not by what is said but by what is done. The analyst does not say he will not abandon the patient; he enacts this by giving her the key.

It is important to note that Fachinelli's gesture was not intentional. It is what psychoanalysis calls the psychoanalytic *act* (Lacan 2024). It is 'a gesture that changes the subject' and constitutes the fulcrum of therapeutic practice (Lacan 2001: 378). As Badiou writes, 'the aim of the treatment is still for the act to take place' (Badiou 2018: 177). A far from simple undertaking. In fact, it is a gesture that happens without the possibility of being predetermined: only consequences can establish, in retrospect, that an *act* has taken place. Fachinelli's act, for example, arises from entirely accidental circumstances and only acquires a relevant meaning in the analyst's eyes *après coup*, after the patient recounts the dream to him. This suggests two considerations.

Act

First. Transference takes place without the analyst having to do anything, simply because of the position they occupy in the relationship with the patient. It is, quite simply, the condition of one who listens and is *supposed to know* (as Lacan says, the analyst occupies the position of the *subject supposed to know*). It is a position of privilege, which the analyst already has from the start without having to earn it, but which they can put to good use when the act occurs. Not unlike the position of privilege held by the teacher in class, also supposed to know – with the

difference that, compared to an analytic session, the teacher holds the floor. The position grants the teacher a *privilege* because they are the one who speaks and will be listened to (this, at least, is indicated by the arrangement of the teacher's and students' desks). It is a privilege they must then make fruitful. And both in psychoanalytic treatment and in teaching, making the position of *subject supposed to know* fruitful coincides with its abolition. It is a theatre that implodes, a game of enchantment and disenchantment: the initial illusion is necessary to set the process in motion. This occurs, via transference, with the act. A dimension for which there is nothing *to know*, there is only *to do*. Indeed, it is a suspension of knowledge, a void that pierces the illusion generated by knowledge. Something like the *keisaku*, the Zen master's stick blow that silences the illusion – the mirage that there is hidden knowledge, like the pearl inside the oyster, that one must extract: the knowledge of the teacher or the analyst. The act breaks the illusion, producing a change of posture. Both in the pupil and in the patient.

In the case of teaching, the act is the gesture with which, in the *Symposium*, the teacher Socrates withdraws from the courtship of his pupils, Agathon and Alcibiades, offering them emptiness instead of fullness (Lacan 1991)[3]. The pearl – the hidden treasure (*agalma*) that Alcibiades assumes to reside in Socrates' soul (Plat, *Symp*., 216e) and that Agathon would like to possess (Plat, *Symp*., 175c-175e) – is not there. With his gesture of withdrawal, the teacher shows that he is inhabited by a lack and is therefore desirous of knowledge, while at the same time exhibiting knowledge as constitutively pierced. What matters is not the destination but the journey, not the supposed full knowledge, like a pearl to reach and conquer, but rather the search as a way of making use of the drive (that *erōs* which is not only the theme of the symposium, and therefore the subject of the speeches and a theoretical knowledge, but also what acts in the symposium itself and circulates among all the guests). By showing their own path, the teacher enables the pupil to seek and find their own – their unique way of bringing *erōs* into play. If this is the *act* that, in the field of education, every good teacher must perform, in the field of psychoanalysis we find something analogous. Here, too, it is the gesture that produces the fall of the *subject supposed to know* (Lacan 2024: 43). With that gesture, the patient's blind faith in the analyst as an omniscient and omnipotent figure falls away and a different stance of the patient towards analysis is triggered. This also changes their stance towards their own role and that of the analyst. Initially passive, the patient now assumes the active role of an inquirer.

Second. The analytic act, as mentioned, can take place entirely by accident. It comes to unhinge repetition by introducing a rhythmic variation. As in the case reported by Fachinelli, that gesture may be unintentional. But it constitutes an important tile to which other tiles can be linked, giving the construction a certain direction. Here the analyst is like the jazz musician who introduces a variation without any specific purpose but, when they realize that the variation is picked up by the other musicians – coming into resonance with what they are playing – they take it up again and enhance it, thereby generating, together with the others, a new motif that grafts onto the previous one.

So, who performs the analytic act? And who performs the *ripresa* (repetition/recovery)? In theory, the analyst performs the first, the patient the second. The analyst's act opens a play space that makes the *ripresa* of the patient possible. However, we should think of the verb for these actions as though it were in the middle diathesis, similar to what we find in Greek grammar, Sanskrit, or Latin deponent verbs. Benveniste defines verbal diathesis as the function

[3] On Lacan's reading of Plato's *Symposium*, see Moroncini 2022; Recalcati 2014: 37-57; Bonazzi 2022: 67-95.

that expresses the relationship between subject and action and indicates the subject's position in relation to the process, whether it is external or internal. We speak of the active diathesis when the subject is the agent of the action and is therefore positioned outside the process it initiates. We have the middle diathesis when the subject is both the agent and the recipient of the action, being positioned inside the process. In this second case, it is as if the subject intercepted a process already underway that involves them and whose effects they undergo. By attuning themselves to the event in progress, however, they assume an active rather than simply passive role: they help bring about the very event that is unfolding. As we said, the analyst does not know *a priori* which moves will produce the return of the repressed or allow for a variation in the repetition. They must intercept the rhythm, without being able to generate or control it.

Wave

Returning to Freud's text, the rhythm of construction – as Fachinelli's example shows – does not simply lie in the words spoken by the analyst and the patient but reverberates in the entire setting: door, keys, and windows included. It is the entire environment in which the analysis takes place (together with the gestures enacted there) that constitutes the reservoir from which the analytic act can emerge, the move in the construction that disrupts the compulsion to repeat. The other Freudian text from 1937, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, suggests a further extension: the initial rhythm, or the sea in which the analyst must train to intercept the wave, goes beyond the setting and the patient-analyst relationship. Given that it is an impossible profession, the question Freud asks himself immediately after this observation is how and where the analyst can acquire some practical know-how. Where and by what means can the analyst gain 'the ideal qualifications which he will need in his profession'? Answer: 'in an analysis of himself, with which his preparation for his future activity begins' (Freud 1964a [1937] SE XXIII: 248).

If one reads *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* in continuity with *Constructions in Analysis*, one may thus infer that the ability to intercept the wave (to obtain truth effects from a construction) comes, in addition to practice in the field with the same patient and earlier cases, from one's own personal analysis. Provided that this analysis, Freud writes (Freud 1964a: 248), fulfils its function, namely: 1) to show the candidate the existence of rhythm, in Freud's terms: 'the existence of the unconscious'; 2) to allow the candidate, future analyst, to acquire an ear for rhythm, in Freud's terms: 'to perceive in himself things which would otherwise be incredible to him'; 3) to allow the candidate to practise rhythmic improvisation, to try their hand at intercepting and bending the wave, in Freud's terms: 'a first sample of the technique which has proved to be the only effective one in analytic work'. This rhythmic know-how that the candidate, future analyst, acquires during their own analysis – and that will enable them to make a construction resonate with 'truth effects' – is what Lacan calls 'knowing how to deal with the symptom'. The end of an analysis, Lacan writes, 'coincides with knowing how to deal with the symptom' (Lacan 1977: 7). Knowing how to deal with it: that is, not simply to eliminate it – an endeavour doomed to fail – but to repeat it in variation, like a jazz musician. It is, so to speak, a matter of making the symptom undulate, manipulating it by inserting it into a wave. For this reason – Lacan suggests on another occasion – the analyst's interpretation of the symptom must not be theoretical; it must not take the form of an 'explanation'. The interpretation 'is not meant to be comprehended, it is meant to produce waves' (Lacan 1976: 35).

Thus, that nomad science of psychoanalysis seems to be teachable and practicable rhythmically, moving from wave to wave: the wave the candidate learned to intercept during their own analysis is not unrelated to the wave to be intercepted, as an analyst, in relation to

the patient. In every analysis, what is at stake is something akin to a wave that reverberates from afar.

Abbreviations

Plat. Symp. Plato. *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias* (trans) W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library Vol. 166, Harvard: HUP, 1925.

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