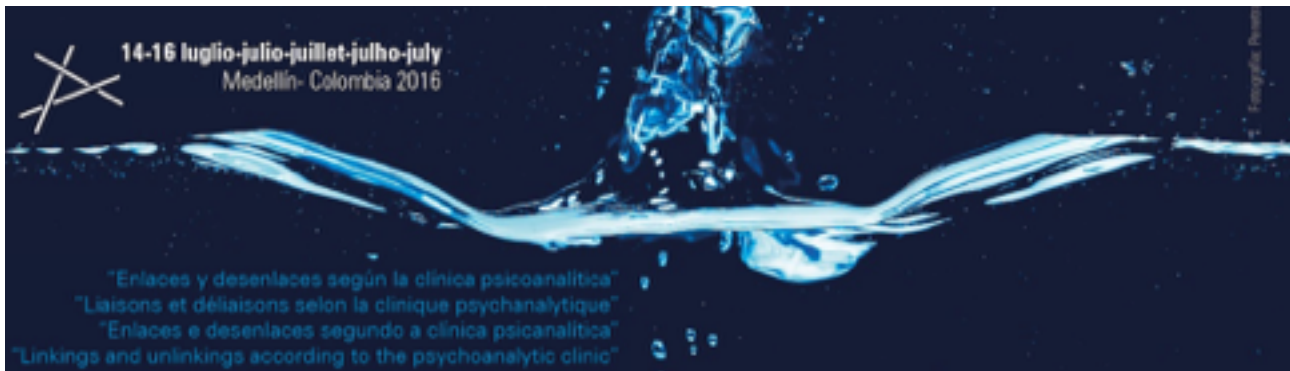


Medellín 2016 - RVI - Prelude - Marc Strauss



The tear

Let us begin with a particular kind of unlinking: a tear.

Rather, let us follow Lacan when he speaks to us about the unlinking that, for him, characterizes, the contemporary era: the one between power and knowledge.

A tear is not a division, a term whose use in Lacan is more lexicalized. Division supposes a relation, while a tear excludes it.

We have to hear the tone--extremely serious and also extremely firm--which Lacan uses to speak about it on May 7, 1969, Class 19, **Seminar XVI**, "From an Other to the other." The symptom of the tear: everyone suffers from it. Freud, from where he stood, had seen the beginnings and attempted to ward off its subjective effects. However, in the meantime, it has happened, and analytic discourse needs to respond to this reality.

Lacan, in this lesson, evoked "the dark years," during which he had "tried to bring psychoanalytic discourse into the light of day." He related it back to the camps at the inaugural moment of the new empire, marked by this "discordance." A citizen of this empire, from which it is impossible to exclude oneself, he persevered in his effort to sustain the analytic discourse so that it could perform the task it always had, that of making existence more livable.

With the empire of knowledge now beyond measure, there is no longer any limit to its power. To speak of this unlinking is to speak of psychoanalysis in the time of the discourse of science, or the discourse of the capitalist, for it is the same. In the empires of antiquity, knowledge and power formed a mutual aid society by pretending to confront each other. From the Sophists to the Dialectic, thought delighted in this, on the supposition that there is a point where knowledge and power are one. Thus everybody could find a place in the collective order.

Of course there was always a price to pay for bearing the insignia of one's place, and at times the price could be heavy. To pay to be constrained: is this not the very epitome of voluntary servitude, the ideal slave, the subject of the unconscious? The more so as the debt lasts forever.

An ambiguity remains: was it a matter of paying to obtain the right to bear, or was it a matter of paying later for allowing oneself to do so? Price of admission on the one hand, punishment on the other. Both in fact. The subject enters discourse by accepting to erase what makes him singular, because he cannot bear the weight of the real. He is then free to put on the masks offered him to participate in the grand game of exchanged objects, with its gains and its losses. But the subject also pays, forever and ahead of time, for the fact that he only masked the precious object of which he is supposed to have rid himself.

We can ask if it paid to pay. But no one had a choice. One had to lie a little bit, thereby parlaying the non-cancelable debt of speech with an unfulfillable promise to settle it.

The tear, the disjunction, the discordance produced by the triumph of the discourse of science now make us into servants of knowledge, whose greed is unbridled. It controls power, reducing it to a calculus of indebtedness sustained by capital. The latter is thus itself at the service of an anonymous knowledge, which turns all subjects into proletarians with digitized bodies.

When knowledge and power maintained their mutual aid society, there was the problem of truth, in fact, of the original lie: the accomplishment of the one from the two. The problem was posed especially in relation to desire and its connection to love on the one hand, to the body on the other. The Freudian neuroses have demonstrated the suffering of those who are lovers of truth at the very moment that it lost all evidence.

But what happens to truth when knowledge has silenced every other power? The subject suffers, as he always has, from the lack of a part of knowledge. But with a knowledge that no longer belongs to anyone, there is also no longer anyone, in his eyes, who has the power to embody it, or to give meaning to this loss. Therefore, this subject can tell his pain to no one, while his solitude spoils all the pleasures accessible to him.

With such a calculus, what indeed is left to say that draws validity from the risk taken in speech?

In an era where everything and everyone are reduced to monetary units, how does one attempt to exist in a valid way, that is, by reserving, in advance, the time necessary to differentiate oneself, other than by way of the "noisy chatter" that is the only thing preserving the part of subjective enigma? Adopting it and imparting it thus permit one to believe one has a place of exception.

In the marketplace of chatter, can psychoanalysis still be an option?

Certainly, psychoanalysis does not promise to know better how to hold onto the object. All the more as, in contrast to the discourse of science which substitutes for it the objects of the market, it acknowledges the loss. And the contemporary subject--no longer even caring to speak the truth, science having taken away his claim to it, as well as to all equivocation--remains a *parlêtre* (speaking being) animated by a desire to speak....something. And lastly, is this not what he has always done behind the veils of truth?

The more so as science itself cannot do without this remainder of saying in each one, even while resenting it. With all due respect to the fanatics, as well as to the enemies, of AI (Artificial Intelligence), saying is necessary for knowledge, in order to find there an object, that is, what it lacks by virtue of its structure. And because saying is sustained only by being addressed to an other, psychoanalysis promotes the link. Even though the tear is History's doing, it cannot prohibit someone from speaking, or even from agreeing on the essential, the incurable pain brought upon us by the irreversible castration of power by knowledge. Thus, psychoanalysis does not strive for the imperialistic return of their alliance, but rather for the recognition of the incalculable power of a singular speech.

If the coming times can make us fear the worst, they should not tame the desire to know that of which we are the symptoms.

And, readers and students of Lacan, we can transmit the insights he offers us, to orient us in a task that is not negligible. *Sicut palea* perhaps, even certainly. But it is from this task that pleasure again finds its meaning. As for the rest, a word to the wise is enough.

Marc Strauss, March 26, 2016.

Translated by Devra Simiu