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Prelude 1

Regarding Silence in the Function of the Analyst

I begin with an observation by Colette Soler in her text *Ethics*,¹ where she speaks of an ethics converted to silence, both with regard to the analyst’s desire and to the analytic act, and concerning which, Lacan’s question is to know “how analysis’ pathway of chatter leads to it”². He had already pointed out that there is no speech without a response, even if that response comes as silence, provided it has an auditor³. That the analyst remains silent *in place of* responding is, in this respect, a significant indication. Yet it is this *in place of* that must be questioned, for it is there that the invocation of speech and of the voice becomes knotted.

Would this be merely a matter of tactics and strategy, or does it instead touch on the politics and ethics of psychoanalysis? I choose the latter. The analyst must pay with words and with his or her own person, offering through the act itself the very possibility of entering into analysis. Let us recall: it is this offer that opens the way into analysis. In that vacant *place*, in the *renewal* of the space of speech, the fundamental rule takes on its force, making free association possible in the analysand’s speech. We know that freedom has a frame: that of

¹ Soler, C. (2025) *Ethics*. Presentation of the XIII Rendez-vous of the IF-SPFLF “The ethics of psychoanalysis and the others”.

<<https://www.champlacanian.net/public/2/evRencEcole.php?language=2&menu=1>>

² Lacan, J. (2006) “Remarks on Daniel Lagache’s Presentation: Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure”. *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*. Translated by Bruce Fink. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, p. 573.

³ Lacan, J. (2006) “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”. *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*. Translated by Bruce Fink. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, p. 206.

the fantasy, which, by definition, is the subject's interpretation in the face of the enigma of desire... of the Other (*Che vuoi?*). The analyst's silence thus operates as an unknown, alluding to the desire that questions the analysand. It is not just any silence, not simply keeping quiet; it is a silence that can be inhabited by precise questions, by punctuations, by cuts, in short, it is an operative silence.

In other words, the analyst keeps silent because he or she cannot respond to the level of knowledge. Transference, defined as the subject supposed to know, points us precisely in this direction. The unconscious, structured like a language, signals this supposed to know which, at the same time, divides the subject and, by its very structure, compels the subject to seek it. It is along this path that the analyst's silence fosters the opening of the unconscious, but as Lacan remarked in 1964, it can also lead to its closure. It is the real presence, a. *The presence of the analyst* as an index of the closure of the unconscious and the silence that matters in analysis: a real cause. There, where speech no longer stumbles in order to relaunch the "that one might be saying", but instead tilts toward the impossible to say.

When articulating his theory of the discourses, immediately after referring to the analytic act, Lacan proposes that the analyst must place the object *a* in the position of the agent. The *a* is the matheme (letter) that inscribes the paradox of the analytic act: simultaneously the cause and the remainder of the operation. How can one make proper use of this in psychoanalytic operancy⁴? Certainly, through the act that inaugurates transference. This is how I read what he observed in a lecture⁵ he gave when he was forced to interrupt Seminar 15, drawing on the topology of the Möbius surface, affirming that the analyst does not operate on the analysand's demand but in that space (that torsion) between the *subject supposed to know* and the *subject supposed to demand*, precisely by locating there the operancy of that *cause*, "that role of object *a*, of lack and distance, and in no way of mediation"⁶, which testifies that no dialogue is possible between the subject and the Other, and that any notion of dialogue is a deception [*duperie*]. That "*in place of*" I mentioned earlier, in which the analyst remains silent, is not of the phenomenological order, but is subsumed within the (quaternary) structure of the discourse.

It is therefore not surprising that, years later, in 1975⁷, he wrote in the same discourse, in the place of the agent/semblance: waste (silence). Managing the silence within that social bond allows the analyst, from that semblance of waste (*a*), to intervene in the conditioned aspects of the subject: "1. Because of what he enunciates" (unconscious knowledge). "2. Because of what he does not say" (S1 in the position of the product/ surplus jouissance). The analyst's response is an ethical condition: silence, cause, *a*. And it is the opportunity, the only one, for the infinite unfolding of an analysis to inscribe - logical production - the finite: S1, the One incarnated of *lalangue*.

A question and the provisional approach to its answer, by way of conclusion:

⁴ Neologism of Lacan. "[...] ce que le psychanalyste dirige de son action dans l'opérance psychanalytique." 22 November 1967. Seminar 15; *The Act*. Staferla, p. 13.

⁵ Lacan, J. The "Conférence du mercredi 19 juin 1968" was published in the *Bulletin de l'Association freudienne*, no. 35, pp. 3-9, in November 1985.

⁶ *Ibid.* Translation from the French: « ce rôle de l'objet *a* qui est de manque et de distance et non du tout de médiation ».

⁷ Lacan, J. *Impromptu sur le Discours analytique*. Conférences dans les universités nord-américaines: 2 December 1975 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published in *Scilicet*, 1975, no. 6-7, pp. 53-63.

The Silence and the saying?

Silence in the analyst's function is in accord with the saying of their act, insofar as the half-saying of the truth underlies that function. This is the wordy chatter: through the work of unconscious knowledge, there is a chance to haunt (*hanter*] the Real. "The approach to the real is narrow. And it is by haunting it that psychoanalysis takes shape"⁸.

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⁸ Translation from the French : « L'abord du réel est étroit. Et c'est de le hanter, que la psychanalyse se profile », in : Lacan, J. (1970) Radiophonie. *Autres écrits*. Paris : Seuil, 2001, p. 431.