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Prelude 6

Crossing the line.

On May 18, 1960, Lacan entered the room where he was teaching Seminar 7 on ethics, wondering at loud if we were not "crossing the line." We forget, he said, that alongside the desires of each subject there is a world with its unpredictable events. Everything suggests that Lacan is referring to an ongoing catastrophe, and indeed he is.

This is what it says in Lesson XVIII: "The frightening unknown, **on the other side of the line**, is that which in man we call the unconscious, that is to say the memory of those things he forgets (because) everything is done so that he does not think—the stench, the corruption (for) life is rotteness"¹. He adds: That second destruction Sade spoke of "*suddenly became tangible to us through the*

¹ Lacan, Jacques (1964/2003). Seminar 7. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. Paidós. Translation by Diana S. Rabinovich, p. 279.

*chromosomal anarchy that could break the ties of life forms*². We now know that he is referring to a scientific article on genetics. As in previous lessons, he was referring to the goods that some possess while others, their contemporary peers, are deprived of them, concluding that the possession of goods is power. This does not mean that those in power do not show solidarity with others in an emergency.

The difference, Lacan added on that day in 1960, will be that Sade's descriptions will be nothing if "*the real unleashing that threatens us explodes*"³. Most likely, in such a catastrophe, no motive for pleasure will intervene. It will not be the perverts who unleash it, but an order issued by one of the masters/bureaucrats, as always "justified" by a "reason" that conceals the calculated amount of the coveted goods.

66 years have passed, and the threats—now involving nuclear weapons—that one of the masters makes in his daily press conferences do not even hide his objectives (land, water, oil, gas, lithium, diamonds, rare earths) and the exact amount that fulfilling them would bring in.

We verify this in the clinic: not only is it impossible to love another as oneself—because that would go against one's own interests—but there is no worse enemy in the distribution of assets than ex-spouses, siblings who also inherit, or rebellious children. A little beyond the family sphere, we find that the enemy the subject complains about is his colleague, his partner, his closest friend, his neighbor. Or the "invading" migrant who is cheaper labor.

You only have to look at how **poor** migrants are treated as trafficked goods. I am not referring only to governments but—above all—to ordinary people who see newcomers as a **threat to the possessions** they have or believe they could obtain for themselves, and thus elevate **poor** foreigners to the status of enemies. I believe this is the only way to explain the steady rise of authoritarian leaders in Europe, the US, and Latin America, supported by a discourse that magnifies (if they have not promoted it themselves) the fears of those supposedly threatened by "invaders."

Unfortunately, history teaches us that all of this has already happened at different times, although not as massively and simultaneously as today. Nor has it been broadcast by the media in real time and worldwide.

What place should analysts occupy amid armed and unarmed conflicts while the leaders of current capitalism in power are deciding, right now, on behalf of everyone? Conflicts with diverse effects that each of our patients (some migrants or in the process of becoming migrants, others deported) bring to the office. It is no different from the place Freud and Lacan showed us when they

² Id.

³ Ibid., p. 280.

practiced amid equally threatening historical circumstances. The place that corresponds to us if we are **alert and do not confuse, in the "praxis of our theory"**⁴, "the symptoms of the discourse of the Other, always historical, (with) the symptoms of the unconscious, nothing historical, which psychoanalysis deals with"⁵. A **difficult** place... but a **necessary one**, if we do not want to fall into the discourse of the master or the teacher, due to the slippage that can always be caused by the temptation of the citizen that we also are outside the analytical act, moving us from the position of the semblant of the object cause of desire of the subject in analysis to that of another subject with opinions, such as those I mentioned above.

Gioconda Espina
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⁴ Lacan, Jacques (June 21, 1964). "Founding Act." In: Other Writings (2014) Paidós.

⁵ Soler, Colette (November 8, 2025). The Presence of Psychoanalysis. In: LIPP Italy-France Debate. Translation by LIPP.