

INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF CONVERGENCIA

June 25th - 26th 2021

“Borders: Psychoanalysis and Displacement”

We thank the organizing committee of this Colloquium, the members of Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association, in collaboration with Associação Psicanalítica de Porto Alegre, Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires and Escuela de Psicoanálisis Sigmund Freud de Rosario, for the effort and enthusiasm they have put into organizing this meeting that allows the Movement to go on, even despite current circumstances.

When I began to write the words ~~that~~ I am now sharing with you, by mistake I changed their order in the title of the Conference. Instead of “Borders: Psychoanalysis and Displacement”, I was overcome by the lapsus “Psychoanalysis, Borders, and Displacement.”

Following Freudian example, I didn’t want to turn a deaf a ear to this new formulation, which is what has guided these words.

As a social link, psychoanalysis allows us to establish a difference between dialogue and discourse, giving place, in the latter case, to what doesn’t work, what doesn’t convince us. The encounter between analyst and analysand is not dialogic, however much it appears to be so, and that’s because there’s a subject present.

This peculiarity allows analytical practice, unlike other predominant discourses in our day, to set out, by its very structure, a place for difference; an inaugural place for the emergence of a subject. I believe that this enablement and this place in which a subject can emerge constitute both the wager and contribution our practice symbolizes vis-à-vis the challenges of the present.

There is a sentence that becomes a maxim when the challenges of psychoanalysis in every era are raised. We all remember Lacan’s declaration in the *Écrits*:

“Whoever can’t meet the subjectivity of his time at its horizon would do better to give up.”

A few paragraphs later, he adds:

“Let him be well acquainted with the helix into which his era draws him in the ongoing enterprise of Babel, and let him be aware of his function as an interpreter in the strife of languages”.

In my opinion, this second sentence gives a new meaning to the first, because it allows it to be thought without being an imperative.

It's interesting, too, in this context, to consider the meaning of 'helix' in mathematics: **it's a curve which starts at a central point and moves away from it, at the same time that it spins around it.**

When Lacan states that the era draws the analyst into the strife of languages, it is understood that the analyst's function isn't just to consider subjectivity as a horizon of his era but also to be the interpreter in the strife of languages.

I believe this is Lacan's way of expressing that we must be alerted to the risk of affecting Psychoanalysis in its structure by generating **displacements** onto terms that belong to other discourses.

Nowadays, so-called sexual diversity or forms of gender dissidence raise issues relating to their problems with "sexual identity."

These social collectives not only establish a way of bonding into the community, but they also present a form of bond, a discourse, because they talk about "that", and that talk produces political, social and legal effects. And it's from that discursive position that demands are made on Psychoanalysis.

The currency of topics in meetings, conferences and gatherings of psychoanalysts clearly show that this issue occupies us and preoccupies us.

The dialogue is posed with other discourses that, by approaching aspects shared with our field, usually elicit critiques of psychoanalytic postulates, especially regarding the relation between the sexes.

While it's true that discourses such as gender theories are the effect, among other things, of the cultural impact that came in the last century from Freud's discovery of the unconscious, a conversation between those theories and the discourse of Psychoanalysis seems awkward at the present time.

In a 2006 interview Joan Copjec said that talking about sexuality without talking about Psychoanalysis is like trying to take a picture without a camera. A witty remark, yet barely a decade on we attest that lots of photos about sexuality have appeared, and they seem to have been taken without that camera.

The lack of argumentation that supports the abundance of labels in gender discourse and the superegoic demand to cover the whole phenomenal field of human sexuality makes gender discourse more moralizing than ethical.

There's a confusion, then, that comes from not distinguishing between what is classified and the logic out of which that operation is staked, as in the lists categorizing every possibility; the enumeration includes gender identities, sexual practices, sexual orientations and more.

What place do these discourses, powerful as they today are in their effects, leave for the subject as psychoanalysis understands it? That is to say, the subject is split between an unknown knowledge and a truth half-spoken due to the very structure that begets it.

To illustrate these issues related to the differences between psychoanalysis as a discourse practice and gender discourses, I will take the clinical example of a young man who started a sex change process. Some questions regarding gender that this young man poses arose before the analysis began. From the outset this young man uses in his narrative a cryptic language taken from prevailing LGBT discourses on the theme of gender. Similarly, from scientific discourse, he gives a detailed account of the effects that psychotropic drugs have on him.

In this intersection of knowledge domains, he defines himself as a “non-binary transsexual boy”, one who's started hormone treatment.

He says that before, when he was a girl, he had a homosexual partner, hinting that at the time he was put off by masculinity by something negative. He locates that negative aspect in a sexual game played with his cousins during childhood.

This game was traumatic because there was a demand placed on him at the time. The game starts with a question asked by his cousin:

“I have *this*, what do you have?”

In the interviews he says he felt the desire to have *that*, which maybe helps understand the form of response he found to the question of sexual difference. A form of response marked by words of a discourse that wasn't his own.

This is why he calls men “masculinities”, in the belief that in so doing he manages to circumvent sexual difference, since he believes that the word “man” is what marks that difference. A similar thing happens with the word “woman.”

He eludes those words (man, woman) because they are the signifiers of sexual difference. By taking them as words, and not as signifiers, he is certain he can be a woman as he'd like to be, and on that he bases what he calls his sexual declaration. He defines himself as “a gay boy”, inhabiting a dissident femininity. This decision makes him belong to a sex that's not in line with his anatomical body.

From the traumatic effect of sexual games played with his cousins and that encounter with lack there arose a desire to have a basis for a sex change, a change that draws on gender discourse as a basis and medical discourse to reaffirm it.

What grows evident at this point, is the confusion that comes from taking the postulates of a discourse as truth, when the truth is on the side of sexual difference, which is real.

Believing he's finding an argument that erases sexual difference, he takes something from prevailing discourses, without yet realizing that this erasure itself is the product of the discourses he uses. It's not his own, if he makes no place for unconscious discourse as unknowable knowledge.

Every speaking being, by virtue of speaking, will opt for one sex or another.

The subjective ups and downs this young man faces in his attempt to find a basis for a sex change rest on discursive postulates such as gender discourses, as if they could provide support to resolve the issues surrounding his sexuality.

Although the "declaration of sex" this young man claims to make does not prevent the assumption of a speaking subject, we are dealing with someone who, paradoxically, declares his gender at the cost of keeping out of language - and of the interdiction of *jouissance* - the signifiers of ~~the~~ difference, displacing sexual difference toward a gender difference.

"The strife of languages" tests us in our disposition to listening and to psychoanalysis as a discourse that questions itself.