

Grupo de Trabajo: The Signifier Is Not A Master Word

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This report is the fruit of an elaboration that emerged from the meetings that took place with the Member Institutions of Convergence represented here, where the first three lessons of the Seminar, Book XII, *The Crucial Problems of Psychoanalysis*, were worked upon, articulated with what has been developed at the Lacanian School over the years, in other words, the transmission of psychoanalysis.

From the very beginning of the Seminar, Lacan shows his concern with the end of analysis by the psychoanalysts, asserting that the meaning of this ending, until that moment, is unresolved. "One thing that remains certain, is that it is associated with what can be called untangling effects. The untangling of things loaded with meaning that couldn't be untangled otherwise". (Lacan, lesson 06/01;65).

Lacan exposes the dead ends the psychoanalysts find themselves in whilst bound by the effect of meaning produced by the signifiers and concepts that uphold the psychoanalysis through the structure of the language: taking them for Truth without becoming involved in them. In the Seminar, book 11, *the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*, 1964, the seminar that preceded the one above, he established the foundations of psychoanalysis, and spoke of the concepts that he deemed essential to stuturing the experience. But in the Seminar, book XII, he sheds doubt on the use that psychoanalysts make of them, which, upon being taken for master concepts, could produce serious problems in the transmission of psychoanalysis and the training of analysts.

The concepts cannot be taken for masters because they are upheld by the language, which includes the subject and upholds them in an elusive state, not as a subject of knowledge. The transmission of psychoanalysis is thus compromised. How can one transmit what is experienced in analysis without falling into the same type of linguistic or scientific formalization that exclude the subject?

As analysts, our aim should be the opposite since the centerpiece of our practice is the subject. The transmission of this experience that presents itself as lack and loss will require a different training.

He then asserts that his radical reference is in the structure of the *Witz*. What is transmitted in it is the incommunicable, what is in the language, but what eludes it, distinct from the molds of scientific communication.

I quote Lacan in the lesson of December 9th, 1965: “If in other terms, there is a place with a *nothing of meaning* – it is the term I used myself regarding *Witz*, playing on the ambiguity of the word *pas*, a negation of the word *pas*, overtaking – nothing prepares the psychoanalyst to effectively discuss his experience with his neighbor. This is the difficulty, though I won’t say insurmountable, considering I am trying to pave its path. This is the difficulty with the institution of an analytical science – which must manifestly be resolved by indirect means – this dead end naturally supplies itself with all manner of devices. This is precisely wherein lies the drama behind communication between analysts. Since naturally, there is the solution of master words, and from time to time they appear. (...) Is the signifier a master word? No, precisely no”.

Following his analysis and using the *Witz* as a paradigm, he points to point x, the hole in language. From there, we propose the reading of the phrase “the signifier is not a master word”, anticipating what Lacan will establish two years later with the proposal of the concept and device, the *Passe*, when the analyst not only bears witness to his story, but via his testimony, transmits the manner in which the concepts that upheld the psychoanalysis inscribed themselves in him over the course of the experience.

The effect of the advances of his theory, especially as of the *Proposition of the 9th of October, 1967, on the psychoanalyst of the School* has served as a landmark towards the development of this essay when Lacan affirmed that in the *passe* the “future analyst must reduce himself and his name to that of any signifier”. This is what becomes at the end of an analysis, when the subject no longer represents himself from one signifier to another signifier, and frees himself from the imprisoning effect of the master signifier and the phallic signifier as determined by him, which controlled the pulsational circuit which he was subject to. The pulsation will be free and will guide the analyst in his relation with the analytical cause.

It is a synchronous operation: with the fall of the unitary signifier, the object that upheld the orgasm in the symptom also falls. The *passe* is the moment of the fall of S1, of the writing of the loss of object 'a', whose value is the orgasm, when it is transmuted to the object cause of desire and the repression of S2, whose value is unconscious knowledge. The spoken word will no longer be taken as the referent for desire, but rather as the object 'a', real.

The formalization of psychoanalysis will no longer be done only through the signifier. We can no longer operate with only the notion of the unconscious structured as language. What must fundamentally be transmitted at the end of the experience, found by Lacan in the structure of the *Witz*, is that what is real in the unconscious isn't structured as language, but written from a void.

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