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Vicissitudes of a Transmission that Knots

*What Transmission Knots*

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1. **Introduction**

First of all I would like to thank Perla Miglin and the GIEP for her invitation today. I have been four times to Israel, the first one was for the NLS Congress in 201. Let me say today that I hope I will be able to be back there, in the flesh, in a not so distant future, it’s my wish.

How did this event come about? Perla wrote to me after I presented my reading of chapter 3 of *Seminar 17* at the online seminar series organised by our colleagues of the London Society of the NLS. This chapter is entitled “Knowledge, a means of jouissance”.

But our exchange had actually begun before then, when Perla contacted me to let me know that a reading of Freud’s ‘Civilization and its discontents’ was going to be done also in Israel in hebrew.

You can see how we have already a number of signifiers, a number of threads or strings if you like, with which we decided to entangle ourselves: knowledge, jouissance, malaise… So what I would like to present today is a sort of manipulation, a certain handling of these strings, to see what that produces in the conversation.

I suggested to Perla that it would be better if some members of the GIEP could articulate some questions so that I could speak, not to the vacuum of Zoom, but to some things that were already resonating for some of you. So I take the opportunity to thank Tammy Weil, Sari Edelstein, Hamutal Shapira and Gina Bauman for having sent me their reflections and interrogations. I am not going to address them directly or separately, but I will rather attempt to weave them into the fabric of what I would like to say to you today.

1. **The titles**

The title proposed by Perla for today immediately evokes of course, Freud’s seminal text “Drives and their vicissitudes”. You know perhaps that in Spanish the title is: ‘Drives and their Destinies.’ I believe Perla was more interested in this word, and the question that it contains: what are the destinies of transmission in psychoanalysis? What are the possible fates of what a psychoanalytic transmission is supposed to produce?

It’s an important question because it goes to the heart of the problem of analytic training (or as we prefer to call it, analytic formation), and therefore, it is a political question.

Let us first remember that Jacques-Alain Miller has spent the last forty years elucidating for us that psychoanalysis -according to Lacan’s teaching- implies the knotting of three dimensions: theory (epistemic), practice (clinic) and politics. The theory is of course the conceptual apparatus, the notions that constitute the ‘doctrine’. The practice is the actual enacting of the analytic discourse in the experience of the encounter between the analyst and the analysand. The political dimension involves two things: the end of analysis and the grouping of analysts. How one conceives of each of these dimensions affects the other two.

This is our main knotting: the notion I have of transference, of the unconscious, of the symptom of repetition, will determine how I operate with my analysands , and will also be linked to how I understand what the end of analysis is and what is the organisation that corresponds to the community of analysts.

This is exactly what Lacan demonstrated in his paper “Situation of psychoanalysis in 1956”. Its a paper I highly recommend everyone to read slowly and in details. It is moreover what Lacan advise everyone to do before reding his proposition. In this text Lacan presents a diagnosis to which he will respond a decade later, with an invention, the School and the Pass. An invention to treat what he had located as the impasses and deviations of the post-Freudians.

This response was his *Proposition of 1967 on the psychoanalyst of the School*, where he introduces the Pass and where he states something that will be one of the threads running through my elucubrations today: “there is a real at stake in the very training of psychoanalysts. We hold that existing societies be founded on this real. We also start from the fact, which is quite apparent, that Freud wanted them to be as they are. The fact is no less obvious—and for us conceivable—that *this real provokes its own misrecognition*, indeed produces its systematic negation.”[[1]](#footnote-1) *[il y a un réel en jeu dans la formation même du psychanalyste. Nous tenons que les sociétés existantes se fondent sur ce réel. Nous partons aussi du fait qui a pour lui toute apparence, que Freud les a voulues telles qu’elles sont. Le fait est pas moins patent – et pour nous concevable – que ce réel provoque sa propre méconnaissance, voire produise sa négation systématique.]*

The framework within which we try to produce something of a transmission in psychoanalysis is therefore, as we say it with a very repeated but extremely complex formula, “the orientation by the real”. What does this mean? That what is fundamental in psychoanalysis of the Lacanian orientation is to stay awake and alert with regards to this misrecognition that the real involved in the formation of analysts produces.

Now, after the title was chosen, I proposed to Perla a subtitle. This subtitle does not have the form of a question. It’s an assertion. It is the affirmation that transmission knots something. And that one could eventually know what that is. Does this mean that one can say it? I’ll leave this in suspense.

1. **Each language has its own form of transmission**

This is a phrase I found in a footnote, in the *Ecrits*[[2]](#footnote-2) : ‘Each language has its own form of transmission’. It’s inserted in one of the first occurrences of the terms in the Ecrits. The term is only present a handful of times, even though one could say that all of Lacan’s teaching can be read with the key of this question: what is it that gets transmitted? And I put this question Not only at the level of the transmission of psychoanalysis but also at the level of the experience of the speaking being. This are not two different things psychoanalysis and the experience of the Parle'tre. it's the speaking being question, what is it that get transmitted? And how? It’s a question central for psychoanalysis because it goes to the core of the problem of the neurotic, and what he or she may eventually expect from going through a psychoanalysis. It's a very common occurrence in the demand of a neurotic, I want to know how not to be like my mother, I want to be different from my father, do something different then what my parents did with me. Or in other version of this I suffered because something wasn’t transmitted to me. very common in women my mother did not transmitted to me how to be a woman, or for the obsessional I cant get rid of the death the other transmitted to me.

It is also central, albeit in a lateral way, to the current debates in our Schools about the continuation of analyses via the phone or the internet. Even though I am not going to focus on this today, I wanted to indicate that what we call “questions of School” are never divorced from the horizon of our epoch, from the times we live in understood as the discourses we are the product of.t

I quote Lacan, in his Rome discourse - the point of departure of his teaching properly speaking-, where he states:

“… when you congratulate yourself for having met someone who speaks the same language as you, you do not mean that you encounter each other in the discourse of everyman, but that you are united to that person by a particular way of speaking.

The antinomy immanent in the relations between speech and language thus becomes clear. The more functional language becomes, the less suited it is to speech, and when it becomes overly characteristic of me alone, *it loses its function as language*. […] By an inverse antinomy, it can be observed that the more language's role is neutralized as language becomes more like information, the more *redundancies* are attributed to it. This notion of redundancy originated in research that was all the more precise because a vested interest was involved, having been prompted by the economics of long-distance communication and, in particular, by the possibility of transmitting several conversations on a single telephone line simultaneously. It was observed that a substantial portion of the phonetic medium is superfluous for the communication actually sought to be achieved.

This is highly instructive to us, (\*) for what is *redundant* as far as information is concerned is precisely what plays the part of resonance in speech. For the function of language in speech is not to inform but to evoke.”

This long quote was very useful to me. In a certain sense you could object that this belongs to the ‘classic Lacan’ to what is wrongly called specially by academics the structuralist Lacan, the Lacan of the symbolic in primacy over the real, etc. etc. However, there is something extremely precise in how he articulates here the loss of the function of speech as language as the condition for the emergence of singularity, that is to say, of that which would later on coincide with the real proper to each subject that is isolated at the end of analysis. It also sets the foundation for the notion of interpretation or more specifically, the notion of the analytic act, as pointing to the void that constitutes the being of he who speaks…

Many AEs have testified to the experience of analysis as an experience where one learns how to speak. Or where one unveils what one’s mode of speaking is made of. For this it is necessary that the analysis produces an unknotting. To unknot the symptomatic arrangement the subject constructed as a response to the Other’s desire and to the impact of language on the body. I can advance then the idea that transmission, in psychoanalysis, is not transmission of something, be it a knowledge, a truth, a knowing-how. Rather it is the transmission of …. And would you believe that I just find out that I never finished that sentence, It's the transmission of… and somehow moving through and forth, this paragraph was left with this blank. So…

1. **Translation**

Some of the questions posed to me by our GIEP colleagues touched on the issue of knowledge and translation with regards to the four discourses. I will introduce a remarks here: we must not forget that Lacan’s theory of the discourse does not quite overlap his theory of the constitution of the subject in the field of the big Other, that is to say, in the dialectic of desire.

This is important because Lacan’s question is precisely how to integrate this real proper to the analytic experience, this heterogeneous element that cannot be captured neither by the symbolic nor by the imaginary.

In the reading of *Seminar 17* I emphasized that Jacques-Alain Miller had entitled a section “How am I translated”, at the point where Lacan was trying to advance in his attempt to establish (I quote) “what are the conditions of a properly psychoanalytic discourse.”[[3]](#footnote-3) In the *Preface to a Thesis*, Lacan states: “My Écrits are unsuitable for a thesis, particularly an academic thesis: they are antithetical by nature: one either takes what they formulate or one leaves them. Each of them is apparently no more than a memorial to the refusal of my discourse by the audience it included: an audience restricted to psychoanalysts. But, precisely by including them without retaining them, each article shows by a further twist that there is no knowledge without discourse. An unthinkable discourse, because it could only be held if one was ejected from it. Perfectly teachable, however, by a half‐saying: a technique which realizes that truth can only be half‐said. This presupposes that the psychoanalyst never shows himself except in an asymptomatic discourse, which is, in effect, the least one can expect of him. In fact, this ‘impossible’ is the basis of his real; a real from within which the consistency of the discourses in which truth limps can be judged, precisely because it limps openly, as opposed to the inanity of the discourse of knowledge, which asserting itself with its closure, makes the others (discourses) lie. That, indeed, is the operation of analytic discourse when it makes a thesis out of the fiction it calls an author, out of the history of thought, or out of something that styles itself progress. […]”[[4]](#footnote-4) I think that this long quote by Lacan can help us position ourselves with regards of the teachings and transmissions of the AE. Especially this assertion by Lacan that there is always something of a fiction in the believe that there is an author. That one would be an author rather than a character in one' s own history.

And Lacan ends the Preface to the book that bears his name (1970), by saying that the interest of this kind of texts, “will be that they transmit what I have said literally; like the amber which holds the fly so as to know nothing of its flight”.

Wanting to know nothing about the flight, I read it first with the clues of Lacan’s return to Freud: freezing the statements, what is said, keeping the information and erasing the enunciation (staying at the level of language as speach), turning the writing to dead letter, to a Scripture. Today I read it from a slightly different angle, namely, the question of transmission; after all, the word itself is included in this sentence. The paradox contained in the phrase “to transmit what I said literally” is not without a resonance to Lacan’s formulation in his ‘Direction of the Treatment”, namely, “to take desire to the letter”. Let’s then oppose ‘literally’ and ‘to the letter’, and place this distinction in the track of the symptom as an ‘inexact name’, and the pathway of the analytic experience as that which brings a subject from the symptom to the sinthome, that is to say, to a new name.

I also said at the time of this reading *of Seminar 17*, that despite this contempt for the dead knowledge of the academic productions, Lacan continued the movement of interrogating how can psychoanalysis teach what cannot be taught. It’s a matter of being aware that the analytic discourse does not think itself as being the truth. He spoke of this at the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes, some years later: “might the antipathy between the university and analytic discourses be overcome at Vincennes? Certainly not. It’s being put to work there. It’s apparent that by coming up against its own impossibility, teaching is refreshed.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

In other words, even though teaching and transmission are not exactly the same thing, they constitute two dimension where, as with any aspect that deals with the existence of psychoanalysis, the question is posed as to what is the real at stake, how to locate it, how to circumscribe it, how not to negate it. For this, we will need One more.

Translation is also a way for me to separate the waters between Freud’s work and the innovation that Lacan’s teaching introduced. This is how Eric Laurent introduce the first three lines of the argument for the theme of the Congress that would have been this weekend and which will not be, the Congress of our School on Interpretation. I quote: “As soon as one evokes interpretation a misunderstanding arises. The binary between the text and its interpretation misleads us. We immediately fall into the illusion that the language of the unconscious exists and that it calls for a metalanguage: interpretation.”[[6]](#footnote-6) As with translation and interpretation, transmission may give rise to the idea of a binary. This is what Lacan tried to get away from with the knot. This is not self-evident, and it proved difficult. Will we say it proved impossible? It’s exactly the other way around: it proves the impossible.

1. **Testimony and transmission: writing**

Let’s now introduce a third. Teaching, transmission, testimony. We could call it the three tees. (After all, one of its meanings as a verb is to ‘link’ or to ‘tie’). It suits me. Perhaps those of you here who heard or read my testimony can be sensitive to what I called my ‘difficulty to count’.

I need this in order to move away from the idea that transmission is a matter of two.

What is at stake in the function of the testimony? Jacques-Alain Miller proposes, in his course of 2001, that “as soon as psychoanalysis is not considered a science and the case history does not pretend to be an account of scientific observation, it becomes a form of literature.”. He continues: “Something that Lacan himself points out […] is that the Pass itself falls within the genre of persuasive literature.” And he asks: “To what extent the perspective proposed by Lacan about the Pass isn't to obtain 'lituraterre', ultimately the deposit on the ground of the litter of the subject.”[[7]](#footnote-7) I would like to put this in tension with the quote about the fly and the amber. They are not at all the same thing. It is a subtle passage: the letter, the litter.

In what way the knot I proposed to keep in mind at the beginning, between the epistemic, the clinical and the political could dance here with these three of teaching, transmission and testimony? And moreover, what about the question of their vicissitudes, their ‘destinies’, in the analytic experience?

At the end of *Seminar 23*, in his “Note”, Jacques-Alain Miller states: “If the knot as the subject’s support holds together, then there is no need of the Name-of-the-Father: it is superfluous. If the knot does not hold together, the Name holds the function of the *sinthome.* In psychoanalysis, it is an instrument for transforming jouissance by way of meaning. It works in the same way as the Name of the father that transforms the *x* of the mother’s desire in the ‘paternal metaphor’ by giving it the signification of the phallus.”

The sinthome at the end of analysis, in what is produced as a new nomination, allows for the passage to a “beyond the unconscious.” This means, a beyond the attempt to resolve jouissance by means of meaning through the Name of the Father as instrument, which is what leaves the subject captured in the phallic logic, that is, in the repetition to which the fantasy subjects it. This can also, I think, be applied to the field of the teaching and transmission of psychoanalysis. we can pose the question in a more simple way, In the configuration of various devices through wich psychoanalysis is allegedly transmitted can we find whether the logic is that of the instrument of the name of the father and therefore an attempt to resolve jouissance via meaning or is there a possibility that the transmission takes place with the inclusion of what Lacan at some point called the logic of the not all. I think this is one of the foundation of the cartel as a pillar of the school together with the Pass.

As Eric Laurent pointed out, in this search for a beyond at the end of his teaching, “Lacan dares to translate the Freudian *Unbewusste*, the unconscious, as *Une-bévue* [One-blunder], which in French -Laurent says- is a homophony, and not a translation. […] it’s a great play of words about the unconscious as ignorance [insu], an ignorance that is known somewhere […] But what does it mean to know what we know?”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Here (as Perla wrote for the Blog of the NLS Congress) lies the delicate point of the knot between knowledge and jouissance. No adequation between cause and name. A hole. Hence, what matters in this question of the knot is of course the various voids that the knotting circumscribes. You can imagine how pleased I was when I found this three T's because the three T's at the same time have a dimension of naming but more importantly, if we put them as a knot produce their own holes. What we are interested in exploring are what this holes are

One of my passers, after I submitted my request to testify of the end of my analysis in the school, let for the moment say that without wanting to pin down things too much , I would say that that is the testimony proper the encounter with the passers. I can say that in my experience I have never lived myself in a way of speaking such as the one I encountered when I met my passers, and it was something that opened and closed because I haven't been able to speak like that again, this is something I transmit you now. So one of my passers pointed to this: what link between testimony and writing? This was connected with the fact I had a practice of writing mostly writing a poetry from quite an early age. I replied: “For me writing is a way of treating that which the species of the object *a* don’t manage to absorb, neither on the plane of identifications, nor with the apparatus of the fundamental fantasy. It is my way of doing with the feminine and it is on the side of S of barred A. That is why what opened for me the pathway towards the exit of the analysis was the emergence of the ‘real pair’ after many years of struggling with various different false pairs, the real pair was extracted from the analysis: body-writing. I had formulated this previously in my analysis: “poetry is being able to write without knowing”. As in my case the neurotic response implied a phallisization of knowledge, writing had always been a torture for me (papers, conferences, etc) because that dimension of knowledge was nearly completely taken in that phallisization. Moreover, the crucial element of my fundamental fantasy wich is “correcting” intervened each time as a mortifying element, both for myself and for others. After the end of analysis, the testimony allows for a new tying [knotting] of the cause (the point of real of the singular mode of jouissance) to an Other no longer complete (the School)”

1. **To conclude**

Some questions by the GIEP colleagues also pointed to the problem of the link between the object and the letter at the end of analysis. This is crucial and I will try to advance on this in the next two years: what kind of litteralization of the object produces its fall from the fundamental phantasy and the emptying necessary for the analyst’s desire to emerge?

For now, I will say that the vicissitudes of a transmission that knots are those of a littoral. They are also that of the turning around the void, the hole, at the very centre of the School. That hole is made possible, at the end of the analysis, by the fall of the object, separation and mourning. In order to sustain that void, transmission comes in the place there where previously the subject placed the guarantee of the Name of the Father or any of its forms.

Again in his “Note” in *The Sinthome*, J.-A. Miller says: “One can’t help thinking that Lacan’s late teaching belonged to the same register as the esoteric teaching that found a place in the Schools of antiquity. […] unlike Freud … Lacan refrained from selecting a circle of supposedly loyal followers and from binding himself to this chosen people[…]by handing out rings. (Concerning the Secret Committee, the inner circle of the Seven Rings, see ‘The situation of psychoanalysis and the training of psychoanalysts in 1956’, in *Ecrits,* op. cit., pp. 473-4.) The only ring on Lacan’s finger is the knot.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Lacan, J., “Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School”, trans. R. Grigg, in Analysis, Issue 6, 1995. [Available online](http://iclo-nls.org/wp-content/uploads/Pdf/Propositionof9October1967.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lacan, J., Ecrits, Function and Field, pp. 246-47 plus footnote 35 (\*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lacan, J., Seminar XVII, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lacan, J., Preface to “Jacques Lacan”, work by Anika Rifflet-Lemaire, published in Brussels in 1970. Published in English by Routledge, 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lacan, J., in Culture/Clinic, Minessota University Press, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Laurent, E., Interpretation. From Truth to Event. Tel Aviv. 2nd June 2019. <https://www.nlscongress2020.com/nlscongress/the-orientation-text> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Miller, J.-A., Orientation lacanienne III, 4 - Course n ° 5 12/12/2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Laurent, E., Speaking with one’s body, speaking with one’s symptom, ENAPOL, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Miller, J.-A., A Note Threaded Stitch by Stitch, Seminar XXIII, The Sinthome, Polity Press, 2016, p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)