



The name of the Father - Doing Without, Making Use Of It

Antonio Di Ciaccia

I will speak in the language of Dante.

At the end of the Fourth Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis, we have a date for the Fifth Congress.

As you know, it will happen in Rome.

What title has been chosen?

What title to give to such an important encounter for psychoanalysts trained in the School of Jacques Lacan in a city that is par excellence “the city”?

One title, among many others, won over all.

In the first place, I will say it in the language of Lacan. Then in the language of our host country, and finally in the language used by the other schools.

The title is:

le nom du père
o nome do pai
el nombre del padre
the name of the father
der name des vaters
il nome del padre

What subtitle to give to such a magnificent title, so emphatic, so grandiloquent, so sacred, so religious and, to say the truth, so rhetorical and pompous?

More than the seduction implied in the title, it needed a subtitle revealing the folds, unveiling the limits, removing the sacred aura of religious fascination, and underlying the shifts which Lacan marked on the signifier that is antonomastically “The signifier.” Furthermore, it needed a subtitle that could underline the clinical edge of the title, revealing its therapeutic efficiency, in short, capable of showing humanity and not divinity.

The chosen subtitle includes all of that:

S’en passer, s’en servir
Prescindir, servir-se dele
Prescindir, servirse de él
Doing without, making use of
Ohne ihn auskommen, sich seiner bedienen
Farne a meno, servirsene

The title – the name of the father- apparently has a unilateral and unique reading. The subtitle, modulating it, unfolds the title in polyhedral perspectives.

Alone, the name of the father lends itself to one and only one dimension. This is really to say a lot, as the dimension of the symbolic manifests itself there. Nevertheless, Lacan himself tore it apart from hypostasis and from single valence. It is Lacan who indicated that the way of the unique dimension is not valid, as it is not valid for religion or for philosophy

and even less so for science. It is Lacan who demonstrated that if the name of the father arises from tradition, this tradition is not singular but at least two-fold: the thousand-year old tradition from the people of the Book, the people of the Bible, and the more recent tradition coming from ancient Greece. Historically, the confluence took place in Rome.

And it settled and dominated imperturbably over the centuries.

Lacan challenges this confluence, he protests against the heretical superimposing of being and the real, he makes fun of the current ideology that, pretending to be ecumenical, hides the remainder of *jouissance* under the universal of the symbolic.

And nevertheless, it is by holding onto the name of the father at the beginning of his teaching that Lacan proposed to the psychoanalytical world to return to Freud. In referring to the name of the father he doesn't challenge the importance of the mother with her children, but he reveals the harmful predominance that one gives to the imaginary in relation to the role that the symbolic has - in every subjective economy - as pivot and turning point. The bottom line is that Lacan attributes to the name of the father the role of preventing psychoanalysis itself from being reduced to a pure delusion. Today, it is not possible not to notice that his reminder opens a gap in the whole psychoanalytical world, becoming an essential contribution to the transmission of the Freudian theory as such.

Nevertheless, I cannot stop from emphasizing an aspect much more important to us: the polyhedral nature of the name of the father shines particularly in the teachings of Lacan.

It manifests itself in the operation that we call metaphorization, as we see it acting in a discriminatory way in the various clinical structures. It manifests itself in the normalization and in a profound and reassuring positivization, such as we see progressively getting a foothold in a subject's life. It manifests itself in the differentiation that happens among the speaking beings as we see it in the diversity that presides over becoming a man and becoming a woman. It manifests itself; at last, in the articulation between law and drive, such as we see it in the way a subject operates in relation to his desire.

Lacan develops this polyhedral nature of the name of the father up to the point of breaking the singular concept, proposing a new plural reading. In the end, if this pluralization liberates us from the father, it chains us to language: the paternal signifier is not a signifier because it is paternal; it is paternal because it is a signifier.

This pluralization, then, taking us away from tradition –fortunately, by the way- introduces us immediately to the transmission of a logic, that which directs the unconscious role that allows certain elements to play the role of pivot in relation to *jouissance*. Moreover, it unveils the statute of pure semblance.

Semblance - it is certainly the most appropriate epithet attached to the name of the father. What a mockery, to pass so unexpectedly from the empire of a name to the anonymity of plural semblances! Would it be this passage that justifies social decline, family frailty, not to mention political impotence?

But finally, the subtitle refers us again to a new reversal. Here, it is especially about the efficacy of the function of the name of the father, which is valorized, because this function is mainly fertile in clinical practice. Efficacy that must never be confined to a pure analytical operation, i.e. in this operation conducted by a psychoanalyst acting in a space supposedly extraterritorial, that of the treatment. Because today the psychoanalytic discourse demands to reveal the impact that it has and that it should have at the social level, not to mention at the political level.

Truly, for this to happen, it would be necessary to ask ourselves the question whether our operation, that of psychoanalysis, is situated before or beyond this role, which nevertheless allows it to emerge. This means that in the treatment, whether we succeed in not allowing a collusion between the function of the subject supposed to know and the paternal semblances, whether we succeed in revealing the logic that presides over the necessary universe of semblances but, correlatively, whether we succeed in making the island of the surplus-enjoyment emerge from the ocean of master signifiers.

For this unique operation to happen, I quote freely Jacques-Alain Miller, “there must be psychoanalysts that don't think highly of themselves, even though they think highly of their own operation. In short, psychoanalysts without pretensions.”

You would understand why, for the poster, we have chosen a fresco from Tiepolo. Not Giambattista Tiepolo in his representation of the angel stopping Abraham in Isaac's sacrifice. But a fresco by his son, Giandomenico Tiepolo, because the Venetian fresco of the Escarpolette of Pulcinella seemed to us to represent our daily work in a more adequate, more adherent, more amusing, more spiritual way.

The congress will be held on July 13- 17, 2006 in the center of Rome, between Piazza Montecitorio and Piazza Capranica, two steps away from the temple of all Gods, the Pantheon.

Translated by Maria Cristina Aguirre

Review by Isabel Aguirre and Thomas Svolos