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Psychoanalysis of the Compassless Man Reactions to the future and their treatment

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Abstract: Globalization has transformed the modern man, exceeded its father-oriented organization, its vertical hierarchy of long lasting ideals and standards. For that reason, our times, for those who find no ways to create their future, are “compassless” and anguished. Can psychoanalysis, born under the standard of the father orientation of the Oedipus complex, change to treat the contemporary man? In this paper, presented at the IV Psychoanalysis World Association Congress, Jorge Forbes provides trends for current clinical treatment.

Key words: Psychoanalytical principles; globalization; contemporary trends.

Resumen: La globalización transformó al hombre moderno, excedió su organización orientada por el padre, su jerarquía vertical de normas e ideales duraderos. Por esa razón, estos tiempos para aquellos que no encuentran la forma de crear su futuro son “sin brújula” y angustiosos. Puede el psicoanálisis, nacido bajo el signo de la guía paterna en el Complejo de Edipo, cambiar para acceder al hombre contemporáneo? En este trabajo, presentado en el IVº Congreso de la Asociación Mundial de Psicoanálisis, Jorge Forbes ofrece pautas para el tratamiento clínico actual.

Palabras clave: Principios psicoanalíticos; globalización; tendencias psicoanalíticas contemporáneas.

*“The traveler, taken unawares by the night,
may sing out loud in the darkness to deny his own fears;
but despite all that, he can scarcely see the way ahead.”*

I – Standards and principles

Lacanian practice has no standards, but it has principles. This is what states the central theme of this 4th Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis.

There is controversy as concerns what a principle should be. I will restrict myself to the prevailing notion: a principle is something that breeds, something that precedes, the head that comes first. Etymologically, the Latin route is the same as caput, head.

Standard, on the other hand, is the Anglo-Saxon equivalent to the Portuguese word “padrão” [pattern]; it designates what we learn from experience.

The principle precedes experience, whereas the standard results from it.

In fact, some standards, after being consecrated, may end up having the role of principles, since they precede and serve as orientation for new experiences.

II – The new man. Change. Consequence.

I start from the theme of the Congress to develop the subject of my own lecture: "Psychoanalysis of the Compassless Man – Reactions to the Future and their Treatment."

By choosing this title, I want to draw attention to a current transformation of the social bonding that requires a change in the form of incidence of the analytical act.

Such change can only be conceived once we differentiate between principles and standards. Without this distinction, psychoanalysis would risk to cease existing, encased by standards unable to treat new forms of bonding.

I use the expression "compassless man" to refer to the inhabitant of a new time: globalization, post-modernity – we still lack a term sufficiently good to name it, and this is a matter of constant discussion – a new time, I said, different from the previous time because it is not primarily "father-oriented".

The social bonding in the industrial era, in modern times, was clearly oriented by a vertical axis. People would gather "in the name of", "around [something]". The family, the company, the nation were all triangular or pyramidal structures, with an ideal and agglutinating apex.

In the family, we had the fatherly authority; in the company, the career plan went all the way from office-boy to director; on the nation level, there was patriotism.

The father – who held the keys to reliable wisdom and gave direction - occupied, together with his representatives, the apex of the pyramid. We must remember, if it is still necessary to reinforce this idea, that, when we did not know something, we were advised to search into a dictionary, which was called, guess what...the "father of dummies".

Well then, in the era of globalization, established knowledge, everything we know since the Illuminists, became a generic, the same way as white fridges and stoves are generics: they all have the same value. To press on a button, to click, to click on the mouse, this is all that is required to gain access to knowledge.

The man became compassless, without the north of his father's hand, of this father who, by having the wisdom, could tell him, for sure, which way to go.

Freud had the genius to propose a structure capable of scrutinizing the human experience in that father-oriented world: the oedipal complex. It is a Freudian standard, not a principle.

During almost a hundred years, much of our understanding of human relationships came through this structure; in such way that many were led to think that Oedipus was a part of man, and that, outside it, there was nothing but psychosis.

It was Jacques Lacan who gave the alert sign to the intensity of a form of psychoanalysis that goes beyond Oedipus. A psychoanalysis capable of sheltering a man whose problem does not stem anymore from his ties to the past, which prevent him from reaching his intended objective and which gave Freud the reason to call psychoanalysis the "memory healing". A form of Psychoanalysis for the man who does not know what to do, or what to choose, today, from the various possible futures: a man without a father, without a north, without a compass.

III – Complaint, Freedom, Anguish

In the past, people complained about not being able to reach the objectives they longed for. Nowadays, almost the other way round, people complain – or they do not even complain yet, but they get anxious – about the multiple possibilities offered to them.

In face of the responsibility to want what he desires, man recoils. He reacts against the uncertain future, and prefers past certainties. The post-modern times, which have come to be so much celebrated, turned from a dream of hope into a

nightmare of anguish. Post-modernity, according to Gilles Lipovetsky, was a short lived period, quickly replaced by the current hypermodernity, which he conceptualizes.

Hypermodernity means an unlimited modernity, extensive to all domains of the human experience, and anchored on three factors: technology, individuality and economy.

Are we destined to be hypermodern beings, following passively the crazy, if not funny, localizationist attempts to find the id in the midbrain, a foretoken of the next medicine, maybe the "id-iot"?

IV – Trends: shall we be hypermodern?

I do not believe this fate, for two reasons: first, because although they are still just a few, we can see that various researchers are studying and fostering new conceptualizations of this social bonding that requires, to be understood, a new topology, the borromean topology, according to Jacques Lacan.

In addition to the group we represent, in Psychoanalysis, I could mention some other people, such as the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky, already named; the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman; the North American architect Ron Pompei; in Brazil, the Law experts Tercio Sampaio Ferraz Junior and Miguel Reale Junior. In brief, I mention some names just to remind each of you of others, from several different areas. All of them, one might say, are "professionals of the incompleteness" who, by chance or on purpose, going beyond the specific boundaries of their disciplines, in a true movement towards "despele refer to J.-A. Miller's lessons of January 2005, in which he presents Lacan's seminar "Joyce le sinthome". cialization", contribute with one another, accomplishing what Freud proclaimed, in his Question of Lay Analysis, namely: the understanding, by the patient, of the foundations of the treatment he undergoes.

The second reason is the firm conviction that the human desirous and incomplete essence of wisdom – i.e., unconscious – is a principle that will resist to all sorts of totalitarian "Bushadas".²

V – Anguish – a parameter.

Anguish is the subject of the moment. "To feel how much anguish the subject can bear puts you – analysts – in check the whole time", said Lacan at the opening of his most recent Seminar organized by Jacques-Alain Miller. Anguish is a major parameter of the treatment direction.

The anguish of the compassless man has been badly treated and accommodated into neo-religiosities and neo-scientificisms. Together with the neo-religiosities I would put the neo-academicists, who consecrate and standardize concepts, in a renewed market of titles, which grants them a respectable cassock to soothe the assumed and feared amorality resulting from the father's fall.

As concerns neo-scientists, empiricists-localizationists, they do not fear the ridicule, since they have as accomplice the eagerness for answers – no matter how absurd they might be – from people to whom they sell the idea that for everything in life there is a remedy.

If he wants to keep alive the principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the psychoanalyst of the compassless man will have to change his tune, adopt new standards.

I forward some examples:

If yesterday we analyzed to better understand, to go deeper, today the treatment is directed towards the limits of knowledge: there is the need for a bet, as time precipitates itself;

If yesterday we performed analysis to obtain a warranted action, free from fantasized influences, today there is no action warranted by a fair knowledge, every action is risky and includes the subject's responsibility;

If yesterday psychoanalysis would talk about psychic pain, which led it to be sponsored by psychologists who reduced it to one of the disciplines in their curriculum, today we must separate it from the field of mental health, a point which has been stressed by Jacques-Alain Miller;

If yesterday we wanted a true certainty, today, in the second clinics of Jacques Lacan, we distinguish between subjective certainty and logical truth. We want a convinced certainty;

If yesterday we limited our praxis to the Cartesian space of our private office, today psychoanalysis will happen wherever there is a psychoanalyst, and he is necessary in the most different places where the human experience takes place, far beyond healthcare institutions;

These trends face a lot of opposition, from empirical statistics to meta-analyses, from miracle remedies – someone proposed, recently, to add antidepressants, together with fluoride, to the water supply in São Paulo - to self-help books. So what? Nothing of that can discourage those who have benefited from an analytical practice and are able to treat anguish with a responsible inventive creation.

VI – Conclusion: stable principles, incomplete standards.

I am not so sure that we lack standards. Since principles go beyond statements, and it is difficult to assert them, maybe we should acknowledge that our statements are ultimately standards that function as principles. However, they are ad hoc standards, used in each analytical decision.

The same happens with legal principles, according to Tercio Sampaio Ferraz Junior: in a judicial decision, they find application as *topoi* or rhetorical commonplaces; standards.

The major difference between orthodox standards and ours lies in the attitude of the enunciator: in a complete or incomplete positioning.

In view of the stability of our principles, our clinical standards shall be light, contradictory, multiple, circumstantial: sensitive to the singularity of each moment when they are applied. The analyst “chooses” which to use, at each time, at each occasion. The analyst may want what he desires; he does not remain in the ineffable territory of the clinical event.

I conclude, quoting Freud, by saying that what we are debating here, analytical principles, is nothing new. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms & Anxiety*³, in 1926, Sigmund Freud advised: “Let us humbly accept the contempt with which they look at us, haughty, from the standpoint of their superior needs. But since we, ourselves, cannot give up, either, our narcissist pride, we will reassure ourselves at the thought that such “Handbooks for Life” will soon be obsolete, that it is precisely our myopic, stingy and insignificant work that forces them to appear in new editions, and that even the most update of them are nothing but attempts to find a surrogate to the old, useful and all-sufficient Church catechism. Only a patient and perseverant research, in which everything is subordinated to the single requirement of certainty, will be able to produce a gradual transformation. The traveler, taken unawares by the night, may sing out loud in the darkness to deny his own fears; but despite all that, he can scarcely see the way ahead.”⁴

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² In Portuguese, the word *Bushada*, written in reference to George W. Bush, has the additional effect of sounding like the name of a typical dish, appreciated by very few people, and considered by most to be disgusting.

³ Title of S. Freud's book in English editions where the German word *Angst* was translated as *anxiety*. In this text, the author has chosen the term *anguish*, [*angústia*, in Portuguese] considered to be more appropriate.

⁴ Quoted in Portuguese – free translation into English.

