

THE SYMPTOMS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS*



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With this title we are asking ourselves about the way the unconscious manifests itself, about its signs. But before the how, there is the question of its locus; where is it attested?

Where?

The unconscious was invented by Freud through a specific practice developed in the "*dispositif*"¹ of free association/interpretation that he inaugurated, which promotes what Lacan named a discourse, a new social link. Hence the thesis: the unconscious only "ex-sists" in relation to a discourse. Yet it is based on the fact that man has always been one who speaks [*un parlant*], even if the proof of his "ex-timate" existence dates, historically, back to Freud.

Here enters the question concerning both the future of psychoanalysis and the dialogue of the deaf, still present and current, between the psychoanalyst and everyone else, whether they are well-meaning or not. The problem is eminently political and, as Lacan says, is one of knowing how the desire of the psychoanalyst can be situated in the context of his time². Will he be able to make it heard that the unconscious that is recognisable in his own discourse is not any less attestable in politics?

The unconscious in analytic discourse

I. "The formations of the unconscious"

All one has to do is read Freud: his three major works from the early 1900s detail the first signs of them: dream, lapsus, and bungled action, not forgetting their affinities with the witticism. It is based on these formations of the unconscious, as Lacan named them, that analytic discourse, via the practice of free association, can evaluate "the unconscious [...] as knowledge"³, a knowledge that works, that works all by itself in the one who speaks [*le parlant*], without his consent. This is the occasion for us then to come back to all of these language formations and to *lalangue*, which makes them possible. Of what real are they the vectors ?

* Argument from November 2, 2017, on the theme of the 2018 Journées nationales of the SPFLF in Paris, "The symptoms of the unconscious".

¹ «Translator's note: Although free association is commonly spoken of as a "method" in English, the word "device" comes closer to what the French term *dispositif* connotes.

² J. Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School", trans. R. Grigg, *Analysis* 6, 1995, p. 12.

³ J. Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss, A. Michelson, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, p. 14

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43

⁵ J. Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967", *op. cit.*, p. 4.

II. The symptoms

However, before the *talking cure*, something else had presented itself to Freud: the symptoms of neurosis, a carving up of the hysterical body, a cutting of obsessional thought, the former objecting to anatomy, the latter to the ends of the bodily function.

For Freud, all of them, from the outset, are formations that he qualifies as sexual. They imply bodily jouissances and are not any less formations of the language-unconscious than are the aforementioned ones, since they are decipherable.

We must then question, once again, how the unconscious that Lacan re-baptised with the name *parlêtre* has its locus in the body, as much as it does in what is called the psyche, both that of formand that of real jouissance.

III. The supposed of the unconscious

Attested in analytic discourse, the unconscious supposes transference, namely, this relation to the subject-supposed-to-know which is a symptomatic manifestation of the unconscious"⁴, as Lacan says, not forgetting of course, but it is structurally secondary, its affective consequences—"hainamoration".

Transference is at the beginning of each analysis and by "the grace of the [...] psychoanalysand"⁵, who, being disturbed in his sleep, his speech, his actions, his plans, and his body, by the symptoms of his unconscious, can make a question of them, namely in appealing to supposed knowledge.

He can, but since the possible is, by definition, that which may not take place, psychoanalysts must take it up, which brings us back to the initial political question.

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