

Ethics, Transmission and Teaching in psychoanalytical practice

Elsa Labos

"Any return to Freud that gives substance to a teaching worthy of that name will only come about through the path by which the most hidden truth manifests itself in cultural revolution. This path is the sole formation that we can attempt to transmit to those who follow us: It is called a style."

J. Lacan

To point out these issues -enunciated by Lacan- implies the commitment of the psychoanalytical institutions to interrogate the particular ways or paths that follows the transmission of the doctrine, namely related to the effects that such transmission produces on the participants who adhere to it.

Such is reason that leads me to briefly outline the conditions which make the "transmission of the psychoanalytical teaching" possible.

The bradawl called "style", which the Ancients used to write with on polished boards, makes reference to the eventuality of a writing founded on the transmission of a teaching. The idea of style -whose definition lies in the writing of the unconscious-, indicates the very matter of the psychoanalytical field; its pertinence was introduced by Lacan. Style is not conceived in the register of the expression, in this sense, it neither expresses nor reveals to man anything; it is not a sign of him. Lacan says: *"The style is the man himself [Buffon quotes], people repeat without seeing any harm in it, and also without worrying about the fact that man is no longer so sure a reference point –writes indeed Lacan- Style is man, and we should adhere to the formula, by only extending it: It is man, though... the one man we address".*¹

That is to say, the idea of style has its origin in the primitive relationship between the subject and the Other, thus "transmission" operates as effect of truth. Thus, the problematic of the effects created in the structure of the subject to whom such transmission is addressed, is considered under these terms.

Thereby, what marks the "psychoanalyst's style" is pure effect of the unconscious; and it is in this sense, that is it directly involved in what occurs both in the psychoanalytic discourse and in the singularity with what teaching is practised.

¹ E.Roudinesco, M, Plon, *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse*.

N.de.T: Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 9.

Concisely, transmission operates in the relationship between the subject and the Other, according to the effects produced in the combinatory movement of the articulation of the "knowledge of the unconscious".

It is also upon this interweaving of effects that social bond among analysts is built and that -as it is known- is not without discomfort.

From another perspective, the position of the teacher, such as Lacan would describe it in his Seminar, *Anxiety*, brings into account the "teacher's desire", insofar as the existence of such desire constitutes the evidence of a teaching.

We know that the assumption of this position is not without consequences since the singularity of the "teacher's discourse" plays a decisive role in the effects produced on the listener.

On the other hand, inasmuch as the institutions constitute a space in which the passage from the individual to the groupal finds its expression, a displacement of the called "work of the transference" in the cure, to what is understood as "transference of work", does necessarily take place in the institution.

In this sense, should this occur, there will be as well a displacement from the analyst's place to the teacher's place, and it is in this same sense that, -as a working condition- a transformation of the "supposed knowledge" into the "exposed knowledge" will take place.

Accordingly, the "transmission of a teaching", will find its definition "in the eventuality" of the upsurge of a significant event, as a result of both experience and analytical practice.

Experience which, such as it was conceived first by Freud and later on by Lacan, founds the specific psychoanalytical field under the axis of the phenomenon of "transference", phenomenon upon which the field that will enable the discourse between the subject and the Other is installed.

Thereby situated, the transferential field constitutes the basic element around which the displacement -as I have mentioned before- towards the called "transference of work" will be generated. Such fact puts into evidence the narrow relationship that exists between analytical transference and transference of work. Both are framed within the possibility of "teaching" in an institution that pretends to be psychoanalytical.

On the other hand, the called "presence of the analyst" implies, within the institutional frame, the structural element which allows the establishment of the "transference of work", such being the component which makes groupal bonds possible.

It involves a notion that is indissolubly related to the structure of transference and to what J. Lacan -in his writing '*Position of the unconscious*'- enounces as the support of institutional work. Such Lacannian thesis asserts that transmission from one subject to another is -in fact- what psychoanalysis teaches.

In this context, the “presence of the analyst” is nothing but the explicitation of the “affirmation of the existence of the unconscious” as such. This assertion is installed at the edge of transference upon which an analytical institution is founded.

Such position is the one that may, at the very best, symbolically attain the real, thereby allowing the possibility of bringing into play the truth within the error, and with it, opposing any attempt of synthesis, closure or conclusion. It thus leaves open the possible senses that the writing will confer to what is enounced.

The object at stake in transmission is by no means exchangeable; but rather constitutes the horizon around which phantoms are structured.

On the other hand, being that the unconscious owes its origin to a lost object, never truly found, that is to say, just desired, as it is the effect of the articulated chain in which the pleasure principle is founded, the possibility of the transmission of teaching as such, can only be grounded in the creativity of the signifier.

The fact that there is no possible conclusion implies that what is at stake in the teaching process leads to call into question the belief in a knowledge that fulfills the structural void, allowing, for the same reason, that whoever assumes the position of the listener is able to count with the possibility of posing his own questions upon which he may or may not produce any answers.

When knowledge is supposed to be absolute, when ignorance, as one of the passions, does not occupy a place within the structure, the object becomes fulfilling, exchangeable, utilitarian. It is a moment of turning point of knowledge, a moment in which what Lacan names “Utilitarian Morale”, is produced. Indeed, such morale is constituted by the degradation of the Freudian’s lost object into a degraded object, degraded insofar as it is an object provided of transferable value in the market of objects.

The institutions founded on such criteria, become corporations or massifications whose main aim lies in the utilitarian value of the object. The so called “prestige” is the social expression of such degradation.

Prestige and identification, both terms define the value attributed to the object that turns around a “negotiable knowledge”. Such prestige is originally mediated by way of rivalry, by the exacerbation of the relationship with the rival, by the relationship of the power of the merchantized value which confers a false distinction, since it is placed in a relationship based on alienation, whereby the subject is captured first as the ego in the rival. Knowledge, in this case, degrades into a mercantile value and such, in turn, into a value of power.

Such phenomenon of degradation of the object is what leads the institutions astray. The transformation produced in the value of the object diverts the axis which supports and orientates its practice in the ethical direction of psychoanalysis.

Ethics grounded on the emergence of the unconscious desire as such, that is to say, an ethics which responds to the very structure of the unconscious.

In such sense, the "transference to a supposed knowledge" is the expression of such structure. Knowledge is "presupposed" in the analyst's function, place where the phenomenons of transference lay. In the institutional direction, the constitution of the "transference of work", as a sublimatory expression proper of its constituent members, aims to offer the possibilities of what is called "training".

Indeed, we could be able to affirm that such called "transference of work" is the structural operator which enables groupal transmission within the institutions; considering in such phenomenon, castration as the logical operator of such procedure.

In countless occasions, when the value of the object understood as "value-power" rules in the institutional discourse, transmission will not take place. This modality of discourse will only be based on a category of knowledge which presupposes the identity of a psychological subject, read from the return of the subject of knowledge. Teaching, in this case, is disturbed in such a way that it will only provide, at the very best, mere information. The isolation of this phenomenon, frequently noticed in the psychoanalytical institutions, must therefore be considered as symptomatic.

The concept of "transference of institutional work" -understood as the structural operation which founds the institution- is the element upon which falls on the responsibility of centering the axis of the institutional practice.

Its exercise offers the possibility of laying the foundations of a definition based on a "taking a stand", in regard of what concerns the "political-institutional", of what is centered in everything related to the way in which discomfort is distributed and elaborated in each moment of institutional transition.

Different from what it is understood by "politics", insofar as the latter tends to provide a function, generally reactive, which supports revendication processes whose function consists in supporting, at all costs, by means of action, ideological coherence. Or rather, what we could call an effect of "politicization of praxis" which sustains psychoanalysis. Such practice implies the decline towards a certain economical dimension, present in terms of a spare piece.

Finally, the ethical orientation will depend on the position that each of the members may assume concerning the "reading and interpretation" of the psychoanalytical work. We must take into account that the choice that this orientation implies will have incidence in the institutional economy, since it is a factor upon which the force of power falls on. Such power will unavoidably attempt to distort any attempt to bond, symbolically, the institutional symptomatic expression.

"The real", in terms of structural impossibility, leads to support discomfort due to the impossibility of achieving a "singular, total and definitive" comprehension of the conflict that nowadays gravitates on every psychoanalytical institution.

Thus, it becomes necessary to make the re-evaluation that implies the ethical problematic on which the instituted discourse is founded.

From this approach, the subject matter of transmission is necessarily bound to the parameters which are proper of the analytical experience that must fundamentally be present as a necessary condition in the institutionalization of the psychoanalytical theory.

Starting point from which the 'training' of the analyst, the consequences of an end of analysis, the teaching, the problem of knowledge and transference and, together with this, the singularity of the transmission of psychoanalysis within the frame of the University, must be questioned.

These considerations concern the institutionalization of a dispositif that allows to carry out the teaching in the core of a psychoanalytical practice.

The pair teaching-transmission converge in the mobility of the word and therefore, in the institutional transference. From this perspective, we consider the "transference of work" as the possibility of producing a displacement of the "transference in the cure" towards a personal elaboration of the theoretical and the practical material. Point in which, on the other hand, Freud would place self-analysis.

We point out, further, that such event takes place when teaching, addressing towards what is not known, borders on ignorance. In this lies the ground on which teaching as transmission is anchored. In other words: the expression of the effects of significant creativity. Such is the reason that attests that transmission in psychoanalysis is founded on a practice led towards what, in the experience, is "the bone of reality".

Email: elsalabos@ciudad.com.ar

Traducción: Laura Sujoluzky