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Notes on Sergio Benvenuto's Addendum to "Translating Angst"

I would like to offer a few notes in response to Benvenuto's welcome comments in his addendum to my article "Translating *Angst*: Inhibitions and Symptoms in Anglo-American Psychoanalysis".

I begin with Benvenuto's sage observation that "by speaking their own membership's vernacular insignia, many have taken the easy route for not thinking any more. Jargon substitutes thought". I quite agree! That is precisely my reason for writing the article. I think it worthwhile to note that my singling out of Anglo-American psychoanalytic jargon, and the consequent lack of thinking that is produced by said vernacular, is due in large part to the fact that I operate from two texts, North American and Latin American. My experience of reading psychoanalytic works in Spanish is exceedingly different than my experience reading the same works in English. Psychoanalysis, as articulated in Spanish, is its own discourse, distinct from philosophy, psychotherapy and especially psychiatry. This distinction is often not present in English-language psychoanalysis, although it very well could be. I've often wondered about the whys and wherefores of this linguistic difference, and my article is a way of explaining this discrepancy.

Benvenuto's comments provide us with some important illuminations regarding this linguistic and cultural variance. He notes that "rather smart German-speaking Jews adapted psychoanalysis to American ways of thinking". Again, I agree and my argument stems from that very idea. In essence, the idea I am putting forth is that this adaption Benvenuto speaks of undermined the very heart of the Freudian oeuvre and its deeply subversive character. Indeed it was a rather narrow (*angustus*) and psychiatrically-carved passage through which these smart German-speaking Jews imported the psychoanalysis of Mitteleuropa to North America. Freud's apocryphal words to Jung (per Lacan) on coming to the U.S. for his lectures at Clark University, "Little do they know we are bringing the plague" reverberate in my ears. What Freud did not and could not know at the time was that a denaturing or stripping of his oeuvre would be the condition imposed as a sort of excise tax on any psychoanalytic importation to North American shores; a negated, medicalized and tamed understanding of psychoanalysis was the result, one which would, ironically enough, come to plague the actual practice of Anglo-American psychoanalysis itself.

My question is why, upon arriving in the U.S., did these Mitteleuropa analysts decide to nurture and bolster this denatured and psychiatrized version of psychoanalysis that one finds in English translations of Freud? Why this collusion between de-Gothicized English translations of Freud and exiled Mitteleuropa analysts? It would seem that fleeing Nazi persecution and war, they wanted to secure a place for themselves in the U.S., for as much as they were Jewish, they were also German and vulnerable to the anti-Germanic sentiment so widespread at the time. But to do so meant going through the pinhole of Anglo-American psychiatry, which they willingly did at the expense of psychoanalysis itself. As Benvenuto points out, they made a strategic choice, "to show that psychoanalysis was a science, a special and respectable branch of psychology". But in so doing, they dug psychoanalysis' grave. Their adaption, their strategic choice meant that Anglo-American psychoanalysis lost its own discourse and was subsumed by the discourse of science, in this case psychiatry. Which might help explain the current state of psychoanalysis in the U.S. Only in the last twenty-five years or

so, after its divorce from psychiatry does Anglo-American psychoanalysis begin to offer much beyond what psychiatry already did and does. We will see whether this late flowering will come to embody the power (as a practice) and enigmatic appeal that psychoanalysis demonstrates elsewhere, and whether a space can be opened up for a Lacanian psychoanalysis in English.

Going further, Benvenuto's remarks regarding English (or any language for that matter) serving as an international communication tool are important and merit further consideration. Let us not forget that psychoanalysis, via translations in English and the steady labors of transplanted Mitteleuropa analysts, was imported to the U.S. as the North American empire was beginning its ascendancy in earnest; an ascendancy that found an important corollary in the worldwide export of a peculiarly North American version of English, as evidenced by none other than Frank Laubach himself, the author of *The Game with Minutes* (1956). For in addition to his role as an American Evangelical Christian missionary, Laubach was also deeply involved in the creation of literacy programs around the world; programs which bore the indelible mark of imperial yearning writ in American English, not British.

And here, if the kind reader were to allow me a further bit of speculative fun, we might finally have another clue as to why Laubach's text was included prior to Bunker's translation of Freud's *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst* in the Martino Publishing edition of *The Problem of Anxiety* (1936). The Bunker translation is a North American rendition, executed by an American, and its sensibility is decidedly not British or even remotely German. As such the Bunker translation speaks something of that time and place (1936), wherein the U.S. was steadily growing in power and struggling to steer clear of conflicts in both Europe and Asia, as evidenced by legislative measures such as The Neutrality Acts. In short, the U.S. was endeavoring to establish and extend its own sphere of influence free from the European fetters that had so often hindered it before. *The Problem of Anxiety* is a product of that imperial drive. It makes sense, then, to have Laubach's text as the frontispiece to Bunker's translation for two distinct reasons beyond those I proposed in my original article.

One, Laubach's piece marks Bunker's translation as something truly North American, and not European or even British. Let us remind ourselves that Bunker's translation came out in the same year as Strachey's, and that Freud knew and sanctioned both. And two, Laubach's piece, tied as it was to his imperial ambitions manifested in the form of worldwide literacy programs, elevates Bunker's translation to the level of American English qua International communication tool and signals the eclipse of the British Empire and its own patois. Anglo-American psychoanalysis was jockeying for position in this greater imperial milieu, and as such it carries many of the latter's attributes. This latter-day conjoining of these two texts, Laubach's and Bunker's, says something about both the present and that past. It is an *après-coup* of sorts, whereby an act in the now, re-orders and re-inscribes our experience or memory of what came before. In the U.S. of the 1930's, the inter-war years for North America, there was no room for Freud's *Angst*, there was only room for anxiety, particularly anxiety for what was to come, which we know is only really a fear of what came before but was not and has not yet been spoken.

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