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# State of Psychoanalysis Worldwide Introduction to Estates General of Psychoanalysis

## *Summary*

*On the occasion of the meeting of the Estates General, it is appropriate to emphasize that psychoanalysis puts into question the paternal function, and is thereby incompatible with all forms of sovereignty. Psychoanalysis opposes state terror and discrimination: in the face of the death drive, it mourns the loss of mastery and acknowledges guilt. The analysis of the solitary, uprooted subject that Freud inaugurated has been transmitted through discipleship and filiation, and while it has succeeded largely in Western, urban environments, it has spread throughout the world, proliferating in many Schools and diverse institutional settings, without being dominated by any single organization or hegemonic thought system. A contemporary renewal of the practice of psychoanalysis might take into account new forms of parenting and family relations, reconsider the treatment of homosexuality and the definition of perversion, and confront demands for diagnosis and therapy in changing social systems, while remaining open as a critical instrument.*

Psychoanalysis was invented by a Jew of Haskala, in the heart of a Mitteleuropa still laboring under the ancient feudal system to which the Revolution of 1789 had put an end the previous century. Psychoanalysis was intended to re-evaluate symbolically a paternal function whose deconstruction it had also contributed. By means of its nocturnal vision of mankind submerged by the tragedy of Oedipus, it presented the world with a fascinating Utopia, a new science of the unconscious. In other words, Freud and his early disciples, the pioneers of the Wednesday Psychological Society[1], attempted to change Man, not by means of social revolution, but through an awakening of consciousness: a consciousness able to admit that its freedom could be bound to the fate of dreams, sex and desire, to the destiny of a failing reason.

In forty-one countries, psychoanalysis has had an impact since the early twentieth century; however, in only thirty-two of these has it succeeded in sometimes becoming a powerful institutional movement, at times becoming an establishment limited to a particular group or a number of individuals. It should not surprise us that it has spread, with few exceptions (for example Japan and India), in the areas of Western civilization (Europe, North and South America, Australia, Israel, Lebanon), with considerable variables depending on the country.

Born in the wake of industrialization, weakening religious conviction, and the decline of traditional patriarchy—that is, the lowering of autocratic, theocratic and monarchic powers, and therefore the advent of democracy and the emancipation of women—it dispensed its teachings, founded its associations and created its training institutes in large cities whose inhabitants are for the most part severed from their roots, withdrawn into a diminished family nucleus and plunged into anonymity and cosmopolitanism. Favorable to the exploration of intimate depths, psychoanalysis is nourished by a conception of the subjectivity which presupposes a solitude of man confronted with himself in renouncing all forms of tribal ascendancy.

The device of the couch in this sense is no more than the clinical translation of that detachment: a private discussion with oneself before an otherness reduced to its most simple expression. As for transference, the main concept established by Freud, it is no more than the transposition, at an intersubjective level, of an ascendancy which has become undone in reality, the power of which the subject reconstructed in his imagination for the purpose of the therapy.

Considering that these Estates General make reference to those of 1789 and that in the program's illustration the king's throne has been eliminated, in this way pointing at the absence of monarchic sovereignty in the interests of that of people—people like the psychoanalysts who gathered together today to speak of the future of psychoanalysis—I cannot resist asking whether or not that discipline is regicidal, whether the theory it puts into practice in order to comprehend the origin of societies assumes or not the existence of an original murder.

Freud preferred the English type of constitutional monarchy to the republican sovereignty of Year II established by the French *Convention* (June 24, 1793): the first in his opinion incarnated a culture of the Ego[2], a puritan Ego capable of mastering its passions, a moral rectitude, an ethic of constraint. The other, on the contrary, represented the territory of the hither, the aesthetic of disorder, of the libido and the driven masses—in other words, a bursting in of forces which, although uncontrollable, were not lacking seduction. This is a distinction between the masculine, with admiration for Cromwell, on the one hand, and the feminine, with fascination for Charcot and the demonstrations at the Salpêtrière Hospital, on the other.

Beyond this English/French bipolarity, and the admission of the sexual difference in his cultural choices, Freud constantly stresses, from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses*[3], that the murder of the father was always necessary for the edification of any human society. However, once that act was accomplished, society did not abandon murderous anarchy unless that act was followed by a sanction and a reconciliation with the image of the father. In other words, Freud believed in the necessity of murder and the necessity of its prohibition, and at the same time in the necessity of the act and in the recognition of guilt sanctioned by the law. He believed that all human society is affected by the death drive and that that drive cannot be eliminated. However, he also asserted that any civilized society is based on the supposition of the existence of pardon, mourning, and redemption[4].

Can we consequently deduct that psychoanalysis is at the same time regicidal (based as it is on the Freudian thesis on the necessity of the act of murder) and hostile to all forms of inflicted death—torture or death penalty—since that act, although repeated in the history of revolutions, must be followed by punishment which tends to abolish the possibility of crime and therefore of capital punishment[5] In the same way, and to return to the question of what defines the conditions of the exercise of psychoanalysis in the world, we could say that it has no nationality, knows no frontiers, although its manner of establishment will inevitably bear the cultural traits of the country of adoption. It is therefore not essentially 'sovereignist', as it does not recognize the sacred nature of sovereignty—of the nation or its chief—although, historically, its modes of transmission have always been in support of the principle of filiation or "apostolic succession", as Michael Balint put it[6]. It is, in other words, a system of initiation into knowledge and practice from a master to his/her disciple through the didactic treatment. Nevertheless, because it does not acknowledge that holy sovereignty, psychoanalysis as a discipline assumes the uprooting of the subject when confronted with himself, a decentering of the subject, as Freud put it, an interior exile which implies three narcissistic humiliations: no longer being at the center of the universe, no longer being outside the animal world, no longer being master of one's own house[7].

One does then understand why psychoanalysis has become established in all the nations of the world subsequent to the psychiatric gesture called "Pinelian", after Philippe Pinel, in the 18th century and ratified by the French *Convention*, which gave form to the removal of madness from the world of demonic possession and religion[8]. One also understands why it has always been persecuted in countries where the civil state did not exist—and even more so by those political regimes which had suppressed the entire body of basic freedoms characterizing that civil state: first of all, the Nazi regime designated it as a "Jewish

science”, and as such it was victim of an extermination in spite of the spread of its concepts and its vocabulary; later, the Stalinist regime stigmatized it as a “bourgeois science” from 1949 on, even after twenty years had passed since it had disappeared from Soviet territory.

Michel Foucault emphasized rightly in 1976 that, in line with his rupture with the theories of heredity-degeneracy, Freud, as a reaction to the great wave of racism of his times, had given as a principle of sexuality “*La loi*—the law of alliance, of the forbidden consanguinity, of the Sovereign-Father”. Briefly, he had assembled around the question of desire all the ancient order of power, and he added: “psychoanalysis has been essentially—except for a few exceptions—in a practical and theoretical opposition with fascism”[9].

This Foucaultian judgement which I embrace is directed to the discipline itself. It is *as a discipline* that psychoanalysis is essentially incompatible with the dictatorial forms of fascism and with any of the forms of discrimination associated with it (racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, etc.), and it remains independent of certain representatives of psychoanalysis who, in particular historical circumstances, were not up to what this discipline demanded, to the point of collaborating with the regimes persecuting it[10].

It is good that psychoanalysis demonstrates that the destructive drive, murder, violence, hatred of oneself and the other, are the passionate invariants of the human condition which must be fought even when it indicates their infinite repetitiveness.

The double process of detachment from sovereignty and of extrication from a symbolic function of the father characterizes the very movement of psychoanalysis. The evolution of its institutions is testimony of it. For the early Freudians, psychoanalysis was the property of a founding father who referred to his own group as a “savage horde”. Those who left him assumed the role of dissidents and no longer belonged to the elected few.

The sovereign function of power was delegated by Freud to the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) in 1910. That was the only legitimate authority of psychoanalysis for nearly twenty years, which was directed not by the founder who continued to incarnate its creative force, but by his disciples of the first generation. That oligarchic type of power well suited a type of psychoanalysis which was still molded in the image of the theatrical production of a classical or Shakespearean sort: somewhere between the city of Thebes and the kingdom of Denmark.

With the scissions which would occur in 1927, the IPA gradually ceased being the vehicle of psychoanalytical sovereignty, remaining however—at least for a while—its only legitimate authority. Actually, those who seceded did not leave the community, in which the living Freud was still the main actor, but attempted to create other internal currents within that community. The scissions in the years between the World Wars was symptomatic of the impossibility for psychoanalysis to be entirely represented by a single government. That period of scissions reflected what was the very essence of Freudian invention: the decentralizing of the subject, the abolition of Mastery, the overthrow of monarchic authority.

This is why, after the Second World War, the IPA was no longer considered to be the only institution able to gather together the whole of psychoanalytical currents in one indivisible community. At that point, not only other associations which were attempting to coexist within a single empire, but groups which rejected the very principle of belonging to a single unity emerged. They made claims for both the disappeared father and his doctrine and an abandonment of his system of thought. These scissions signaled the transformation of psychoanalysis into a mass movement.

The present situation reflects the history which we have inherited. At this point, we know that no International can claim to be the incarnation of the absolute legitimacy of psychoanalysis. Consequently, all its institutions have felt the influence of the mourning for a sovereignty lost forever or engendered by the interminable mourning of the figure of a master to whom some would wish to be faithful at the risk of transforming that figure into a sham.

Therefore we have now no *single* International but *many* Internationals which group together some of the numerous associations—which are not homogenous or in perpetual mutation: presently at least four in addition to the IPA[11]. As regards associations, schools, societies, they number in the hundreds worldwide and represent around 30,000 listed practitioners, added to which are the independents, in constant progression, either belonging to no institution or more than one.

The success enjoyed by psychoanalysis was challenged by incessant attacks. During the first half of the 20th century, it was assimilated to a pan-sexualism and blamed for a lowering of civilized behavior. It was accused of corrupting morals and sowing discord within families. After 1960, when the Western world became more liberal in sexual matters, psychoanalysis was condemned for its alleged clinical ineffectuality, for its unscientific nature. After having been banished from the realm of right-thinking citizens for its rebel spirit, it was excluded from the academy of notables of science because of an attachment, considered conservative, to the traditions of Greek and Judeo-Christian humanism.

These criticisms are the sign of the force of psychoanalysis. However, although its institutions are not in danger, its teachings are widely threatened in the universities, in ways varying according to the country. It is in regression in Europe; it is limited to the Humanities Department (literature, philosophy, sociology, history) in the United States; while in Latin America—above all in Brazil—it has been strongly established in all the trainings of clinical psychologists (that is, in the Psychology Departments, which explains the vitality of the Latin American psychoanalytical movement which is today comparable to the ancient Diaspora coming from Mitteleuropa).

As an answer to the attacks, psychoanalysis could well adopt the famous phrase Mirabeau addressed—on May 5, 1789—to the Deputies of the Third Estate (soon to be called “*députés des communes*“): “*Il leur suffit de rester immobiles pour se rendre formidables à leurs ennemis*” (“It is enough for them to stay immobile to become formidable for their enemies”)[12].

Despite the fact that the death of psychoanalysis has been regularly announced, psychoanalysis has in fact spread out into many currents of thought—obviously some Freudian ones, but above all the numerous interpretations of that current. Certain schools bear the name of their founding masters (Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan), while others instead choose a label, a conceptual belonging. One could list five main principles (besides classic Freudianism), divided in the various geographical areas I mentioned above: Ego Psychology, Self Psychology, Kleinism, Existential analysis, AnnaFreudism, Lacanism, each is in turn divided into various branches. The expansion is so vast that one might ask if there still exists a psychoanalytical community and whether the practitioners of the unconscious around the world still wish to communicate in a transversal way, beyond their respective schools.

The 19th century was the century of psychiatry, and the 20th was the century of psychoanalysis. What is by now referred to as the crisis of psychoanalysis is no more than a crisis linked to the definition of its specific nature in the world, in the 21st century where already now one is a witness to a great multiplication of psychotherapies: a thousand are presently accounted. Their success is due in part to the fact that psychiatric knowledge is bogged down in the cognitivist behaviorist classifications which reduce man to a sum of syndromes, as demonstrated by the interminable, so-called “diagnostic” debates which have stormed for the past twenty years regarding the DSM (*Statistical and Diagnostic Manual of Mental Illness*, adopted by the World Health Organization)[13]. However, that success is also the consequence of a transformation of Western society—the cult of happiness, the quest for health, the interest in the body and the privileges accorded to the achievements of a narcissistic individual. In other words, the theme of “personal development” has in the Western world—notably in the middle classes—substituted political or social commitment, so calling into question a subjectivity which is at the same time subversive and universalizing.

Adapted to each case, each group, each individual, and therefore adopted by the middle classes anxious about their well-being, these therapies were developed slowly, first in the United States beginning in

the 1960s, then about ten years ago in most Western countries. At the same time, as the world evolved towards a global economy with no other enemy, after the defeat of Communism in 1989, the fantasy raised by the Self became sovereign in its own home and projected its fantasies onto another which incarnated what is foreign to oneself, foreign to the homeland, to what is intimate, to the nation itself[14]. Unlike psychoanalysis, but on the same terrain in which it is practiced, these therapies lead to the belief that individual will is more powerful than the weight of the past, that it is far more determinant for the destiny of the subject than repression or the anchorage in an unconscious genealogy.

If psychoanalysis must by now define its identity rigorously, while perpetuating the strength of its concepts, it cannot do so by closing itself within a dogma or a fake unity. In other words, if it is to survive as a clinical practice, it cannot avoid taking into account the real state of psychic suffering, which is generally treated by psychotherapies, and which has followed the transformation of the Western family, a transformation which was partly brought about by psychoanalysis.

Starting from these remarks, the reflection in progress in these Estates General could result in some propositions regarding (among others) the future of a new psychoanalysis which we wish to create. I would summarize these propositions in the form of the following questions:

1 – How is the Treatment-Type to be considered—the armchair-couch model—in a world where the demand for efficacy goes hand in hand with a conscious will of the users themselves (patients and practitioners of psychiatry, medicine and psychotherapy) to avoid exploration of the unconscious?

2 – How is a clinical knowledge to be created which would escape the present classification of psychiatry and without abandoning the essence of Freudian definition? In the case of the treatment of madness in a world where each subject will have more and more access to his medical files, should the nosographic frame, already denounced by Michel Foucault, be maintained, even though is in danger today more than ever of being assimilated to a discriminatory judgement?

3 – Can homosexuality be still considered a perversion and can one continue, contrary to the evolution of Western societies, to exclude even in-a-non-officially way homosexuals from the profession, as it is the case in certain psychoanalytic associations? In the same train of thought, should there not be more reflection on the manner in which psychoanalysis should take into account the statute of the child and the new forms of family organization (co-parenthood, homo-parenthood, artificial insemination) which already exist and are disapproved of by a considerable number of practitioners?

4 – How should the future of psychoanalysis be considered, both in the various countries where it has not yet been rooted and in Europe where it is enjoying a new success, notably after the fall of the Communist regimes? Will the new psychoanalysis of the 21st century be exported to these countries, following a post-colonial or a globalizing model, in the manner of an interpreting machine, or instead will it succeed in becoming a critical instrument, critical at the same time of its own dogmas as well of those schools of thought which resist its expansion?

In conclusion, I should like to extend my heartfelt thanks to René Major, as it is thanks to his passion for psychoanalysis and his tolerant and democratic spirit that this magnificent event was made possible.

## Notes:

[1] *The Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, I, 1906-1908, edited by Herman Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1962); *Ibidem*, II, 1908-1910, edited by Herman Nunberg (New York:

International Universities Press, 1967); *Ibid.*, III, 1910-1911, edited by Herman Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1967); *Ibid.*, IV, 1912-1918, edited by Herman Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1975).

[2] See Carl Schorske, *Thinking with History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[3] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913), *SE*, XIII, pp. 1-158; *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays* (1939), *SE*, XXIII, pp. 1-137.

[4] See Jacques Derrida, “Le siècle du pardon”, interview with Michel Wieviorka, *Le Monde des débats*, December 1999.

[5] See on this subject Elisabeth Roudinesco, “Freud et le régicide. Eléments d’une réflexion”; it will be published on *Revue germanique internationale* in September 2000. And Myriam Revault d’Allones, *D’une mort à l’autre* (Paris: Payot, 1955).

[6] Michael Balint, *Primary Love and Psycho-Analytic Technique* (London: 1952).

[7] Sigmund Freud, *A Difficulty on the Path of Psycho-Analysis* (1916), *SE*, XVII, pp. 137-144.

[8] See Jacques Postel, *Genèse de la psychiatrie. Les premiers écrits de Philippe Pinel* (1981) (Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, 1998).

[9] Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 198.

[10] See René Major, *De l’élection. Freud face aux idéologies américaine, allemande et soviétique* (Paris: Aubier, 1986). Elisabeth Roudinesco and Michel Plon, *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

[11] See *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse*, op.cit.

[12] Albert Soboul, *Histoire de la révolution française*, vol. 1, *De la Bastille à la Gironde* (1962)(Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 148.

[13] See Stuart Kirk and Herb Kutchins, *The Selling of DSM: The Rhetoric of Science in Psychiatry* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992).

[14] See Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991).