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Sergio Benvenuto

## Relations of Psychoanalysis with Sciences

*Text read at Sorbonne, Paris, 11 July 2000, at the debate "Relationships of Psychoanalysis with Sciences, Biology and Law"*

I must stress that I am one of the few speakers here who is not speaking his mother tongue, since Italian was not admitted as one of the official languages. But perhaps, even in another sense, I will speak a non-admitted language, one not in tune with the prevailing mood at this Assembly. I fear that what I say will sound unpopular. Minorities are always unpopular.

I chose to speak in English as a way to remind you (or perhaps provoke you?) that English is now *the universal language of the scientific community*. A friend of mine, a scientist, told me that "you analysts are not scientific because you don't write or speak *exclusively* in English." It is true, psychoanalysis *resists* even linguistically Scientific Objectivity. This is also why, unlike scientific communities, analysts are not even a *community*. We have schools, institutions – Derrida said yesterday that we are a Civilization – but we are not a Community. We speak many psychoanalytic languages. I must confess: our *language* in Rome and Milan is *other* than the *language* of many here. And this daring and courageous initiative to call for an Estates General was, I guess, simply an attempt, a hope, to create not a new school, a new institution, but finally a *psychoanalytic community*. But is this possible?

First, let me recount an anecdote. A friend of mine is a successful Lacanian analyst who years ago fell into a deep depression. She tried many cures, including analysis, without any improvement. She quit her analytic practice completely. And after many "ideological" hesitations, she took lithium, and improved dramatically. She even was able to resume her analytic practice. Before coming here to Paris, I called her – because she is a very good example of a *concrete* relationship between psychoanalysis and science, in this case, pharmacology. I asked her her present view on psychomedicine, and was struck by her answer: "Psychoanalysis is my job, and I am proud of my job – but I am *grateful* to the psychiatrist who prescribed me medicine". The word *gratitude* is essential. And not only in Kleinian theory, where the analytic goal is to allow a person to feel Gratitude towards others.

I stress this capacity to feel grateful – to be able to give thanks – for something *other, a stranger*, because what has struck me in many papers in this section was precisely a culture far from gratitude. Of course, not all papers. For example, let me quote from "Facing up to the Embarrassment", by Amy Cohen and Francisco Varela, which in my opinion is heading in the right direction: it contradicts the common bias that psychoanalysis and neurosciences are *incompatible*. It shows that they can be at least compatible, in the sense of *having compassion* for each other. Compassion for their mutual embarrassment.

In fact, some papers in this section not only did not show a culture of gratitude, but rather a culture that Nietzsche would have called of *resentment*, of *grudge*. Derrida yesterday talked about *cahiers de doléances*: many analysts *complain*, *ils sont endeuillés de doléance*. Now why do they complain so much? And against what? Essentially against the triple powers which are more and more destined to rule our 21st century:

*Anglo-Americanization – Objective Sciences and/or  
Technosciences – Capitalist Liberalism*

Today everyone is talking about globalization, *mondialization* in French, but I prefer to speak about the sheer Anglo-Americanization of the world. I think that the real question of this conference should be “*How can psychoanalysis survive in a world increasingly dominated by anglo-americanization, sciences and liberalism?*” This is evident among the young, who have largely been converted to this *powerful trinity*. I think this is the real question. But I am afraid that many responses – too many for my taste – go in the direction of *grudge* and *rancour* against this trinity. And some clearly *identify* these three powers as part of a single bloc – a sole superpower: Anglo-American Scientific Capitalist Liberalism.

This grudge is generally justified by *these complainers* by denouncing some of the bad effects of the ruling Trinity, what in medicine are called *side effects*. Which is not without truth. After all, who can deny that although the technosciences have produced much enjoyment, they have also produced much sufferance. Modern science produced the Internet, which helped us enormously in communicating prior to this conference, but it also produced Hiroshima and Chernobyl. But I have a suspicion that this denouncement of the *evil effects* of Anglo-Americanization, science and liberalism – so dominant in these Estates General – hides, represses, something deeper: *our difficulty* in recognizing the *Trinity’s power to give us enjoyment*, both before and beyond sufferance. As in the case of lithium with my Lacanian friend, it is very hard to acknowledge the Trinity’s *power to give us jouissance*. We cannot be grateful for this enjoyment because the power to give us enjoyment humiliates us.

How many analysts are able, for example, to harbor *gratitude* towards democracy as an essential condition for their profession? I am speaking also to Argentinian analysts, who know very well how much the lack of democracy and liberal institutions can be a mortal threat to their practice, and even to their own lives. And I would go even further: is liberal democracy just an historical condition in order for psychoanalysis to thrive, or was, and is, psychoanalysis *a condition for a true democratic life*? When researchers study the efficacy and efficiency of psychoanalysis, they should consider this perspicuous hypothesis: that psychoanalysis is *both* an effect and a cause of democracy.

This is just like what happens in sexual relationships. We know how difficult a sexual life can become because it is very hard to acknowledge the fact that we need the *other* – other sex, other partner – in order to have full sexual enjoyment. We feel trapped by the Other’s power to give us enjoyment. The Power, the possibility, that the Other has over our pleasure is perhaps our worst narcissistic threat.

This is why the complainers complain that millions of people are *excluded* from this enjoyment given by the Trinity. But this complaint is a denied recognition that the Trinity has the power to give us *jouissance*. Because as Westerners, we all enjoy the privilege of the benefits of technoscience, liberalism and even globalization. In fact, here at the Sorbonne, we are enjoying a kind and gentle globalization.

Frankly speaking, I am worried by a certain tendency at this Assembly to oppose the Powerful Trinity with a nostalgic and Romantic return to pure Subjectivity. I do not believe that we can respond to the Trinity’s increasing power by simply appealing to a regressive and very humanistic spiritualism, today re-christened in linguistic, hermeneutical or even “Derridian” terms. In the debate here on Clinical Practice, I was struck by the stress on Transference, on Analysis as a Poetic Procedure, on music. I have noticed today a very strong push towards the full *aesthetization* of analysis.

Yesterday’s discussion centered around a classical topic: the possibility to psychoanalyze art and literature. But I think the more serious issue today is rather the opposite: the tendency to turn psychoanalysis into a form of art or literature. Not that I am criticizing this tendency: in Freud’s time, the model for grasping the truth was science, while today it is Art and Literature. And I am a writer myself.

I as well am convinced that analysis is neither a science nor a psychotherapy. But is not the complete embrace of an aesthetical mystics of pure subjectivity, basically a renouncement of Freud's challenge? Freud had such an effect on the past century because he bet on something very clear: that some subjective significance was the *real cause* of neurotic sufferance. Freud aimed to tell a realistic truth: that *guilt* is the *cause* of a lot of human sufferance (the Ancient Greeks had a single word, *aition*, to signify cause and guilt – and in a certain sense Freud said that “the cause-feelings are the cause of neurotic or psychotic sufferance”). Freud aimed not for poetry or music, but to show the real cause of sufferance.

As Derrida reminded us, Freud did not harbor any grudge against anglo-americanization, sciences and liberalism. It is true that he had contempt for Americans, but he admired England, where he went to die. He always believed that psychoanalysis was a *science*, an objective science of the subject. Certainly, this was his illusion. As Cohen and Varela correctly stated – using Bruno Latour's expression – the Freudian subject is neither an object nor a subject, it is a *quasi-object*, or a *quasi-subject*. Which can be added to what Simon Harel stated yesterday: that psychoanalysis is the daughter of a “*métis*”, a half-caste, a half-breed. Neither a science, nor an artistic hermeneutics.

I was struck when Roudinesco opened her speech by speaking about *regicide*, the murder of the King. Since then, I have continued to ask myself: but which *king* must we kill, in the end? For a while I worried that perhaps it was Major, because he called for this Estates General. But perhaps, in the end, will we kill psychoanalysis itself? Is this the unplanned suicide of psychoanalysis itself?

I do not know – nobody knows – if the century ruled by the Trinity of science, anglo-americanization, liberalism, will succeed in killing psychoanalysis. But psychoanalysis certainly has a chance of surviving, if it can give up what Derrida called its self immunization. Immunization against what? Against anglo-americanization, sciences and liberalism. Bearing a grudge or rancour is one way to deny that psychoanalysis needs globalization, scientific ideals and a liberal free society to enjoy life more, to make people enjoy their analytic experience. Psychoanalysis must renounce the arrogance of its autarchy, the conformist retreat into established languages and the assured Masters – Freud, Klein, Lacan, Bion and others. Psychoanalysis must recognize its debt to this modern world – whose product, and partially producer, it is – without whose lament, or doléances, it seems so difficult and painful to survive. The world wherein we live is our Other whom we must finally receive.

And I am especially *grateful* to René Major and Elisabeth Roudinesco for having given some space to my fringe contribution.