

The Contemporary Efficacy of the Analytic Act

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Selena is 15 years old and lives with her mother, María Selva, her twin brother, and another brother two years older. Their father passed away when they were young, and for the past eight years, their mother has been in a relationship with Vicente.

Until recently, Selena said she got along well with him. However, they recently had an argument. The reason was a phone charger that she took without permission, claiming it was hers, although it was among Vicente's personal belongings. He reproached her for taking something that was not hers without asking.

The argument escalated, and in a sudden impulse, Selena went out onto the balcony and told her mother she was going to jump. Her mother, without hiding her anger, told her to stop bothering her, made her come back inside, and asked her to write to her analyst to talk about the matter. Selena did so immediately; the analyst responded briefly, but indicated they would discuss it further in session. A few days later, the mother requested an interview for herself.

María Selva arrived at the session visibly upset with her daughter, stating that she often answers rudely, does not help with household chores, and treats everyone badly. She said that she had never argued with her partner before and that this episode left her feeling disoriented: she no longer recognized her daughter, did not know how to handle her, could not tolerate her anymore, and found everything easier with her sons, who were affectionate and obedient.

When Selena arrived at her session, she recounted the incident but offered a different version: she insisted that people were taking her things. She also said she was not afraid of her mother and assumed she could do whatever she wanted; however, deep down, she admitted that when she went out onto the balcony that day, she simply wanted to be hugged and to feel loved. Instead of receiving that hug, she encountered distance, an order to go to sleep, and the instruction to speak to her analyst. This filled her with even greater anger. Up to this point, the vignette.

We are witnessing an era of profound transformations in the ways of inhabiting, thinking, and constructing social bonds, which leads us to reconsider both our clinical practice and the function of the analyst.

However, reflecting on contemporary clinical practice also involves introducing the question of the analyst's desire. In this regard, I find it pertinent to revisit some passages from Seminar VIII: The Transference, where Lacan returns to Claudel's trilogy as a way of staging what he calls "the contemporary tragedy of desire." These works, in his view, anticipate how human desire is structured and how the variations of the castration complex are inscribed in modern subjectivity. From there, a fruitful path opens for thinking about transference and the place occupied by the analyst, in light of the decline of the paternal function.

For example, in *The Humiliation of the Father* from the aforementioned trilogy, Lacan points out—and here lies the paradox that interests him—that thanks to his castration, the father remains necessary as bearer of the Law, as the one who ensures the enforcement of what is established. It is no longer necessary to be the omnipotent father attributed by Freud to the Victorian Oedipal father, but rather to be the one who upholds the given word.

Returning to our vignette, Selena's challenge can be read as a demand addressed to an Other. It is not a whim, but the enactment of a desire. However, as we see in this instance, sometimes this can go unread, and in its place, something of punishment emerges.

In certain cases, we can observe how the authority of the father evaporates within a culture that promotes the relentless pursuit of limitless *jouissance*. A culture that pushes the subject to constantly seek more satisfaction, in an endless race that paradoxically leaves the subject submerged in perpetual discomfort. In my clinical practice with adolescents, this becomes particularly evident: symptoms arise that demonstrate a surplus of *jouissance*—self-harm, suicidal threats and ideation, inhibitions (today referred to as INCEL), compulsive gaming, hyperconnection to social networks, and substance use that acts as a supplement to endure the anguish of encountering the Other.

In Selena's session, the analyst points out that it is good not to fear responding to her mother or attempting to fulfill her own desires, but cautions that this entails consequences: not everything that is desired can be realized, and one must bear the gap between desire and its possible fulfillment. One such consequence could be her mother's reaction. Thus, it becomes a matter of thinking about what she does with what her mother said, and what her responsibility is regarding the

consequences of her words and actions. Although she was seeking a gesture of love, it may be difficult for that gesture to be recognized when requested in such a manner. Upon this intervention, Selena responds that she had not thought of it that way but says she does not want to continue talking and changes the subject.

From this, we can say that the analytic act has not changed in its fundamental structure: the analysand comes to analysis seeking relief from their malaise. Today, we frequently encounter analysands (or parents, educators, medical professionals, etc.) who burst forth with an imperative demand for a response—a tyrannical demand that tolerates neither delay nor absence.

Thus, the analyst does not remain solely in the position of the Subject Supposed to Know but can also become captured as someone expected to suture the lack—someone sought out to provide something, an answer, a solution. In this attempted displacement, the question of the analyst's desire and their act reopens: an act that can only be thought from that desire, but also from how, from there, an intervention is made to create a gap within the logic of immediacy that tends to dominate contemporary discourse.

Lacan warns us that “whatever the analyst does, the patient enjoys.” Every gesture—whether a silence, a sigh, or a glance at the clock—will be interpreted and will leave a remainder of jouissance.

Thus, how do we conceive today the position of the analyst, when the jouissance that inevitably traverses them within the transference no longer presents itself veiled, but often erupts with a logic of impunity, attempting to strip the analytic act of its ethical dimension?

To reach something new, the analyst wagers in their act, without anticipating, without offering guarantees. They are also a novelty bearer by upholding the ethics of their desire as an analyst. Therefore, it is about the analyst shifting positions according to the different logical times throughout the course of a treatment, promoting discursive shifts. This allows us to avoid sacralizing the analyst's place. The place of the analyst is exactly the inverse of proposing themselves as an object of identification. They continue to occupy the position of the semblance of object a, offering themselves as that void in the field of the Other that sets the subject's desire into motion, sustaining an enigma.

At the same time, it is essential to avoid feeding the deadly jouissance of the symptom, not confusing responsibility with punishment, as illustrated in the vignette, by striving not to leave the analysand in the position of simply receiving a mandate

that guilt-trips them. In this direction, the analyst knows how to wait, sustaining the word and restoring value to what currently appears devalued.

Thus, it is rather a matter of sanctioning in act something that opens the possibility of a question, whereby the subject may take responsibility for their jouissance, giving rise to another, non-symptomatic, version of it.

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