

FROM THE HELL WE FORM TOGETHER: IS THERE A POSSIBLE WAY OUT?¹

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It is not new in our area, Psychoanalysis', to focus on "the crisis in culture". Freud himself declared that, although psychoanalysis was born in the clinic, he wished to cast light on Culture, *Kultur*; and its discomfort: Freud wished psychoanalysis to be able to "read" culture in order to allow humanity to move forward.

Various are the fields, in particular literature and art in general, which reveal what we consider a real cultural "mutation" that can touch, produce effects and modify what we call "subject". However, it is necessary to raise a question: do cultural mutations, the crisis in culture, modify the "subject or the "subjectivity"?"

What we collect in the clinic, the so-called "new symptoms", results from a mutation of the subject or subjectivity? This question arises when we find that in Lacan's teaching, in the beginning, one thing was mixed with the other. Later, one concept separated from the other. They even excluded one another.³ But what we will consider here, without delving deeper, is the provocation Lacan poses (1998, p. 322) in 1953⁴, when he invites to abandon the analytical practice those "[...] who cannot reach the subjectivity of his time". The question remains, but not without taking into account, following Lacan, the fact that "[...] this subjectivity, in whatever field [time / epoch] it may appear, no matter if it is mathematical, political, religious or advertising, continues to drive the human movement "(LACAN, 1998, p. 284), and does not cease to suffer the effects of this "impulsion". Therefore, let us consider that the subject today is the one who bears the consequences, for example, of the mutation of the master's discourses, which originated the "capitalist discourse", in which the division of the subject appears as a "defect", a flaw to be completed with gadgets and commodities, or as a "disease" to be "cured" by medical discourse.

In our daily practice, we hear what we might call the "effects of subjective change" in the scene where Samuel Beckett presents Lucky's speech, which falls, faints, staging the bankruptcy of the objectification of modern/scientific discourse in the face of issues since "[...] o eu do homem moderno adquiriu sua forma [...] no impasse dialético da bela alma que não reconhece a própria razão de seu ser na desordem que ele denuncia

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3 "The term 'subjective' should be repelled simply because the subject can only appear after the link between meanings is established. A subject can only be the product of a significant articulation. The subject itself never dominates such articulation, ever, but it is properly determined by it.", LACAN, Jacques. *O Seminário, livro 18: de um discurso que não fosse semblante*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed., 2009, p. 18.

4 LACAN, Jacques. "Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis". In: *Writings*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed., 1998.

no mundo”⁵ (LACAN, 1998, p. 283). ‘the ego of modern man [...] has taken on its form in the dialectical impasse of the belle âme who does not recognise his very own raison d’être in the disorder that he denounces in the world’. Here, we recall Lacan’s precise words about what he called the “modern subject”, but what may already be a pronouncement of subjectivity devoid of the paradigms of Modernity, when he refers to the new mode of appearance of the subjective division:

In the "liberated" man of modern society, this shattering reveals, down to the depths of the being, his frightful fissure. It is the neurosis of self-punishment, with the hysterical-hypochondriac symptoms of its functional inhibitions, with the psychogenic forms of its de-realization of the other and of the world, with its social sequences of failure and crime. It is this moving victim, escaped from elsewhere, innocent, who breaks the exile that condemns modern man to the most frightening social galley, who we welcome when he comes to us: it is for this being of nothing that our daily task consists of reopening the path of his sense, in a discreet fraternity in relation to which we are always too unequal" (LACAN, 1998).

What happens, then, in the realm of culture, or in the depths of your most intimate experience as a subject, to the subjectivity it supports? The assumption is that some symptoms indicate a mutation which is at the same time culture and subjectivity: the position of exile and expectation in which the subject in question sees him/herself; the difficulty to think about him/herself in a world that tries to expel the tragic; his/her impasses facing what is necessary to construct both his/her sexual condition and a fiction able to sustain his/her love life, and which, in its turn, can allow him/her to confront the anguish and the possibility of madness inherent to the human condition. Without resources, then, the man here called postmodern has succumbed in the face of the emptiness of his existence.

So, we should ask: what can psychoanalysis, in the face of the challenges of our contemporaneity; in the face of events that sometimes horrify and paralyze us because of the wounds opened by economic disputes and the misery generated in the world; in the face of the ethnicism and its consequent wars and large migratory movements; in the face of drug trafficking; and so many other processes that reveal themselves as inhuman, barbaric? What can psychoanalysis do in the face of a technology which has changed the way we see time, which has generated new forms of addition and shortened the distance between people who are geographically far while separating us from those around us?

We bring Ítalo Calvino’s work, *As cidades invisíveis*⁶ (*Invisible Cities*), to think about the discomfort in our culture/civilization. We select the dialogue, at the end of the book, between Emperor Kublai Khan and Marco Polo, who travels for the Empire and goes to far-away lands and exotic places, but who always returns to tell the Emperor his stories, because, given the size of the territories, it would be impossible for the ruler to travel all around it, even if he destined the rest of his life to travel only. Marco Polo seemed to privilege, in his narrative, the poetic, the good and the beautiful of the cities he visited. However, the Emperor just worried about what he had not yet heard: the frightening, the horror, the hell, and did not contemplate the aesthetics of beauty, but only

5 LACAN, Jacques. “A agressividade em psicanálise”. In: *Escritos*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Ed., 1998.

6 CALVINO, Ítalo. *The invisible cities* (1972), Rio de Janeiro: Cia. das Letras, 1990.

what experience shows that must exist in any human society. Thus, Kublai Khan, questioning the usefulness of all the beautiful stories about his kingdom, curious to know just about what Marco Polo seemed unable to reveal, tells him:

“- It shall all be useless if the last port is the infernal city, which is deep inside and pushes us into a vortex that becomes narrower and narrower.”

And Polo:

"- The hell of the living is not something to come; if it exists, it is already here, the hell in which we live daily, which we form by being together. There are two ways of not suffering. The first is easy for most people: to accept hell and become part of it till the point of not perceiving it any more. The second is risky and requires continuous attention and learning: trying to recognize who and what, in the midst of hell, is not hell, in order to preserve and find a space for it" (CALVINO, 1990, p. 150).

It seems that this is such a time: together, forming hell, noticing our world gathering forces in favor of the neoliberal flag, in line with the emergence of extreme right governments in important nations.

After the great wars, it looked like the human community, facing the horror of the experience, was moving towards the promotion/consolidation of pacifying advances. At the end of the Second World War, the UN emerged and created instances supposedly strong enough to guarantee the main rights of the human beings. Today, relevant criticisms question the effectiveness of such organizations.

It seems that we are once again in the midst of a war, or at a time that reveals the transience of life. The standards on which we were socially anchored are in decline, they no longer fit! However, we have not yet built what could answer, or even support, the new challenges. These are difficult times, with consequences, of course, in our daily clinic, where we observe new (?) forms of suffering, in which the subjects find themselves: "depressions" being one of them.

A text by Freud (1974), written at the end of the First World War (1914/1918), entitled "On transience (1916[1915])", illustrates our theme by making reference to the material and subjective debris left by war. The war (1914-18), Freud writes⁷,

It not only destroyed the beauty of the fields it crossed and the works of art it encountered on its way, but also shattered our pride in the achievements of our civilization, our admiration for numerous philosophers and artists, and our hope for a final triumph over disagreements between nations and races. It tarnished the high impartiality of our science, revealed our instincts in all their nakedness, and unleashed within us the evil spirits we thought had been tamed forever, for centuries of uninterrupted education by the noblest minds (1974: 347-348).

And Freud continues, at the end of the text, to talk about the grief caused by so many losses, but, according to him, as painful as it may seem, one day it will come to an end. Freud adds (1974, p. 348):

When the mourning is over, it will be seen that the high concept in which we had the riches of civilization lost nothing with the discovery of its fragility. We will rebuild all that the war destroyed, and perhaps on firmer and more lasting ground than before.

7 FREUD, Sigmund. "On transience (1916 [1915])" In *Complete Works by Sigmund Freud*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago Editora Ltd, 1974, v. XVI.

Even though Freud talks about the wreckage the war left on its way, he encourages us to look at our future in a more optimistic tone.

At this point, we deem it important, as we are in a Convergence meeting, to think about the “hell we formed by being together” when it comes to the so-called analytic community itself. In “Function and field ...”, Lacan (p. 242) raises a question about psychoanalysis, which we should not forget in our daily exercise, in our coexistence:

Method of truth and demystification of the subjective camouflage, would psychoanalysis manifest an unmeasured ambition when it applies its principles to its own corporation, i.e., to psychoanalysts’ role, their place in the society of the spirits, their relationship with their peers, and their teaching mission?

And if the purpose of an analysis is "demystifying the camouflages", it is necessary to recognize the identifying rags that compose and imprison our image, covering up the lack. If the process of demystification implies the management of the misunderstanding in the interpretation⁸, will it be possible to empty the meaning, to escape from the established and fixed formulas related to who we are, to play with the sonority of the language and continue until "a window to something else is opened"⁹, as did Marcel Duchamp with his *ready-made*. The reversal of the use value of the signifier generates strangeness, surprises and distresses us, but it is the very passage to another satisfaction, not without finding the lack, because "it is about lacking in a different way"¹⁰.

The path of analyses opens for some, when it reaches its completion, the possibility of knowing-how-to-read-their-own-text-in-another-way"¹¹, which generates in the school the insistence of saying, in its own way, Lacan’s and Freud’s texts. Why does the analytic group, paradoxically, react to this in a strange way?

In *On Ugliness*¹², Umberto Eco (2007) shows us that, since the old times, the foreigner, besides pronouncing incomprehensible sounds in another language, have different traits and habits that do not seem adequate to the group's criteria of beauty, which makes him ugly and enemy. The demonization of the enemy, then, is revealed by its grotesque or malignant representation, and the description of the atheist’s diabolic behavior follows in the same direction. “The Greek considered barbaric (i.e., people who babble) all those who did not speak Greek” (ECO, 2007, p. 185).

Besides, one must not forget that Lacan considered himself an heretic as far as Freud was concerned, and brought the rivals’ interlocution to his teachings.

8 LACAN, Jaques. “The third”(1974)[La troisième]. In: *Intervenciones e textos*. Reviewed by Diana Rabinovich. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Manantial S.R.L, 1998. Free translation): “The interpretation should always be Marcel Duchamp’s *ready-made*, may you at least listen some of this, the essential that lies in the wordplay, which is what our interpretation must aim at so that we do not feed the symptom” (p. 94).

9 CABANNE, Pierre. *Marcel Duchamp: Engineer of Lost Time, Engenheiro do Tempo perdido* 2ª ed. São Paulo: Ed. Perspectiva, 2002

10 LACAN, Jaques. *The Seminar, book 25: moment to conclude*. Unpublished, lesson of 01/10/78

11 *Idem*.

12 ECO, Humberto. *On Ugliness*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2007.

The “Ugly” has always existed in arts and presents itself as the opposite of the esthetic criteria of the “Beautiful”. Recently, we learned that two paintings, Francis Bacon’s triptych and a painting by Lucien Freud, got in disputed auctions an unexpected value, revealing that the ugly can exert the same attraction that a beautiful scene had before.



What is unusual is that they are two works that, frankly, show us this other side of the aesthetics of beauty: they are two beautiful works that show us the "ugly", so to speak.

But the question is: what does this mean in a world, in a moment of history that chooses entertainment, spectacle, and beauty? And what does this teach about being able, if we intend to be analysts, in each of our singular experiences, to accomplish the "demystification of subjective camouflages" in our "environment", our associations, schools, institutions?

Perhaps we should not abstain ourselves from revealing "the hell that we form when we are together", from speaking about the ugly, from the ill feeling that unceasingly crosses us. Convergence certainly constitutes a space for the impasses, the differences that bring wealth, at the same time, of converging around the psychoanalysis promoting its advance, because the idea is that we cannot approach neither the "subjectivity of our time", nor the conditions that engender the suffering in our contemporaneity, if we cannot speak of our own "hell".

From the desire to go into exile, to leave, to break the ties, and to express oneself with freedom, things which we see in both James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, for example, perhaps we can learn something about the conviviality of analysts in the Schools.