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Transference: From *Agalma* to *Palea*[1]

The power of the ego and the powerlessness of psychoanalysis

The triumph of narcissism that we have been witnessing of late is the emblematic pathology of our time and it is not an accident that this contemporary pathology is coincidental with the rise in the power of images. Our world is a world swarming with images to such a degree that one is tempted to state that we are living in an "empire of images". The world we are living in today is a world that itself has been transformed into an image or, rather, into "a wall of screens," to borrow a term introduced by Géreard Wajcman, a mosaic of myriad images that constitute "a single yet unlimited image."[2] An image inevitably refers to the gaze that stands for the gaze of the Other. If the omnipresence of images signals a momentous shift in the history of civilisation this is because, as Wajcman has rightly remarked, "the desire to See All" that dominates and animates every human activity announces the emergence of a new figure of the gaze: the gaze that sees all at once, breaking thereby with the structuring role of the frame which could be summarised as "seeing is framing". From this perspective, the empire of images, insofar as it implies that "the visible world has been entirely seen and has become all-seeing," is only possible as "a creation of the civilization of the gaze."[3] Our world, as Wajcman's argument goes, is global not only because it is the reign of the single market, but also because it is under the dominance of the gaze that has become one as it knows no perspective and therefore no limitation or obstacle. What characterises the new regime of the gaze is precisely the absence of such a frame that would constitute a window looking out onto the world. In the new regime of the gaze, the point from which the subject is looked

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[2] Gérard Wajcman, "Wall of Screens," *lacanian ink*, no. 40, p. 99.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

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on, is not simply hidden, but radically unlocatable. Omnipresent, yet nowhere to be found, the gaze is incarnate in the visible itself. With the elimination of the frame, the limit separating the subject from the scene of the world in which s/he could appear likewise disappears. Thus, according to Wajcman, in a world in which there is no preconceived distribution of places, a world without places, the place of the subject is also erased. Therefore, a theory of the hypermodern gaze, as Wajcman conceives of it, is a theory of "the placeless subject" in a "placeless world"[4]. Seen from this perspective, the current ubiquity of images clearly indicates that the gripping power of the image cannot be simply reduced to the imaginary, one of the three realms that, according to Lacan, constitute human experience. Rather, the spreading empire of images renders all the more obvious the distinction, indeed, the disparity, of reality (constituted through the imaginary and the symbolic) and the real that is excluded from reality.

The pervasiveness of the image, but even more so the grip that the image has on us, has never been so manifest and intensified as today. It can be viewed as a clear sign of a modification in the dialectic that determines the relationship between the agency of the imaginary (the ego) and the agencies of the symbolic (the subject of the unconscious and the Other) in which psychoanalysis is grounded: the rise of the image is accompanied by the rise of the ego and the corresponding declines of the subject and the Other, of precisely that function which is constitutive of the formation of the ego. It is then hardly surprising that in the era of the empire of images, which is in fact the empire of the gaze, an era characterised by what Joyce designated as "the ineluctable modality of the visible,"[5] psychoanalysis seems to be strangely out of sync with the zeitgeist. This is hardly surprising insofar as in psychoanalysis, in which the symbolic prevails over the imaginary, "the ineluctable modality" is rather the modality of the sayable rather than that of the visible. But the current powerlessness of psychoanalysis also results from the "weakness of words" themselves. Due to the inconsistency of the Other, words are increasingly becoming vague, floating, and thus ineffective for responding to the deregulation of the speaking bodies. The widespread practice of submitting bodies to what Éric Laurent has termed "surplus excess" or "surplus deficit,"[6] a kind of oscillation between bulimia (as

4 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

5 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Folio Edition, London 1988, p. 37.

6 Éric Laurent, "The Reverse of the Hysterical Symptom," *lacanian ink*, no. 40, p. 86.

seen in "the exacerbation of sight," with the omnipresence of screens and images) and anorexia (as exemplified in the asceticism of modern art, of which Malevich's white square could be an illustration) is manifest in all forms of human activity.

While the prospect of the non-contemporaneity of psychoanalysis was the focus of much of Lacan's teaching, its present apparent non-contemporaneity has yet to receive sustained attention in psychoanalysis itself. Some of the key elements of a possible response to this question can be found in Lacan's theory of the four discourses. According to that theory, psychoanalysis is not possible if its other side, the master's discourse, is inoperative as it is precisely that discourse which allows the speaking being to attain his/her symbolic existence by being represented by the master signifier. Once the master's discourse is replaced by the capitalist's discourse, the subject is no longer represented by the master signifier, which has marked the subject with an irreducible singularity. Rather, in the capitalist's discourse the subject is pinned down by a swarm of signifiers that, because they are countable, indifferent, and therefore replaceable, erase the subject's singularity. Thus, what characterises the dominant social experience today is the installation of the inexistence of the Other through the combined efforts of the discourses of science and capitalism that strive to foreclose the unconscious by transforming subjects into ones-all-alone. We are now confronted with the tyranny of the surplus jouissance governed by the logic of the market. As testified by the variety of modalities of addictive behaviour proliferating today, contemporary subjects, caught in the autistic, repetitious jouissance of the One (exemplified by bulimia, anorexia, toxicomania, etc.), appear to be incapable of changing the mode of their enjoyment and thus of breaking with their deadly solitude.

If the role of psychoanalysis, as Freud and Lacan conceived it, remains that of guiding the subject through the evolution of the semblants of civilisation to the extent precisely that the mutation of the Other of civilisation leads to a modification of the mode and usages of jouissance, one cannot help but wonder about the curious powerlessness of psychoanalysis in guiding the subjectivity of our time once the latter is enslaved by the power of the image. Could it then be claimed that the main goal of psychoanalysis today is none other than to undo this irrepressible power of the image? In order to address this problem it is therefore necessary to start by taking into account that there is a certain correlation

between the installation of the empire of the image and what Lacan called "the rise to the zenith of the object a."

The object a that is in question here is the object surplus jouissance that implies an approach to the question of jouissance beyond the relation to the Other. Within the new paradigm, the paradigm of the object surplus jouissance, the object a becomes something that can be calculated, evaluated. This also explains why mass-produced objects, a variety of gadgets that have become indispensible in our life, rather than a part of the body, could become a model for the object surplus jouissance. And to the extent that the object surplus jouissance is governed by the logic of the capitalist market, which means that it is considered from the point of its value on the market of jouissance, the object surplus jouissance can only bring about an autistic, asexual jouissance that no longer involves the Other. As a result, the jouissance that such an object brings about is no longer marked by a lack and the demand for love. Rather, jouissance designated as the satisfaction of the drive gives rise only to the demand for more, for *Encore!*, to borrow Lacan's proper term, for Again! to be taken in the sense of "more and always more", outside any relation to the Other. What the installation of the inconsistent Other thus signals is that the object a no longer functions as the cause of the Other's desire destined to fill in the subject's lack of being. Worse, it is the subject's lack of being that seems to be inoperative today: with the mass-production of the object surplus jouissance, the lack of being only appears as a "being-in-excess" with respect to what is wanted. As a consequence, if the subject's lack of being is not articulated to the Other's response, the subject him-/herself turns into an object a of a special kind: waste to be eliminated.

Clearly, the current fascination for the image, in particular for that of one's own body, stems from the dominance of one particular figure of the object a: the gaze, its main function being that of incarnating the point of view attributed by the subject to the Other, the perspective that allows the subject to be "seen in a satisfactory light."[7] In giving rise to a frenetic quest for jouissance, the current fascination for the image cuts the link between words and bodies, thereby rendering contemporary subjectivity particularly unresponsive to the analytic treatment whose main tool remains speech. In the culture of the image, what brings words

7 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* trans. A. Sheridan, Penguin, London 1977, p. 268.

and bodies together, despite their current disjunction, is paradoxically the generalised narcissism. The latter promotes the regulation of the relationship between bodies and words through spectacle, thereby giving rise to the industry of narcissism in a variety of modalities, an industry that thrives on what Laurent designates as "the paradoxes of the uniformizing tyranny of the narcissism of increasingly small differences,"[8] a veritable mass reproduction of narcissised bodies that occupies the vacated place of the Other. For psychoanalysis, in contrast, what brings bodies and words together is the symptom. Defined as a mark of the Other on the body, the symptom manifests itself in the disturbance of the body, indicating thereby the emergence of an always contingently fixated mode of jouissance to which the subject will remain enslaved.

It is no doubt true that psychoanalysis is today no longer the same as it was in Lacan's time, and still less in Freud's time, because the status of the Other has changed to the point that we can even speak of its inexistence. It nevertheless remains the case that the necessity of addressing the question of the regulation of bodies and words via the symptom results today, as in the past, from an impasse, indeed, from what could best be termed the unresponsiveness of the subject of the unconscious to the psychoanalytic treatment. An illuminating example of such interrogation can be found in *Seminar II*, in which the Freudian notion of the ego in psychoanalysis is re-examined. On this reading, the second topography was introduced as a response to what Lacan termed "the 1920 turning point," a time of a "real crisis," because "this new *I*, with whom one was meant to enter into dialogue, after a while refused to answer."[9] However, for psychoanalysis to account for this strange unresponsiveness of the subject of the unconscious to the analytic treatment, this amounts to taking into account the effect that the analytic discourse itself has on the discourse of the unconscious. And conversely, the neglecting of the effects of the analytic discourse on the unconscious, as Lacan clearly notes, "necessarily leads to a new crystallization of unconscious effects that renders the latter discourse more opaque."[10] Paradoxically, it is because of the impact of the analytic discourse on the

8 Laurent, "The Reverse of the Hysterical Symptom," p. 87.

9 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, trans. S. Tomaselli, W. W. Norton, New York, London 1991, p. 10.

10 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference*, trans. B. Fink, Polity, Cambridge 2015, p. 334.

discourse of the unconscious that the unconscious closes again and the analytic treatment "no longer has the same effects as it did before." Worse, "these effects make the subject beat a retreat; they immunize or inoculate him with respect to a certain discourse. They impede us from leading the subject [...] to his desire."[11]

Following Lacan, it could then be argued that the issue of the ego is put on the agenda of psychoanalysis whenever analysands appear to be immune to the cure, which is to say, whenever the effects of speech in analysis wear off. As a consequence, this inevitably ends up in confusing the subject of the unconscious with the individual, while the task of psychoanalysis is rather to "wipe away the subjective from this subject."[12] Taking up the Freudian notion of the ego, designated as an organ outside of the body, yet invested with libido, Lacan – for whom the function of the ego is to ensure the consistency of the speaking being – recognises in the Freudian notion of the ego the matrix of the mirror stage. Ultimately, as Lacan would state later, if there is something that puts into relief the fact that "the relation of man, or what goes under this name, to his body is imaginary, it is the importance taken on by his image."[13] Lacan could then conclude that, to the extent that the longed-for unity of the ego comes from the image of the body, "the body is what is most imaginary."[14] This also explains why the speaking being remains enslaved to the (narcissised, libidinised) image. Once "the body enters the economy of jouissance through the image of the body,"[15] as Lacan insists, the body of the mirror stage would remain the matrix of the ego. And Lacan could thus claim that the ego is the idea of oneself as a body: "The idea of the self, the idea of the body, carries weight. This is what is called *the Ego*."[16]

Yet what is at stake in the mirror stage is not simply that the nullity that the subject appears to be at this stage cannot see him-/herself anywhere except, as

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11 *Ibid*.

12 Jacques, Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 of the Psychoanalyst of the School", *Analysis*, no. 6, p. 4.

13 Jacques Lacan, "La troisième," *La cause freudienne*, no. 79, p. 22.

14 Jacques Lacan, "Conférences et entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines," *Scilicet*, nos. 6–7, p. 54.

15 Lacan, "La troisième," p. 22.

16 Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XXIII*, Polity, Cambridge 2016, p. 129.

Lacan clearly points out, in seeing "his form materialised, whole, the mirage of himself, outside of himself"[17] as an image in the mirror, that is to say, an other. Lacan's point is, rather, that to attain some kind of consistency, to see him-/herself as something, the intervention of the Other is necessary as the purely specular image cannot ensure the unity of the ego. On the other hand, however, it is "on the basis of the Other's gaze" that the ego "presents itself and sustains itself qua problematic."[18] Confronted with his/her mirror image, the subject turns to the Other in order to receive from him/her "some sort of agreement or attesting," as Lacan notes. However, all that comes from this Other is a splitting of that very image insofar as it is "both desirable and destructive."[19] And it is due to a split that occurs at the level of the Other that the ego finds itself divided: desired or not by the Other.

This splitting is particularly relevant when in comes to dealing with one's fellowman, the small other, because one's mirror image is precisely what leads one to hate one's fellowman. Thus, "when faced with what is both himself and another," the subject seems to have no other solution than an either/or: "Either he has to tolerate the other as an unbearable image that steals him from himself, or he must immediately break him, knock him over, or annul the position across from him, in order to preserve what is at that moment the center and drive of his being."[20] It is precisely because, in the mirror, "I see myself as another," endowed with the longed-for completion, that the possibility of either self-fracturing or squashing the small other, Lacan notes, is always open to the subject: "he cannot see one of his counterparts without thinking that this counterpart is taking his place, and so, naturally, he loathes him."[21] At the same time, the very fact that the specular relationship is structured by the paranoid logic, indicates that for the mirror image to constitute the object with which the subject identifies in the scopic field, an object eternalised insofar as it transcends all movements and change, there must be room for a non-specular, non-reciprocal relation in which the Other occupies a position of "the third party" between the ego and the other. Because the image the subject sees in the mirror is "lacking in

17 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique,* trans. J. Forrester, Norton, London & New York 1988, p. 140.

18 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference,* p. 354.

19 *Ibid.,* p. 353.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 352.

21 Lacan, "La troisième," p. 22.

consistency, incomplete,"[22] Lacan insists, it follows that no truly effective imaginary regulation can be set up without the intervention of the symbolic relation that determines "the position of the subject as seeing."[23] The guiding instance that allows the subject to determine his/her position in the imaginary can only be situated at a transcendent point, beyond the imaginary, outside the specular relationship, i.e., as the place of the ego-ideal. Thus, for the gaze of the Other to be internalised, the unary trait is enough to the extent precisely that the unary trait stands for the capital I and is as such considered as a "sign of the Other's assent."[24] Strictly speaking, the identification via the unary trait is not specular; it is rather its support inasmuch as "it supports the perspective chosen by the subject in the field of the Other, from which specular identification may be seen in a satisfactory light."[25]

Considered from the point of view of the mirror stage, narcissism could then be viewed as an attempt to regulate the gaze. Inasmuch as the mirror image allows the speaking being to "give himself some measure of consistency," it involves a libidinal as well as a defensive aim as it prevents the fusion that threatens the subject with dissolution. As the subject today remains in thrall to his/her image, it could be argued that the pre-eminence of the image of one's own body is reaffirmed in what is called a "culture of narcissism". But the question then becomes: to what extent does contemporary narcissism succeed in regulating the gaze if to attain jouissance by the ceaseless projection of the self-image necessarily involves the supposition of the gaze of the Other? Indeed, the dependence of the image returned from the Other is one of the essential traits of the ego of our time. Paradoxically, it is the exaltation of the image of the ego, a kind of "imaginary bulimia," that prevents the subject from separating him/-herself from the gaze of the Other. From this perspective, the exaltation of the image of the ego could then be seen as a sign of the weakness of one's own ego: in his/her attempt to satisfy the demands of an ideal Other that the social imaginary conveys, the contemporary subject is forced to "succeed" and enjoy in order to satisfy the greediness of the economic machine that instrumentalises the gaze

[22] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 267.

[23] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, p. 140.

[24] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference*, p. 355.

[25] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 268.

of the Other. The price to be paid for the ego's unstoppable quest for jouissance is therefore a desperate quest for the approval to be found in the Other's gaze, a quest that as such indicates the inability of the contemporary subject to control the excess of the gaze.

Regarding psychoanalysis, it is important to note that the rise of the object a to a social zenith implies the social reinforcement of this attachment of the subject to his/her image exactly to the extent that the symbolic order is inoperative. But this is precisely why contemporary narcissism could also be considered, from a different perspective certainly, as both a problem but also as a solution, as a sinthomatic solution, to be precise, a solution that each subject has to find out for him-/herself in order to counteract the failure of the symbolic Other to regulate jouissance. Thus, the ego, in contemporary narcissism, is not to be confused with the ego of the mirror stage. The ego of contemporary narcissism, as elaborated in Lacan's *Seminar XXIII*, relates namely to the subject's speaking position as an attempt to make up for the deficiency of the Name-of-the-Father, that agency whose principle function is to regulate jouissance. The case of Joyce is particularly instructive in this respect. The topology of knots allows Lacan to reintroduce the ego as the imaginary function in the Borromean knot as a suppletory device equivalent to the sinthomatic supplementation. As a result, the function of the ego radically changes: from being a veil of castration and of the subject's desire, to a supplement to the paternal lack. The new, "Joycean ego" thus takes up the function of a fourth ring to repair the Borromean knot as it is only through such a sinthomatic knotting provided by the ego that the imaginary (of the body's image), the symbolic (of the signifying inscription in the field of the Other), and the real (of the subject's singular mode of enjoyment) hold together.

Under the current dominance of the gaze and the resulting prevalence of the image, insofar as it is contaminated with jouissance, the new ego is no longer representable by the signifier. This is because the function of the image of the body is essentially articulated to some fundamental absence or lack situated either on the side of the subject (the lack of unity or the lack of being of the subject of the signifier), or on the side of the Other, whose principle function is to provide a guarantee of consistency in the imaginary and symbolic realms by regulating jouissance, the drive satisfaction, belonging to the realm of the real. The function of the image of the body, insofar as it is linked to some

fundamental lack, is therefore to fill it in or to cover it up. The speaking being in the era of the empire of images remains therefore submitted to his/her image, yet its function has changed: confronted with the lack in the Other and, consequently, its inability to regulate jouissance, the image of the body becomes the site of an utmost narcissistic jouissance. Hence, it is through images that the speaking being nowadays strives, paradoxically, to contain the excess of the jouissance that inundates the body and, in so doing, to cover up the lack in the Other. It is clear, however, that Lacan's highlighting of the function of the gaze implies that not all of the image is reducible to the mirror image of the body-one. As Lacan already points out in *Seminar X,* the imaginary function of the body image may well result from its being libidinised, but "[n]ot all of the libidinal investment passes by way of the specular image. There's a remainder."[26]

But to clarify this point it is necessary to bring into play the distinction between two incompatible bodies. On the one hand, there is the body of the mirror stage, i.e. the body reduced to its image, that is to say, to a "good" form, that provides the longed-for completion. On the other hand, however, there is the libidinal body, i.e., the body of drives that in some sense consists only of erogenous zones, the body that is in some radical sense formless. To account for this distinction, it is essential to bring into focus the ways in which the signifier and the drive affect the body. While the signifier cadaverises the body by cutting up its jouissance into parts that Lacan terms objects a that have a parasitical relation to the body as they appear to be shared by the subject and the Other, the drives in contrast turn the body into their battleground, an organism with indefinable limits. That the libidinal body should be considered as an organism, as Lacan suggests, rather than as a body, this is then due to the drives that take "the organism's being to its true limit, which goes further than the body's limit."[27] What the libidinal body, the body of drives, thus interrogates is the body as One, the evidence of its corporeal individuality, the evidence of the unity of the body.

At the same time, the change in the way in which the image of the ego is rendered operational in the current culture of narcissism calls attention to the sta-

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[26] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book X: Anxiety,* trans. A. R. Price, Polity, Cambridge 2014, p. 38.

[27] Jacques Lacan, "Position of the Unconscious," *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, Norton & Company, New York & London 2006, p. 719.

tus of that object a that is structurally correlated to the image: the gaze. Defined as (an always failed) attempt to inscribe the drive in the scopic field, the gaze can only appear in the visible field due to some surplus jouissance contained in the perceptual image. As a libidinal object that cannot be seen in the mirror, as a kind of invisible *agalma*, the gaze could best be designated as a material incarnation of the object a. There is a clear distinction, namely, between the object a considered as a part of the body (the breast, the faeces, the phallus, the voice, and the gaze), and the object a considered as a logical function. Taking the libidinally invested parts of the body as a model for the object a, the function of these "natural" objects in their variety and multiplicity would seem to be to fill, with their "stuff", their substance, the emptiness of the subject, the subject being the lack of being. Considered, however, as a logical function, the object a is nothing but a semblant of being that does not exist; in fact, the object a, as defined by Lacan in *Seminar XI*, is nothing but a hole, a void, around which the drive circles.

The gaze can thus emerge as a perfect model for the object a, since, being a hole, the gaze itself, rather than being identified with the mirror, is precisely what cannot be captured in the mirror: by being extracted from the picture, the gaze constitutes the invisible frame or, rather, to use Lacan's own term, the "window onto the real,"[28] in order for something in the scopic field, the perceptual reality, to become visible. The end of an analysis would then mark a moment of seeing the window as such a frame in order to recognize oneself to be subject to the drive. In rendering visible the invisible frame the end of analysis would allow the analysand to situate him-/herself at the level of the object a, the hole around which the drive, this *acephalic*, headless agency, circles, while drawing an unaccounted for jouissance from this repetitive circling around a hole in a perpetual failure.

In the new regime of the gaze, it is precisely this extraction of the gaze as the object a enabling the re-installation of the "window onto the real" that has become problematic. As a result, the subject is left defenceless against the invasion of the surplus jouissance. It then follows that for the contemporary subject, the only way for him/her to regulate the invading jouissance is to "resurrect" the

[28] Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 of the Psychoanalyst of the School", p. 9.

gaze of the Other.[29] This perspective indicates what is at stake in psychoanalysis today, i.e. in the era of the one-all-alone: to lead analysands, one by one, to find the particular way to exit from the trap of narcissism and, thus, to break with the deadly solitude by establishing an impossible link with the Other, albeit only as fiction. The main difficulty today consists precisely in making possible the "resurrection" of the figure of the (inexistent) Other that would then allow the subject to wrench him-/herself from the repetitious, autoerotic jouissance of the One, that repeats his/her mode of jouissance *ad infinitum*, without any variation or change, and in so doing, allow for the emergence or rather creation of something new.

Thus, for psychoanalysis the taking into account of the profound transformation of the function of the ego today, i.e, in the era of the inexistent Other, inevitably raises the question of that leverage which makes psychoanalysis possible, that is to say, the question of transference. It is certainly not enough to simply stubbornly insist on its necessity for transference to remain the condition for the possibility of psychoanalysis. What is needed instead is a re-examination of the working of transference in analysis in the context of the current "culture of narcissism" and the effects obtained through its handling that would enable the modification of the jouissance of the subject.

Knowledge between love and jouissance

Lacan sets out to re-examine transference in his *Seminar VIII* in order to be able to write, as he puts it, "a new chapter on analytic action."[30] The question Lacan raises in this seminar is that of the analyst's place in transference, in particular as the analytic relationship itself is based on a misunderstanding since, as Lacan insists, there is no overlap between the place where the analysand situates the analyst and the place where the analyst must be "in order to suitably respond to him."[31] There is then an issue here, which is the unclarity over the

[29] While for Freud only virtue or modesty is able to preserve the Other's gaze, for Lacan, what brings the judging Other to life, as J.-A. Miller clearly points out, is "the Other's gaze as the bearer of shame." Jacques-Alain Miller, "On Shame," *Reflections on Seminar XVII. Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* J. Clemens and R. Grigg (eds.), Sic 6, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2006, p. 15.

[30] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference,* p. 334.

[31] *Ibid.,* p. 329.

analyst's function in the cure. If Lacan never stops interrogating the concept of transference, this is because the question of transference is not only a theoretical one, but also a technical one, that of its handling in the cure. It should be noted that, for Lacan, transference is to be considered as that which "directs the way in which patients are treated," since, Lacan continues, "the way in which [the analysands] are treated governs the concept." [32] This is why transference could be considered as a compass that signals not only the analyst's orientation, but also his/her blundering.

Setting out from Freud's contention according to which "[t]transference, which seems ordained to be the greatest obstacle to psychoanalysis, becomes its most powerful ally,"[33] Lacan goes on to show in what way the position of the analyst is decisive in how transference is handled. For Lacan, it is clear that this handling of transference does not consist in appealing "to some healthy part of the subject thought to be there in the real,"[34] as the ego is "precisely this part that is concerned in transference, [...] this part that closes the door."[35] As a consequence of this confusing of the subject of the unconscious, the symbolic function, with the ego, the imaginary function, the main question for the post-Freudian orientation in psychoanalysis became the question of the ego-ideal. For Lacan, in contrast, the clarification of the role of the ego-ideal in transference has particular bearing upon the possibility of the subject to exit from the narcissistic sphere, or, in Lacan's words, "to leave behind his narcissistic self-envelopment"[36]. The ego-ideal is for Lacan "the pivotal point of the kind of identification whose impact is fundamental in the production of transference,"[37] on the condition that psychoanalysis sets out from the Freudian distinction between the *Ichideal* and the *Idealich*, which allows the analyst "to make sense of what happens in analysis on the imaginary plane, which we call transference."[38]

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32 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 124.

33 Sigmund Freud, "A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria", SE VII, p. 117.

34 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 9.

35 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 131.

36 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference*, p. 348.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 346.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

For there is a theoretical point here that is worth highlighting for discussion. Insofar as transference presents itself as a paradox – on the one hand, its emergence is a necessary condition for interpretation, and on the other, transference, as love, being always narcissistic, which means deceptive, inasmuch as the analysand expects to receive love in return for his/her love for the analyst, closes the door to the unconscious – it remains the site of a "permanent conceptual crisis [...] in analysis,"[39] a crisis that puts into question the very possibility of psychoanalysis. While Lacan himself may well designate the "initial infatuation" that inevitably emerges at the beginning of the treatment as "a pivotal role in the transference,"[40] this love-transference is nevertheless situated at the level of the imaginary. Thus, transference is viewed as love because it starts as a "narcissistic relation by which the subject becomes an object worthy of love. From his reference to him who must love him, he tries to induce the Other into a mirage relation in which he convinces him of being worthy of love."[41] Indeed, the function of this love is "[n]othing but to fill the emptiness of this standstill with a lure. But [...] this lure serves a purpose by setting the whole process in motion anew."[42] Hence, what is at stake, for Lacan, especially in *Seminar VIII*, in which he develops at length the issue of love, is to establish what place love has in the analytic treatment. While transference love is "triggered off almost automatically in the analysand/analyst relation," and moreover, "arises, one can say *even before* the analysis has started,"[43] but precisely as such, transference serves a very specific purpose: it is "constructed so as to give you the very image of your desire."[44]

In *Seminar VIII* Lacan takes a very important step in developing a radically different logic for love in psychoanalysis – a logic that interrogates the relationship between love and knowledge on the basis of transference. To include the function of knowledge means that it does not suffice to posit the state of being in love from the point of narcissistic satisfaction: "I only love you in order to

39 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 131.

40 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, p. 282.

41 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 276.

42 Jacques Lacan, "Presentation of Transference," *Écrits*, p. 184.

43 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, p. 142.

44 *Ibid.*

see myself as I love myself," but rather, "I love you for something that is in you, which is what I lack." Hence, for the subject to embody the Other for somebody else – this is one of the main theses in *Seminar VIII* – he/she must have what the subject has lost, a precious object, *agalma*, the object that the one in love always tries to re-find in the Other. It is this precious object that, according to the Lacan of *Seminar VIII*, is the cause of the love that one has for the Other: it is because the Other has what the subject has lost that his/her image acquires a consistency that the subject feels he/she lacks.

It is worth noting that in *Seminar VIII* Lacan situates this agalmatic object at the level of being. To the extent that the subject can come into being only by entering the field of the Other, i.e. by being represented by a signifier for another signifier, which is why the subject lacks being, s/he can regain some of his/her being through the object a, which will give him/her, in the imaginary register, the consistency that s/he lacks in the symbolic. The subject will therefore love the one who seems to hold the truth of his/her desire, of his/her being. This also explains why Lacan, at least from *Seminar VIII* onwards, insists on the link between love and knowledge, which is crucial to Lacan's reading of Socrates' position in Plato's *Symposium*. In his commentary on the miracle of love presented in *Symposium* – a miracle that consists in a kind of reciprocity: the *erómenos,* the beloved, in turn starts to love the *erastés* – Lacan elaborates on what he called "metaphor of love".

In the situation of love, the *erastés*, the lover or the one who loves, is at the same time the one who is lacking something, without knowing exactly what this something is, while the *erómenos*, the beloved, does not know what s/he has that makes him/her attractive to the lover any more than the lover knows what s/he lacks. Setting out from this happy encounter of two kinds of not-knowing, Lacan defines the metaphor of love as the substitution of one for the other: "It is insofar as the function of *erastés* or the person who loves, as a lacking subject, comes to take the place of, or is substituted for, the function of *erómenos*, the loved object, that the signification of love is produced."[45] This miraculous transformation, whereby the subject passes from being loved to loving, from desired object to desiring subject, is only possible because reciprocated love, "love as a response," as Lacan claims, "implies the domain of not having."

[45] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference,* p. 40.

Hence, "one cannot love without presenting oneself as if one does not have, even if one does."[46]

Now, this reciprocity of love is exactly what Socrates refuses. Thus, in his attempt to seduce Socrates, Lacan notes, Alcibiades wanted to "make him into someone instrumental and subordinate to what? To the object of Alcibiades' desire – ágalma, the good object."[47] In so doing, Alcibiades succeeds in rendering visible what Lacan calls "the central articulation of the transference."[48] The main point to recognise is that, for Alcibiades, "Socrates is nothing but the envelope in which the object of desire is found." But Alcibiades can only show that Socrates is "nothing but this envelope" by showing that "Socrates is desire's serf [...] enslaved to Alcibiades by his desire."[49] For what Alcibiades demands from Socrates is proof; he wants to see "Socrates' desire manifest itself in a sign, in order to know that the other – the object, ágalma, was at his mercy."[50] What Alcibiades clearly spells out, or, rather, the lesson an analyst should draw from Alcibiades' "coming out" is not simply that in transference love the ultimate aim is to obtain the agalma, i.e. exactly what Alcibiades believes "Socrates is the ungrateful container of."[51] In humiliating himself Alcibiades rather reveals what Lacan calls "the most shocking secret," namely, that "the ultimate mainspring of desire, which in love relations must always be more or less dissimulated, [...] is the fall of the Other, A, into the other, *a*."[52]

Several controversial corollaries follow from this stance. One of the lessons to be drawn from Lacan's reading of *Symposium* is that, for the object of desire to be overvalued, as it is, the Other, Socrates, who incarnates it, as can be seen in the case of Alcibiades, must be lowered to the level of object, what Lacan designates as "the fall of the Other, A, into the other, *a*". We have here the first formulation of the mutilation of the Other involved in desire as a mainspring of love that brings to the fore a hidden link between love and desire, which was elaborated in more detail in *Seminar XI:* "*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you*

46 *Ibid.*, p. 357.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
48 *Ibid.*, pp. 699–700.
49 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
50 *Ibid.*
51 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 7.
52 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference*, p. 176.

something more than you – the objet petit a *– I mutilate you.*"[53] Without going to the extremes of desire, taken in its pure state, which is to say, desire that "culminates in the sacrifice, strictly speaking, of everything that is the object of love in one's human tenderness,"[54] Lacan nevertheless indicates here, *avant la lattre* so to speak, that due to the impossibility of the sexual relation, speaking beings, inasmuch as they are speaking, are subject to the phallic jouissance, which is universally valid regardless of their sex, a jouissance that prevents them from relating to the Other as such. Thus, instead of enjoying the body of the Other, they can only enjoy it in the guise of a part of it, the object a.[55]

On the other hand, however, it is exactly because Socrates refuses the reciprocity of love and in so doing proves that he is truly the one "who is knowledgeable in matters of love," more precisely, in the emergence of transference love, that Lacan recognises in him "the precursor of psychoanalysis." Indeed, "who knows better than Socrates," asks Lacan, "that he holds only the meaning he engenders in retaining this nothing, which enables him to refer Alcibiades to the actual addressee of his discourse, Agathon (as if by chance)."[56] Following Lacan's description according to which "what is at stake in an analysis is nothing other than bringing to light manifestations of the subject's desire,"[57] Socrates is a true precursor of the analyst for revealing to Alcibiades the ultimate paradox of the subject's desire, as Lacan puts the words in Socrates' mouth: "Everything you [Alcibiades] just did, and Lord knows it isn't obvious, was for Agathon's sake. Your desire is more secret still than all the unveiling you have just given yourself over to. It now aims at yet another. And I will designate that other – it is Agathon."[58]

We are dealing here with what could be called Socrates' *Versagung*, which essentially consists in leaving "empty the place he is called upon [by Alcibiades]

53 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 268.

54 *Ibid.,* p. 275.

55 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX: Encore,* trans. B. Fink, W. W. Norton & Company, New York 1998, p. 15.

56 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 7.

57 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference,* p. 238.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

to occupy."[59] If Socrates' desire consists in leading "his interlocutors to *gnóthi seautón* (know thyself)," which is to say, to guide them on the path of desire, defined as the Other's desire, which implies that, for Socrates, too, as Lacan emphasises it, his desire is "unbeknown to him". But despite this Socrates can guide his interlocutor on the path of desire because he "makes himself into its [desire's] accomplice." In so doing, albeit "unbeknown to him," Socrates takes the place of the analyst at the tipping point at which Alcibiades' love for Socrates, who is knowledgeable in nothing except "in matters of love," should take a different path, that of an inquiry into his true desire. More exactly: "[t]o the extent to which Socrates does not know what he himself desires – it being the Other's desire – Alcibiades is possessed by what? By a love about which one can say that Socrates' only merit is to designate it as transference love, and to redirect him to his true desire."[60]

Here Lacan presents a second metaphor, different from the miracle of love: instead of the substitution of *erastes* by *eromenos*, we are dealing here with the substitution of the lack, the division of the subject, by the agalma. By refusing the reciprocity of love, by holding firmly to his own desire, his lack, Socrates becomes all the more agalmatic. For Lacan, this substitution of his division by the agalmatic object, is what transference is about, at least if we consider it from the side of love, and at this moment of his teaching. But it is precisely by emphasising the analyst's refusal of the reciprocity of love, a refusal that makes the analyst agalmatic, that Lacan opens a wholly different perspective on transference: that of the analyst's desire. In keeping the gap open between the ego-ideal and the object a, Lacan provides us, in the final part of *Seminar VIII*, with the first formulation of what he calls an "absolute point", which will be developed in *Seminar XI* in terms of the desire of the analyst, and which is in *Seminar VIII* modelled on Socrates' *atopia*. Just like the analyst's, Socrates' proper place is "that of pure desiriousness."[61] If Socrates is a precursor of the analyst, as Lacan claims, then the task for psychoanalysis is to conceptualise how a subject can "occupy the place of pure desiriousness – in other words, abstract or subtract himself, in the relationship to the other, from any supposition

59 *Ibid*., p. 368.
60 *Ibid*., p. 179.
61 *Ibid*., p. 368.

of being desirable."[62] Indeed, to support "the pure place of the subject qua desiring," the subject of desire, as Lacan goes on, "can say nothing about himself without abolishing himself as desiring."[63]

In a way, we are dealing here with an elaboration at two levels: at the level of the analysand in analysis and at the level of the analyst's response. On the one hand, the analysand elaborates knowledge of what s/he is as a subject, i.e. the subject of the unconscious as an effect of the signifier, namely, pure lack, pure loss, and which therefore cannot be hooked onto the signifier. Then, on the other hand, there is a theoretical subsumption of clinical experience: there is a lack in the Other, which is why the Other cannot, by definition, respond to the lack of the subject. Thus, whereas the analyst incarnates the barred Other, we have, on the side of the analysand, castration. At this precise point Lacan brings together what is at stake at the end of analysis and in the analyst's desire.

While (transference) love is no doubt an inevitable consequence of the analytic setting and, as such, a condition of the possibility of the cure, it can also disrupt an analysis if it is not elaborated logically. That is because, as a specular mirage, love, according to Freud and Lacan, is essentially deception because it is situated at the level of "that sole signifier necessary to introduce a perspective centered on the Ideal point, capital I, placed somewhere in the Other, from which the Other sees me, in the form I like to be seen."[64] Due to the presence of the subject that is supposed to hold the truth of his/her being, the analytic situation inevitably triggers transference love in the analysand: the latter loves his/her analyst because the analyst is supposed to hold something the analysand lacks, which is why it causes his/her desire. In the analytic setting, this desire takes the form of a desire articulated with the lack-of-being. The analysand wants to know something about him-/herself that will make him/her whole. The logic of transference love therefore needs to be elaborated so that the goal of analysis can now be stated as allowing the subject to reconcile him/-herself with the singularity of his/her subjective position. The focus of that effort, however, is to shift the analysand from identification with the ego ideal to the position of the

62 *Ibid.*, p. 369.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

64 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 268.

subject of desire via identification with the object a. By refusing to give any indication as to his/her desire, the analyst leads the analysand to take up the path of the logic of the signifier in order to face what s/he is as the object of desire, that, namely,

> before which the subject sees himself being abolished when he realizes himself as desire. In order for the subject to accede to this point beyond the reduction of the ideals of the person, it is as desire's object *a*, as what he was to the Other in his erection as a living being, as *wanted* or *unwanted* when he came into the world, that he is called to be reborn in order to know if he wants what he desires.[65]

One can see here one of the first attempts to articulate the dialectics of alienation and separation: insofar as the subject, by being represented by the signifier, disappears in it, or, to be even more precise, is "erased" in his/her being and thus reduced to silence, unable to say anything about him-/herself, unable to designate him-/herself by a signifier that would be proper to him/her, it is precisely at this point that the subject confronting his/her "namelessness as a subject"[66] is encouraged to recognise him-/herself in the object a, the desire's object-cause.

The essential moment that, according to Lacan, is of particular relevance to the question of the analyst's ability to handle transference is the moment in which Socrates, by claiming "to know anything, except on the subject of Eros, that is to say, desire," sets up "the place of transference." There is transference, Lacan claims, as soon as "the subject who is supposed to know exists somewhere."[67] Yet in Socrates' case as well as that of the analyst, this supposition of knowledge is only operational, effective, if it incarnates what Lacan calls "an absolute point with no knowledge."[68] If Lacan insists on the absence of knowledge, this is precisely because there is no knowledge prior to the emergence of transference.

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65 Lacan, "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation: 'Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure'", *Écrits*, p. 571.

66 See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Presentation of Book VI of the Seminar of Jacques Lacan", www.lacan/actuality/presentation-of-book-vi-of-the-seminar-of-jacques-lacan/. I am indebted to Cindy Zeiher for drawing my attention to this text.

67 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 232.

68 *Ibid*., p. 253.

And, indeed, Lacan claims, "of the supposed knowledge, he [the analyst] knows nothing."[69] What is emphasised instead in the supposed knowledge attributed to the analyst is the structural function that the analyst has to assume, namely, to incarnate a point of non-knowledge in order to arouse in the analysand a desire for knowledge.

Taking the position of Socrates as a model for the analyst, the presence of the analyst should be considered from two radically different perspectives: transference love begins once the analysand falls prey to the illusion that the analyst is already in possession of the truth of his/her being, of his/her unconscious desire. That is why the analysand, like Alcibiades, strives to arouse the analyst's love in order to make him/her yield the longed-for knowledge that s/he lacks. By refusing to yield to the analysand the precious object, the agalma, that the analyst is supposed to incarnate, the presence of the analyst is a negative presence as it manifests itself in the analyst's restraint as a means to awaken in the analysand a desire for knowledge. Viewed from this perspective, the knowledge of the analyst as the supposed subject of knowledge is not to be confused with ignorance. It should be taken instead as an effort to keep knowledge in abeyance. What is crucial at this point is Lacan's distinction between referential knowledge, the linking of a sign to its referent, and textual knowledge, a knowledge that can be produced by following the logic of the signifier.[70] The subject thus becomes the signifier only by supposing the presence of the subject of knowledge. In slightly different terms, it is by following the logic of the signifier that we see "isolated [...] the pure aspect of the subject as free relation to the signifier, the one from which the desire for knowledge as desire of the Other can be isolated."[71]

We can see here how the so-called algorithm of transference that introduces the supposed subject of knowledge captures the paradoxical aspect of the onset of the transference formerly implied by the metaphor of love. The key factor is the analysand's willingness to impute knowledge about him-/herself that s/he lacks to the analyst. However, if the supposition of knowledge is equivalent to the agalma, the side of the signifier involved in knowledge, what Lacan termed

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69 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 7.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*

"textual knowledge", is, by contrast, the reverse of love. What makes the replacement of the metaphor of love with the algorithm of transference possible is the assumption according to which the algorithm is nothing but the application of the definition of the signifier according to which the signifier represents the subject for another signifier. Seen from this perspective, then, transference is not to be seen as a relation between subjects, it should instead be viewed as a relation between signifiers as the subject of the unconscious itself is nothing but an effect of the signifier. There are two signifiers involved in transference: the first signifier, S_1, also called the signifier of transference, is enigmatic insofar as it is all alone. Such an isolated signifier, cut off from the signifying chain, is constitutive of the analytic symptom insofar as it is based on the assumption that "it means something," which is why it is addressed to the supposed subject of knowledge, the analyst. But this also explains why the analyst has to be situated in the place of "any signifier,"[72] as Lacan calls it. In being implicated with the indifferent signifier, the enigmatic signifier emerges as a demand for knowledge, and it is this demand that brings about the supposed subject of knowledge. The "indifferent signifier", which is, strictly speaking, whatever is obviously not the knowledge that would solve the enigma addressed to it. Rather, insofar as it is incarnated by the analyst, the indifferent signifier is a stand-in for a mute, unresponsive corporeal presence as a site of jouissance, a presence that does not respond to the demand for knowledge.

The necessity of situating the analyst as a mute presence sheds light on the shift that has been taking place in the handling of transference: from the relation between knowledge and love, constitutive of the Freudian transference, to the relation between knowledge and jouissance that designates the novelty of the Lacanian elaboration of transference. As exemplified by the position of Socrates, the emergence of a desire for knowledge implies a certain restraint, a holding back on the part of the analyst that allows the production of the agalma as the cause of a desire to know. However, when the relation of knowledge and jouissance is at stake in transference the position of the analyst changes. This is because jouissance, insofar as it involves a living body, requires presence in the process of handling transference, one could even say a positivated presence. This shift in the conception of the analyst's position from a negative to a positive presence is already announced in *Seminar XI* with transference designated

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

as "the enactment of the reality of the unconscious,"[73] thus allowing Lacan to separate transference from repetition. With the distinction between two modalities of repetition, *automaton* and *tyche*, the latter being the repeatedly missed encounter with the real, the focus of the new conception of transference becomes the impossible encounter with the real insofar as the real is an "impossible to say". The handling of transference would then consist in circumscribing the "impossible to say" as the very core of what is said.

The new version of the handling of transference already announces a new figure of the subject: instead of the subject of the signifier, the subject as a lack of being, impossible to pin down by one signifier, elusive and therefore changed each time it is represented by different signifiers, we now have what Lacan termed a "*parlêtre*", a speaking-being, a being of speech, or, even better, a speaking body. The emphasis shifts from the effect of the signifier to presence and substance as jouissance can only be experienced in the body. In bringing together knowledge and jouissance, the focus in the handling of transference now moves towards the corporeal presence as a stand-in for what is unsayable: that dimension of the speaking being that belongs to the body as real. The unsayable presence in the speaking being, for being unrepresentable by the signifier, can therefore be presentified by one of the four instances of the object a: the gaze, the voice, the breast, or the faeces. Hence, we are dealing here with the presentification of the speaking being via the materiality of the object instead of the representation of the subject of the unconscious via the signifier. In the new modality of handling transference, the goal is to isolate what is unsayable for the subject that can therefore take on the status of the object. Upon confronting that dimension of the speaking being that can only be designated as a mute, corporeal presence, the site of jouissance, the subject supposed of knowledge becomes inoperative, ineffective, precisely because knowledge itself comes up against an unsurpassable limit. This unsayable dimension of the speaking being can therefore only be presentified by the analyst's mute presence. Hence, what the analyst lends his/her body to is precisely this dimension of jouissance as a mute staging of the drive, a dimension that remains irreducible to the signifier, which can nevertheless be circumscribed in the handling of transference.

[73] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 146.

Hence, the analyst takes upon him-/herself the task of presentifying this "impossible to say". Beyond transference love, which, being love, is like any love deceptive and thus a misrecognition of this real, there is the analyst's desire that, by refusing the analysand's demand for love, guides the analysand to what is the true kernel of the demand for love, the object a around which the drive circulates. The end of analysis, seen from this new conception of transference, would then be designated as the separation from the object rather than identification with the analyst as the incarnation of the ego-ideal.

Transference love vs. the analyst's desire

The very fact that Lacan speaks of the handling of transference signals that transference during analysis and transference at the end of analysis is not the same thing. Which is why the thorny question for Lacan is none other than: What is it the analyst is supposed to know? Despite the fact that, as the subject supposed to know actually knows nothing about the analysand, the analyst should nevertheless know, having gone through actual experience, "what it is all *about*," that is to say, "*he* must know," as Lacan vehemently emphasises, "what it is around which [...] the process through which he guides his patient [...] turns."[74] In short, what the analyst is expected to know, according to Lacan, is that "transference is unthinkable unless one sets out from the subject who is supposed to know,"[75] but the analyst is also expected to know that this supposed knowledge is in itself the transference effect, the effect of love. The analyst, insofar as s/he assumes the responsibility to guide the analysand through analysis, is confronted with a particular difficulty, namely: "[i]n so far as the analyst is supposed to know, he is also supposed to set out in search of unconscious desire."[76] But to attain this goal, the analyst has to set in motion, render operational, the only weapon at his/her disposal: the desire of the analyst, which can only be articulated in the "relation of desire to desire," a relation which is itself based on the assumption that the speaking being's desire, precisely for being a being of speech, is the desire of the Other.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 230.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
76 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

In *Seminar VII* Lacan broaches the question of the analyst's desire via the price to be paid by the analyst. Thus, for Lacan, "an analyst has to pay something if he is to play his role. He pays in words, in his interpretations. He pays with his person to the extent that through the transference he is literally dispossessed."[77] Just like Socrates, who makes himself into the accomplice of his interlocutor's desire that remains unbeknown to him, the analyst, too, has to pay "with a judgement on his action." Lacan can therefore boldly state that, "from a certain point of view, the analyst is fully aware that he cannot know what he is doing in psychoanalysis. Part of this action remains hidden even to him."[78]

To realise this, it suffices to ask with Lacan what it is actually that is demanded of an analysis: "What is demanded can be expressed in a simple word, *bonheur* or 'happiness,' as they say it in English."[79] That the analyst cannot simply ignore the analysand's demand for happiness results from a momentous historical change: once "happiness has become a political matter", as is the case since the French Revolution, this involves that for the modern subject "there is no satisfaction for the individual outside of the satisfaction of the all". Hence, in a certain sense, happiness is considered to be one of the essential rights of man. Or to state it with Lacan, it is "because happiness has entered the political realm" that the demand for happiness is situated "at the level of the needs of all men."[80] And it is exactly in such a context that "the analyst sets himself up to receive a demand for happiness."[81] Indeed, this is something that should be taken into account, Lacan warns,

> whenever the analyst finds himself in the position of responding to anyone who asks him for happiness. [...] To have carried an analysis through to its end is no more nor less than to have encountered that limit in which the problematic of desire is raised. That this problematic is central for access to any realization of oneself whatsoever constitutes the novelty of the analysis.[82]

77 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Porter, W. W. Norton & Company, New York 1992, p. 291.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*, p. 292.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

In contrast to love, transference love included, which consists in giving what one does not have,

> [w]hat the analyst has to give, unlike the partner in the act of love, is something that even the most beautiful bride in the world cannot outmatch, that is to say, what he has. And what he has is nothing other than his desire, like that of the analysand, with the difference that it is an experienced desire. What can a desire of this kind, the desire of the analyst, be? We can say right away what it cannot be. It cannot desire the impossible.[83]

There is a tipping point here that announces a change in perspective, if not a paradigm shift. From *Seminar VII* onwards, Lacan posits that there is a lack in the Other and that the Name-of-the-Father fails to account for this lack. Hence, when the subject, through his/her question and desire, encounters this lack, precisely at this point s/he loses something. This is, as Lacan affirms, the great secret of analysis, and it is precisely at this point that he raises the question: What is the analyst's desire?

What highlights the unheard of novelty of psychoanalysis is not simply the discovery of the unconscious, but also its refusal to satisfy the analysand's demand to make him/her happy again by getting rid of the symptom, the cause of the analysand's suffering. In ignoring the analysand's futile pursuit of happiness, psychoanalysis nevertheless offers something precious in return: it seeks to arouse in the analysand the desire to know and to recognise in his/her symptom, this being the indelible trace of a contingent encounter with jouissance, the mark of his/her singularity. Refusing to promise the analysand the recovery of his/her happiness by helping reconcile him/her to civilisation, psychoanalysis promises the analysand something entirely different: the uncovering of the revolutionary potential of his/her very symptom.

To uncover this revolutionary potential it is essential to further elaborate the position of the analyst in transference. Thus, while transference love bears upon the knowledge that the analyst is supposed to hold, beyond this supposed knowledge, the analyst is also a corporeal presence, a body, or rather an object, whose main function is not to facilitate a dialogue with the analysand but in-

[83] *Ibid.*

stead to provide through its mute presence a corporeal support that enables the installation of the analysand's true partner, his/her symptom. The analyst has to draw a clear line of demarcation between offering his/her body to incarnate the agalmatic object that the analysand is desperately demanding, and guiding him/her to the real of his/her libidinal body, fragmented by the drives and, as a consequence, inundated by jouissance.

This also explains the curious dialectics of transference that consists of two diametrically opposed yet complementary operations: alienation and separation. If transference love marks the moment of the subject's initial alienation in the Other, the separation from this Other marks the resolution of transference and thereby the end of analysis. The Other is thus at the very heart of the analysand's symptom; one is almost tempted to state that the subject's symptom is none other than the Other. The reason for this can be found in the very production of the analytic symptom. For the symptom to be "read" and eventually eliminated, it is necessary that the symptom, just like the subject, originates in the field of the Other, more specifically, in that trait that brings the subject into his/her symbolic existence, the unary trait that by marking him/her with an indelible trait, sets him/her apart. What specifies the unary trait, which is why it has some affinities with the master's signifier,[84] is the link between the ideal and the symptom. It is through the unary trait that the symptom is rooted in the symbolic. However, the separation of the symptom from the Other is not the end of the story for that matter insofar as the symptom is also the drive satisfaction allowing the subject to draw some jouissance from his/her suffering caused precisely by the symptom.

The question then becomes how to bring the subject to the point of recognising in the symptom s/he complains about the very knot that holds him/her together: the imaginary unity attained through the image of the body which provides to the subject a sense of consistency, a symbolic existence as it is through the signifier that the subject finds a place in the field of the Other, and the real of his/her always unique, singular mode of jouissance. Or, rather, how to lead the

[84] As Lacan himself will note in *Seminar XVII,* considered as "the function of the simplest form of mark," the unary trait is "properly speaking [...] the origin of the signifier." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* trans. R. Grigg, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London 2007, p. 46.

subject to the point of being able to give a name to the real that designates the singularity of his/her subjective position, in short, to discover in the symptom a new unary trait as his/her true, that is to say, symptomal name? This new identification, the identification with the symptom, which is a true identification in the real, is to be distinguished from the imaginary and the symbolic identification. This is because the symptom, now situated as a kind of Archimedean point opens the horizon of the possible for the subject, yet against the background of the impossible, which, for psychoanalysis, is none other than the "There is no sexual relation." It could then be argued that, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, the symptom in its revolutionary, unruly capacity is precisely that which opens up for the analysand the possibility of escaping from the formatting imposed upon him/her by the dominant discourse and, in so doing, of enabling him/her to think otherwise, this being the only prospect for innovative action. The presence of the analyst may well be itself a "manifestation of the unconscious,"[85] as Lacan claims, but, by incarnating the agalmatic object for the analysand, the analyst is also present as the object a. Hence, what counts in an analysis is the analyst's being, not his/her lack thereof which would imply that the status of the analyst is that of the subject.

It is precisely at this point that Lacan situates the opposition between transference love and the analyst's desire defined as "a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in position to subject himself to it."[86] It is by incarnating the agalmatic object for the analysand that the analyst raises the analysand's hope that s/he will regain what s/he has lost, whether the truth of his/her being or the mythical, yet unattainable jouissance that would make him/her whole again. The analyst's desire points in the opposite direction. It is precisely at the point where the analysand is confronted with the primary signifier to which s/he is initially submitted, where the analysand expects the analyst's response to his/her demand of love (of knowledge), that s/he encounters the analyst's desire, "a desire to obtain absolute difference" between the agency of alienation, the ego-ideal, the point I, and the agency of separation, and the object a. Using the terms from "Proposition", it could then be said that the analyst's desire becomes operative, effective, only

85 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 125.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 276.

to the extent that it "comes to the place of the *x* [...] whose solution delivers the psychoanalysand his being, and whose value is written [either] (-φ), the gap that, if one isolates it in the castration complex, is designated as the function of the phallus, or (*a*) for what obiturates it with the object that can be recognised in the function approximated by the pregenital relation."[87]

For transference to emerge, the analysand has to establish a relation with the analyst "at the level of the privileged signifier known as the ego ideal," as it is only from that point of view that the analysand will "feel himself both satisfactory and loved."[88] Yet for the analysand to be able to "read his/her (unconscious) desire" that will enable him/her to confront the mode of jouissance that singularises him/her, in a word, to wrench him-/herself from the alienating identification and to break with the autistic, repetitious jouissance that condemns the subject to his/her deadly solitude, another function is called for, one that "institutes an identification of a strangely different kind, and which is introduced by the process of separation."[89] This identification "of a different kind" is none other than identification with the object a that allows the subject to separate him-/herself, to exit the alienation that only brings about what Lacan calls "the vacillation of being."[90]

For there to be a way of avoiding the impasse of an approach whose ultimate goal is identification with the analyst, it is therefore important to indicate that there is "a beyond to this identification, and this beyond is defined by the relation and the distance of the *objet petit a* to the idealizing capital I of identification."[91] What characterises the position of the analyst is precisely a shift, a move, a passage from the place in which the analysand situates him/her: that of the ego-ideal, to that of the object a. But how exactly does the position of the analyst relate to the function of the object a?

In the closing chapter of *Seminar XI* Lacan designates the end of analysis as the operation of leading the analysand to the "point of lack that the subject has to

87 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 8.

88 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 257.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 271–272.

recognize himself." The handling of transference, supported by the analyst's desire, would then consist in an operation that "maintains a distance between the point at which the subject sees himself as lovable – and that other point where the subject sees himself caused as a lack by *a* and where *a* fills the gap constituted by the inaugural division of the subject."[92] Seen from this perspective, the handling of transference is centred around the object a, a peculiar object "discovered by analysis" in the sense that it is the "object around which the drive moves," yet "whose very reality is purely topological."[93] There is, however, another, essential trait of "this privileged object": its "special status" is revealed in the handling of transference since it designates the place where the analyst must be in order to lead the process of transference to its resolution. It is precisely because "the fundamental mainspring of the analytic operation" consists in maintaining "the distance between the I – identification – and the *a*" that Lacan can circumscribe two pivotal points of the whole operation:

> if the transference is that which separates demand from the drive, the analyst's desire is that which brings it back. And in this way, it isolates the *a*, and places it at the greatest possible distance from the I that he, the analyst, is called upon by the subject to embody. It is from this idealization that the analyst has to fall in order to be the support of the separating *a*.[94]

Transference at the end of an analysis does not, properly speaking, amount to its liquidation. The encounter between the love of knowledge and the analyst's desire aims at a resolution, but a resolution that leaves a remainder.

Clearly, the analyst's desire viewed from the perspective of the ideal ego is entirely different from the analyst's desire seen from the perspective of the object a. But there is a price to be paid for this shift. Situated in the position of the object a, "the analyst," Lacan notes, "cannot help but think that any object whatsoever can fill it."[95] Which is why Lacan concludes *Seminar VIII* by claiming that the analyst must mourn love, since no object is more valuable than another. The analyst's desire is centred around this bereavement that reveals, as the logic of

92 *Ibid.*, p. 270.
93 *Ibid.*, p. 257.
94 *Ibid.*, p. 273.
95 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VIII: Transference*, p. 397.

drives does, that any object whatsoever will do. If the analyst vacillates when the question of what the analyst's desire involves, it is precisely because s/he must accept that s/he will no longer be agalmatic for the analysand, or, rather, s/he must accept losing his/her agalma, becoming nothing more than a waste product of the cure; s/he must consent to a radical mutation of the object a: from *agalma* to *palea*. In incarnating and veiling at the same time the disbeing, *désêtre*, of the supposed subject of knowledge, the agalma of the analysand's desire, the analyst must be from the outset "ready to pay for it through reducing himself, himself and his name, for any given signifier."[96] Hence, it is precisely the role that the analyst has to take on in order to sustain the analysand in his/her operation that makes him/her "destitute as subject," condemned in advance to become the remainder. Lacan can then claim that, for the analyst, his/her "[s]ubjective destitution is written on the entry ticket".[97] Paradoxically, only by accepting in advance that s/he will become a residue, *palea*, useless as dung – once the analysand, at the end of analysis, succeeds in producing knowledge about the being of his/her desire, agalma, the desire's cause, as a (structurally necessary) lure yet void of being – will the analyst succeed in guiding his/her analysand to the point at which s/he will reconcile him-/herself with the inexorable logic of the drive. But the price for making the analyst's desire operational is nothing less than to willingly accept being "the reject of humanity." Thus, what distinguishes the analyst, as Lacan somewhat provocatively claims in "Italian Note", is that "he knows that he is a reject."[98]

This very passage from *agalma* to *palea* indicates that the analyst's desire signifies "an a-subjective function," as Marie-Hélène Brousse designates "the result of a subjective operation," namely, that of an analysis which allows the analysand at the end of his/her analysis "to consent to and decide to operate under this function: thus a desire to take a specific place in the device and thereby contribute to its reproduction."[99] But then the question becomes how, exactly, is desire modified by analysis. Or, put differently, if the goal of every analysis is to reveal at the end the cause of desire, what then is the cause of the desire that supports the handling of transference and its resolution? That the cause of

96 Lacan, "Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School," p. 10.
97 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
98 Jacques Lacan, "Note italienne," *Autres* écrits, Seuil, Paris 2001, p. 309.
99 Marie-Hélène Brousse, "A Desire without Cause?", *lacanian ink*, no. 40, p. 61.

the analyst's desire poses a problem can be seen in the fact that Lacan himself designates the desire of the analyst as an "unheard-of desire." If the unheard-of, unprecedented novelty of the analyst's desire relates to its very cause, and if this is the case, Brousse asks, "what new cause gives rise to an unheard-of desire?"[100] Or, more specifically, how are we to conceive of "the relationship between desire and the object-cause which a subject can incarnate for another subject?"[101] If the analyst's desire is without precedence or "unheard-of", as Lacan claims, this is first and foremost because it is a desire that is operational, effective, without the division of the subject since the analyst is placed in analysis as an object rather than a subject.

Taken as "the desire's function," the analyst is indeed situated as an object, yet, as Brousse rightly remarks, as "a de-phallicized object," an object that is not even lost because it remains as "an irretrievable waste"[102] at the end of analysis. So, either the analyst's desire is a desire literally without a cause, or its cause is unlike any other cause of desire known so far. If the analyst's desire is caused neither by the object of a drive, nor even by the object-nothing, then the only option that remains is that it is caused by an impossible, unsayable real, that renders the symbolic inoperative because the real cannot be written. The real in question here, the real for the speaking being, is encapsulated in the famous Lacanian formula: "There is no such thing as a sexual relation." Since the real specific to the speaking being is the impossibility of writing the sexual relation, what takes the place of the object a, this real-cause – the cause of the analyst's desire – is strictly speaking not an object. Rather, due to the impossibility of translating the real into the symbolic, the object that causes the analyst's desire is ultimately erased as an object.

It is then, to follow Brousse's suggestion, this "impossible that is placed in the position of the cause of the analyst's desire." This is because it is only by making this place void, that the analysand can place therein the object of his/her fantasy, whatever it may be.[103] In this sense, it is only by losing its "agalmatic value of surplus jouissance," that the object-cause of the analyst's desire can be

[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[102] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

articulated to the senseless emergence of the real exactly at the point at which the Other as the guarantor of meaning used to be situated. The possibility of handling transference therefore depends – in order to mark the impossibility of the sexual relation for each and every analysand – on the effective voiding of the object. And it is precisely as such, i.e. void of all objectality, that the object-cause of the analyst's desire bears witness to the encounter with the impossible-real that every analysand brings to analysis and to the consequences to be drawn therefrom – as can be evidenced in the production of new knowledge. Therein we can see the object a, the object-cause of the analyst's desire.

Today, however, this path of knowledge seems to be unviable since, once knowledge is downgraded, devaluated, it is "no longer an object of love, but has become merchandise itself"[104]. Once there is a disjunction between knowledge and the Other, its guarantor, there inevitably arises the following question: What kind of relation does the contemporary subject have with knowledge and jouissance? In discovering transference Freud also discovered a link between love and knowledge. For Lacan, by contrast, what is at issue in transference is not only the secret connection between love and knowledge, since for him, beyond knowledge, there is the sexual reality of the unconscious, this being the real that love dissimulates. With the emergence of a new paradigm of surplus jouissance, when knowledge itself is evaluated from the point of view of its jouissance value, it appears to be devalued. Having lost its "agalmatic value,"[105] knowledge has become something quite indifferent. There is then an undeniable connection between "the rise to the zenith of the object a" and the devaluation of knowledge. For the paradigm of knowledge that dominates today is a knowledge cut from both the object and the subject, a knowledge reduced to an algorithmic technology. Just like the drive, circling blindly around the hole and therefore indifferent to the object that enables it to remain in circulation, algorithmic knowledge is an acephalic machine for the calculation and evaluation of everything, which means anything. With the current de-agalmisation of knowledge, there seems to be no room for the subject supposed to know, supposed to be in the possession of the precious truth about the subject's being. Contemporary subjectivity, being indifferent to knowledge, knows only of the various experiences of the object, its addictive and inexorable mode of jouissance, which from the start

[104] Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire : Livre XVI : D'un Autre à l'autre*, Seuil, Paris 2006, p. 39.

[105] See Jean-Claude Milner, *Le Juif de savoir,* Grasset & Fasquelle, Paris 2006.

prevents the onset of transference. Without the possibility of clarifying what his/her status is as an object of the drive, the subject nowadays is condemned to the unsayable, repetitive, and unchangeable jouissance.

From the perspective of the prevailing indifference to knowledge that renders transference difficult if not impossible, psychoanalysis, too, seems to be in danger of extinction. Hence, for there to be psychoanalysis, it is of paramount importance to re-examine the current possibility of transference in psychoanalysis. In the era of the tyranny of jouissance, as manifest in the current triumph of narcissism and indifference to knowledge, transference appears less to be a matter of supposed knowledge articulated to love, than a matter of knowing how to deal with the real of jouissance.