

PRESENCE OF THE ANALYST

Problems of the transference · Obscurantism in analysis · Ablata causa · The Other, already there · The unconscious is outside · An article in The International Journal

So that I would not always have to be looking for a box of matches, someone gave me a very large box, as you can see. On it is written the following motto: *the art of listening is almost as important as that of saying the right thing*. This apportions our tasks. Let us hope that we will measure up to them.

Today I shall be dealing with the transference, or rather I shall approach the question, in the hope of giving you some idea of the concept, as I promised I would do in my second talk.

I

The transference is usually represented as an affect. A rather vague distinction is then made between a positive and a negative transference. It is generally assumed, not without some foundation, that the positive transference is love—though it must be said that, in the way it is used here, this term is employed in a very approximate way.

At a very early stage, Freud posed the question of the authenticity of love as it occurs in the transference. To come to the point, it is usually maintained that in these circumstances it is a sort of false love, a shadow of love. But Freud himself did not weigh down the scales in this direction—far from it. Not least among the consequences of the experience of the transference was that it led Freud to take the question of what is called true love, *eine echte Liebe*, further perhaps than it had ever been taken.

In the case of the negative transference, commentators are more prudent, more restrained, in the way they refer to it, and

it is never identified with hate. They usually employ the term ambivalence, a term which, even more than the first, conceals things very well, confused things that are not always handled in a satisfactory way.

It would be truer to say that the positive transference is when you have a soft spot for the individual concerned, the analyst in this instance, and the negative transference is when you have to keep your eye on him.

There is another use of the term transference that is worth pointing out, as when one says that it structures all the particular relations with that other who is the analyst, and that the value of all the thoughts that gravitate around this relation must be connoted by a sign of particular reserve. Hence the expression—which is always added as a kind of after-thought or parenthesis, as if to convey some kind of suspicion, when used about the behaviour of a subject—*he is in full transference*. This presupposes that his entire mode of apperception has been restructured around the dominant centre of the transference.

I will not go any further because this double semantic mapping seems to me to be adequate for the moment.

We cannot, of course, remain satisfied with this, since our aim is to approach the concept of the transference.

This concept is determined by the function it has in a particular praxis. This concept directs the way in which patients are treated. Conversely, the way in which they are treated governs the concept.

It might seem to settle the question at the outset if we could decide whether or not the transference is bound up with analytic practice, whether it is a product, not to say an artefact, of analytic practice. Ida Macalpine, one of the many authors who have been led to express their opinions on the transference, has carried as far as possible the attempt to articulate the transference in this direction. Whatever her merits—she is a very stubborn person—let me say at once that I cannot, in any sense, accept this extreme position.

In any case, approaching the question in this way does not settle it. Even if we must regard the transference as a product of the analytic situation, we may say that this situation cannot create the phenomenon in its entirety, and that, in order to produce it, there must be, outside the analytic situation,

possibilities already present to which it will give their perhaps unique composition.

This in no way excludes the possibility, where no analyst is in view, that there may be, properly speaking, transference effects that may be structured exactly like the gamut of transference phenomena in analysis. It is simply that, in discovering these effects, analysis will make it possible to give them an experimental model that need not necessarily be at all different from the model I shall call the natural one. So to bring out the transference in analysis, where it acquires its structural foundations, may very well be the only way of introducing the universality of the application of this concept. It should be enough, then, to open up this package in the sphere of analysis and, more especially, of the *doxa* that goes with it.

This, after all, is a truism. Nevertheless, it is a rough indication worth making as a start.

2

The aim of this introduction is to remind you that if we are to approach the fundamentals of psycho-analysis we must introduce a certain coherence into the major concepts on which it is based. Such a coherence is already to be found in the way I have approached the concept of the unconscious—which, you will remember, I was unable to separate from the presence of the analyst.

Presence of the analyst—a fine phrase that should not be reduced to the tear-jerking sermonizing, the serious inflation, the rather sticky caress to be found in a book that has appeared under this title.

The presence of the analyst is itself a manifestation of the unconscious, so that when it is manifested nowadays in certain encounters, as a refusal of the unconscious—this is a tendency, readily admitted, in some people's thinking—this very fact must be integrated into the concept of the unconscious. You have rapid access here to the formulation, which I have placed in the forefront, of a movement of the subject that opens up only to close again in a certain temporal pulsation—a pulsation I regard as being more radical than the insertion in the signifier that no doubt motivates it, but is not primary to it at the level of essence, since I have been driven to speak of essence.

I have shown, in a maieutic, eristic way, that one should see in the unconscious the effects of speech on the subject—in so far as these effects are so radically primary that they are properly what determine the status of the subject as subject. This proposition was intended to restore the Freudian unconscious to its true place. Certainly, the unconscious has always been present, it existed and acted before Freud, but it is important to stress that all the acceptations given, before Freud, to this function of the unconscious have absolutely nothing to do with the Freudian unconscious.

The primal unconscious, the unconscious as archaic function, the unconscious as veiled presence of a thought to be placed at the level of being before it is revealed, the metaphysical unconscious of Edward von Hartmann—whatever reference Freud makes to it in an *ad hominem* argument—above all the unconscious as instinct—all this has nothing to do with the Freudian unconscious, nothing at all, whatever its analytic vocabulary, its inflections, its deviations may be—nothing at all to do with our experience. I will ask analysts a straight question: *have you ever, for a single moment, the feeling that you are handling the clay of instinct?*

In my Rome report,¹ I proceeded to a new alliance with the meaning of the Freudian discovery. The unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at the level at which the subject constitutes himself out of the effects of the signifier. This makes it clear that, in the term *subject*—this is why I referred it back to its origin—I am not designating the living substratum needed by this phenomenon of the subject, nor any sort of substance, nor any being possessing knowledge in his *pathos*, his suffering, whether primal or secondary, nor even some incarnated logos, but the Cartesian subject, who appears at the moment when doubt is recognized as certainty—except that, through my approach, the bases of this subject prove to be wider, but, at the same time much more amenable to the certainty that eludes it. This is what the unconscious is.

There is a link between this field and the moment, Freud's

¹ 'Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse', *Écrits*, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1966; 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psycho-Analysis', *Écrits: a selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, Tavistock Publications, 1977.

moment, when it is revealed. It is this link I express when I compare it with the approach of a Newton, an Einstein, a Planck, an a-cosmological approach, in the sense that all these fields are characterized by tracing in the real a new furrow in relation to the knowledge that might from all eternity be attributed to God.

Paradoxically, the difference which will most surely guarantee the survival of Freud's field, is that the Freudian field is a field which, of its nature, is lost. It is here that the presence of the psycho-analyst as witness of this loss, is irreducible.

At this level, we can get nothing more out of it—for it is a dead loss, with no gain to show, except perhaps its resumption in the function of pulsation. The loss is necessarily produced in a shaded area—which is designated by the oblique stroke with which I divide the formulae which unfold, in linear form, opposite each of the terms, unconscious, repetition, transference. This area of loss even involves, as far as these facts of analytic practice are concerned, a certain deepening of obscurantism, very characteristic of the condition of man in our times of supposed information—obscurantism which, without really knowing why, I can well believe will be regarded as incredible in the future. What I mean by obscurantism is, in particular, the function assumed by psycho-analysis in the propagation of a style that calls itself the *American way of life*, in so far as it is characterized by the revival of notions long since refuted in the field of psycho-analysis, such as the predominance of the functions of the ego.

In this sense, then, the presence of the psycho-analyst, seen in the very same perspective in which the vanity of his discourse appears, must be included in the concept of the unconscious. Psycho-analysts of today, we must take account of this slag in our operations, as we must of the *caput mortuum* of the discovery of the unconscious. It justifies the maintenance, within analysis, of a conflict situation, necessary to the very existence of analysis.

If it is true that psycho-analysis rests on a fundamental conflict, on an initial, radical drama as far as everything that might be included under the heading 'psychical' is concerned, the innovation to which I refer, and which is called *recall of the field and function of speech and language in psychoanalytic experience*,

does not claim to exhaust the possibilities of the unconscious, since it is, itself, an intervention in the conflict. This recall has an immediate implication in that it has itself a transferential effect. In any case, this is recognized by the fact that my seminar has been criticized precisely for playing, in relation to my audience, a function regarded by the orthodoxy of the psycho-analytic association as dangerous, for intervening in the transference. Now, far from denying it, I would regard this effect as radical, as constituting, indeed, this renewal of the alliance with Freud's discovery. This indicates that the cause of the unconscious—and you see that the word cause is to be taken here in its ambiguity, a cause to be sustained, but also a function of the cause at the level of the unconscious—this cause must be conceived as, fundamentally, a lost cause. And it is the only chance one has of winning it.

That is why, in the misunderstood concept of repetition, I stress the importance of the ever avoided encounter, of the missed opportunity. The function of missing lies at the centre of analytic repetition. The appointment is always missed—this is what constitutes, in comparison with *tuché*, the vanity of repetition, its constitutive occultation.

The concept of repetition brings me to the following dilemma—either I assume quite simply my implication as analyst in the eristic character of the discord of any description of my experience, or I polish up the concept at the level of something that would be impossible to objectify, if not at the level of a transcendental analysis of cause.

Cause might be formulated on the basis of the classical formula of the *ablata causa tollitur effectus*—I would have only to stress the singular of the protasis, *ablata causa*, by putting the terms of the apodosis in the plural *tolluntur effectus*—which would mean that *the effects are successful only in the absence of cause*. All the effects are subjected to the pressure of a transfactual, causal order which demands to join in their dance, but, if they held their hands tightly, as in the song, they would prevent the cause intruding in their round.

At this point, I should define unconscious cause, neither as an existent, nor as a *ὄντιον*, a non-existent—as, I believe Henri Ey does, a non-existent of possibility. It is a *μὴ ὄν* of the prohibition that brings to being an existent in spite of its non-

advent, it is a function of the impossible on which a certainty is based.

3

This brings us to the function of the transference. For this indeterminate of pure being that has no point of access to determination, this primary position of the unconscious that is articulated as constituted by the indetermination of the subject—it is to this that the transference gives us access, in an enigmatic way. It is a Gordian knot that leads us to the following conclusion—the subject is looking for his certainty. And the certainty of the analyst himself concerning the unconscious cannot be derived from the concept of the transference.

It is striking, therefore, to observe the multiplicity, the plurality, the plurivalence even, of the conceptions of the transference that have been formulated in analysis. I do not claim to be able to provide you with an exhaustive account of them. I shall simply try to guide you through the paths of a chosen exploration.

At its emergence in the writings and teachings of Freud, a sliding-away (*glissement*), which we cannot impute to him, lies in wait for us—this consists in seeing in the concept of the transference no more than the concept of repetition itself. Let us not forget that when Freud presents it to us, he says—*what cannot be remembered is repeated in behaviour*. This behaviour, in order to reveal what it repeats, is handed over to the analyst's reconstruction.

One may go so far as to believe that the opacity of the trauma—as it was then maintained in its initial function by Freud's thought, that is to say, in my terms, its resistance to signification—is then specifically held responsible for the limits of remembering. And, after all, it is hardly surprising, given my own theorization, that I should see this as a highly significant moment in the transfer of powers from the subject to the Other, what I call the capital Other (*le grand Autre*), the locus of speech and, potentially, the locus of truth.

Is this the point at which the concept of the transference appears? It would seem so, and one often goes no further. But let us look at it more closely. In Freud, this moment is not simply the moment-limit that seems to correspond to what I

designated as the moment of the closing up of the unconscious, a temporal pulsation that makes it disappear at a certain point of its statement (*énoncé*). When Freud introduces the function of the transference, he is careful to mark this moment as the cause of what we call the transference. The Other, latent or not, is, even beforehand, present in the subjective revelation. It is already there, when something has begun to yield itself from the unconscious.

The analyst's interpretation merely reflects the fact that the unconscious, if it is what I say it is, namely, a play of the signifier, has already in its formations—dreams, slips of tongue or pen, witticisms or symptoms—proceeded by interpretation. The Other, the capital Other, is already there in every opening, however fleeting it may be, of the unconscious.

What Freud shows us, from the outset, is that the transference is essentially resistant, *Übertragungswiderstand*. The transference is the means by which the communication of the unconscious is interrupted, by which the unconscious closes up again. Far from being the handing over of powers to the unconscious, the transference is, on the contrary, its closing up.

This is essential in noting the paradox that is expressed quite commonly in the fact—which may even be found in Freud's writings—that the analyst must await the transference before beginning to give his interpretation.

I want to stress this question because it is the dividing line between the correct and incorrect conception of the transference.

In analytic practice, there are many ways of conceiving the transference. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They may be defined at different levels. For example, although the conceptions of the relation of the subject to one or other of those agencies which, in the second stage of his *Topography*, Freud was able to define as the ego-ideal or the super-ego, are partial, this is often simply to give a lateralized view of what is essentially the relation with the capital Other.

But there are other divergences that are irreducible. There is a conception which, wherever it is formulated, can only terminate practice—I am referring to the conception which would have the analysis of the transference proceed on the basis of an alliance with the healthy part of the subject's ego, and consists in appealing to his common sense, by way of

pointing out to him the illusory character of certain of his actions in his relation with the analyst. This is a thesis that subverts what it is all about, namely the bringing to awareness of this split in the subject, realized here, in fact, in presence. To appeal to some healthy part of the subject thought to be there in the real, capable of judging with the analyst what is happening in the transference, is to misunderstand that it is precisely this part that is concerned in the transference, that it is this part that closes the door, or the window, or the shutters, or whatever—and that the beauty with whom one wishes to speak is there, behind, only too willing to open the shutters again. That is why it is at this moment that interpretation becomes decisive, for it is to the beauty one must speak.

I can do no more than suggest here the reversion involved in this schema in relation to the model one has of it in one's head. I say somewhere that *the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*. Now, the discourse of the Other that is to be realized, that of the unconscious, is not beyond the closure, it is *outside*. It is this discourse, which, through the mouth of the analyst, calls for the reopening of the shutter.

Nevertheless, there is a paradox in designating this movement of closure as the initial moment when the interpretation may assume its full force. And here is revealed the permanent conceptual crisis that exists in analysis concerning the way in which the function of the transference should be conceived.

The contradiction of its function, which causes it to be apprehended as the point of impact of the force of the interpretation by the very fact that, in relation to the unconscious, it is a moment of closure—this is why we must treat it as what it is, namely, a knot. Whether or not we treat it as a Gordian knot remains to be seen. It is a knot, and it prompts us to account for it—as I have been doing for several years—by considerations of topology. It will not be thought unnecessary, I hope, to remind you of these.

4

There is a crisis in analysis and, to show that there is nothing biased in this, I would support my view by citing a recent article that demonstrates this in the most striking way—and it is the work of no mediocre mind. It is a closely argued, very

engaging article by Thomas S. Szasz—who hails from Syracuse, which fact, unfortunately, does not make him any more closely related to Archimedes, for this Syracuse is in New York State—which appeared in the latest number of *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

The author was inspired to write this article by an idea in keeping with the line of investigation that inspired his earlier articles, a truly moving search for the authenticity of the analytic way.

It is quite striking that an author, who is indeed one of the most highly regarded in his circle, which is specifically that of American psycho-analysis, should regard the transference as nothing more than a defence on the part of the psycho-analyst, and should arrive at the following conclusion—*the transference is the pivot on which the entire structure of psycho-analytic treatment rests*. This is a concept that he calls *inspired*—I am always suspicious of *faux amis* in English vocabulary, so I have tried to tread warily when translating it. This *inspired*, it seemed to me, did not mean *inspiré*, but something like *officieux*. *It is an inspired and indispensable concept—I quote—yet it harbours the seeds, not only of its own destruction, but of the destruction of psycho-analysis itself. Why? Because it tends to place the person of the analyst beyond the reality testing of patients, colleagues, and self. This hazard must be frankly recognized. Neither professionalization, nor the 'raising of standards', nor coerced training analyses can protect us from this danger.* And here the confusion arises—*only the integrity of the analyst and of the analytic situation can safeguard from extinction the unique dialogue between analysand and analyst.*

This blind alley that Szasz has created for himself is, for him, necessitated by the very fact that he can conceive of the analysis of the transference only in terms of an assent obtained from the healthy part of the ego, that part which is capable of judging reality and of separating it from illusion.

His article begins thus, quite logically—*Transference is similar to such concepts as delusion, illusion, and phantasy*. Once the presence of the transference has been established, it is a question of agreement between the analysand and the analyst, except that here the analyst is a judge against whom there is neither appeal nor recourse, we are led to call any analysis of the transference a field of pure, uncontrolled hazard.

I have taken this article only as an extreme case, but a very revealing one, so as to encourage us to restore here a determination that should bring into play another order—that of truth. Truth is based only on the fact that speech, even when it consists of lies, appeals to it and gives rise to it. This dimension is always absent from the logical positivism that happens to dominate Szasz's analysis of the concept of transference.

My own conception of the dynamics of the unconscious has been called an intellectualization—on the grounds that I based the function of the signifier in the forefront. Is it not apparent that it is in this operational mode—in which everything makes light of the confrontation between a reality and a connotation of illusion attributed to the phenomenon of the transference—that this supposed intellectualization really resides?

Far from us having to consider two subjects, in a dual position, to discuss an objectivity that appears to have been posited there as the gravitational effect of a compression in behaviour, we must bring out the domain of possible deception. When I introduced you to the subject of Cartesian certainty as the necessary starting-point of all our speculations as to what the unconscious reveals, I pointed out the role of essential balancer played in Descartes by the Other which, it is said, must on no account be deceived. In analysis, the danger is that this Other will be deceived. This is not the only dimension to be apprehended in the transference. But one has to admit that if there is one domain in which, in discourse, deception has some chance of success, it is certainly love that provides its model. What better way of assuring oneself, on the point on which one is mistaken, than to persuade the other of the truth of what one says! Is not this a fundamental structure of the dimension of love that the transference gives us the opportunity of depicting? In persuading the other that he has that which may complete us, we assure ourselves of being able to continue to misunderstand precisely what we lack. The circle of deception, in so far as it highlights the dimension of love at the point named—this will serve us as an exemplary door to demonstrate the trick next time.

But this is not all I have to show you, for it is not what radically causes the closure involved in the transference. What causes it, and this will be the other side of our examination of

the concepts of the transference, is—to come back to the question mark inscribed in the left part, the shaded, reserved part—what I have designated by the *objet a*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

F. WAHL: *To what theory of knowledge, in the system of existing theories, might what you said in the first half of the lecture be related?*

LACAN: Since I am saying that it is the novelty of the Freudian field to provide us in experience with something that is fundamentally apprehended like that, it is hardly surprising if you cannot find a model for it in Plotinus.

Having said this, I know that, despite my refusal to follow Miller's first question on the subject of an ontology of the unconscious, I nevertheless gave you a little rope with some very precise references. I spoke of the ∂v , of the $\sigma\partial x$. With the ∂v , I was referring specifically to the formulation of it given by Henri Ey, of whom it cannot be said that he is the best qualified person to speak of the unconscious—he manages to situate the unconscious somewhere in his theory of consciousness. I spoke of the $\mu\eta\partial v$, of the prohibition, of the says-no. This does not go very far as a strictly metaphysical indication, and I do not think that here I am transgressing the boundaries that I have laid down for myself. All the same, it does structure in a perfectly transmissible way the points on which your question bears. In the unconscious there is a corpus of knowledge (*un savoir*), which must in no way be conceived as knowledge to be completed, to be closed.

∂v , $\sigma\partial x$ ∂v , $\mu\eta\partial v$ —to use these terms is still to over-justify the unconscious. This is why I have carefully avoided them. What there is beyond, what a little while ago I called the beauty behind the shutters, this is what is in question and which I have not touched on today. It is a question of mapping out how something of the subject is, behind the screen, magnetized, magnetized to the profound degree of dissociation, of split. This is the key-point at which we must see the Gordian knot.

P. KAUFMANN: *What relation is there between what you have designated as slag and what you earlier spoke of as remainder?*

LACAN: In human destiny, the remainder is always fruitful. The slag is the extinguished remainder. Here, the term slag is used in an entirely negative way. It refers to that true regression

that may occur on the plane of the theory of psychological knowledge, in so far as the analyst finds himself placed in a field in which he has no other course but to flee. He then seeks for assurances in theories that operate in the direction of an orthopaedic, conformist therapeutics, providing access for the subject to the most mythical conception of *happiness* [English in the original—Tr.]. Together with an uncritical manipulation of evolutionism, this is what sets the tone of our era. By slag, I mean here the analysts themselves, nothing more—whilst the discovery of the unconscious is still young, and it is an unprecedented opportunity for subversion.

15 April 1964