



STUDY DAY OF THE SCHOOL
THE PASS: EXPERIENCE AND TESTIMONIES

REPLY N° 4

CARMINE MARRAZZO

(Member EPFCL - Italy FPL, Milan)

Impossible to testify

Invited to take part in the relay that will lead us through the alleys of Venice to our next Study Day of the School, I gladly take up the baton of the Reply.

The previous works have attempted to circumscribe and isolate at least two orders of problems and their articulation: the logic of transmission and the hypothesis of a mathematisable formalisation of this logic. The fold (topological transformation?) that I will attempt to follow leads to the logical aporia of the transmission of that singular human experience on which the dispositive of the Pass is founded: the practice of testimony. What fabric is it made of? It is, I believe, a discursive material.

By inviting us to think psychoanalysis as a discursive practice, Lacan has given a further turn to the attempt at a formalisation of psychoanalysis: from the formalisation of the structure of the unconscious-language to a formalisation of the social link close to the "*Qu'on dise*"¹ [That one says], to the additional turn of the saying. There is no transmission other than that of discourse, but within discourse, between discourses: there is, in structure, an impossibility of transmission, and if there is transmission anywhere, it can only be the transmission of what cannot be transmitted. And, on the other hand, precisely because

¹ J. Lacan, "*L'étourdit*" (1972), in *Autres écrits* p. 449

psychoanalysis reveals itself to be “untransmissible”, as Lacan did not fail to note in 1978, a dispositive for transmission is required.²

For his dispositive, Lacan has opted for a means not like the others: the practice of testimony, in an historical moment marked, sociologically, by the advent of the figure of the witness, as a feature of an era, *The Era of the Witness*.³ The path of testimony, the risk that this practice entails, subverts the problem of the formation of analysts and is obviously different from the ‘providing proof’ of the AS: for the AS, it is a question of giving testimony of what he has done, of himself, the moment of passing, turning, passing to the analyst. But... ‘rien ne l’oblige’, [nothing obliges him].⁴ Enigma, then: *Che vuoi?* Lacan, with your offer of the Pass?

And what pushes, if not obliges, someone to present themselves at the door of the Pass, to cross the threshold of the testimony? The testimonies of the School’s ASs tell us something of the ‘varité’ of this choice of each one, the choice of a contingent condition at the moment of the Pass, of the auctorality of the one-by-one, if I may say, which remains analysing work, invention in the face of the dilemma between the impossibility and the urgency of saying, to take up the terms of the *Ouverture* text, regarding the “occurrences” the name of contingency, which can precipitate into testimony.

But what, then, is it to testify: perhaps another impossible profession?

In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben interrogates the place and the subject of testimony, the “lacuna” in its background⁵ which makes all testimony a testimony of the untestifiable, of that to which one cannot testify: “it is not us” wrote Primo Levi, “the true witnesses” the “integral transmission” being that of the one who has not been able to testify, *der Musselmann*, the “Muslim”: a logical impossibility. Whoever testifies, then, is an exception: the true witnesses could not do so, because “whoever has seen the Gorgon has not come back to tell the tale, or has come back mute”⁶.

Now, given the incommensurability of the experience passed to History under the signifier ‘Auschwitz’, what can the latter teach us in terms of the dispositive of the Pass? All the more so in that we are lead, with Lacan, to ask ourselves about it, he who evoked the camps in his Proposition and for which he was criticised for being ... “serious”.⁷

² J. Lacan, “Sulla trasmissione” (1978) in *La psicoanalisi*, n° 38, p. 14

³ A. Wiewiorka, *L’era del testimone* (1998)

⁴ J. Lacan, “Note italienne” (1973) in *Autres écrits*, p. 307

⁵ G. Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* (1988), p. 31

⁶ P. Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati* (1986), p. 64

⁷ J. Lacan, «Discours à EFP» (1967), in *Autres écrits* p. 274: “someone has thought that it was his duty to tell us that evoking the camps is something serious. And not to evoke them?”

The work on the testimonies of the survivors, which are also uneven, led me to ask a question that is gradually becoming inescapable: 'Is analysis the same before and after Auschwitz?'. With Kertész, I question here the pervasive character of the Holocaust as a 'culture', i.e. its "influential ethical consequences",⁸ among which is the universal category of being-without-destiny. Now, how does this affect us, as analysands of the School? And what, if anything, does it have to do with the dispositive of the Pass, when the whole analytic experience touches on the problem of (not) wanting to know the "destiny"⁹ that the unconscious fabricates for the *parlêtre*?

This question, which, for a long time I thought might be poorly-posed, found a home in Anne-Lise Stern's work on *savoir-déporté* [deported-knowledge]: 'to medicate, to heal Auschwitz, to cure Auschwitz through psychoanalysis? Lacan once said more or less this: thinking, thought, is a bandaging [*pansement*]. So, rather, ask the question: what psychoanalysis after Auschwitz? And he continues, a little later: 'I propose this logical formula for reflection: can one be a psychoanalyst after having been deported to Auschwitz? The answer is no. Is it possible, today, to be psychoanalysts without this? The answer is still no. To clarify *how these two impossibilities hold together, what their relationship is made of*, seems to me a good way to address the question: what psychoanalysis after the Shoah?'.¹⁰

I observe that the Pass was – historically, logically – invented, established and offered *afterwards*. I put forward the hypothesis that the dispositive of the Pass, of each Pass, is affected by the relation of this logical impossibility that arises, for psychoanalysis and for civilisation, *afterwards*. It seems to me to be a way of putting the experience of the Pass as a *quaestio* for civilisation: "to make oneself the refuse" of the aforementioned humanity, as the *Italian Note* says,¹¹ where "every deportee", continues Anne-Lise Stern, "testifies, in reality, to this, to the refuse he has become. This is the knowledge of the deportee, a knowledge of the remains, of the rubbish. But when he talks about it, when he testifies, he is no longer waste"¹²

I pass the baton by recalling a passage from the first pages of *The Truce*, where Primo Levi becomes a passer for little Hurbinek: the particularised interest, "maternal rather than paternal", of the fifteen-year-old Henek, made possible for Hurbinek the emergence of something of the order of an articulate, if incomprehensible, word: "*mass-klo, matsklo*"

⁸ I. Kertész, *Il secolo infelice* (1998), p. 135

⁹ J. Lacan, *Televisión. A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss, A. Michelson, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company (1990)

¹⁰ Anne-Lise Stern, *Le savoir-déporté. Camps, histoire, psychanalyse*, (2004), p. 192, corsivo mío

¹¹ J. Lacan, «*Note italienne*» (1973), in *Autres écrits*, p. 309

¹² Anne-Lise Stern, intervención en el Congreso de Orleans, *Temoigances, savoirs, traces*, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1999, citado en A. Wiewiorka, *L'era del testimone* (1998), p. 138

together with a series of “experimental variations around a theme, a root, perhaps a name”: a taste of *lalangue* that Primo Levi, passer, elevates to the rank of a testimony that exists “only through his words”.¹³

Is it thus that an ethics of testimony can become the testimony of an ethics? Ethics of that to which one cannot testify, the foundation, perhaps, of the possibility of a poem to come.

Translation: Pedro Pablo Arévalo

¹³ P. Levi, *La tregua* (1963), pp. 11-13.