

«The elusive of the unconscious and the certainty of the parlêtre»

Dear Dominique,

Time is indeed what I lack, what makes it difficult to write the preliminary you have requested on this topic. Not that I have the pretension to think I am busier than other people—yourself, for example, in charge as you are of the preparations for this Congress, which is so important for the future of our Forums and School. But when I say that I am lacking time, it is because it escapes me and I cannot grab it back. How then, a fortiori, to write something about it?

Could it be that I have lost it? Perhaps I had it for awhile and—to my horror—let it escape, without realizing or measuring its value; otherwise, I would have paid more attention... Oh, crazy youth, as Francois Villon used to sing! But in blissful youth, the urgency was not the same. Then, I was in a rush to accumulate as many experiences as I could, as opposed to today. It's the little time I have left that rushes me now, and all the time that I don't have anymore that oppresses me...

But, frankly, did I ever have this time? When I was young, it didn't make sense to stop myself because I had already missed the train for the first time. All the more as this train could reappear at any time and for nothing in the world would I want to miss it again. Indeed, so dreadful was that early time (though I hardly remember it) that no way would I ever want to see it again.

And it's still like this! What did I do for things to have happened this way? Did I fail or not? Although it is clear today that I could not catch the moment that had passed, it was not because I was not willing to, but due to ignorance, which would have led to another unforgivable "failure. Like Freud, who would follow tirelessly the subtle meanderings of the family romances that were being offered to his listening.

Lacan: All this doesn't really take us very far. We are only feeding the theme with a sham, a trial in which judges and lawyers argue back and forth but they are really taking orders from the same director; where the defendant is labeled innocent and, to his even greater comfort, he is kept out of the game, awaiting a verdict that is always postponed. If there is a thesis that is worthwhile, it is the one about lack. A lack of structure, therefore, of a first grammar.

This is because the question "What should I do?" can only arise from "What did I do?", in which the "I" that questions is no longer the same as the one who did, except in memory. And the one who answers is no longer the one who has done, but the one that more or less remembers and, on top of that, knows what he wants to obtain – or to avoid – from the one who interrogates him. Where was I, then, when I was doing? And where I am now? Let us notice, without lingering on it, that all of this also applies to "What did I say?", for to say is also to do something.

So, time divides me, or better, time and my division are the one and the same thing. We can say with Lacan that I am divided between pure absence

and pure feeling and that the name of this division is time. What am I then? Beyond, of course, what the other has told me that I am—and that is not it...

Lacan formulated an answer based on his reflections on time, and he demonstrated a logical structure. But I am not referring here to his well known text from 1945, "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty," in which the subject still finds his answers in the other, all the more as he is responds under the weight of urgency and the suspension it imposes. Rather to the one in which there is a reformulation, in the third lesson of the *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, January 29, 1964, where he concludes:"....the unconscious is the elusive—but we are beginning to circumscribe it in a structure, a temporal structure, which, it can be said, has never yet been articulated as such." (p. 32, trans. Alan Sheridan). Twenty years later, more or less, he has taken up the question again, in such a way that, not by chance, he announces as new.

We read: "The appearance/disappearance that takes place between two points, the initial and the terminal of this logical time—between the instant of seeing, when something of the intuition itself is always elided, not to say lost, and that elusive moment when the apprehension of the unconscious is not, in fact, concluded, when it is always a question of an 'absorption' fraught with false trails (une recuperation leurreé/a deluded recuperation) (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, trans. Alan Sheridan, p.32).

From the instant of seeing the color on the discs of the two prisoners, something clearly black or white—to the instant of seeing what has been elided, something always already lost; from the time to comprehend the vanishing appearance and the rush to conclude—to the elusive moment that does not conclude: that's a big difference, I think we will agree on that, my dear Dominique.

So you might be asking me: what are the consequences for the concept of the subject and of the symptom, for the direction of the treatment toward its conclusion. But, I will remind you, this is only a preliminary; and I will content myself with recalling that the emphasis Lacan placed on the elusiveness of the unconscious took him much further, to new elaborations about the real and the object in play in psychoanalysis, since it was necessary for him, therefore, to found the certainty of the subject in something else, in the beyond of the chain of the Other's message. Which allows me to propose a title for this little note, if you would like one: "The elusive of the unconscious and the certainty of the parlêtre."

If these small observations suffice to make you willing to go further into this matter of time—so peculiar to psychoanalysis—we could do it together soon, in Sao Paulo. And in the meantime, I wish us interesting preliminary work...

Marc Strauss

Translation: Patricia Daher