

HERVE DAMASE

What Becomes of the Lunatic, then...

From the teachings of Lacan one can draw a practice that will found my argument, the aim of which is to try to outline a definition of those who choose to work with psychotics. This practice is situated notably at the Centre Therapeutique et de Recherche de Nonette, which has constructed a work-orientation in reference to Lacan's teachings. The position of those whose work, taking care of psychotics setting out from the psychoanalytic clinic, is not a given from the immediate outset. It is more on the order of a production, the fruit of an elaboration.

At the end of two years of practice, I see myself constrained to state that it is in negative that a response might be given to this question so essential from an ethical viewpoint. To develop my proposition, I will relate two periods which might correspond to two beacons that, a posteriori, allow us to discern the margin in which the summoned subject can be inscribed. These two points are in fact two periods in the elaboration of my position. They have been, one after the other, the occasion for a clinical work presented in the setting of the Freudian Field.

The first period of elaboration was drawn from the construction Christian, a young man of twenty-three, brought me to make when I found myself in a transference relation with him. The work took on its rhythm from diverse clinical elements: in our institutional clinical meetings, we discovered the existence of Christian's imaginary little other in the form of a funny man. This function was incarnated notably in the character of an autistic resident whom he promanaged and to whom he attributed euphoric powers. I drew the second element from Christian's father, who has a very characteristic personality trait: his apprehension of his fellows is marked by an extreme familiarity. I would even say that he's a bit of a gay lad for whom the other is his likeness. Finally, a supplemental and fundamental element

is the appearance of the signifier «Mister» which Christian addressed to me, tagged onto my first name. I then localized the usage of this signifier in three occurrences: when he spoke of his father (or himself, for that matter, since Christian said he was named with the same first name as his father), when he spoke of the young autistic and when he spoke of me. The development of a singular behavior toward me was associated to the use of the signifier «mister» when addressing me. Its manifestations oscillated between the greatest friendliness and the most abrupt aggression.

How does one make this transference relation operational? I lent myself to the incarnation of the imaginary other, adopting an identificatory attitude setting out from a trait taken from the image of his father. The imaginary relation prevalent in a massive way with certain psychotics reveals itself to be an impasse. To add to this side of Christian had the strict consequence of producing rivalry. When I expected Christian to speak to me, a multiplication of passages to the act was produced. A slow elaboration of understanding then allowed me to modify my position towards this subject; in subtracting my image from his gaze, the harassment blurred and from that moment on, another path opened up for Christian.

In counterpoint and strongly marked by this experience, a second period in my development was instituted around the reading of Jacques-Alain Miller's «Clinique Ironique.»¹ A clinic of psychosis must foreground the consideration of the object, the transference relation having as sole alternative erotomania and/or persecution. The practical implication is thus to avoid favoring an effective presence for the subject because the *jouissance* takes over and the subject is annihilated.

This was the case with R.L., a young woman of twenty-four at Nonette since 1979, who permitted me at this point in the elaboration, to make the most of a new dimension of the relation: to take into account the manner in which the subject makes do with, even treats his or her *jouissance*. The work R.L. does in the real, alone, testifies to a clinic of the object which does not, however, exclude the other. What R.L. holds to is an attempt to reduce the object to the point of annihilation. At her arrival in the institution, she was afflicted with an enormous bag, filled with diverse things from which she was never separated. Today, R.L. gets around easily with only the head of a doll which hangs from her arm and makes one think that she has constituted her ego with it. The current work of this young woman is to try to make an identificatory image consist in the register which it belongs to. With the aid of the signifier «you» that she encounters in the real as the roofs of buildings,² she has invented a mode of writing in space which allows her to test herself by separating from the doll's head.

What occurred to me during a presentation I made of this case is that R.L.'s choice comes out of an ethical position. It exemplifies what a subject who doesn't dispose of the signifier except in its status as real is capable of carrying out as task in reference to his/her only choice, that of madness. The function of accompanying the subject to make the most of her choice is, in this case, that of presentifying a place for receiving the material data of the work. A suspension of this function and passing along an interpretation would sign the arrestation of the work in progress. To have situated her activity in the extra-ordinary with a concurrent temptation to put a signifier on it, or at least a meaning to it, had clearly visible effects.

So, from these two works, a point of passage can be located concerning my position. From a blind faith in the effectiveness and operative nature of a transferential relation with a psychotic subject, I have come to a consideration of a clinic of the object with its implications for my subjective position. The succession of these two periods supposes that they had each been elaborated then transmitted in a work transference. In his «On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis,» Lacan writes that a discovery «...can be made only at the cost of complete submission, even if it is intentional, to the properly subjective positions of the patient...»³ This clearly indicates on which side the knowledge is to be found. What comes from a practice is a knowledge of the structure; one cannot call on what is foreclosed.

However, beyond the structure which determines the mode according to which the subject is inhabited by language, we say rather that what comes out of a collective dimension -- THE psychotics -- is another dimension, that of the particular and which makes it so that there can only be a one by one. In order for a psychotic subject to attempt a treatment of jouissance, there must be a point of alterity that can be defined approximately as a particularized address, in other words, not anonymous. At a minimum, one must recognize and make recognized the work a subject does. This must be accomplished with the goal of permitting him to pursue it in a framework. It is our job to elaborate the contours of this frame.

This seems easily said. As always, some conditions are logically necessary: for the one who offers himself to this task, a theoretical reference and an address to give legitimacy to his practice is necessary. Psychoanalytic theory is the vector, the pole which gives direction to the work transference. It is about cultivating the exterior; beyond the Other of the institution lies the Other of the Freudian Field. One can expect effects of signification only in articulation. The promotion of supervision needs to be established in principle, because what must be known is what each one of us puts into play in relation to psychotic subjects. The ethic of those who choose to be in relation with psychotic subjects is founded on the presupposition that

there is *jouissance* at stake, and the work consists precisely in extracting, subtracting this *jouissance* from the relation.

And what do we do with this *jouissance*? One mode of treatment consists in putting it to work by making the object pass to the cause. In other words, I would propose to substitute the desire for knowledge, the love of knowledge, in place of love for the lunatic. In practice, this amounts to trying to realize a present absence with these subjects. It isn't easy, for it isn't a theoretical question, but rather a relation to the analytic experience and its consequences. It's not good enough to wish that a lunatic become, in the sense that the subject is engaged in the work (of the treatment), for the exigence of rigor to be fulfilled. Our responsibility, each and every one of us, is engaged to the guarantee that it represents. It is only from the testimony of his/her practice with So and So, that transmission is assured and that the reference to the analytic discourse is rendered valid.

You probably know what Lacan said about the lunatic and his relation to liberty: «the madman is the free man.» In a passage from the «Discours de cloture des Journees sur les psychoses chez l'enfant,» Lacan infers a link to liberty for the institution: «That if, finally, a question is posed of an institution which would be properly in relation with the field of the psychoses, it would be found that, always, at some point in a variable situation, a relation founded on liberty prevails there.»⁴ Thus the task Lacan assigns us is indeed that of resolving a paradox: the institution being in its essence what infringes on liberty in its spiritual, philosophical sense. A change in register is necessary here. To conclude, I would say that it is properly the very stuff of the ethic of psychoanalysis that we use to construct a framework for the psychotics.

¹ Jacques-Alain Miller. «Clinique Ironique.» *La Cause Freudienne*: Feb. 23, 1993; pp. 7 - 13.

² One french word for you in the familiar case is *toi* and the word for roof is *toit*. It is interesting to note that this is not the personal pronoun (*tu*), but the disjunctive pronoun (in English, 'I' is a personal pronoun and 'me' is a disjunctive pronoun). [trans. note].

³ Jacques Lacan. «On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis.» *Ecrits: A Selection*. trans. A. Sheridan, Norton, 1977; p. 181.

⁴ Jacques Lacan. «Discourse de cloture des Journees sur les psychoses chez l'enfant.» *Quarto*: fev. 15, 1984; pp. 27 - 32.