

EUROPEAN FORUM OF TURIN

DETERMINED DESIRES FOR DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

Torino, 18 November 2017



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Short preliminary notes

Towards the Forum “Determined Desires for Democracy in Europe” of 18 November 2017

I read the title of the “first European Forum of the Freudian Field”, which will take place in Turin on 18 November 2017, “Determined Desires for Democracy in Europe”, proposed by Jacques-Alain Miller in *Lacan Quotidien* n° 721 of 15 June, as an invitation specifically addressed to Lacanian psychoanalysts to not underestimate the risk, ever present, of forgetting the politics of the act. The politics of the act specifies the analyst, who is governed by an ethics oriented by the real of the speaking being rather than subjected to the politics of the Other. In this sense, the analyst, to the extent that there is something of it,^[1] is in the opposite position to that of the real of the contemporary capitalist discourse. As Lacan puts it in the “Italian Note”, leaving the capitalist discourse does not aim for the ruin of capitalism, but rather to make sure that “the analyst continues to prevail over the market”.^[2]

For me, the words “Determined Desires” refer to acts which allow psychoanalysis to continue to “prevail over the market”. They introduce the hypothesis of a democracy in which the welcoming of singularities facilitates the possibility of putting the serialised surplus-enjoyments of consumer society in perspective, making room for the symptom, carrier of subjective singularity.

In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*,^[3] Lacan defines the discourses of the master, university and analyst out of the three impossible professions referred to by Freud – to govern, educate and analyse. He then adds the discourse of the hysteric, the function of which is to make one desire. In a second moment he adds the discourse of the capitalist, whose objective is now revealed as to make one consume.

We have to see that although power relations have always existed, it is not the case for the discourse of the master, which cannot be found in societies said to be primitive or mythical.

The discourse of the master starts in Ancient Greece, with the birth of an order grounded on law and the notion of responsibility. It starts with Oedipus king; Oedipus does not become king out of divine right or of some mythical filiation, but because he vanquished the Sphinx. Oedipus wants to solve the social symptom which terrifies the people, and does not realise that he himself is the cause of the disaster which afflicts the city.

What is at stake is to make the discourse of the master function without incarnating the master: hence the need for a Constitution and the Rule of Law.

Lacan himself teaches us that if the discourse of the master emerges with Oedipus king, the hysteric’s discourse appears with Socrates, who functions as what spurs conscience on. He interrogates the master’s actions, forces him to produce knowledge and opens to a calling into question of authority. Beyond Socrates’ position on Athenian democracy, he is considered the precursor of democratic ideals, of the ideal of freedom and of the autonomy of the subject.

If Socrates calls the master to account, Plato wants to reform the discourse of the master by grounding it on reason. From Maieutic to constituted knowledge, which is the basis of the university discourse.

Lacan situates the emergence of the discourse of science, as a production of knowledge, at the level of the hysteric’s discourse, which calls into question the authority of the master. Science does not stop before the authority of those who govern, nor before that of the Church. It therefore promotes ideals of freedom, subjective autonomy, and potential forms of jouissance.

But science also produces a knowledge which it tends to situate in the position of the master. The vacillation of the discourse of the master, produced by science, therefore oscillates between democracy, as an effect of the interrogation of the hysteric, and technocracy, promoted by the University discourse.

The time of the birth of modern science is also that of the triumph of mercantilism. Freedom becomes commercial freedom, free trade, deemed to be the sole way forward in view of the gain that each gets out of it.

But experience shows that free trade leads to injustice, since exchanges never take place on an equal footing. Further, what kind of free trade is it, if today the answer to mass immigration is to construct walls, in multiple ways?

Where does democracy take us today? Which act can relativize the rush for profit and performance which puts the products of science in the service of the gain of jouissance?

Rosa Elena Manzetti

Translated by Véronique Voruz

^[1] J.Lacan, , Note italienne, Autres écrits, Paris, Seuil 2001, p. 308

^[2] Ibid, p.310

^[3] J.Lacan, Le Séminaire, Livre XVII, L’envers de la psychanalyse, Seuil, Paris