

Tearing of the Veil; Revelation, Emergence

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Tearing of the veil, revelation, emergence. Three terms that invite us to examine the theme of the upcoming NLS Congress, *Variety, Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis*. Whereas *revelation* and *emergence* quite evidently lend themselves to thinking about the question of truth, how to think of truth from the perspective of the tearing of the veil? We already find this expression *tearing of the veil* in the case of the Wolf Man. Freud defines the tearing of the veil as analogous to the opening of the eyes, or even to that of a window.¹

Truth of trauma

For Freud, trauma is above all an encounter with the sexual. He qualifies the sexual as a necessary and indispensable element in the constitution of any neurosis – the subject responding to it with a symptom. Freud discovers this in the accounts of his patients, in the form of a childhood experience, a scene: a primal scene, a scene of seduction. While he initially situates these events as coming from the external world, the question of their veracity, their *reality*, quickly arises. He eventually concludes that “there are no indications of reality in the unconscious.”² These scenes, when they are evoked or reconstructed in analysis, have the structure of fantasies. In the unconscious, it is impossible to distinguish truth from fiction invested with affect.

Twenty years later, Freud returned to and dialecticized this hypothesis.³ Childhood experiences, as the cause determining trauma, are not always true. In some cases, they are even contrary to historical truth: “sometimes indisputably false and sometimes equally certainly correct, and in most cases compounded of truth and falsehood.”⁴ Fantasies possess psychical reality as opposed to material reality, and it is psychical reality that plays the dominant role, Freud concludes – elevating psychical reality to the dignity of truth, emphasising what Lacan will call subjective truth.

Three forms of tearing

Based on his work on the traumatic neuroses, Freud nevertheless isolates another form of trauma, where something from the outside, through an effraction, produces the irruption of a hole.⁵ An encounter with a real. It is on the basis of this encounter, which Lacan describes as *traumatic*, that we can locate one of the forms of the tearing of the veil: the moment when the fantasmatic truth is torn apart, unveiling a truth other than the one veiled by the fantasy. An encounter with the real Other: the sexual, for Freud; that of the *there is no sexual relation*, for Lacan.

¹ Freud, S., “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (1918), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XVII*, London: Hogarth Press, 2001, pp. 99-101.

² Freud S., “Extracts from the Fliess Papers: Letter 69 (21 September 1897),” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 1*, London: Hogarth Press, 2001 p. 260.

³ Freud, S., *Introductory Lectures On Psychoanalysis*, “Lecture XXIII: The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms” (1917), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVI*, London: Hogarth Press, 2001, pp. 367-371.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁵ Freud, S., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII*, London: Hogarth Press, 2001.

Two other forms of tearing of the veil, which are not those of trauma, can also be isolated in the analytical experience.

The first, as an effect of revelation and the emergence of truth. We can think of it in terms of the interpretation by the analyst. It is never a direct revelation, but an “aid to revelation,”⁶ which can lead to the falling of the veil for the analysand.

The second, in the form of the traversal of the fantasy, “as an experience of truth.”⁷ It is to be situated beyond knowledge. Jacques-Alain Miller qualifies it as a truth of the real, an awakening to the real that can be attained by the lifting of the veil.⁸ An experience that allows one to “reorder, retroactively and definitively, the occurrences of the subject’s life, and make their previous torments appear more or less illusory.”⁹

Revelation and emergence

Revelation and emergence are two terms that inevitably imply the question of the veil. Etymology refers to the act of unveiling, of lifting the veil.

In both cases, it concerns what suddenly appears as new cognition, sensations never before experienced. Jacques-Alain Miller points out that the word *revelation*, in analytical practice, is closest to the English word *insight*, as it refers to “the subject’s relation to a truth he accesses in a moment of seeing.”¹⁰ We might also add, in the moment of seeing differently, in another way.

Lacan situates revelation in terms of resistance,¹¹ of obstacle, of what is veiled by repression. It is through the return of the repressed – the emergence of a forgetting, a bungled action, or a dream – that the truth, enciphered in speech and ignored by the subject himself, is unveiled and speaks. Thus, the forgetting of the name *Signorelli* “reveal[s] the deepest secret of Freud’s being”: the truth of Freud’s wanting to forget the news of the death of one of his patients emerging in “the scraps of this speech.”¹² Or again, Freud’s slip of the pen in a note sent to a jeweller,¹³ where the preposition *for* should have appeared twice. Instead of the second occurrence, Freud wrote the word *bis*. A slip of the pen that lends itself to three interpretations revealing the “truth of the gift”¹⁴: a gift offered by Freud that he would have liked to keep for himself; a slip that reveals the subject’s realisation of the truth, his truth.

However, it is important to emphasise that the truth that is revealed is not only of the order of hidden knowledge. Jacques-Alain Miller uses the word *expérience* (*éprouver*) – “phenomena of

⁶ Miller, J.-A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning,” *The Lacanian Review* 2, 2016, p. 14.

⁷ Miller, J.-A., “La théorie du partenaire,” *Quarto* 77, 2002, p. 30.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 30.

¹⁰ Miller, J.-A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning,” *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹ Lacan, J., *Freud’s Papers on Technique: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. J. Forrester (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³ Freud, S., “The Subtleties of a Faulty Action” (1935), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII*, London: Hogarth Press, 2001, pp. 233-235.

¹⁴ Miller J.-A., “*L’orientation lacanienne. Choses de finesse en psychanalyse*” course given at the Department of Psychoanalysis at the University Paris 8, lesson of 19th November 2008, unpublished.

revelation in analysis, which are *experienced* as such”¹⁵ – indicating that revelation goes beyond knowledge and cognition. In the analytical experience, the effects of the revelation of subjective truth are experienced, they are felt in the body.

It should also be noted that the revelations and emergence of truths are part of the analytical experience, especially at the beginning of analysis. There is no analysis without revelations of truth. “An analysis that starts develops under the sign of revelation.”¹⁶ But revelation does not always play a central role. In an analysis that lasts, revelation will give way to repetition, to stagnation.

The end of the analysis may lead, as Jacques-Alain Miller says, to “the withdrawal of libido from a certain number of traceable elements that have been brought out at the time of the revelation.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Miller, J.-A., “Truth is Coupled with Meaning,” *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁶ Miller, J.-A., “Psychoanalysis has a Structure of Fiction,” *The Lacanian Review*7, 2019, p. 142.

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*