

## Surprised Truth

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“The analytic discourse institutes a place reserved for truth”<sup>1</sup>, Lacan notes. But how can it be made to emerge, when “it is from the signifier that effects of truth are generated”<sup>2</sup>? How can one uncover this sleeping beauty who hides in the place of the Other?

Surprise plays a part in its unveiling, for both the analysand and the analyst.

By listening to his patient Emmy von N. without interrupting her, by allowing her to “tell what she has to say”<sup>3</sup>, Freud enabled her truth to come into being through speech. He consented to be surprised, and in doing so opened the path of psychoanalysis.

For Lacan, “everything that pertains to the unconscious is characterized [...] by surprise”<sup>4</sup>; indeed, in the analytic cure, its manifestations – dreams, slips, parapraxes, witticisms – appear in the mode of “impediment”<sup>5</sup>, which surprises the analysand all the more insofar as the signifiers brought into relief by the analyst through his act prove to have a truth value for the subject.

The function of the analyst is to say yes to the enunciation of what Jacques-Alain Miller terms “abnormal elements”<sup>6</sup> with respect to collective reality – fantasy, truth, and jouissance. To do so, analysts must “not merely be surprised, but also be surprising”<sup>7</sup>, and must possess “the desire to be surprised in order to be able to surprise as well.”<sup>8</sup>

The truth discovered by the analysand constitutes a surprise with respect to the repetition and the *automaton* of the already-there knowledge in which he was caught: a loss of meaning occurs, while at the same time surprise suddenly awakens him to his position as a subject of the unconscious, the subject of a new knowledge, hitherto unknown. As Patricia Bosquin-Caroz indicates in her argument for the Congress, “truth initially presents itself as a non-knowledge [...] and ends by taking the form of knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> For the analysand, it is transference that makes this surprise tolerable, even gives him a taste for it.

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<sup>1</sup> Lacan J., *Le Séminaire*, livre XIV, *La logique du fantasme*, Seuil & Champ freudien, Paris, 2023, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> Miller J.-A., « L’orientation lacanienne. De la nature des semblants », teaching delivered under the auspices of the Department of Psychoanalysis, University of Paris 8, lesson of 15 April 1992, unpublished.

<sup>3</sup> Freud S., “Frau Emmy von N. Studies on Hysteria (1893)”, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. II, London: Hogarth Press, 2001, p.63.

<sup>4</sup> Lacan J., *Le Séminaire*, livre XIV, *La logique du fantasme*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Lacan J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, Norton: New York/London, 1998, p. 25. *Achoppement* here translated as *impediment* is, in my view, better translated by *stumbling*.

<sup>6</sup> Miller J.-A., « Le clivage psychanalyse et psychothérapie », *Mental*, n° 9, June 2001, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Miller J.-A., *Le Conciliabule d’Angers. Effets de surprise dans les psychoses*, Paris, Agalma, 1997, p. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Bosquin-Caroz P., “Varity. Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis”, *Presentation of the NLS Congress Theme 2026*, p. 5. Available online.