

## Dora's Case – From Truth to Mystery

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In his text *Presentation on Transference* Lacan points out that “the case of Dora is laid out by Freud in the form of a series of dialectical reversals [...] What is involved is a scansion of structures in which truth is transmuted for the subject.”<sup>1</sup>

In the same text, Lacan also notes that “this is the first time Freud uses the term ‘transference’ as the concept of the obstacle owing to which the analysis broke down.”<sup>2</sup>

The first dialectical reversal results from Freud's intervention: “Look at your own involvement” he tells her, “in the mess [*désordre*] you complain of,”<sup>3</sup> highlighting Dora's own “complicity” and thus aiming at a subjective rectification.

The second reversal appears in a footnote added by Freud after the interruption of the analysis and operates through the remark that the father—who at first seems to be the object of Dora's jealousy—actually conceals Dora's interest in Mrs. K. Freud suggests that his own reluctance to interpret this point was linked to his non-neutral attitude toward homosexuality. Lacan nevertheless stresses that the analyst is not responsible for truth: his position is “[n]othing but to fill the emptiness of this standstill with a lure. But even though it is deceptive, this lure serves a purpose by setting the whole process in motion anew.”<sup>4</sup>

The third reversal noted by Lacan arises from Freud's questioning of why, despite the betrayal Dora perceives from Mrs. K, she nevertheless remains loyal to her. “What is the motive for this loyalty which makes you keep for her the deepest secret of your relations?” Lacan asks. He continues: “... this secret [...] would reveal to us the real value of the object that Frau K is for Dora. Frau K is not an individual, but a mystery, the mystery of Dora's own femininity, by which I mean her bodily femininity.”<sup>5</sup>

Whereas the first two reversals seem to resonate with the dialectic of desire as it unfolds in Lacan's early teaching, the third highlights the nonsensical dimension of *jouissance* as it appears in his later teaching. With it, “[t]he boundary post we must go around in order to reverse course one last time already appears within reach”<sup>6</sup>, and, as Miller emphasizes, this is an attempt to approach the Real.

The topological structure of the cross-cap allows us to perceive the object of Dora's fantasy as situated at a structural point that folds space back onto itself: an image of “*jouissance* enveloped in its own contiguity.”<sup>7</sup> Not a truth laid bare, but a real mystery.

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<sup>1</sup> Lacan, J., “Presentation on Transference”, *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>7</sup> Lacan, J., “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality”, *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 619.