

Libidinal energy and academic morality

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Summary

This quite untypical and only half formal text pretends to apply analysis in all too perversive way. Namely it applies it ironically (however, not seriously ironically...) to the field from which it originates and where it grows—the academic field. Since analysis is always scandalous (and cannot give up this scandal, unless it wants to remain relevant), also its travestation must use critical measures. If it is remembered, that the analysis constitutes a form of self-therapy for the academia, its honest self-application must relate to the professor-student relations.

The academic social space is an area of the most direct sublimation of drives into a cultural meaning, since discursive fertility is an activity proper to members of this community. As we already know, incestuous libido is the main drive undergoing transformation and put to use there.

Since the student's submission to the power of the lecturer-parent ends sometime in the future, she becomes a legal object, in addition retaining some of the attractiveness of the biological offspring. The pleasure resulting from the imaginary state of being free from the incestuous taboo is both a basis of the academic bond, and an award uniting this community. It is reflected in the essential rule of academic morality providing that female students are inviolable, but after their graduation from the university close relations with them become legal.

Key words: discourse, libidinal energy, morality, psychoanalysis, philosophy, perversity,

Starting a psychoanalytic discourse is accompanied by a thrill of emotion, the same that announces any perversity. My paper is of philosophical nature and therefore its main topic must be what is untopicable and constantly deviating towards a margin. Namely, the philosophical topic of my paper is perversity, the surviving, although socially recognised perversity of analytic speech, and more precisely – of its travesty on each occasion. Among its uncountable examples there is this contribution, since analysis has no central paradigms belonging to the main text of culture, but reproduces itself just by these travesty, sometimes even ironic mimicking repetitions. Such as this *als ob* argument of mine, being only a philosopher's irresponsible play with analysis, an attempt at experiencing it.

Yes, analysis can live no other way than as a counter-discourse, an aesthetic scandal, or somewhat pretentious marginality. Transforming any cultural meaning into expiation of what is disguised and repressed by psychoanalytical symbolism,

analysis inevitably wallows in the depth of toposes of dirty unmasking, finding this most repulsive. The analyst struggles as if locked in a glass cage – his critical and therapeutic actions, by now generally accepted, owe their impact and legality to the same middle-class academic circumstances that are the subject of his criticism. In other words, the analyst is a debtor of his city and university, being ashamed of this as same as an artist is ashamed of being under a patronage. This struggle, reflecting the social and discursive role (unwanted as any other!), is symbolised in the history of psychoanalysis by Freud's half-unconscious violent act. One day Freud grabbed a figurine from his collection and threw it against a glass case standing in the room. Of course, when performing the act he already knew that the figurine was the price he was paying to make an analysis credible and that he was going to use this autobiographical event to carry out the analysis. My text is also a figurine throwing.

Superficial scandalousness of analytic discourse is indeed a *real scandal*. Analysis does not strip culture off its meaning and does not reveal its pre-meaningful, biological and unconscious determinants, but on the contrary – shows the emotional-symbolic origins of meaning and the solipsist drama of its return from the public domain into the individual psyche. The story about the meaning of culture cannot find either a rostrum or a pulpit it deserves - the story always supporting the poor individual human being and turbulent existence hardly coping with its own ability to understand and symbolise. There is neither any official analysis nor analysis treated seriously that would be free from a little scandal. And this is what makes up the real scandal of analysis.

So I will be telling the impossible about impossibility of analysis, providing that analysis would mean something serious and self-confirming in full awareness and affirmation of its identity as a discourse. I will be telling that in the only way possible, i.e. by *pretending analysis*. I will be showing, but not considering; my position will be not in the centre of my discourse, but beyond it, as if discourse was swept out of my conceptual and linguistic resources. Thus, I will be presenting a totally redundant surplus that everybody could do without perfectly well, as same as we have been doing without analysis for 25 centuries. By the way, analysis itself – particularly in terms of its scientific pretences - would have changed nothing in culture. As a philosopher then I will be saying unnecessary things. I will be only scandalising and sobbing aloud in a voice of dying analysis that is passing away together with the whole good Old World. Whom should this complaint about the abuse of analysis be addressed to? Obviously, to academicians, since psychoanalysis, being a part of the academic world, as a matter of fact lives from and for this community and the voice of analysis anyway is always addressed to them. Perhaps the most profound need of analysis is a verbal transformation of secret desires of academic people, their self-therapy and relaxation making them believe that science is the last domain fit to live in, since one is allowed *to say everything* there.

The structure of academic conscience

Due to the freedom of relationships in the academic world rather few contents are repressed and have to be internalised in the academic individual's psyche as the self-punishing instance of conscience. The relaxed and liberalised form of conscience characteristic of ego undertaking academic functions and roles retains first and fore-

most the general foundation of conscience being a primeval taboo: the interdiction of incest, and more precisely – *inviolability of daughters*. The father-daughter relation as repeated in the relaxed, informal and often even familial institutional structure: male lecturer- female student, is a therapeutic rather than neurotic repetition. The essence of this reproductive academic relationship is its transience and dissolubility as opposed to the rigid and never-ending relation of fatherhood. Since the student's submission to the power of the lecturer-parent ends sometime in the future, she becomes a legal object, in addition retaining some of the attractiveness of the biological offspring. The pleasure resulting from the imaginary state of being free from the incestuous taboo is both a basis of the academic bond, and an award uniting this community. It is reflected in the essential rule of academic morality providing that female students are inviolable, but after their graduation from the university close relations with them become legal. An incarnation of such a relationship is the exemplary academic affair consisting in Platonic love between lecturer and his student, confirmed by their legal marriage after her graduation. A somewhat shameful apotheosis of such exciting social events is the best evidence of the true nature of the libidinal transaction involved there.

A live source of academic pleasure is then the awareness of the incestuous taboo impotence beyond the limit determined by the time served by women in the role of daughters-students. On their graduation or ritual liberation the taboo is no longer in force, and the daughters become free women fully accessible to academic males, without guilty conscience. This transformation and slackening of the incest interdiction is the first tangible psychological profit earned by the academic world.

The second functional rule of academic morality (besides that of students-daughters' inviolability) is the *weakness principle* serving as a guaranty of the first one. The weakness required in the academic community consists in general gentleness, subordination, consideration, and predictability of behaviour. These highly civilised manners guarantee safety of the whole community that can freely pursue the delightful game with the incestuous taboo being sure that nothing drastic would happen. The weakness principle has also a deeper meaning, as it turns academy into a luxurious space of *libidinal safety*, to be discussed later on.

Finally, the third principle constituting the academic conscience is that of *oral substitutive fertility*. Oral substitutive fertility (even if dramatised in such scenes of domination and violence as a lecture or – especially – examination), on the one hand manifests fertility and libidinal readiness of academic males producing complex sequences of overtones, and on the other hand repeatedly communicates that there will be no physical action. Therefore, academic logorrhea is not an impotent surrogate of sexual intercourse, but rather a manifestation of libido, the more dangerous and fertile that submitted to the control by the ego which delays fulfilment. As a result, the libidinal economy of the academic domain is extremely strict, or perhaps even ascetic. As compared to the community of university lecturers, there hardly can be another functional community offering so little sexual fulfilment to its members. Consequently, libidinal tension in the academic community is exceptionally high.

Academy as a domain of libidinal safety

Oral fertility including the activity of writing determines the pecking order in the academic community structure. The most fertile ones, i.e. those who speak and write most, are predestined to assume key roles, while those lacking oral (and more precisely – dactylo-oral) potency are punished by marginalisation. However, they are never punished by exclusion, although plagiarism, being a grave offence against fertility, may meet sometimes with repressive measures. Even infringement of the taboo is rather seldom followed by exile, which can be easily explained by the liberalisation and partial invalidation of the incest taboo in the considered area. The academic world opposes *libidinal safety*, i.e. the weakness principle made objective and reflected in the community social structure, to the primeval power of the taboo. The vital common interest that unites the whole academic community over and above any conflicts is the institutionalised gentleness that guarantees constant pleasure (but also constant frustration) due to the delay of fulfilment resulting from daughters' inviolability. If oral sublimation of libido and in consequence elimination of sexual intercourse from the academic community life (at least across the border separating students and lecturers) is to remain stable and sure, safety valves are necessary for those who do not commit the main offence. Within the very broad limits determined by the incest taboo and the weakness principle any libidinal behaviours and strategies are usually admissible, including the substitutive perversity of analytic discourse. Otherwise desperados could easily infringe the taboo, with unrest ensuing. However, if there is no risk of exclusion from the academic community for petty offences or infertility, there is also no opportunity to manifest maladaptive behaviour that is provoked first and foremost by situations where one has nothing to lose, as the saying is.

Longing for leadership

Libidinal discipline might be attained in a seemingly more natural way, i.e. through a strong leadership. However, the peculiar feature of the academy is a lack of leadership, or rather the presence of a weak leadership. In other words, an imagined genuine leadership (in which individuals might overtly admire their own idealised egos) is established provisionally, serving an evidently substitutive function. The secret of the lack of a genuine leadership (or the community's imaginary ideal ego) consists in the highly abstract quality of the academic social bond and the academy's structure. Its reality is imagery – the academy is an imaginary body and any form of tangible reality including a strong leadership would belie and undermine its abstract nature. A strong leadership would mean a real force opposing sublimation and so to say ethereality of the academic world, thus leading to its destruction. This does not mean though that academy can do without some imagery of leadership at all, without the ideal ego and projection of its collective psyche. I believe that the most consequent ideal that can be found in collective dreams of the academic community combines the features of the forbidden daughter-student and the father-lecturer ruling a harem of his former female students. Such a figure, the Academy Gradiva, is a female professor, equipped with the insignia of her academic position, but at the same time being a young and beautiful woman desired by her colleagues and by male students, and for both these

groups inaccessible. As such she has power over all men, (which is the main attribute of leadership), and indirectly - by envy she arouses - also over women. Of course, this is a case of libidinal inversion: the father-lecturer revering his ideal and imagining the latter in the role of a leader changes the ideal's gender so as to be able to desire her. A similar inversion can be seen in religious cults, where figures of goddesses dislodge male objects of worship.

Sublimation and oral transformation of libidinal energy

The academic social space is an area of the most direct sublimation of drives into a cultural meaning, since discursive fertility is an activity proper to members of this community. As we already know, incestuous libido is the main drive undergoing transformation and put to use there. It becomes transformed into discourse, particularly into its perverse forms: reflexive, alluding, and anyway intriguing and seductive by their rhetoric. However, the academy is no stranger, also to general pretences to upbringing. These extend the parent-child relationship beyond the limit of the child's attributes (as students are no longer children) and have the nature of an incestuous game in which libido appears in the form of educational authorities. Since students cannot be touched, they are as if disguised as children, (who are inviolable of their very nature), and in this disguise are submitted to the acceptable upbringing actions or pedagogical harassment. Of course, this is only an aspect of the complex relations between lecturers and their students. First of all, reminiscences of the primitive community structures (e.g. totemic) are present here, with their initiation ceremonies and rituals of passage. However, these are beyond the scope of our object of interest, i.e. the academic libidinal economy.

The safe and derealised (abstract) academic space has infantile features. The reality principle finds expression there with difficulty and delay, while oral pleasure is almost always immediately available. Nobody ever interrupts the speaker and there are no limits either to the contents or form of what he has to say. The peculiar sexual austerity of this community is compensated by freedom of speech, mythologised in the discourse on the freedom of science. The oral compensation is so full that there is really no longer reason for any repression of Eros. This is evidenced by the freedom of analytic discourse and its feminist or anarchist variations.

The academy as an infantile dream, daydream, or a sublime entity free from the burden of reality, is quite helpless in the social domain. In order to retain its status of an infantile refuge free not only from carnal Eros, but also from the drudgery of a regular job, academy defends itself addressing to the external world domineering narratives on scientific ethos, autonomy and public service. As long as it does not aspire to any genuine power and importance, enjoying in seclusion the achievements of its libidinal economy, such narratives are good enough to secure academic peacefulness. Seduction of the daughter, the dream of Gradiva, oral pleasure and mirages of fame fill up quiet days of the academy. Time goes by in the rhythm of routine substitutive fulfilment – recovered dreams or childhood memories, at a safe distance from the reality with the struggle for survival and libidinal-economic competition.

The academic dream structure is governed by an indefinable and unconscious flexible element, a blind spot of unconscious dreaming. Its allegory in the academic community mythology is the figure of the Great Scientist, or even of more abstract Truth. The Great Scientist is usually absent, being dead or over the ocean. The same is with Truth, always ahead of us. Historical awareness, being the conscience of the scientists' tribe, broods on the death of the Great Scientist in eternal Interpretation. According to the Interpretation rituals, the Great Scientist's contemporaries are blamed for their sin of underestimating (or killing) him, which is followed by bringing him back to life by reverent memory and Comprehension. This digression however takes us away from our main theme.

Perverse Eros of the academic world

Owing to the libidinal safety and alibi provided by the infantile status of an unreal dream, the academy can afford (as is the case with dreams) a considerable dose of symbolic perversion. Symbolic only, since due to the gentleness principle, the academy is in fact characterised by a considerable moral austerity, as it has been noted earlier.

The essence of academic perversity consists in an uninhibited pleasure-seeking in speaking and mimics. To be precise, it is a more general perversion of facial mimic and gesture rather than just oral perversion. The academy organisation depends on the requirements of oral practices: lectures, reading aloud, seminar talks, examinations, staff meetings, and meal taking. Activities involved in production (work), restrictive-repressive rituals and any other kinds of fulfilment available to a community, are always kept in the background here. The academic world activity is almost entirely limited to talking that is a goal in itself, not expected to produce any effects.

The very organisation of highly sublime oral practices of the academy has clearly perverse features. Its essence is to facilitate meetings held behind closed doors. Some of the meetings are almost public, as e.g. lectures, other are half-intimate, as seminars, while still other – bilateral and dominating, as consultations and exams. The meetings are associated with a covert circulation of money and a complex structure of exchange and symbolic gratification. The main role is played there by marks awarded for the narcissistic satisfaction of watching one's own oral practice reproduced by an individual in a subordinate position (e.g. during an examination). Similar phenomena of oral perversion can be found also in other communities, such as the army or hospital. However, being real, these institutionalised communities have more opportunities to subordinate individuals (as in their routines dead bodies are involved). How does the illusory, infantile and weak academy manage to persist in its practices so efficiently, avoiding work and repeatedly obtaining a new contingent of individuals, including a large number of young women? In my opinion the answer lies in the very nature of the libidinal economy appropriate to the academy and in the structure of the academic conscience supporting this economy.

Crowds are attracted to the ethereal and closed in itself academy by the sense of security it provides. The principles of gentleness and libidinal safety exert an irresistible soothing charm especially winning to frantic young people. They need the company

of a weak and delicate Eros, suiting their sensitivity of feelings they are not aware of. The possibility a continuation of childhood in the company of superiors from whom no harassment other than oral (and even that rather camouflaged) should be feared is a great attraction offered by the academy to the young fraction of the society. I believe that this balsamic and therapeutic effect makes the greatest advantage of the contemporary university and the academic world has every reason to be proud of it.

It is analysis that is the most direct and so to say childishly honest exposition of the academic conscience, as well as an embodiment of all the *irresponsibility* or infantilism of the academic oral practice and symbolic production. I am not an expert in psychoanalysis. I only wanted to pay it due homage as best as I could by means of this narcissistic oral activity you have just mutely witnessed.

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