

MANIFESTO FOR THE DEFENCE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

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From many quarters over the recent years alarm bells have been rung about the risk of psychoanalysis' disappearance from our society. We, the undersigned, fully share this preoccupation and launch this appeal as a contribution to the defence of psychoanalysis.

It would be a mistake to think that psychoanalysis, which has represented an enormous step forward towards the understanding and research of those themes surrounding the human psyche, is a legacy only for those who undergo an analysis and engage in psychoanalytic work. On the contrary, psychoanalysis has contributed to the advancement of multiple fields: from education, to communication, to philosophical, social, and scientific research.

To defend psychoanalysis, therefore, is not merely to defend a specific field or practice. It is to defend a heritage that belongs to everyone, to the advantage of society as a whole.

The defence of psychoanalysis is an indispensable condition for its development. This defence must be based first and foremost on a definition of psychoanalysis' specificity, its fields of intervention and its limits, the respect that it demands from other fields of knowledge and what it contributes to them, starting from those situated on parallel but different terrains, such as psychology and the various forms of psychotherapy.

To define and defend the specificity of psychoanalysis necessarily demands that we return to the problem of the formation of the analyst, which is not an 'annexed' question but instead takes us to the heart of the essence of psychoanalysis and its possibility for existence. As for every living organism, the future of psychoanalysis depends most of all on the possibility to transmit its 'genes'.

In many different countries, including our own, this problem has been tackled and discussed at various times, finding more or less satisfactory 'solutions'. With this appeal, we want to try to reaffirm and recuperate some distinctive and essential elements, the origins of which go back to Freud and his teachings. These elements are derived not from abstract speculation, but from rigorous reflections founded on psychoanalytic practice. And starting from this reaffirmation, we want to ensure that these elements are agreed and utilised by all those, who, in different capacities, are asked to speak on behalf of psychoanalysis and its practice.

What is psychoanalysis?

In the course of its history, since Freud, psychoanalysis has seen the birth and growth of diverse currents, discussions, associations and points of views. There can be no doubt, however, that something shared by all these currents constitutes the heart of psychoanalysis and delineates the boundaries between it and everything else:

1. The recognition of the centrality of the unconscious and its manifestations (lapses, parapraxis, dreams) as key for the understanding of human behaviour;
- 1) The reference to a specific analytical setting, which, through the method of free association and the work of interpretation, makes possible the emergence of the unconscious and the overcoming of resistance, allowing the subject to take a position in relation to his or her lived experience and desire.
- 2) The consideration and evaluation of 'transference'.
- 3) The fact that personal analysis, and so the knowledge of one's own unconscious, constitutes the privileged instrument and fundamental passage to becoming an analyst.

This cluster of elements leads to a conclusion, on which there is ample agreement by psychoanalysts and others engaged with psychoanalysis in different capacities: psychoanalysis is radically 'other' from the various fields of knowledge interested in the human psyche. This fact is confirmed by psychoanalysis' own history. As is known, on several occasions Freud underlined how the theoretical and practical foundations of the discipline he created were not indebted, other than very minimally, to the philosophical and technical/scientific knowledge of his time.

Deepening this assertion, on which there is considerable agreed documentation, is not this manifesto's task. We can say, however, that psychoanalysis is born precisely where 'change' — and especially 'awareness' — inserts itself in the place of 'therapy', which aims at eliminating symptoms and at re-establishing a more or less pre-existing order of well-being.

Notwithstanding the discussions and diversions within the psychoanalytic movement and the debate that surrounds psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis nevertheless constantly finds itself at a crossroad: whether to maintain and defend its specificity or slide towards its negation and die, dissolved as it were in a sort of psychotherapy.

What has been said so far implies that the submission of psychoanalysis to other disciplines within the 'psy' world would entail a loss of its identity and autonomy.

Could we say that the current Italian legislation allows for these?

To answer this let us speak of the facts. In our country, psychoanalysis is not regulated at all. Law n. 56 (1989) names and regulates exclusively the professions of psychology and psychotherapy, making no reference whatsoever to psychoanalysis.

The hypothesis that this occurred because psychoanalysis was implicitly understood to be one of the therapies mentioned within the Law is unsustainable. The many years that preceded the approval of the Law were characterised by a broad and passionate debate, during which psychoanalysts and

psychoanalytic organisations — if even from very different positions — struggled to make a clear distinction between these professions and to be excluded from these registers.

Indeed, at the end of a lengthy trajectory that lasted about twenty years, the legislative dialectic produced the following: psychoanalysis was not included in the Law and, implicitly, was reaffirmed as a distinct profession from psychology and psychotherapy. And since psychoanalysis was not regulated by other means, it can be considered a free and non protected profession.

Further, in the following years numerous verdicts and ‘pro-veritate’ opinions (in particular that of Prof. Francesco Galgano) by judges, courts and lawyers have fully confirmed this, dispelling any residue of doubt.

What would happen if one day...?

Despite this, since the approval of Law n. 56, psychoanalysis has found itself against a paradoxical problem. Periodically, psychoanalysts who are not registered are called to defend themselves against an accusation that within Italian Law simply has no logic: that of not being psychologists, psychotherapists or medics.

To defend themselves from these litigations — which, although unfounded, constitute a problem and a threat — over the years many psychoanalysts with the necessary qualifications decided to register.

But what would happen if one day only this kind of psychoanalysts remained? In other words, what would happen if for some reason becoming a psychoanalyst required that someone should first be a psychologist or a medic? What would happen if in order to undertake a training analysis — fundamental to the formation of an analyst — one should first or contemporarily attain a degree in psychology or medicine?

There can be no doubt: psychoanalysis would then be definitely subsumed to disciplines extraneous to it and in time become a field or ‘specialization’ within these, determining its own disappearance.

In reality, a true analysis that may lead to someone becoming an analyst can only occur in the full freedom of the subject, with no ‘master’, no ‘super ego’, no social law or symptom over-determining the analysis itself. Or, better said: the function of an analysis is precisely to overcome these obstacles, erected by the unconscious. But not only this: were it not so, were it necessary for a future analyst to be first or also a psychologist or a psychotherapist, the analysis of the subject would face the impossibility of a full elaboration of his or her own desire.

The trajectory of an analysis and of a possible analytical formation do not have a predetermined time, a required title, a pre-existing condition, a pre-established term and not even a clear ending. This is because the times, modalities and contents of the discovery of the unconscious could not tolerate such boundaries and would immediately enter in absolute contradiction with them, forming resistances that analysis instead attempts to reveal. It is analysis itself, for what it is, that cannot tolerate the intrusion of a superior instance (academic qualification, recognition, register...) within the relationship analyst-analysand.

Of course, since anyone's path can go in these as in other directions, one may sign up to a register of psychologists, doctors or anything else. But imposing such paths on psychoanalysis could not but open the door to its death.

Indeed, it should be noted that many respected analysts have had and have an entirely different formation from that of medics or psychologists: for example, Anna Freud (who did not have a degree), Cesare Musatti (who had a degree in philosophy), Melanie Klein (who did not have a degree), Eric Fromm (sociologist with a degree in philosophy).

Why should then psychoanalysis renounce its identity, its history and its independence?

Psychoanalysts must present themselves for what they are

This is why every psychoanalyst, every analysand, every scholar, every judge, every politician and everyone interested in the survival of psychoanalysis is called upon to speak up against any attempts to incriminate a psychoanalyst who is not registered. Every time an analyst ends up in court charged of breaching a law that does not exist, it must be made clear that this case is not against a single individual but against psychoanalysis itself.

Psychologists and medics too should be interested in this defence, since, if even within their own specificity, psychology, psychotherapy, medicine and psychiatry cannot but enrich themselves through the preservation and development of psychoanalysis, drawing on what each discipline can contribute.

Because of this, in tandem with the intransigent defence of psychoanalysis' freedom, we assert that the ethics of each analyst demands that he or she clearly discloses to each analysand the titles attained and the formative curriculum undertaken.

In this full clarity, the public may then choose the route of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy.

Equally crucial is that both analysts and analysands continue to nourish themselves through the widest confrontation, within and outside organisations, and that in the right forms they continue to undertake activities that allow them to elaborate their transference, ensuring that their practice does not slide towards the terrains of suggestion, seduction and 'cure'. All of this, however, is and will be possible only through a free psychoanalysis that in principle is not subsumed to any other discipline.

Each from his place: let us defend psychoanalysis

In history, totalitarian regimes have always attempted to erase psychoanalysis. Italian society as a whole, on the contrary, has been able to defend the minimal conditions for the existence of psychoanalysis, first, thanks to the debate that has avoided the worst dangers of the Law, and, second, thanks to the judges, who have fully understood the implications of their decisions.

This appeal is therefore addressed to the whole of society, starting from those who have specific responsibilities. Its aim is not only to ensure that these principles continue to be affirmed but, also, to end the attacks on psychoanalysis by those who, consciously or unconsciously, would like to see its disappearance.

It is in this sense that we ask all those subscribing to the principles of this manifesto to undersign it.

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