

## Psychoanalysis and Institutions: the inescapable truth about the inaccessible

**Marcela Toledo França de Almeida**

Creation, invention: there is nothing more real than this body that I imagine; there is nothing less real than this body I touch that turns into a heap of salt or vanishes into a column of smoke. With that smoke my desire will invent another body. (Octavio Paz)

From amongst the themes of inaccessibility we could begin with a discussion on the limitations of psychoanalytical work in public institutions. However, as the proposal of this article, that theme shall be extended to the inescapable truth about the inaccessibility of working with psychoanalysis wherever this takes place as a process.

The issue to be presented arises from clinical practice at an institution for teaching Psychology. I shall present the issue based on the case of Elvira, a lady who, although not quite sure, claims to be over 50 years old. She reached the institution in search of psychological care for her adopted daughter. For a while, it was her daughter who received the psychoanalysts' attention, but, as the months went by, Elvira demonstrated her own desire to be heard.

Treatment began less than four months ago. She appears to be someone who, by way of inheritance, received the 'gift of suffering'. Throughout her life she has only suffered at the hands of the 'animals', her relatives. She says she is nothing like them and suffers because she has been unable to transform her children into better people.

She has no recollection of having lived a life without sexual abuse, always committed by her brothers. Her older brother died believing her to be the 'woman of his life' and the second, upon noticing her suffering, stopped abusing her body. Her suffering is emphasized by memories of abandonment by her parents. She begged not to be made to go to the countryside alone with her brothers, but her mother said that if anything was going on it was because she was allowing it. She complains of an absent father

and asks if he wouldn't have 'taken care of the matter', taken care to avoid her being abandoned to the reality of her body. When young, she attempted to escape and could only do so with the excuse of taking care of a sick family member. She sought medical help and was also raped there. Throughout the years, violation has taken place in several ways in her life and she remains in search of an answer by means of an institution that will guide her through her pain and that of her children.

Despite all the abandonment, Elvira continued to demand from institutions an answer that would change the nature of the facts. She begins all sessions by saying that only death will release her from this life of suffering. Her fantasy revolves around care. She says that in the passage to death she took care of almost all those who made her suffer. This is her pact with God: she will take care of those who need her and in return she will receive a peaceful death.

Her narratives of the horrors she has undergone are punctuated by moments of silence. In her discourse, silence is filled with the desire for death: "Only death can release me from this life of suffering". With this sentence she indicates the inaccessibility of her suffering and points to more. How can she say more? The image is fixed and is repeated in its crudity.

Some questions arise. How can a body experienced as flesh, in the first relations of a subject, come to be an instinctive body and stabilize in view of the horror of the fall, distancing itself from the original lack of support? What object is this that makes the subject fixate and journey between the imaginary and the symbolic during their experience of reality? She has desire, even if it is for death. A desire guides her in search of another institutive order.

She seeks to speak to someone, some professional with knowledge. She seeks, in language, support for her body. It is known that outside of language, the body is not seen as a unit, but rather as chaotic fragments, that, by means of the physical need of a body experienced by fragmented organs, the presumed subject suffers from the excess of energy that circulates in no particular direction. The fragmented body requires construction of an outline, a limit that organizes the unbearable nature of meaninglessness.

In the unbearableness of life's first experiences, the notion of a state of helplessness is found, one which, according to Freud, relates to the experience of extreme

dependence on another. This experience is the mark of trauma, since the accumulation of energy is greater than the possibility of resolution by means of psyche work. In helplessness, the trauma presents itself.

Helplessness, here taken as a moment of trauma, appears in a state of no limits of the subject, in which they see themselves in a chaos in which their energy circulates aimlessly. But it will be in the relationship with the Other, that which is not of the speculative order or similar, but of the symbolic order, that the subject will find the desire and possibility for organization of their energy.

*Language* colonizes a territory by means of its marks, enabling an outline. Upon stating what is missing, the fantasy brings reality to the subject and the real does not reach them in a devastating manner, but is mediated by the meanings which structure the fantasy. The fantasy structured by the symbolic, maintains images sliding on a chain of meanings without crystallization: a mobile structure which is not limited to the imaginary. This is a movement which follows the path to meet this Original Other which cannot be reached.

At this point of calling a foul, common to all human beings, art comes close to fantasy. By means thereof, the foul inevitably introduces itself as that which escapes, as the rest which consumes human production. As with all human production, art remains in tension without succeeding in filling the void that it denounces. Art brings to the surface the discomfort, without resolving it, but maintains tension so that it develops in the transgression of the fantasy.

The illusion offered by the work of art is surrounded by a fragile thread, harmed by a distinct space for creation of a vacuum converted into a space for creation of the illusion. Lacan suggests that, by means of an illusory space, the artist makes this a *support* for reality, limiting the Thing (*das Ding*). This is not an attempt to recreate the empty space, to represent the Thing. On the contrary, it would be a creation of an outline of it by art, a distinction of heterogeneity from which one may learn and creation of the incomprehensible by construction of a border.

Something escapes even from the image, but the inescapable is the very inaccessibility of the content in its entirety. How can shape be given to the inaccessible? The patient in question leads me to the work of Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills*. As opposition to her photographed scenes, I wait for whatever this woman (who sees something that

I cannot see) tells me about her pain and her enjoyment in this position that does not yet form a moving picture, but rather remains as stills/still.