

The screams of silence: Depression and other maladies of modern times

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Depression will become the first cause of death in humanity in this century. All efforts to penetrate its mysteries are justified since it's a complex clinical problem and, at the same time, it's a threat to public health.

Suicide it's already the third cause of death among Mexican teenagers. The first place are automobile accidents and we don't know how many of them have an underlying depression. Addictions to drugs and alcohol are in a great percentage, the other side of the coin for depression. For many people that need to consume some kind of stimulant or analgesic, including those that physicians prescribe as anti-depressants, is the only way they find to cope with depression's pain. Other alternatives to cope with the pain of depression, are psychosomatic diseases or eating disorders like anorexia or obesity. The manic responses are also forms of defense against the pains of the soul. In this group we can include syndromes of hyperactivity or attention deficit in children. Suicide is of course associated in many cases to what I like to call the Pain with capital P: depression. Suicide can be considered in psychoanalytic theory, as a homicide, the need to kill that intruder that inhabits in our body. In this route of ideas we can understand why violence is another consequence of the big Pain. All of this syndromes and diseases are what we can call the maladies of silence, and due to their increasing incidents in this century, they are the maladies of modern times.

In the midst of this desolation, psychoanalysts, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and social and health scientists may start to feel a little depressed with so much depression. The maladies of silence are contagious, a "¡Don't Talk!" leads to a "¡Don't Speak!" The

sea of Pain is confronted with an ocean of prescriptions. That's how the U.S. became the Prozac nation and the whole world became the analgesic planet.

It's hard to believe that suddenly the serotonin in every human's head became crazy, too much, too little, but never right. It's too much of a coincidence that the serotonin levels came out of control, at the same time that we have created a world of deaf trying to listen mutes.

Our fast system, fast track, fast food, fast talk, fast love is nothing else but the fasting machine of words. The NO-word machine is the womb of violence, the cradle of all the maladies of silence.

When I say that we are all deaf and mute, I'm not saying that we can't articulate any word, what I'm saying is that we are too far away from our poetical spirit. We have lost our capacity of feeling what we say; we are unable of being touched by the words of another person. It's like if a piece of our body is not part of us anymore. It is a piece of flesh that serves as a pain reservoir so we can keep on going. Part of our body has become a fuse. The new organ of modern times is an electrical fuse, it burns itself. The fuse is any organ; it is any part of our body when the problem is called psychosomatic. But the fuse can also be non-geographical, non-anatomical, not a part of our body. Then becomes a don't-know-where-I-burned-something. That fuse is behind depression. It's not strange that the new chronic fatigue syndrome has been called "burn-out."

What's the refusal behind our burned souls?

Let's take for example Freud's grandson playing his famous "FORT-DA" which he introduced in his article "BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE." In this article he proposed his Eros-Tanatos dualism. Is in this writing that he is moved to sustain a theoretical structure that included the death instinct or death drive. This dualistic theory became the center of controversy among many psychoanalysts. While a lot of

psychoanalysts fought against the theory of the death drive, Ego Psychology grew on the fertile land of Freud's article: "The Ego and the Id." But again, it can't be such a coincidence that "the ego and the id (1923)" was written after "Beyond the pleasure principle (1920)."

What fuse was burnt in "Beyond the pleasure principle" that was immediately refused when reading "The ego and the id."

The refusal of the death drive in the psychoanalytical world has left us clinicians unarmed to help our patients in this new age of modern maladies of silence. While old time's neurotics rarely appear in our offices to consult us, the maladies of silence are sitting in front of us, like living-dead, awaiting for some kind of proposal from psychoanalysts. The maladies of silence are deeply engraved with their roots nurturing from the death drive.

It's about this kind of proposal I want to talk to you today. I want to share with you the theoretical hypothesis I developed in the book "*Del Silencio a la Palabra. Reflexiones psicoanalíticas sobre la depresión.*" Freud said that melancholy is like an open wound, where all our psychic energy is drained. Is like having a hose with a big hole. The water will never arrive to our grass; it will be dilapidated outside our garden. If we think of our garden as what Freud called the psychic apparatus we will be depleting our psychism from all its energy. When this energy -which is called libido when it's inside our psychic apparatus-, moves in our psyche, we speak of a primary process with its free energy, and secondary process with its bound energy. In both cases we are in the world of language. Free energy has to do with the language of dreams, and bound energy with this language we are trying to share due to my terrible English.

The objective of the psychic apparatus is to process the energy that comes from outside the psyche, that is the world and the body, by trying to keep the energy in a constant value. This is what Freud called the constancy principle.

But, what happens if the energy overwhelms this Freudian machine? What happens if the psychism is unable to cope with these big amounts of energy that modern times imprint in our psyche? If we refuse this energy, the fuse is burnt; so we refuse, and the fuse is burnt, and again we refuse, and the fuse is burnt. Fuse, refuse, fuse, refuse, you know how we call this: repetition compulsion. That's exactly what Freud was talking about when he described his grandson's "FORT-DA" game, and when at the same time he introduced the concept of death drive.

The "FORT-DA" story is magical, is a miraculous phenomenon that Freud discovered and Lacan complemented it with his Mirror Stadium. This miracle or mirror-cle is precisely what gives birth to every subject immersed in language, to every human being that talks. Is in this fuse – refuse compulsive chain that we can witness some kind of passage from death to life, from Tanatos to Eros. Every human being is born by stealing a word to death, by moving from a silent urge to kill your neighbor to the thunder made by a new born word. We are in front of a dialectic between being born or being burned as a subject.

Playing with words is a serious game. We are talking about a new born word. When this new word comes to light, or should I say comes to tongue, we can witness the birth of a new human subject. That's exactly what Freud witnessed in his grandson playing the "FORT-DA" game. But when this new word comes to dark, we can witness the death of a new human subject. The word is not born, but burned. A new living-dead inhabits our world and the counts for the maladies of silence start to climb. A complex clinical problem grows by the hand of an alarming social health issue. We, as a society, have

constructed a big subject burning machine. Is in this sense that we cannot think of depression as an isolated problem that the clinician will have to cope with it alone. We are in front of an enormous social problem. If the numbers of the living-dead, of the silent armies is increasing in this astonishing way, then I want to ask each one of you. Can we really think that depression is an organic problem that can be solved only with a chemical solution? Anyone that answers YES to this question is confirming the hypothesis that the human race is mutating. I believe it is much more credible to start accepting once and for all, that depression and all the other maladies of silence are a product of human culture. We are a modern society that has constructed the genesis, and not the genetics, of the maladies of silence.

I hope at least some of you out there are convinced by this logical argumentation. If I got some of you to start doubting, I will feel highly gratified. And that magical word: doubt, is in the center of the epistemological changes we are desperately needing in our world.

Forget about doubt related to obsession, even though it has connections, but oppose doubt to certainty. To be certain is to be mad. Being crazy is being right, having the reason. We have to start losing our reasons in order to listen to our fellow human being. Being right, being the owner of reason is being deaf. We have constructed a world of deaf giving birth to mutes. Silence is a social secretion that is destroying our so hardly constructed culture.

Silence is not a new gene that sleeps in some kind of X-Men, the mutant beings. If some of you still have doubts, well that is good enough (like the good enough mother). Give me the benefit of your doubt and try to listen a little further away from the madness of certainty.

What lies under the maladies of silence? If we give up the genetic theory, then we will have to say that the origin of these maladies has to do with an ethic problem. The dominant ethics among humanity have to do with what is wrong and what is right. And this ethics of right and wrong is correct for many spaces in our culture. I'm sure some of you are starting to hear some tingle-tingle in your ears when I talk about being right. We have just said that madness has to do with being right, with the paranoid certainty of delirium and not with the extravagancies of the unconscious. Is in this context that Lacan affirms that crazy is someone that thinks that "he is he OR she is she," when in reality everybody is not himself but someone else: we are always other. It is not that I am me; it is that I am other. There is other that inhabits everyone of us. When someone asked Dr. Freud: "Tell us where are you heading to," he answered: "go ask my horse." The ethics of right and wrong is the place where paranoia nurtures itself. The "big-brother" observation machine that George Orwell proposed in his book "1984," has brilliantly being described by Michelle Foucault in works like his book "Watch and punish": to watch, to guard, to keep an eye. To be or not to be... paranoid, that is the question. The dilemma is either you keep an eye or you give an ear, that's exactly the inflection point in Freudian theory. It's quite different to keep an eye in Freudian texts or give an ear; the same can be said about our patients: we keep an eye on them or we give an ear. Freud said what I consider the deepest phrase he ever wrote in regards to what being psychoanalyzed means. Freud's phrase was: "I succeeded where the paranoic fails." This is a magical phrase, keep it under your pillow and you will have great dreams. This sentence forces the construction of a new ethics for psychoanalysis. Our ethical principles cannot be the "Right-And-Wrong-Keep-An-Eye." That is not our paradigm. The ethics of psychoanalysis is our compass in clinical work. If we don't have a compass, "a cure direction," it is easy to drive in the wrong direction, to a dead-

end, to a dead drive. Without a compass we will take our patients from language to silence, instead of going from silence to language. Without a compass we can transform our patients' pathology into apathy. Let's break the word "apathy" into two words: A=NOT and PATHOS=ILLNESS OR MALADY. Apathy is the other name for depression; it is the distinctive finger print for the maladies of silence in modern times. Our compass has to go from apathy to pathology. If we go the other way, we are using a compass that has nothing to do with psychoanalysis. The hushing, the quieting of neurotic symptoms is committing a crime to language. It attempts against the existence of the subject. It is a way to push someone to the precipice of violence. Silence is violence, and deaf is death. Symptoms are hope and to give ear is to give life to desire. The difference has to do with being able to burn with desire and not to burn desire. The maladies of silence are the grave of human desire. The symbolic realization of desire has to go beyond symptoms, and not move back to depression. Our compass is not the right or wrong thing, but the write and read issue. Our ethics has to do with the write and read: writing and reading the human desire. We as clinicians read the desire in our patients. Obviously I'm talking about the unconscious desire. We, patient and analyst, try to read and write all we can around the desire that inhabits the person lying on our couch (lying in its both senses: lying down and telling lies). And when I say read and write, I'm thinking more in poetry and literature, and not in any way of colonization of the read and write world, from the "I know it all" world. The ethics of psychoanalysis gives up the use of any power. We, clinicians, resign to any word of power and give way to the power of words.

With this compass we can start constructing a theory that can help us understand the maladies of silence. One of these efforts is the book I wrote under the name "Del

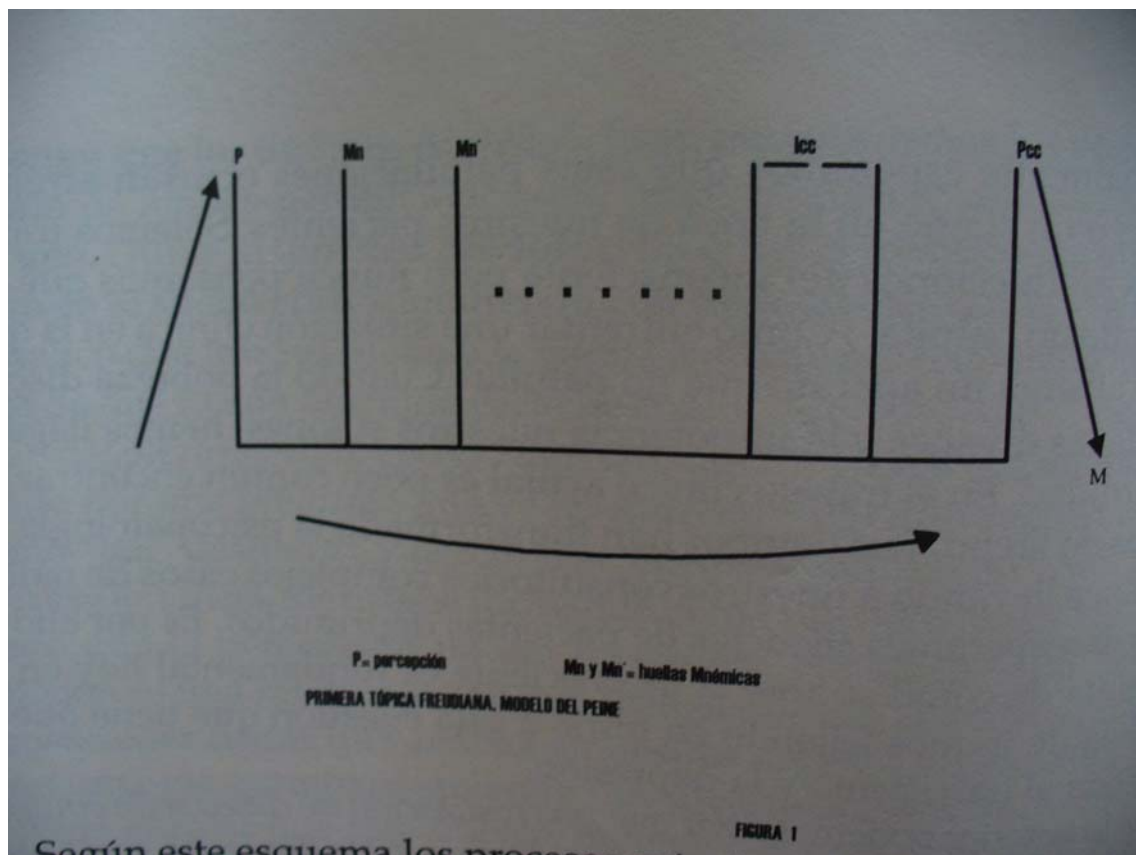
Silencio a la Palabra”, that we can translate as: “From Silence to the power of Words”.

In this work we propose a palpitant-psychic-apparatus.

THE PALPITANT-PSYCHIC-APPARATUS

When Freud developed his psychic apparatus in chapter VII of “The Interpretation of Dreams”, this machine is what we like to call, due to it’s resemblance, (figure 1) the comb model.

(FIGURE 1)pg. 34 of my book



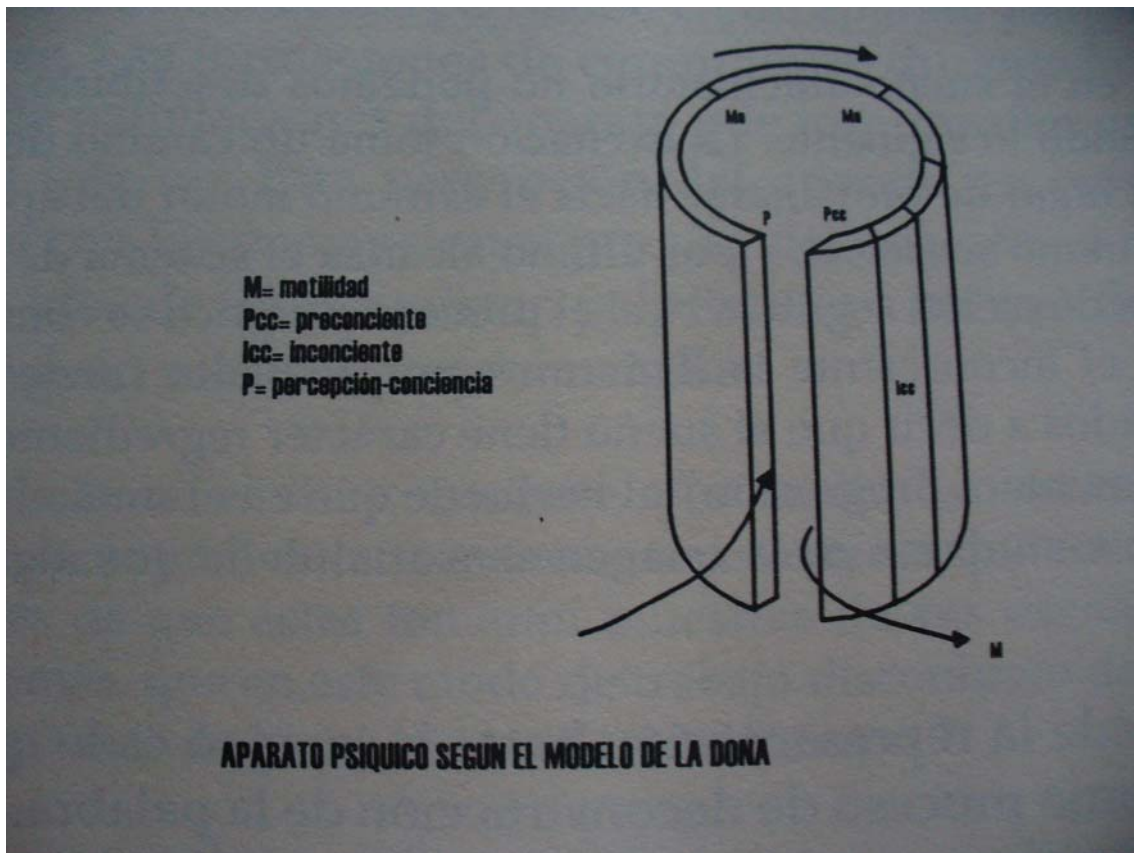
In this model, he pointed out that in order to explain dreams, motility has to be inhibited, when libido arrives to the Pcc (Preconscious) pole in a progredient direction. This inhibition makes libido bounce back in a regredient direction. The energy would then arrive to the P (perception) pole. Since perception is always the P-Cc (Perception-

Conscience) pole, the regredient energy will produce a kind of hallucination in the P pole, which is precisely a dream.

This model, that's used to explain dreams, apparently shows a contradiction since it does not have a route to go from the Pcc to the conscious system. This is unacceptable since Pcc and Cc are one system. To solve this problem, Freud introduced note #11 in 1919 where he states that this unwrapped or unwinded model should include the hypothesis that the system that follows the preconscious is the perception-conscience.

The model works for dreams but has a contradiction if we are not sleeping. The direct relation of the conscious system with the preconscious system is a condition of the secondary process. If these two systems were separated by the unconscious, we would think with the laws of dreams, and the world would be a mixture of hallucinations and objective reality. Jean Laplanche, taking into account Freud's note #11 of the linear unwinded sketch, wrote in 1982 an article called "The Psychoanalyst and his bucket" where he proposes to wrap the model making a kind of donut that would put the perception pole in contact with the motility pole. We will call this the donut model (figure 2).

FIGURE 2 – pg.35 of my book



Our point of view is not that Freud made a mistake and then Laplanche corrected it. We think that the comb model is the way the psychic apparatus works when we are dreaming, and in general it applies for all compromise-formations. These are symptoms, lapsus, parapraxis, dreams, and jokes.

On the other hand we have the donut model that works for our common daily life, and keeps untouched our ego's well functioning. We are not taking side for any of these two models. We consider it is one model with two different states; the unwinded state and the roll-over state. When the apparatus goes from the donut state to the comb state we say it palpitates.

A person that does not have neurotic symptoms, lapsus, parapraxis, dreams, and sense of humor, would be the owner of a psychic apparatus that does not palpitate. If our

psyche is unpalpitant or poorly palpitant we can say that we suffer some kind of silence malady. All compromise-formations, and particularly dreams, are a mechanism that enables a symbolic realization of a desire. If our desires are unrealizable, not even symbolically, we fall in depression, and our hope is lost. The psychic apparatus becomes a forbidden space for our drives to be processed. This is the land of the death instinct, silently pouring all the energy outside of our psychism. Drugs, organic diseases and depression, among others, will be the favorite routes for this deathful energy, for this lost connection between desire and language. The death instinct pushes psychic illness to the land of biological silence. The-out-of-language biological world of silence, is the muteness of an organic pattern that repeats itself, instead of talking the singular history that is engraved in every human being. That unique mark that crosses each person, is overseen by a death amnesia, that keeps us living the poor life that a non-palpitant psychism gives us.

You can probably guess that, if we define the maladies of silence as the effect of an unpalpitant or poorly palpitant psychic apparatus, then our clinical proposal is to find a way to produce palpitations. In many cases, transference will do the job. Transference produces palpitations since it starts a dialogue between two unconscious systems. The discovery of a fellow human being, of the existence of the other, the neighbor, throws us to the land of the unexpected. This may sound trivial, but we have to be careful when we affirm that someone has discovered his neighbor. Our narcissistic structure is like a mirror that converts the whole world in reflections of us. Even though, like Narcissus in front of his image reflected in a water well, we do not realize that it's our reflection and we precipitate into the well of death trying to find our ideal love. The psychoanalyst Serge Leclaire, in a study of primary narcissism, in his book called "A child is killed", said that many people are born, live and die without ever talking to anyone else but

themselves. This is a terribly sad story I'm telling you, and all of us can start asking ourselves if we have ever talked to a fellow human being, or we only talk to ourselves when we speak to a neighbor.

The condition for being able to hear our neighbors, is that we are not deaf, and that we know how to talk. Let me tell you that some organically deaf people, hear much more than many people that have their ear function untouched. The way we went through what Lacan defined as the "Mirror Stadium", will determine our capacity to talk and hear. For many people a classical psychoanalysis will provide, through transference, the tools to deal with his or her silent maladies. For other patients, a pre-analytical process will be necessary. This last patients need to learn to talk before we can start listening to them. A re-edition of the mirror stadium will be necessary before their psychism can start to palpitate.

Let's take for example a clinical case I call "The woman in Black".

She is a 50 year old patient, that arrives to see me because of a depression that has bugged her for more than 30 years. She always dresses in black. Everything in life is ugly; apathy is the paradigm of her life. She awaits death as the only door out of her depression. She told me she had a boyfriend when she was a teenager; this guy treated her very violently. He used to hit her by mouth and hand. Because of this, she decides to end the relationship and the guy threatens to kill himself. The next day she gets a call where she's informed that he committed suicide. At this point her depression started, alternating with all kinds of organic diseases. One day after a couple of years of analysis (or pre-analysis), the depression moved out. She stopped dressing in black, color and words of hope started to fill the session. The turning point had to do with an act, a kind of ritual act. One day she comes and says: "I went to see the grave of my boyfriend; I had not been there since he died. I went to talk to him. I told him I'm not

responsible for his death. I told him he's the only one to blame for his suicide, and that I'm sorry for what happened to him, but I'm not going to continue to be bugged by his suicide. He's the one to be bugged for his acts."

In this talk, she moved from a passive state, where she had been parking for 30 years, and took an active position: "It is not you who blames me, but I who blame you for your suicide". This phrase resembles the sentence that makes Freud when we interprets his grandson's FORT-DA game. The child throws away the toy that represents his gone away mother and says OOO, meaning FORT that in German means, "go away". Freud tells us that the child is moving from a passive position to an active one, by saying with his playing: "You are not the one that leaves me; I'm the one that throws you away. Get out of my sight, I don't want you."

The child makes an inversion from a situation where he's being abandoned by his mother to a new active situation where he's the one that tells the mother to go away. In this same movement, that inverts passivity to activity, the child is starting to talk. Language is born as the possibility to confront and survive the unbearable anxiety of being abandoned and condemned to die of hunger, due to the possession of a useless body that we can't control. That's exactly what is being cooked during the mirror stadium, the promise of having a unified body that we control, and not one that is an appendix of our mother's body.

Our patient, as Freud's grandson, was able to learn to talk as she finds a way out of the alienating Moebius band, the cradle of human narcissism, by sorting out that the one that was bugged was he and not her. As you can see, when we say that someone has to learn to talk, we are saying that he has to be born as a subject and not burned. So the question behind our assertion that we are somehow deaf and mute can be stated as follows: Who talks in our mouths when we speak?

With this clinical example I wanted to emphasize the difference between, learning to talk, by transforming the underlying narcissistic structure and, what we understand, happens in a classical analysis of a neurotic patient. In this last case, we work in order to produce a new speech from an incarnated word. It is in this sense that neurosis is a malady of words, and its clinical approach has to do with finding a less painful way to talk. We search for a route of words instead of symptoms. But when a person is lost in a confusion between the inside and the outside, when he's confused between being himself or his neighbor, he's suffering from the maladies of silence. In this case, our cure conduction should point to first make the patient a neurotic. This means to find a way to get in motion the Freudian palpitating machine.

The quality of palpitation creates two different time systems that coincide in our present, in our being conscious. The donut model has to do with the time we deal in our daily life activities; we could call it a logical time. On the other hand, the comb model deals with another time system. Freud said there was no time in the unconscious, that's exactly what we can understand as a different time system; where past and present live together. This time system is not non-logical, but has the logic of the unconscious. In this system you can travel through time. You can talk to your mother or father even if they have died long ago.

A palpitation of the Freudian machine will put in contact our logical time with our magical time. The possibility of connecting two different times in one instant, opens the symbolic realizations of our desires. Any clinical approach that obturates this palpitating function, is moving in the wrong direction. The non-palpitant apparatus is the paradigm of insomnia. We all know that sleeplessness is the plague of many depressed people. A sleeping pill is a substance that can make the body sleep, as long as it inhibits the palpitation of the psychism. Sleeping chemicals interfere with the

formation and production of dreams, since dreams are the royal road to the unconscious, they are a symbolic realization of desire. The “perfect” sleeping pill should let you sleep but not dream. Our hypothesis is that depression is the effect of a desire not symbolically realizable. Our conclusion on this study is that depression, and other maladies of silence, are produced by a non-palpitant psychic apparatus. This non-palpitation would have to do with unelaborated duels. As long as we cannot give burial to our deads, they will inhabit our bodies as living-deads that can’t rest in peace ,-if they can’t rest they’ll nest in our bellys-, until some kind of pending justice occurs. Our living dead will keep us awake until justice gives us the possibility to start having desires again. This justice can only be achieved by society, through politics or through arts. This justice is a way of going back in time and writing the story of the defeated, and not only the story of the victorious. As you can see, we are again in this thing of write and read, and of right and wrong. Write and read the real story of a human being or a society, and not just print all the lies around, who won and who lost. Is there any winner in this massive madness that we call war? Wars will continue charging us with a high fee in the generations to come, not only in depression and other maladies of silence, but also in the increase of psychotic patients, as new studies are demonstrating. The french psychoanalyst, Francois Davoine, established the relations between war, unrealizable duels, and psychosis.

We propose a cure to the non-palpitant psychism through a trip to the past. We are not talking about re-signification of the past in the present. We are proposing something impossible: re-significating the present as a result of traveling to the past. This unthinkable trip should be able to imprint the real story in the mnemical prints where, in other times, the official history was written.

Art is a way to make possible the impossible. It is a way to make a transgression to time. Winnicott's transitional space is the place of creation; it is the kitchen of the new words, the new story. This magical space is where the outside shares with the inside. The topology of this magical space is that of a Moebius band. This is a scene, a place where the play takes place. I'm using the word play in its two meanings in English; one pointing to a theatre, to the play's scenery, and the other to the playground. This last one, as Cat Stevens sang it many years ago when he asked: "Where do the children play?" Children don't like games, they like to play. Play is creation, game is a chain of rules and being chained by rules. Cat Stevens question is alive: "Where do the children play?", because if they don't have a playground, they will mess with drugs, and depression will blacken the future of our youngsters.

As you can see, the clinical approach to the maladies of silence has to do with art, with the revelation of a poetry that inhabits every person that lives in the blues.

As analysts, we share this acts of reading and writing, this new poetry, this impossible trip to yesterday "where all my troubles seem so far away" (the Beatles said). What we are trying to say is that this problem is not isolated to our clinical jobs, but it is a giant pandemic that threatens all our societies. If art can be seen as the cure direction, politics is the royal route to cope with this pandemic. If we can find the way to be governed by politicians that start giving ear instead of keeping an eye upon their people, the world would start to change.

Can you imagine a world where being psychoanalyzed would be a must for every politician. Under the light of this words, we can understand today what Freud meant when he said there are three impossible professions: psychoanalyze, governate and educate. All this professions have to deal with transference. Unfortunately for teachers

and politicians, only psychoanalysis has a theory of transference and takes it into account.

The only way to dislocate the narcissistic self of psychoanalysts, teachers and politicians, is by giving all of them the opportunity to be psychoanalyzed. Can you imagine a world where teachers and politicians could start giving ears instead of keeping an eye on everybody. John Lennon would say “Imagine there’s no country”.

If we want to stop this enormous death factory of deaf and mutes, we should start by taking psychoanalysis out of its intellectual coffin, and start giving ears to the people. Specially the people that work with people: teachers, politicians, medical doctors, nurses, psychologists, the list could go on and on.

Maybe I became too much of a dreamer today, but I hope I’m not the only one. As you have probably noted, this exercise I made of writing in English, made me travel to my teen years, and the music we used to hear in those years. This is another example of how language makes becomes a trip in time, more than in space. Language has to do with different times, with years going through your ears, and not with eyes and I’s proclaiming the end of history, the end of time, the new ice (eyes, I’s) era of depression.

I want to thank the members of the North Carolina Psychoanalytic Foundation, and specially my friend Dr. Jeffrey Chambers, for your generosity in inviting Leolinke and me to share our sayings. I also want to thank all of you for your patience in giving ears to this Magical Mystery Tour from silence to language.