

## The enigmatic experience in psychosis: the elementary phenomena in the light of theory of significant

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**Abstract:** The knowledge of the elementary phenomena is a valuable tool for diagnosis and treatment of psychosis. Lacan reexamines this psychiatric notion based on Benveniste's and Jakobson's studies on the shifters. As will be shown, the result of this dialogue was the formulation of the enigmatic experience on psychosis, where appears the unique possibility of an enunciation without enunciator. Despite exceeding the limits of what is acceptable as valid by linguistics, the consequence of Lacan's research is situate in a definitive way the causality of psychosis in the field of language, and not in the biological register. In addition, understanding the two logical times of the enigmatic experience allows to isolate a principle from which is deduced a reorganization of the elementary phenomena into 2 types: xenopathic and self-reference.

**Keywords:** psychosis, psychoanalysis, Lacan, linguistics, elementary phenomena.

### Introduction

The notion of the elementary phenomena flourished in the soil of organicist Psychiatry in the late 19th century, therefore within a clinical tradition whose epistemological assumptions Lacan combated frontally. The dispute, which focuses essentially on the assumption that psychosis would be a mental disease whose etiology is biological, never stopped Lacan from recognizing the value of research undertaken in this direction. Lacan's recognition in relation to the legacy left by his master in Psychiatry, Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, should be especially noted, from whom he would inherit the interest in research of the so-called elementary phenomena.

Initially, this article aims to determine the importance of the elementary phenomena for Psychoanalysis today, highlighting its importance for the diagnosis of psychosis. Subsequently, the intention is to demonstrate how Lacan's alliance with structural linguistics, especially with Jakobson's and Benveniste's studies on the enunciation and the shifter, allowed an unprecedented reading of this classical notion of Psychiatry. The consequence was that Lacan's interpretation brought greater rigor and systematicity to the old notion, surpassing the merely descriptive level by deducing it from a significant principle. The result of this reading was the understanding of the elementary phenomenon as an *enigmatic experience*.

The enigmatic experience attests the Lacanian thesis that psychosis would be not a mental illness whose cause is organic but a very special mode of relationship between subject and language in a new way. Therefore, the most appropriate recording of treatment for the problem of

psychosis would be the field of speech and language, and absolutely not the recording of factual objectivity.

### The importance of the elementary phenomena for Psychoanalysis

The category of the elementary phenomena was developed by classical Psychiatry in the late 19th and early 20th century. Originally formulated within the organicist clinical tradition, the notion of elementary phenomena would receive from this current its brand of baptism, which would be partially conserved in later developments. According to the organicist Psychiatry, mental illnesses would be caused by biological factors, in such a way that the presence of special organic conditions would bring the emergence of *sui generis* psychic phenomena as a consequence. The peculiarity of these phenomena is that they introduce a break in the continuity of the lived, suspending both the logical coherence and the comprehension of the experience as significant totality (Lustoza, 2006).

Such phenomena would be considered *elements* as they would constitute the most simple and basic units that compose the psychopathological process. Therefore, the soil in which the notion flourishes is that of an *atomistic semiology*, closely linked to a particular conception within the organicism, the mechanicism. This would seek to establish the disease on the hypothesis of the occurrence of a specific lesion (Simanke, 2002, p. 35).

Such disruptive phenomena would be a sort of foreign body, to which the mind would later react by trying to produce a response that could handle this emergence that was originally devoid of significance. Based on this hypothesis, the organicists would seek to separate the elementary phenomena – which would form a manner

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of primitive core of psychosis – from the phenomena considered accessory or secondary, which would be added *a posteriori* (Álvarez, 2009). Such orientation, which distinguishes what is essential and what is derived in the psychotic process, would open a specific field of research in psychopathology, which even goes beyond the strict limits of organicism.<sup>1</sup>

The category of elementary phenomena, whose definition and scope were not consensual among the old clinicians, would receive renewed treatment by Lacan, being granted the status of key element for the diagnosis of psychosis.<sup>2</sup> Its practical utility is linked to the fact that it constitutes a pathognomonic sign of psychosis (Álvarez, 2009).

These are phenomena whose minimum matrix reveals and contains the general structure of psychosis. Because they are consubstantial to it, that is, *pathognomonic*, their discreet presence indicates the presence of the psychotic structure, whose clinical triggering may or may not have been produced (Álvarez, 2009, p. 111, emphasis added).

In medicine, a manifestation is a pathognomonic sign when it can *always* and *only* be found in the cases of patients affected by the disease (Aguar, 2004). In the case of the elementary phenomenon, it should be possible to find it, at the same time, in *any case* of psychosis, as well as *exclusively* in cases of psychosis (and not in neurosis or perversion).

Importantly, prudence is recommended here, as a psychotic patient will not necessarily present elementary phenomena *all the time*. There are cases in which the diagnosis is reported very late by the clinician, as is shown in the example given by Darian Leader (2011). This is a patient, successful in his career in the legal field, whose life had not been significantly disturbed by manifested symptoms or inhibitions, until the moment he starts to suffer a crisis of intense anguish. After a long period of treatment, the subject is able to find what led to his apprehension and decides to terminate his analysis. In the last sessions, however, he surprises the analyst with the delusional belief that all people whose first name was equal to his shared a common ancestor. As says the author concerning the case, “the long-term work with a psychotic subject always shows that there are many things that are not revealed immediately, if ever” (p. 22).

1 This means that such researches would not necessarily follow the original atomistic orientation of the mechanicism. The psychogenetic perspectives, for example, would emphasize the idea of the disease as *total phenomenon*, rather than *elementary* (Simanke, 2002); however, maintaining the idea of a separation between primary and secondary processes.

2 Lacan (1955–56/2002) states explicitly having collected the term *elementary phenomena* from the work of Clérambault, who imparted to him the interest in this issue, present at least since the doctoral thesis: “If you read, for example, my work on paranoid psychosis you will see that I emphasize in it what I call, *borrowing the term from my master Clérambault, the elementary phenomena*” [emphasis added] (p. 28).

The lesson that can be drawn from cases like these is that the diagnosis of psychosis cannot be done at once, and that it requires that the clinician follow the patient's discourse, sometimes for a long time, to have greater confidence in the diagnostic assessment. While this cannot be done, there will be a suspension of the diagnostic judgment.

Another point to be clarified is that the determination by the analyst of the elementary phenomenon is not always simple, because it depends on an assessment of the patient's subjective position. The diagnosis cannot be punctual, and should always seek to find the subject considering the phenomenon. Well, if the research of the elementary phenomenon cannot be separated from the search of the subject's position, *it will be only through listening that the analyst will determine if a given material is or is not an elementary phenomenon*. In the case of neurosis, the subjective position is that of the belief in the phenomenon; belief that can always be questioned. Psychosis, on the other hand, is the only structure in which experiences are found that are lived by the subject in the field of enigma/certainty (this point will be the subject of more detailed considerations throughout the article).

The semiological value of the elementary phenomenon has been updated by discussion on the ordinary psychoses, which would be psychoses in which the noisy and extraordinary signs classically associated with the declaration of that structure – namely, the hallucinations and the deliriums would be absent. Well, the research of the elementary phenomena, by investigating the earliest signs of psychosis, ends up precisely comprising a set of manifestations that are much more subtle and silent, which may be present in the clinical condition even in the absence of triggering. Knowledge on such phenomena would be fundamental in the diagnosis of ordinary psychosis, by allowing the determination of the presence of psychosis in cases where such a structure has not yet been clearly demonstrated.

Early detection is vitally important for Psychoanalysis, because it is important to assess the risks of treating a patient whose psychosis is still not patent. Let us recall here the famous warning of Lacan (1981/2002), according to which the free-association device may cause the triggering of a psychosis that until that point had been stabilized: “it turns out we receive prepsychotics, and we know the result of that – it results in psychosis” (p. 285). Which means, if not an absolute contraindication to treatment, at least a strong warning when accepting a prepsychotic patient.

Lacan's interest in isolating the core experiences is not exclusively due to the problem of early detection of the structure, but also to his hypothesis that the elementary phenomenon enables – because of its simplicity – a crystal clear view of the lines of force at stake in the complex condition of psychosis; lines that delineate a structure belonging to the symbolic field. Thus, they form a kind of map, which by reducing a territory to its main points

provides a privileged panorama of the set. Hence, it is possible for Lacan to make a broad use of the concept of elementary phenomenon, since any other posterior and secondary phenomenon, such as the delirium, must be a repetition at an extended level of that which already emerges primarily in elementary phenomenon:

Therefore, the important aspect of the elementary phenomenon is not to be an initial nucleus, a parasitic point, as Clérumbault expressed, within the personality, around which the subject would make a construction, a fibrous reaction destined to encyst him/her by involving him/her, and at the same time integrate him/her, that is, explain to him/her as they often say. *Delirium is not deducted, it reproduces its own constituent power, it is, also, an elementary phenomenon.* (p. 28)

In relation to the circumscription of the “elementary phenomena,” the set of what is considered to be included in this category varies from author to author within Psychiatry; some, for example, include the hallucinations as elementary phenomena, whereas others exclude them<sup>3</sup>. In a *stricter* sense, as proposed by Álvarez (2009), such phenomena would not initially have a hallucinatory content. Such a definition is interesting when it aims to delimit *early signs* of psychosis, that is, manifestations that appear silently and inconspicuously to the layman eye. Such signs may be present in the patient’s life, without this patient ever having experienced a triggering. Concerned with the issue of diagnosing ordinary psychosis, Álvarez avoids including hallucinations and deliriums among the elementary phenomena, because he understands them as late signs that characterize an already declared psychosis.

However, it is clear that such separation is somewhat artificial. Therefore, we can try to give a *broader* sense to the elementary phenomena; this is the version that appears in *Seminar 3* (Lacan, 1981/2002), in which the author proposes an expansion of the concept, with it being possible to extend to the hallucination the same reasoning that he applies to delirium or to any secondary process: they all reproduce the force present in the elementary phenomenon to a greater extent. In this extended sense, the elementary phenomena would comprise the *entire* set of enigmatic experiences. In our view, both the *broad* and the *restricted* sense may be useful, depending on the problem intended to be examined.

As a starting point, we will see the point of view of Álvarez (2009), according to which the elementary phenomena could be divided into 2 main types.

a) The *xenopathic* ones are related to a loss of control by the subject of thought, body, or will, which go under the automatic power of a strange influence that is alien to oneself. They correspond, in general, to the phenomena of corporal and mental automatism as described by Clérumbault (1920/2006); a phenomena in which “patients who feel influenced do not belong to themselves anymore” (p. 57), as “the representation of the physical self is affected” (p. 57). We could provide as examples: interference with thought, acceleration of thought, stop of the flow of ideas, belief that the organs of the body are under transformation, etc.

It should be noted that Clérumbault devoted more attention to the description of the mental automatism than to that of the corporal automatism. He classified the phenomena of mental automatism in various ways, one of them according to their evolution in time. The initial forms of mental automatism are not sensory; the intermediate forms already acquire sensory content but still do not have a hallucinatory character; the late forms are hallucinatory, usually related to auditory and motor-verbal aspects (Barros & Campos Filho, 2002, p. 158). Only the initial and intermediate forms are characterized by him as Small Mental Automatism Syndrome.

This precision is important, especially when considering that in ordinary psychosis hallucinations or deliriums may be absent, but it should be possible for other more subtle psychotic phenomena to be found. The presentation of the small mental automatism syndrome meets the need of a more delicate and detailed clinical description of the phenomena as a means of diagnosis.

b) the phenomena of *self-reference* are related to experiences in which the subject feels directly alluded or referred to by facts or individuals, whose signification become personally addressed to him or her. Examples include the intuition (in which the patient has access to the sudden revelation of a full truth) and the delusional perception (in which the patient reads on the objects of the world signs addressed to him or her). The basic difference between the 2 types of elementary phenomena is that, while the xenopathic ones testify to the fragmentation of the egoic identity, those of self-reference demonstrate the maintenance of the integrity of the I (Álvarez, 2009).

### Position of the problem: the structural nature of the pathognomonic

In *Seminar 3*, Lacan (1981/2002) examines the notions of classical Psychiatry in the light of structural linguistics, resulting in a new intelligibility of the elementary phenomena, in which they come to be thought of as a significant principle. It is the emergence of an

<sup>3</sup> “Maybe as it is a hybrid and relatively silent ground, the considerations made by the specialists about this type of phenomena do not fail to show certain discrepancies, even incurring contradictions. There are those who consider hallucination and the elementary phenomenon as homologous; there are also authors that limit the presence of this phenomenon to the triggering of madness; and, also, there is no shortage of those who believe that this can do without it entirely” (Álvarez, 2009, p. 111).

enigmatic experience, which can be translated as the emergence of a *significant devoid of signification*. Thus, both the xenopathic and the self-reference phenomena have as common base that they constitute an enigmatic experience, which means situating it as a fracture in the field of sense. The term enigmatic experience will end up standing out in relation to the term elementary phenomena, as it is already associated with the contributions of structuralism to Lacan's teaching.

If the elementary phenomenon was invoked to support such weight in the Lacanian theory of psychosis, that is because it is a phenomenon that can only be circumscribed when related to a subject. What matters here is to situate a particular type of relationship of the subject with his own productions, in which this subject is unable to recognize them as *his productions*, which become, due to this very reason, enigmatic. That is, the accent will be put on the psychosis as a special mode of the subject's relationship with the signifier, in which the language device can become exterior to the subject.

Lacan (1981/2002) refers to the description of the psycho-motor verbal hallucinations made by psychiatrist Julian Séglas to emphasize the uniqueness of the psychotic experience. This is a special type of hallucination, in which the subject says a phrase, states having heard it, but then is able to affirm that the phrase came to him from outside, as if it had not been pronounced by himself:

He [Séglas] noted that the verbal hallucinations were produced in people who showed – with very obvious signs in certain cases, and in others after a little more careful observation – that they themselves were uttering, knowingly or not wanting to know it, the words they accused their voices of having pronounced. (p. 33)

This surprising fact leads us to ask: how can anyone say something and not be able to recognize the act of saying as one's own? How can anyone emit signifiers and not be able to include oneself in one's own signifying activity? Such problems lead Lacan to address the issue of psychosis as a problem of an intentionality that does not hook to the signifying chain, as if there were a missing a link that establishes a connection between subjective intention and objective signifying sequence. As if the effect were absent, which is typical in neurosis, in which the subject is entangled, pinned, captured by the discourse. There we face the central aspect of the problem of the enigmatic experience: it becomes impossible for the subject to situate him/herself in the signifying chain. In other words, we have a signifier that *does not represent* the subject.

According to Miller (1995), "the elementary phenomenon represents something, although it is not known precisely what. Let us say that it represents something, unbeknownst to someone, for the subject" (p. 8). Instead of the standard Lacanian formula, in which the

signifier represents the subject for another signifier, the signifier starts to represent something unbeknownst to a subject, it represents something for someone. We have an isolated S1, and the psychotic cannot resort immediately to a S2 that would make it legible.

Why not translate thusly the forclusion of the name-of-the-father, the forclusion of this S2 that for the neurotic allows him to decipher everything without perplexity? This that in the neurotic, the so-called normal, so naturally emerges, if I may, for the psychotic implies a great work, as there must be an elaboration of knowledge that is not so natural. (p. 21)

Upon realizing the possibility, opened by the psychotic structure, of the signifier without representing the subject, Lacan (1981/2002) asks himself a number of important questions:

Where, in the signifier, is the person? How is a discourse supported? To what extent can a discourse that seems personal, only at the level of the signifier, bear many traces of impersonalization so the subject does not recognize it as his own? (p. 304)

Here the concern to isolate the point in which the subject connects to the signifying chain should be clearly noted, in which he gives vital support to that which is said. Armed with these questions, Lacan would resort to the contributions of the structural linguistics, finding the first orientation in Benveniste's work on personal pronouns, which would be the subject of discussion in *Seminar 3* (Lacan, 1981/2002).

### **Treatment of the problem of the enigmatic experience in Seminar 3: Lacan with Benveniste**

We have no intention here of summarizing all the rich contribution of the Benvenistean linguistics to Lacan, however, we will emphasize in particular the problem, explored in *Seminar 3* (1981/2002), of situating what distinguishes a personal discourse from an impersonal discourse with regard to the issue of self-recognition of the subject through enunciation. Let us remember that, by definition, enunciation assumes the subject's self-perception as an instance that is agent and transparent to itself within the field of the signifier. The aim is precisely thinking about the intriguing fact that, in psychosis, the subject may not be represented by the signifier at the very moment in which he performs the act of enunciation, thereby generating the strange experience of an enunciation that is disconnected from its enunciator. It will be in Lacan's reflection on this strange phenomenon that we will find the reference to Benveniste.

In his third seminar, dedicated to the study of psychoses, we find only six references of Lacan to Benveniste. However, this scarcity does not reflect its importance; on the contrary, Benveniste is a privileged interlocutor according to Lacan, as he is invoked in the manner of an ally in the project that comprises the very title of the seminar: it would be possible to demonstrate the relevance of psychoanalysis in the understanding and treatment of psychosis, precisely because psychosis could be reduced entirely to a problem belonging to the language sphere. It is in this sense that Lacan finds the possibility of illustrating something that he himself seeks to circumscribe in Benveniste: through the linguistic category of the shifters (translated as *embreadores* or *dêiticos* in Portuguese) we can find an example of an overlap between subjectivity and language.

Benveniste was not far from Roman Jakobson who, since 1950, had already presented the verbal categories present in the enunciation that were characterized exclusively by the reference to the context of enunciation. According to Jakobson (1957/1963), the notion of shifters would form a separate category in natural language due to their specific function: they are the language elements that directly reference a pragmatic meaning associated with a concrete discursive situation. Benveniste (1956/1997), in a famous article in tribute to this Jakobsonian genius, notes how the shifters constitute a grammar class that pervades some of the personal pronouns, adverbs of time and space, as well as the verbal inflections of time and person.

Within the universe of the shifters, those that most directly relate to our problem would be the personal pronouns in 1st or 2nd persons. The personal pronouns *I* and *you* are signs devoid of empirical referential content, as they do not relate to a sensitive object, which would remain substantially identical over time: thus, *I* can have a different sense if said by Lacan or Freud, for example. These two personal pronouns, differently from other pronouns, have no material reference, as they indicate neither something to which we can assign qualities nor qualities of a thing (Benveniste, 1956/1966, p. 252). Such terms acquire signification only within a discursive reality, inevitably including a reference to the speaking subject, since *I* is the one who speaks and *you* the one to whom you speak. “What is, therefore, the reality referred to by *I/You*? Solely a reality of discourse, which is a very unique thing. . . . *I* signifies “the person who enunciates the present instance of discourse containing *I*.” (Benveniste, 1956/1997, p. 173). As the pronouns *I/you* do not refer to the concept of an invariant substance, their referential emptiness can only be filled based on the act of speech, that is, on their situation according to the coordinates of a discourse:

The use [of these pronouns], therefore, is conditioned on the situation of discourse, and no other. If each speaker, to express the feeling of

their irreducible subjectivity, had a distinctive sign . . . there would be almost as many languages as individuals and communication would be strictly impossible. Language prevents such risk by instituting a single, yet mobile sign, *I*, which can be assumed by each speaker, with the condition of referring each time only to the instance of their own discourse. (p. 175)

At this point, it is possible to understand why Benveniste would affirm that the personal pronouns do not all have the same *status*. While *I/you* can function as shifters, the same is not true for the third person (*it*), which Benveniste considers as a *non-person*. That is because the figure of the third person relates to an object of which we speak and not to the person speaking or to the person to whom we speak (1956/1966, p. 256). Thus, the non-person designates the class of the pronouns that do not have a reflective nature; characteristic that is present precisely in the shifters.

It is interesting to note how Benveniste continuously supports the fact of the enunciation represented in shifters with the same structure as that of the *Cogito*, an enunciative cogito, in which in lieu of *I think, therefore I am* we would have an *I enunciate, therefore I am*, or, in the words of Benveniste (1958/1966): the deictic enunciation *I* corresponds to the “coincidence of the event described with the instance of discourse that describes it” (p. 262). And, hence, the shifters are figures whose only function is to give form to the speaking subjectivity, establishing the “subjectivity in the language” and creating the very “category of the person” (p. 263). In this sense, we can observe that, even when dealing with temporal shifters (yesterday, tomorrow, today, etc.) or spatial shifters (here, there, etc.), it never concerns the metric time or space of the objectivity of measurement of science, but rather a space and a time that only refer to the subject in the first person. Shifters are empty signs through which an irreducible subjectivity within an addressing of words to the Other is expressed.

Lacan agrees with most of Benveniste’s assumptions concerning the elements involved in the enunciation, but is also fairly aware of what implies the transposition of a theory of enunciation to the psychoanalytic field. Therefore, the possibility of using the reference to the Benvenistean theory of enunciation is not conducted by Lacan in the way a linguist would expect.

In all his references to Benveniste, Lacan gives us the impression of understanding the morphological-grammatical peculiarity of the shifters well. Lacan would be particularly interested in a strange exception in the theory of the shifters, when there is the possibility of an impersonal use of the second person, *you*: “the second person can be used out of the speech and become an impersonal variety” (Benveniste, 1946/1997, p. 167). The example given by the linguist himself of this impersonal use of the second person would be quoted in full by

Lacan (1981/2002), as read in the following excerpt from *Seminar 3*:

When they say in everyday use – *you can't stroll* without being accosted, in reality it is not about you at all. The *you* assumes the value of indeterminacy of the subject, corresponding to this subject. (p. 311, emphasis added)

That is, the *you* employed here is not related to *the person to whom you are speaking*, but to *any person*. To the extent that the phrase pointed out could be replaced by: *one can't stroll*, having “one” as index of indeterminacy of the subject. *You* here generically refers to anyone: “the function of the second person in this instance is precisely referring to that which belongs to no one, which is impersonalized” (p. 311).

Despite having obtained the distinction between the personal/impersonal uses of the pronoun *you* from reading Benveniste, Lacan was determined to make an original use of the teachings of Linguistics. When taking, for example, a founder line such as *You are my master*, it clear that this is a personalized use of the pronoun. But the correct justification from the linguistic point of view – that is, the fact that the *you* in question refers to the person to whom one speaks, and not a generic person – would not be exactly the reason alleged by Lacan. The psychoanalytic justification is that, in hearing someone tell him *You are my master*, the subject becomes someone other than what he is, by striving to correspond to what one is expected to be. The subject takes charge of a mission that leads one to go beyond oneself, implying an operation of identification that transforms the subject radically. This is the point where lies the operation of personalization. Or, to express it in more precise Lacanian terms, this is where is located the operation of entanglement or the point of subjectivation of the chain.

The performativity at stake in the personalized usage of the pronoun is, without a shadow of a doubt, what is at stake according to Lacan:

The *you* is in the signifier what I call a way of hooking the other, of hooking the other to the discourse, of hooking the signification to the other. *It should not in any way be confused with the alocutor, that is, the one to whom one speaks.* (p. 336, emphasis added)

Clearly here there is a critique of the definition – for being too narrow – of the personalized *you* in Linguistics. The emphasis on the transforming and operating character of *you* in the full discourse is evidenced in the following passage: “this *you* that in itself is less that which designates the other and more that which enables us to operate on the other” (p. 337). That is, the personal pronoun has an operative character, and not simply a descriptive one: it performs changes and produces effects.

But, if in neurosis, it is necessary that something in the subject come to correspond to the function assigned by the Other, then what occurs in psychosis? In the example mentioned by Lacan (p. 344), a young man, whose psychosis had not manifested until a certain point, is surprised one day by the news that his wife was expecting a child. They had just told him *You're going to be a father*, the young man begins to have hallucinations, in which an apparition tells him: *You are Saint Thomas*. The key point is that the assignment from the Other cannot be accepted, the subject is summoned to a position to which he cannot respond in a symbolic form. Initially, there is no operation of subjectivation, because the signifier remains impersonal, indeterminate, with no value of representation of the subject.

Lacan's approach with Benveniste's studies and with the impersonal use of the pronoun *you* may seem a little forced in this context, but in our view it can be best understood as an unsatisfactory solution for a real problem: analyzing how, in psychosis, the signifier can be autonomized in relation to the subject and become exterior to it.

### **The solution of the problem: “I come from the sausage maker”**

The presentation of the following clinical case was reported in the context of *Seminar 3* (Lacan, 1981/2002), having been rewritten in “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis” (Lacan, 1966/1998). There is a text by Éric Laurent (1995, p. 121) that marks with precision the notable differences of the narrative of the case between one work and the other, which are largely due to the influence of the reading of Jakobson by Lacan. For this reason, we will focus more here on the approach contained in the “Preliminary question.”

During a presentation of patients at the hospital Sainte-Anne, Lacan interviews a paranoid patient. Divorced from her husband, she went back to live with her mother, with whom she lived in a manner of double delirium. Both feel particularly intrusive due to the occasional interference between them by a female neighbor, who seemingly has an intense sexual life. One day, in the hallway, when she came across that neighbor's married lover, the patient hears his hallucinatory cursing: *Pig!*. Lacan asked her if she would have said something to that man immediately before, to what she admits she said: *I come from the sausage maker*.

The misconception that one must here avoid is to analyze this case from the perspective of the projection, in which the subject, identified initially to a pig, would then alienate that interpretation from her own being, attributing such judgment to the other. That is because the projection presupposes the prior recognition of that which the subject will later endeavor to ignore. Well, what is at stake in psychosis is exactly the nonexistence of this prior recognition.

This is the reason why Lacan argues that, little inclined to identify in the phrase a projective mechanism, he continues asking the patient: at whom was the phrase *I come from the sausage maker* aimed?. The answer being: the patient does not know who this *I* is. Although the patient knows she was the one who uttered such words, these words cannot be recognized as a reference to herself.

For our current aim, it is sufficient that the patient recognized that the phrase was allusive, *in a way, however, she could show nothing but perplexity as to learning to whom of the co-present ones or absent one the allusion referred*, as thus it is evident that the [*I*], as subject of the sentence in direct style, had left in suspension – in accordance with its function of shifter in Linguistics – the designation of the speaking subject. (Lacan, 1966/1998, p. 541, emphasis added)

The phrase is allusive, the patient admits that it alludes to swine; but who is the pig? The patient? The neighbor's lover? Someone absent? The subject knows nothing – but not in the same sense that the repressed not knowing.

According to the very enlightening work of Silvia Tendlarz (2009), the phrase *I come from the sausage maker* assumes an indeterminate value, since, as the subject does not make himself represented by the signifier, he will not be able to carry out a distribution of the voices.

There is an indeterminacy when the *I* appears, which is a personal pronoun, when the shifter appears – note that it is no longer only as pronoun but also as shifter –, considering the question: who is the *I*? . . . there is an indeterminacy. The central orderer, the name-of-the-father, is missing, and this produces a certain subjective hesitation. Something is in suspension, the phrase is interrupted subjectively, even though it may be correct at the grammatical level, which does not prevent it from being interrupted. *If the subject cannot produce a distribution of voices and give an attribution, the phrase is interrupted.* (Tendlarz, 2009, p. 106, emphasis added)

It is important here to stress the definition of the enigmatic empty as an interrupted chain, translated as a solitary S1, a S1 that does not connect to a S2. Therefore, there is the first logical moment of perplexity, which is characterized by indeterminacy, in which the distribution of voices cannot be made.

However, the suspension of the signification ceases after a pause, when the verbal hallucination appears: *Pig!* (Lacan, 1966/1998, p. 541). The hallucination will allow a distribution of voices, in which the patient has certainty that the neighbor insulted her.

How to elude this attributive oscillation, this initial perplexity? Where the attributive oscillation appears, the hallucinatory voice makes it possible to locate and make the subject able to distribute the voice. Considering the voice “I come from...” and the perplexity due to the questions “who said that? who is this I?” the answer is “the other called me a pig.” This is a location, a distribution of the voices. (Tendlarz, 2009, p. 108)

The hallucination enables the end of the indeterminacy by the emergence of a certainty. The certainty unfolds in 3 levels: certainty of the reality of the phenomenon; certainty of the existence of a signification; certainty of its addressing to the subject.

There is a famous passage of “Preliminary question” in which Lacan (1966/1998) relates the first logical time of the indeterminacy to the second logical time of the determination of certainty: “it is, in fact, an effect of the signifier, in so far as its degree of certainty (second degree: signification of signification) acquires a weight proportional to the enigmatic emptiness that is initially presented in place of the very signification” (p. 545). The enigmatic emptiness (first degree: absence of signification) is converted into certainty of signification (second degree: signification of signification).

It is important to note that the certainty does not imply a dissipation of the enigma; it will persist, albeit in another form. The certainty does not imply an overcoming or a surpassing of the indeterminacy, on the contrary, it implies a coexistence of the two.

The certainty *does not exclude* the feeling of perplexity, far from it, since the signification of the signification designates nothing but a present, yet undetermined signification, which is the very definition of the enigma which the psychotic subject faces. (Soler, 2007, p. 101, emphasis added)

The certainty is therefore the continuation of the enigma by other means. It is concluded that the notion of enigmatic experience does not point exclusively to the initial moment of indeterminacy, but it also comprises the certainty. It can be said that the enigmatic experience is a complex set of experiences, or an experience consisting of two logical times.

The two logical times bring new light to the elementary phenomena's classification proposed by Álvarez (2009). It could be said that the xenopathic phenomena, attested to by the various forms of automatism that manifest a subjugation of the I, are situated closer to the indeterminate pole of the signification. The phenomena of self-reference, in which there is a personal message referred towards the subject, are situated closer to the pole of the certainty.

It is worth noting that the comprehension of enigmatic experience consist of 2 logical times allows the

inclusion within that key, not only the elementary phenomena, but also the delirium – according to the Lacanian thesis that equates the delirium to the elementary phenomenon.

## Conclusion

The original use that Lacan makes of the theory of the shifter and of the enunciation in Benveniste and Jakobson is a correlate of the original use he makes of the theory of the sign in Saussure. Although appealing to the studies of Linguistics, Lacan escapes the strict limits of what would be conceivable in that discipline, by locating the possibility of an *enunciation without an enunciator* in the psychotic structure. When faced with the impossibility of locating the enunciator, the psychotic will supplement

the difficulty by placing himself as an object of the enunciation, that is, he starts to instantiate the enunciation with his own body.

Such a description coincides to the 2 logical times of the enigmatic experience. There is a first instant of indeterminacy, in which the enunciation is emitted, but in which it is not yet possible for the subject to circumscribe the source and origin of the enunciation. There is a second instant, in which the subject offers his body as target and recipient of a strange enunciation, which is then taken as certainty that it is coming from outside. Such logical moments, in allowing a redistribution of the elementary phenomena, prove how the Lacanian theory of the signifier enables a renewed reading of a concept of classical Psychiatry.

## A experiência enigmática na psicose: os fenômenos elementares à luz da teoria do significante

**Resumo:** O conhecimento dos fenômenos elementares é uma ferramenta valiosa no diagnóstico e tratamento da psicose. Lacan reexamina essa noção psiquiátrica com base nos estudos de Benveniste e Jakobson sobre os *shifters*. Conforme será demonstrado, o resultado desse diálogo foi a formulação da experiência enigmática na psicose, na qual aparece a possibilidade original de uma enunciação sem enunciador. Apesar de exceder os limites do que é aceitável como válido pela linguística, a consequência da investigação lacaniana é situar de forma definitiva a causalidade da psicose no campo da linguagem e não no registro biológico. Além disso, a compreensão dos dois tempos lógicos da experiência enigmática permite isolar um princípio, do qual se deduz uma reorganização dos fenômenos elementares em dois tipos: xenopáticos e de autorreferência.

**Palavras-chave:** psicose, psicanálise, Lacan, linguística, fenômenos elementares.

## L'expérience énigmatique dans la psychose: les phénomènes élémentaires à la lumière de la théorie du signifiant

**Résumé:** La connaissance des phénomènes élémentaires est un important outil tant pour le diagnostic que pour le traitement de la psychose. Lacan analyse cette notion psychiatrique à partir des études de Benveniste et Jakobson à propos des *shifters*. Tel qu'il sera démontré, le résultat de ce dialogue a été la formulation de l'expérience énigmatique dans la psychose, où il surgit la possibilité originelle d'une énonciation sans énonciateur. Malgré l'extrapolation des limites de l'acceptable du point de vue de la linguistique, la conséquence de l'investigation lacanienne a été la possibilité de situer d'une manière définitive la causalité de la psychose dans champ du langage, et non pas dans le registre biologique. Par ailleurs, la compréhension des deux temps logiques de l'expérience énigmatique lui a permis d'isoler un principe, a partir duquel se déduit une réorganisation des phénomènes élémentaires selon deux types: xénopathiques et d'autoréférence.

**Mots-clés:** psychose, psychanalyse, Lacan, linguistique, phenomenes elementaires.

## La experiencia enigmática en la psicosis: los fenómenos elementales a la luz de la teoría del significante

**Resumen:** El conocimiento de los fenómenos elementales es una valiosa herramienta en el diagnóstico y tratamiento de la psicosis. Lacan reexamina esta noción psiquiátrica basado en los estudios de Benveniste y Jakobson sobre los *shifters*. Como se demostrará, el resultado de este diálogo fue la formulación de la experiencia enigmática en la psicosis, donde aparece la posibilidad única de una enunciación sin enunciador. A pesar de superar los límites de lo que es aceptable como válido por la lingüística, la consecuencia de la investigación lacaniana es poner definitivamente la causalidad de la psicosis en el campo del lenguaje, y no en el registro biológico. Además, la comprensión de los dos tiempos lógicos de la experiencia enigmática permitió aislar un principio de que lo se puede deducir una reorganización de los fenómenos elementales en 2 tipos: xenopáticos y de autorreferencia.

**Palabras clave:** psicosis, psicoanálisis, Lacan, lingüística, fenómenos elementales.

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