

# A Reading of “Analysis Terminable and Interminable”<sup>1</sup>

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The only writing that Freud dedicates to the question of the end of analysis is “Analysis Terminable and Interminable.” This article has been subject to numerous controversies in the history of psychoanalysis, and it is a source for many theories of the ending and the finality of psychoanalysis. And this is perhaps unsurprising since it contains far more questions than answers, far more debates on clinical facts than theorizations.

When one reads “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” for the first time, one might think it is driven by political intentions rather than conceptual ones. It appears that in this article Freud slaughters his most eminent disciples before his own death and writes in favor of an order that may be inherited—and indeed this is a reading that has influenced the reception of this essay for very long time. However, if one follows with precision how Freud recounts his “vertigo” in approaching the final facts offered by analysis, one discovers something completely different. It becomes evident that this essay, aside from its elegance and many lines of engagement, is a hole in the theory. A hole that Freud wants to preserve despite everything he had theorized—the drive.

The essay seems to interpellate its reader by saying: There is something that cannot succeed by other means than failure,

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<sup>1</sup> This article is adapted from part of the first chapter of my PhD thesis “The Dialects of Symbolic and Real and the Concept of the End of Analysis” (University of Ljubljana, defended in July 2022).

namely the failure of knowledge. If the “alchemy of castration” leads nowhere other than castration, then the concept of “castration” must be revised; and if the object of desire does not cease to be lost, then the concept of the “object” must be revised as well. Freud leads us to approach in so many ways the central question that he debates with Ferenczi: Is it true that psychoanalysis is a process of mourning of the partial object? And if so then does it really have a natural end that is the acceptance of castration? In other words, has there ever been a positive object before its negativizing loss for analysis to succeed as mourning? And therefore, is castration originally a loss or a relation to the object?

Freud describes how the experience of analysis crashes at the limit of castration—which he calls a *bedrock*—and with it all its previous conceptual coordinates. On this point, Freud doesn’t provide a theory, but he provides evidence in the form of an inefaceable scar or a last plea. What does Freud defend so dearly, to the point of giving to the failure of analysis—as a cure—the status of a terminus? I aim to respond to this question by providing a close reading of “Analysis Terminable and Interminable.” Specifically, I aim to show that what Freud indicates as a bottoming out of analysis in the castration complex is a subjective destitution.

### *The Symptom Not to Interpret*

Freud sets out from a critique of the “impatient contempt” (Freud 1964, p. 219) the medical discipline has shown toward psychoanalysis in its relation to the symptom, and questions Otto Rank’s project, and later on Ferenczi’s, aiming at the reduction of the duration of the analytical treatment. By doing so, he dismisses the performative aspirations of a shortened analysis. Moreover, Freud suggests that the symptom presents a far more critical problem than the one conceived, and that its disappearance in analysis can hardly be conceived as permanent. So the question of the length of

analysis gives place to two fundamental questions: first, whether there is, regardless of the length of analysis, a permanent recovery of symptoms; and second, whether there is "such a thing as a natural end to analysis" (*ibid.*, p. 219). Ferenczi posits the concept of a natural end to analysis in *The Problem of Termination of the Analysis* in 1927: "Analysis is not an endless process, but one which can be brought to a natural end" (Ferenczi 1982, p. 52).

The course of Freud's reasoning on the first question (why there cannot be a permanent recovery of symptoms) reveals the hypothesis he departs from: it is only if there has been a permanent recovery of symptoms that there can be a natural end to analysis. Yet, this causal correlation of the two questions goes against the split Ferenczi introduces between them in the beginning of his text, positing that, regardless of the fate that analysis reserves to the symptom, there is a natural end to analysis that is rather on the side of character: "the dissolution of the crystalline structure of a character [that is] a recrystallization" (*ibid.*, p. 47). In other words, if Ferenczi considers a natural end to analysis, it is because he dismisses the symptom (*ibid.*).

So one could say that Freud remains loyal to the symptom—he trusts the symptom—and at a clear distance from this notion of character.<sup>2</sup> He is even ready to sacrifice the question of the end of analysis for that of the symptom, which he considers a more essential one: why does it return? What function does it hold? What is *symptom* the name of?

In this field the interest of analysts seems to me to be quite wrongly directed. Instead of an enquiry into how a cure by analysis comes about (a matter which I think has been sufficiently elucidated) the question should be asked of what are the obstacles that stand in the way of such a cure. (Freud 1964, p. 221)

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<sup>2</sup> Freud uses the concept of ego instead of character throughout, to counter the thesis proposed by Ferenczi on the reconstitution of character.

This recentring of the question on the obstacles (symptoms, repetition) comes right after Freud claims that, even for those ideal cases whose “ego had not been noticeably altered” and whose “etiology of [...] disturbance had been essentially traumatic,” even in such cases where one “can [...] speak of an analysis having definitively ended,” “we do not know how much [their] immunity may not be due to a kind of fate which has spared [them] ordeals that are too severe” (*ibid.*, p. 220). What Freud means by *fate* is a chance that has prevented the return of the symptom. So Freud affirms that unless a sort of chance is involved, the symptom must return (*ibid.*, p. 223). And he evokes right after that the drive<sup>3</sup> and its “constitutional strength” (*ibid.*, p. 212). It is either left to chance, then, or to the drive.

Why does Freud not add anything new about the symptom? Why this fast move onto economy and the drive? Wouldn't he have pushed his theorization of the symptom further if he wanted to? He doesn't take the slightest risk as another step on the path of the symptom's interpretation, for he doesn't speak of a symptom to interpret. Freud approaches the symptom as one approaches a closed and consummated fact. So what Freud starts by putting into the equation, in response to the question of the end of analysis, is the ever-returning symptom as representative of the drive. In that, Freud amends the question of the end of analysis: How can one conceive of the terminality of analysis in light of the interminability of the drive, the symptom, and repetition? It is from there that he wants us to depart.

### *Economy of the Unsynthesizable*

Against the equal division he had proposed earlier in the text between the constitutional (strength of the drive) and the accidental

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<sup>3</sup> *Trieb* is mistranslated in the text as *instinct* instead of *drive*.

(traumatic alteration of the ego), Freud suggests that the constitutional is primary: "One is tempted to make the first factor—strength of instinct—responsible as well for the emergence of the second—the alteration of the ego" (*ibid.*, p. 212). He maintains, then, the opposition of the drive to the ego, yet a version of it that is altered by the priority of the drive: the ego's function is to *tame* the drive, he says, but the drive constitutes the ego, it predetermines a priori its structural failures, and triggers them a posteriori in the actuality of its return.

This division directs him in the twenty following pages toward a constant return to the economic argument (*ibid.*, p. 240ff.) as a way of explaining the return of the symptom: whatever happens to the ego during analysis or after its termination, it is constantly brought down to a deferred economy of the drive, whereby the greater strength of the drive is rendered unsynthesizable for the ego. What Freud emphasizes here is not something that is found unsynthesized under particular circumstances, but the unsynthesizable: something of which synthesis is impossible, if not by a temporary solution. So the entry into the economic argument appears to be an indication of surplus jouissance. There is an unsynthesizable surplus jouissance that the subject cannot do without and which must be regarded as the norm rather than as the exception. Based on this normalization of the unsynthesizable surplus, Freud advances three subsequent claims that have serious implications.

First, he reconsiders the autonomy of the dynamic theory and subjects it to temporality: "we should have to modify our formula and say 'the strength of the instincts at the time' instead of 'the constitutional strength of the instincts'" (*ibid.*, p. 224). What difference is there between these two propositions, if not that this strength of drives is not only proper to the constitution of mental life, but also subject to return? What Freud tells us here is that the surplus mustn't be conceived of as a simple post hoc, a traumatic birth of the psyche (as in Rank's thesis), but as a

component that is always present somewhere in the equation and that manages to get out of hand at any point in time.

Second, Freud interrelates the temporality of the strength of drives to accidental and developmental circumstances (*ibid.*, p. 226). In other words, he tells us that both the traumatic and developmental factors must be conceived of as deregulations of the synthesis whereby the surplus returns, as in the moment called constitutional. He pushes the very definition of those accidental and developmental factors into the return of the drive in its unsynthesizable magnitude.

And third, Freud posits that, if analysis is “a correction of [the ego’s] initial process of repression [of drives]” (*ibid.*, p. 227), then “what analysis achieves for neurotics is nothing other than what normal people bring about for themselves” (*ibid.*, p. 225), which is a temporary solution to a temporary strength of the drive. In other words, if one approaches the drive in respect to its constancy in mental life, and with regard to its unsynthesizable character, one wouldn’t differentiate so much between a subject who has undergone analysis and another who hasn’t needed it, Freud tells us, for they would both be managing the surplus in a temporary manner.

This last point comes in response to one of Ferenczi’s claims in *The Problem of Termination of the Analysis*—namely, that a completed analysis, which is for Ferenczi an analysis that has reached its natural end, produces an identifiable subjectivity that is distinct from normal subjectivity. Ferenczi puts it in the following terms:

We can however indicate certain common traits of persons who persevered in their analysis until the end. The far clearer separation of fantasy from reality, obtained by analysis, allows them to acquire an internal freedom that is quasi unlimited, therefore, a better mastery of actions and decisions; in other words, a control that is more economical and efficient. (Ferenczi 1982, p. 47)

Freud's position vis-à-vis this claim is expressed in a sharper statement further in the text:

One has an impression that one ought not to be surprised if it should turn out in the end that the difference between a person who has not been analyzed and the behavior of a person after he has been analyzed is not so thorough-going as we aim at making it and as we expect and maintain it to be. If this is so, it would mean that analysis sometimes succeeds in eliminating the influence of an increase in instinct, but not invariably, or that the effect of analysis is limited to increasing the power of resistance of the inhibitions, so that they are equal to much greater demands than before the analysis or if no analysis had taken place. (Freud 1964, p. 228)

These two opposed claims on whether or not analysis produces a subjectivity of its own are not all that is in opposition here. Their conceptual procedures are not less opposed than their contents: Ferenczi mentions a psychic economy bettered by analysis only as an aftermath of the modification of character, whereas Freud sets out from it to explain the results of analysis, with the conviction that structure—of the relation of the ego to the drive—has no outside. For Freud, it is a structure that stands on economy, and which may only host a change by economy—the core of this economy being a surplus that is unsynthesizable.

So, for Freud, any possible result of analysis should be conceived of in terms of an enhanced economy within the same structure. When Freud speaks of the ego, throughout this article, he mostly speaks of the subject of the unconscious. While Ferenczi speaks of a dissolution of structure whereby a new structure is achieved—a structure that Ferenczi sustains under the term "character," and which doesn't feature the same duality present in Freud's concept of ego. In this respect, the whole debate leads to two different concepts of subjectivity. What is subjectivity for Freud, and what is it for Ferenczi? This is what we will try to address next, in order to grasp Freud's next move in the article. The

debate might seem to be clinical, but the quarrel about whether analysis permits a changeability in structure shows that it was a conceptual debate all along. The kernel of Freud's disagreement with Ferenczi pertains to the question of subjectivity, and thus relates to the status given to the structure of the unconscious.

### *The Quarrel about Subjectivity*

Ferenczi doesn't offer a recollection of his findings in a renewed introduction of what he considers to be the psychic apparatus. What he leaves us with are clinical notes that require a synthesis. To understand Ferenczi's position from the question of subject and structure, we shall set out from the observation that he had started to take a noticeably different theoretical path from Freud's since Freud's conceptualization of the death drive (1920).

As underlined by José Jiménez Avello, Ferenczi disagrees with Freud's attribution of the death drive to the order of the congenital, or the constitutional, since for him it is impossible that the drive had been a death drive since the beginning of psychic life, and there must have been a traumatic element to direct it into such a function (Avello 2000, p. 32). Ferenczi articulates this traumatic element through a substantial work on the process of mimicry, or primary identification, that he posits to be prior to object relations in psychic development. Ferenczi tells us that what takes place in the infant's mimicry is an introjection of "alien transplants" that are "psychical contents" pertaining to the adult's desire, which the infant's psyche will host, henceforth, as if they were its own, implicating therefore feelings of displeasure (Ferenczi 1985b, pp. 134–203).

The subject will respond to those "un-pleasurable alien transplants," experienced as the traumatic intrusion of the other, by *passional* reactions, says Ferenczi, similar to what Freud describes by the death drive (Avello 2000, p. 36). Avello interprets



Ferenczi's use of *passion* through Ferenczi's reference to Descartes in the post-script of "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child": passion for Ferenczi, following the Cartesian line of thought, is the subject's response—by suffering—to their own transformation in consequence of their environment, that is to say the Other (*ibid.*).

Avello concludes on a pivotal interpretation of the quarrel between Freud and Ferenczi: Ferenczi opposes Freud's attribution of a masochistic quality to the death drive, for in doing so he would be legitimizing the oppressive action of the Other on the subject by his theory of the psychic apparatus (*ibid.*, p. 38). Freud's classification of the death drive in the constitutional order reflects, for Ferenczi, Freud's willingness to renounce the "essence" of the subject for the Other's oppression. In other words, Freud theorizes the subject in their psychic apparatus as already occluding the Other.

If Avello shows us the other's oppression in Ferenczi's works on the imaginary, Wladimir Granoff underlines this same oppressive process in the subject's entry into the symbolic. *Thalassa*, Granoff tells us, is a term by which Ferenczi introduces to us "the signifier as such," the signifier as a *pure body* deprived from its symbolic dimension—that is to say the status of the symbol before the subject's inscription in the symbolic (Granoff 1958, p. 89). Granoff draws our attention back to Ferenczi's refusal to conceive psychic development within the limits of Freud's reliance on ontogenesis. The access to the symbolic, and thereby to genital sexuality, Ferenczi tells us, is a "phylogenetic catastrophe" that exceeds the "ontogenic" one (Ferenczi 1938, p. 51). The term phylogenetic Ferenczi employs here, stresses not only that the access to genital sexuality is in correlation to the access to the phallic key, but also that the constitution of language in the child's psyche is a genetic process of its own, and the entry into the symbolic is not to be approached as ontogenesis. Granoff returns to Ferenczi's 1912 letter to Freud, where he had written about a certain duality

in the status of the symbol: the symbol up until then had been approached only from the outset of the order it establishes (the symbolic), but it has another dimension one can grasp if one approaches it from without (Granoff 1958, p. 92).

Let us retain from Granoff's disquisition of Ferenczi's line of thought the idea that the status of the symbol is transformed by repression. What the symbol is before repression is a phenomenon, a body, or a form; and what it becomes after repression is a crypt—that is, as in *crypta*, a cemetery under a language. In short, Ferenczi grasps very early the mortification involved in the establishment of the symbol which, for him, is not only the burial of the thing as such, but the subject's burial as well. Miguel Gutiérrez-Peláez formalizes the argument initiated by Granoff through a reinterpretation of Ferenczi's position on the symbolic through Lacan's concept of *la langue*: "What if there is an original (failed) rejection [...] of the symbolic order in the infant? What if language itself constitutes the Urtrauma?" (Gutiérrez-Peláez 2015, p. 6) For Gutiérrez-Peláez, this is how Ferenczi redirects Freud's question. He continues: "Ferenczi intends to unveil a realm prior to language, free of trauma; concepts such as 'Thálassa' (1924), the primordial sea, or 'infant,' he who is speechless or unable to speak, point directly to this." (*Ibid.*, p. 6) From this, Gutiérrez-Peláez articulates this state prior to repression or trauma to desire in Ferenczi's writings: desire is, for Ferenczi, the desire to return to this primordial state, and analysis must operate in the direction of this desire (*ibid.*, p. 7).

Nevertheless, following Ferenczi's progression to this undivided "essence" of the subject leads to no simple conclusion. We are left with a far more complex conceptual problem, which, as Gutiérrez-Peláez points out, Ferenczi wasn't unaware of: if the subject's inscription in the symbolic is traumatic, what is their non-inscription in it (*ibid.*, p. 12)? Is it not equally traumatic? Is not the subject's capture by their *jouissance* with no Other to inhibit it even more traumatic than one's oppression by the

Other? Is there such a thing as this "outside" of trauma in the psychic apparatus, which Ferenczi seems to want analysis to reach, like a process of "healing" (*ibid.*, p. 16)? It is perhaps with this transcending direction to analysis implied by the idea of the primordial essence that Freud engages in his response when he tells us that changeability in structure is economic, and therefore temporary. For Freud, the structure of the psychic apparatus must include this oppressive Other, it must function as a dialectic that has neither a state that is prior to it, nor an outside. Freud doesn't believe there is a point that precedes the dialectic that one must reach; transcendence for him is but a lure. This is the sustaining idea of the article, from the necessity of the symptom and the dichotomy of ego and drive to the unsynthesizable surplus to his defense of his concept of the duality of the drive.

So Freud disagrees with Ferenczi not only on the concept of the death drive. The following section will show us that he also disagrees with him on the concept of the life drive and with regards to the object of the drive.

### *The Drive as Negation*

Ferenczi posits that there is an end to repetition that may be reached when one accesses his primordial essence. And this is what Freud argues against in his essay. In *The Problem of Termination of the Analysis*, Ferenczi tells us the following:

Originally, for the child, all that has a good taste is good. He has therefore to learn to consider and feel that numerous things that have a good taste are bad, and to discover that obedience to precepts implicating difficult renunciations transforms into a source of felicity and of extreme satisfaction. [...] Every renunciation of the drive and every affirmation of unpleasure are still, clearly, linked to the sentiment of non-truth, that is to say of hypocrisy (Ferenczi 1982, p. 46).

Freud addresses in response Ferenczi's very concept of truth—the drive—on the basis of which he constructs his non-truth. What is this truth Ferenczi articulates to the drive, and whose loss occurs by “obedience” and “renunciation”? Is it not the “primary experience of pleasure” that Ferenczi tells us to be the subject of this “renunciation of the drive” (*ibid.*)? And does it not suppose, already, that what the drive is after is pleasure? Furthermore, if Ferenczi conceives the drive as this “strong tendency” to access primary experiences of pleasure, does he not suppose as well that this drive has an original object, and thereby that its object is originally a positive one? This drive, seeking pleasure in a positive object, is conceptually sufficient for him to throw the whole of the problem of enjoyment on the Other's back, and endow this Other, by the same token, with as much positivity as that of the object he makes him restrict. In fact, Ferenczi's construction of the idea of truth—of enjoyment—bypasses the concepts of surplus and negation from beginning to end, and it is precisely there where Freud directs our attention in his response.

First, Freud tells us that “obedience”—which he translates into “repression”—is not the renunciation to an original pleasure but to a negation that he likens to Flavius Josephus's offense to the Christendom (Freud 1964, p. 236). What is repressed is a negation, and a negation of the sufficiency of the symbolic.

Second, Freud reunifies the drive and the ego which he had kept extrapolated since the beginning of the text: “id and ego are originally one,” he says and then adds that the drive lays the foundations of the ego, which shares its “lines of development, trends, and reactions” (*ibid.*, p. 240). So what Freud advances here is that there is an “ego” that is a realization of the drive as much as there is one that synthetizes it. He claims that resistance sustains a subject that is unsplit and questions therefrom whether one may still call it a resistance (*ibid.*, p. 241).

This brings us to the third point where Freud revises this naming. He had mistakenly called them, he says, the “resistances from

the Id"<sup>4</sup> in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (Freud 2000–10, pp. 4248–4324), and decides to attribute them now to "the behavior of the two primal instincts, their distribution, mingling and diffusion" (Freud 1964, p. 242). What Freud considered to be the resistance from the Id, he tells us, is the drive's method of "defending itself" against recovery, a method by which it shows itself to be "absolutely resolved to hold on to illness and suffering" (*ibid.*).

Fourth, Freud proceeds to explain that this masochism of the drive is the kernel of psychic normality, as opposed to the thesis sustained by Ferenczi claiming "that mental events are exclusively governed by the desire for pleasure," and that this masochism is an abnormality that analysis must abolish (*ibid.*, p. 243). There is a radical conceptual necessity, Freud argues, and not just a "pessimistic theory of life," giving place to this masochism within our conception of our psychic normality (*ibid.*).

Fifth, Freud addresses the inherent duality of the drives, using the example of homosexuality, where heterosexual and homosexual tendencies "are in a state of irreconcilable conflict" (*ibid.*, p. 244). Why don't the two opponents "divide up the available quota of libido between them according to their relative strength [he asks], since they are able to do so in a number of cases?" (*Ibid.*) In other words, why doesn't this duality resolve itself, why does it subsist as a conflict of a constant stance? Freud argues that there is a final cause that exceeds the material one—irrespective of the quantity of libido—which, had things been left to it, would have consumed this duality and produced a unity instead.

In fact, if Freud called his advancement of the dualistic theory the third step in the theory of drives, he might be introducing through Empedocles's supplement, that he prepares here by this negation of the material cause, a fourth one. For in his third step,

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<sup>4</sup> "We have called the behavior, perhaps not quite correctly, 'resistance from the id'."

Freud proposes that if the drive's trajectory leads back by the pleasure principle to the inanimate it departs from (the complete discharge), then the drive is basically a death drive; while the life drive's function he posits to be a postponing or suspension of this complete discharge whereby a sustainment of life takes place. This is what requires a beyond of the pleasure principle for life to be sustained—by an accumulation of excitation without discharge. Nevertheless, if the opposition of the life drive to the death drive was already drawn for us in the third step, what Freud tells us here is that these two opponents, as in Empedocles's love and strife, are rather two successive operations than opponents, two successive logical times of the relation to lack (of being), which always leads back to its beginning.

To grasp Empedocles's supplement that Freud introduces here we must refer to its formalization by Lacan in Seminar XI, which may be summarized as follows: Given that the pleasure principle implies that the subject is already dead in their biological function of reproduction, the drive transgresses this initial death, first, by mounting the subject's need to the Other's demand beyond need. The result of this montage is the split subject that is appointed by the Other, and thereby dead by the symbolic (a point Lacan will call *aphanisis*). Then, to surpass this alienation to the Other (and the subsequent effacement of the subject by the symbolic), the drive operates a second transgression that is separation. This separation proceeds by extracting the Other's supposed jouissance through experiencing it as a pain inflicted by them. This second operation implies the status of the headless subject that is reduced to the level of the sign (anxiety) as objection to the order of the signifier. In that, it is a symbolic death of the subject, the lost symbolic subject being the object of the Other's demand. So the drive sets out from the lack as such—that is the lack of the subject in their function of reproduction—to bring about an alienation whereby the subject enters representation and aphanisis both at

once, then operates a separation by which the subject returns to their *lack as such* yet symbolically, for their death for the Other is a symbolic death that comes to counter their death by the symbolic. Therefore, separation doesn't lead back to the point the dialectic departs from, but to a renewal of the entry into alienation, and thereby to the cyclical functioning of the drive.

In sum, neither can the dialectic of the drive and the Other get back to an original presubjective point, nor can it reach a final accomplishment that is separate from the Other, it has neither beginning nor end. It is a suspension of the subject in the condition whereby being, on one side of the equation, and nonbeing, on the other side, are always present in correlation. Where there is satisfaction, there is death in the biological function of reproduction; where there is symbolic subject, there is aphanisis; and where there is headless subject, there is symbolic death.

Yet, although Lacan considers that this is already beyond Hegel insofar as it surpasses the function of recognition in the master-slave dialectic, where his argument leads us, in fact, is to the very condition that Hegel formalizes as a dialectic. Ray Brassier explains this exclusivity of the dialectic as follows:

Externalization [of estrangement] is deestrangement as estrangement. The prospect of deestrangement emerges only by retrospectively an enabling estrangement. Objectification and subjection are facets of a single indivisible movement. This is why there can be no narrative about overcoming the need to overcome; no history in which the compulsion to repeat would be undone by the rememoration of compulsion. There is no self-relation uncontaminated by estrangement. (Brassier 2019, p. 104)

Brassier's conclusion on the dialectic of estrangement summarizes the endpoint of Lacan's formalization of the drive and of Freud's revision of the duality of the drive by Empedocles's theory: there is neither initial nor final state where overcoming can become unnecessary or accomplished.

To return to “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” Freud starts by explaining that Empedocles had posited that the universe was organized according to two governing forces—love and strife—that are very similar to Eros and Thanatos (Freud 1964, p. 246). And the central opposition that love and strife sustain is not simply life and death, but combination and dissolution. Freud tells us that there isn’t in psychic life such a thing as a fully consumed death, or a stable ontological life, as the misreading of his dualistic theory of drives has drawn. All there is, is the in between—of life and death—which requires, then, combination and separation to sustain:

The one strives to agglomerate the primal particles of the four elements into a single unity, while the other, on the contrary, seeks to undo all those fusions and to separate the primal particles of the elements from one another. (*Ibid.*)

We may consider, retroactively from Lacan’s formalization, that Freud’s reference to Empedocles—that shifts the operation of the drive from cycles of life-death to cycles of combination/dissolution or estrangement/de-estrangement—is a fundamental course correction, and one step further indeed: for in combination, what the drive operates, we may call now alienation; and in dissolution what it operates is separation.

Now, to put his argument back in the context of his debate with Ferenczi, Freud’s very long response leads us to that, if truth—the essence of the subject—is in natural satisfaction, as Ferenczi posits, there would not be a subject to proclaim it as truth, it wouldn’t be subjectivized. This truth is only reachable by the negation of alienation, and it is bound to lead back to alienation. What Freud puts in the mouth of Empedocles is that the essence of the subject can neither be an original nor a final state for analysis to reach. If there is such a thing as an essence, Freud tells us, it can only be conceived of as the suspended horizon of



negation. In this respect, what Freud tells us is that it is because the essence of the subject that Ferenczi defends is only conceivable as a part of the dialectic of self-estrangement, there can be no end to repetition; namely, the repetition of the Other's failure. It is there that Freud's introduction of the drive through the question of masochism—as part of normality—takes full effect. The Other must fail again for subjectivity to persist.

Furthermore, the whole procedure by which Freud devotedly revises and defends this position suggests that truth for him is the dialectic itself. And this is, perhaps, what he considers to be the nature of the result of analysis: not something of the kind of a subjective anchoring in an original lost essence or freedom, but rather something at the level of the inscription of the dialectic itself that conditions being, something at the level of which the necessity of the cyclical failure of the symbolic may be inhabited as a condition of being in its correlation to nonbeing.

### *Five Antitheses for a Mourning of the Concept of Mourning*

Now, it is on these theoretical grounds—of the drive as cycles of alienation and separation—that Freud re-engages with Ferenczi's thesis on the natural end of analysis (*ibid.*, p. 250).<sup>5</sup> We shall start with Ferenczi's thesis to which this section of Freud's text responds, and first with the part of Ferenczi's text that Freud quotes.

Ferenczi correlates his concept of the natural end of analysis to the dissolution of the crystalline structure of character, whose operationalization he points out in the becoming of the analysand's transference. The most tangible expression of this natural end, he claims, is the modification of transference:

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<sup>5</sup> Although this debate on the practical termination of treatment takes place in the shadow of Ferenczi's unfinished analysis with Freud, that is a dimension I will not address here.

Every male patient must attain a feeling of equality in relation to the physician as a sign that he has overcome his fear of castration; every female patient, if her neurosis is to be regarded as fully disposed of, must have got rid of her masculinity complex and must emotionally accept without a trace of resentment the implications of her female role. (Ferenczi 1982, p. 51)

Although one may find in these words an idealistic theory of the liquidation of transference, Ferenczi's statement calls for a conceptual evaluation. Ferenczi argues that analysis must achieve an acceptance of castration—that is, a traversal of castration anxiety—whose manifestation is a “feeling of equality in relation to the physician.” He doesn't introduce one without the other: castration must be accepted insofar as the object lacks in both—the analysand and the analyst—whereby an equality may be negatively established. In this respect, what Ferenczi is addressing, is in fact a traversal of desire's positivization of the lacking object in the Other, whereby the demand that drives this desire gets retrieved from the relation to the analyst.

Furthermore, Ferenczi prepares this traversal of desire's positivization in his article through a reasoning that departs from the libidinal to end in fantasy. We may summarize this reasoning as follows: first, that “there are libidinal tendencies, and not only simple tendencies of self-affirmation or vengeance, that were the variable motives of the formation of character” (*ibid.*).

These libidinal tendencies are yielded in a demand for love that the analysand must come to realize has been reverted in negative transference: “After having exploded all his anger, the dirty child reveals his hidden demands of tenderness and love, with a naïve frankness” (*ibid.*). So up until now, Ferenczi speaks of a recognition of the demand for love, that is the demand of the Other as such. Then Ferenczi moves on to the phallic function in enjoyment: “No analysis is terminated as long as the activities of preliminary and final pleasure of sexuality, as much in their

normal as in their abnormal manifestations, have not been experienced on an emotional level, in the conscious fantasy" (*ibid.*). It is at this point that Ferenczi approaches desire; fantasy is where the kernel of desire's positivization of the object is laid. Before claiming that castration must be accepted, he argues that fantasy must be recognized as such. This is, in fact, the point that Ferenczi reaches beyond Freud in practice.

The patient is finally perfectly convinced that analysis is for him a means toward new satisfaction, yet still in fantasy, that doesn't bring him anything in reality. [...] He turns inevitably toward other possibilities of satisfaction that are more real. (*Ibid.*)

What occurs, by the medium of this recognition of fantasy, is a *conviction* by which the analysand surpasses fantasy—and thereby desire—together with the limitation of his enjoyment to the analytic situation, and directs himself onto real activities procuring him satisfaction. What the analysand is convinced of is that analysis "doesn't bring him anything in reality," this emphasis on the real should indicate for us that Ferenczi speaks of a sort of traversal of desire's function—that is, not to reach satisfaction—whereby the analysand becomes rather tolerant to satisfaction. What Ferenczi proposes is a modification of the analysand's enjoyment whereby the analytic situation, as modality of sustaining enjoyment, gets exhausted: "the analysis must so to say die out of exhaustion"—an exhaustion that, following Ferenczi's reasoning, we should be able to call the exhaustion of fantasy and desire (*ibid.*).

Once there, however, Ferenczi introduces a phrase that provides context retroactively to the whole reasoning he proposed to us earlier:

The whole of the neurotic period of his life appears then, truly, as a pathological mourning that the patient wanted also to displace on the situation of transference, but whose veritable nature is

unmasked, which puts then an end to the tendency of repetition in the future. The analytic renunciation corresponds therefore to the actual resolution of situations of infantile frustrations which were the origin of the symptomatic formations. (*Ibid.*, p. 52)

Ferenczi's foundational idea is in the master signifier "mourning"—a term that has become widespread in analytical theories since this debate, and which Melanie Klein inherited. This is a term that also took center stage in the works of some Lacanian analysts, such as Daniel Lagache, and which Lacan has done enough to repudiate by the distinction between the partial object and the primordial object introduced in the concept of the object *a*. We shall see a little further how Freud's response prepares a "mourning" of the theory of mourning that Lacan will formalize later on; for now, let us try to grasp what Ferenczi advances here.

Originally, he tells us, there are "infantile frustrations" and their antidote (result)—"symptomatic formations." In other words, the symptom's business is to prevent the accomplishment of a loss to keep frustration at a bearable level. Ferenczi previously unpacked this symptom in the demand of the object of need, the demand of love and the desire of the phallic object that the analysand must come to recognize. Those are the main constituents, for Ferenczi, of "pathological mourning"—that is to say, mourning that doesn't reach "renunciation." This means that renunciation, for Ferenczi, together with castration, is separation; and that "the tendency of repetition"—in line with symptomatic formations—is the tendency of repetition of demand, inasmuch as (for him as well) demand sustains alienation (which this logic of object relations reduces to attachment). And it is only on those bases—that repetition is the sustainment of attachment to counter loss—that Ferenczi can posit that transference is repetition, and that, therefore, mourning and renunciation can resolve transference, repetition, and infantile frustrations all at once.

One must point out here though that this placement of repetition on the side of alienation provides the exact opposite

definition of that which Freud advances; for Freud, repetition is Empedocles's strife—it is the Other's failure—that is separation, and that is at a clear distance from transference. This is the—long inherited—misunderstanding in response to which Lacan announces his formalization of repetition (in Seminar XI), as a fundamental concept that is distinct from transference, by the clear statement: "the concept of repetition has nothing to do with the concept of transference" (Lacan 1981, p. 33). The clinic of mourning is not Freudian, therefore, insofar as it stems from a notion of transference that is explained by a notion of repetition, and which are both distinct from the concepts of repetition and transference that Freud proposed.

Now, aside from those conceptual problems in Ferenczi's use of transference as repetition, and of repetition as sustainment of attachment, which remain effects of a more fundamental misunderstanding, let us turn to the master signifier, *mourning*. What is it in the order of things that one can mourn? What is it, other than that whose presence precedes his absence? If there is any reason for us to believe in the necessity of such a mourning, it stems from our belief that the object is originally a positive object, and consequently that the only entry point to this business of its negativity is privation. The whole purpose and natural end of analysis that Ferenczi unfolds for us departs from the object as defined by evolutionary theory—that is, an object suspended between pleasure and attachment. Furthermore, to sustain the theory of mourning doesn't go without supposing that the being of the subject is ontic, that it is in itself, and that it may, if one mourns the thing till the end, be sustained by something other than a lack. In other words, for one to practice analysis as a clinic of mourning, one needs to be a firm believer in a sort of self-sufficiency of the subject.

Freud responds to Ferenczi's claim (that demand is a demand of love) by arguing that the analysand "refuses to subject himself to a father-substitute, or to feel indebted to him or anything"

(Freud 1964, p. 252). In other words, Freud argues that Ferenczi had classified under negative transference something that, at the end of the day, might not be so in line with a demand of the Other; that Ferenczi had neutralized, in his defense of negative transference, a demand that longs for the exact opposite of the Other—a demand that negates the Other. After all, what is a demand for love, other than a demand for the Other's lack?

At no other point in one's analytic work [Freud pleads] does one suffer more from an oppressive feeling that all one's repeated efforts have been in vain, and from a suspicion that one has been "preaching to the winds", than when one is trying to persuade a woman to abandon her wish for a penis on the ground of its being unrealizable or when one is seeking to convince a man that a passive attitude to men does not always signify castration and that it is indispensable in many relationships in life. (*Ibid.*)

Although what is spelled out in those lines articulates what Freud suspects to be the binding rapport between desire and castration, the level at which he addresses this rapport is the level of demand, and a demand to which one cannot but fail to respond to. In other words, this relation of desire to castration is subsumed in an impossible demand addressed to the analyst, a demand in consequence of which the Other is bound to fail. What is demanded is the Other's castration. Freud's statement exceeds by far a theoretical claim that castration anxiety is unsurpassable, it is a last plea whose function is to preserve a last trace to a secret. Freud tells us: at no other point in one's analytic work had I suffered as much from being—as Other—negated with such persistence; at no other point had I realized that what the analysand truly demands is a nonrecovery, a nonobject, and a non-Other. And that, inasmuch as his recovery—the acceptance of castration—would be surrendering his jouissance to the Other: "he refuses to accept his recovery from the doctor" (*ibid.*).

On that point, one must disagree with Chawki Azouri's thesis, according to which Freud's words constitute a defense of the paternal function, whereby he restricts psychoanalysis in his order of inheritance from surpassing the father (Azouri 2015, p. 204). The resonance of Freud's words—"he refuses to subject him-self to a father-substitute"—poses the exact opposite question: Has there ever been a paternal function involved, as a law, in castration? Or has castration been only accepted inasmuch as it sustained a father, and the desire of the father in position of the law, producing thereby repression and identification? There are, indeed, theorists of the dictate of the identification to the analyst (Balint for instance, one of Ferenczi's successors), but Freud is not one of them, even less when he shows that the clinic of mourning is an ideologization of the Oedipus complex by claiming that castration cannot be accepted. Is there anything better than mourning, after all, to sustain the father's desire in position of the law—which interdicts what (of *jouissance*) is already impossible? For mourning bets on nothing else than the symbol, it is a rendering symbolic of what is missed; mourning, therefore, sustains and operates by and under the Name-of-the-Father. Furthermore, mourning supposes that, in its completion, lack may be fully consummated and that the subject can exist by something other than a lack; which implicates, then, the self-sufficiency of the symbolic subject, and thereby an existentialist deadlock. Freud doesn't address identification but the refusal of identification: he claims that castration doesn't function in accordance with the Oedipus complex after all. In other words, the Oedipus complex, the endpoint of which is identification, turns out to be a perverted fallacy. The Oedipus complex turns out to be a symptom that the analysand drops at a certain point and "refuses to subject him-self to a father-substitute."

Miller explains this refusal in opposition to the pervert's position, taking his point of departure from Lacan's *Encore*:

Lacan can be translated [in *Encore*] as saying—”the neurotic imagines that the Other demands his castration.” Where the acknowledged pervert admits the jouissance of the Other, the neurotic is [...] perceptively directed before everything by what would be, on the part of the Other, the demand for his castration, that reduces the law of desire to a demand for castration. (Miller 1997, p. 29)

In effect, there where the pervert may still exist in the acceptance of castration as “instrument of jouissance of the Other,” the neurotic gets effaced, and this is sufficient reason for this running aground on anxiety. As Freud shows us, the neurotic refuses to surrender their jouissance to the Other by accepting castration.

This is why Lacan can develop [Miller continues] what plays out at the end of the analysis as the refusal, by the neurotic subject, to sacrifice his castration to the jouissance of the Other. It is even what explains in the paradoxical formula, by saying, “The Other does not exist for him.” One can’t understand more. This means—the Other does not exist for him, in the sense where only phallic jouissance matters fully. At this moment there, he refuses the sacrifice that is necessary for the Other to exist. As Lacan says, “If he existed, he would be pleased by my castration”. (*Ibid.*)

In this sense, one may ask if this sacrifice of knowledge is an unbeing of the supposed subject of knowledge, and in reversed reasoning, if the unbeing of this supposition is protective of jouissance. Is the unbeing of the subject of knowledge a beyond of castration? Or is it a holding onto castration that goes as far as negating the Other? Freud tells us that this is the final scene of an analysis, which is a scene that is phallic in appearance (a holding on to castration), but anal in kind: you won’t get my jouissance.

No analogous transference can arise from the female’s wish for a penis, [Freud continues] but it is the source of outbreaks of severe depression in her, owing to an internal conviction that the analysis will be of no use and that nothing can be done to help her. And



we can only agree that she is right, when we learn that her strongest motive in coming for treatment was the hope that, after all, she might still obtain a male organ, the lack of which was so painful to her. (Freud 1964, p. 252)

Freud shows how this holding onto castration produces a disbelief in knowledge and in analysis at once, together with the realization that desire is a lure, inasmuch as desire only leads back to the castration it departs from. What Freud provides is a little more detailed than Ferenczi's claim: it isn't *the crystalline structure of character* that is dissolved in that moment of analysis—for what is character?—but it is desire, for desire is castration—that is to say, the Other's desire. Then Freud advances to formalizing castration as a bedrock, insofar as it constitutes the last frontier of knowledge:

The decisive thing remains that the resistance prevents any change from taking place—that everything stays as it was. We often have the impression that with the wish for a penis and the masculine protest we have penetrated through all the psychological strata and have reached bedrock, and that thus our activities are at an end. This is probably true, since, for the psychical field, the biological field does in fact play the part of the underlying bedrock. The repudiation of femininity can be nothing else than a biological fact, a part of the great riddle of sex. (*Ibid.*)

Here, we must first question Freud's introduction of the "repudiation of femininity," which he substitutes for Alfred Adler's "masculine protest" two pages earlier (*ibid.*, p. 250). What difference is there between those two formulations, aside from Freud's expressed intention of accommodating *Penisneid* along with the fear of castration? If the masculine protest relates to castration from the outset of the object as positivity, the repudiation of femininity underlines the exact reverse, whereby the object as negativity constitutes the initial point. And if Freud precludes

both the fear of castration and *Penisneid* in this initially negative state of the object, then the penis is already posited to be a positivization of a lack that precedes it. In other words, what is operated by Freud's formulation and use of repudiation of femininity is not the repudiation of femininity, but the repudiation of lack.

So it is this repudiation of lack that Freud claims is a bedrock that "can be nothing else than a biological fact, a part of the great riddle of sex" (*ibid.*, p. 252). Why does he not stop at the biological fact in explaining this bedrock? He adds: "a part of the great riddle of sex," the riddle that constitutes enjoyment in both men and women. What is a riddle other than something not yet explained, which he calls "biological fact" inasmuch as it is unformalizable? Is that not what is meant by this bedrock? Is it not, precisely, a *bedrock* in what concerns signification? Miller asks: "What did Freud expect of the experience if not a formula for the sexual relation? He hoped to find it inscribed in the unconscious; hence his despair at not finding it" (Miller 2009, p. 2). One may say, then, that Lacan's breakthrough in Seminar X, where he addresses lack as *irreducible to a signifier*, is a formalization of this dead end.

In conclusion, we have five antitheses against the theory of mourning—that is, to be more specific, a mourning of the partial object. Let us summarize these antitheses by briefly correlating them to the formalizations that Lacan will bring to them. (1) Freud claims that demand is deception insofar as it aims at the Other's lack; that demand is separation, not alienation. Lacan formalizes this point in Seminar X under *that which deceives*. (2) Freud shows that the paternal function is an effect of castration, not a cause of castration (as in the Oedipus complex). Lacan conceptualizes this rupture with the Oedipus complex by a re-routing of castration in the property of jouissance itself. (3) Freud claims that if the analysand, after all, "refuses to subject him-self to a father-substitute," then the paternal function is in itself a positivization of the lacking object. Lacan develops this idea in the object's entry into exchange by the medium of the castration

complex. (4) Freud claims that desire leads nowhere other than castration. Lacan formalizes this by arguing that desire can only lead back to lack, which renders the object a *cause of desire*, as opposed to an *object of desire*. Finally (5), Freud shows us that the repudiation of femininity — that is, the repudiation of lack — is the bedrock of formalization. Lacan translates this into the lack that is irreducible to a signifier. These are the five antitheses by which Freud counters the theory of mourning, whose end point is an acceptance of castration.

These are, moreover, five of the fundamental coordinates of the object as object *a*. Although Lacan challenges Freud on the end of analysis in Seminar X, he must have followed to the letter Freud's antitheses as theoretical indications in some cases, and as evidences in others, calling for a conceptualization such as the object *a*. It is by the object *a* and its fourth stage, after all, that Lacan will show that *mourning* cannot realize more than a substitution, since what may be mourned is the object as seen (its image  $i(a)$ , which is already a substitute) and not the object as seeing (the gaze). So, this falling of the gaze involves a destitution that exceeds mourning, and that belongs on the opposite side of mourning, in melancholia. Why would Ferenczi qualify such a thing as the dissolution of the crystalline structure of character as a mourning? The whole emphasis in this dissolution is on destitution rather than loss. Ferenczi's practice, rather than his concepts, is what's beyond mourning.

### *The Finitude of Finitude*

At no point in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" does it seem that Freud is losing ground on a particular certainty. This certainty is first introduced in the symptom not to interpret, then operationalized in the economy of the unsynthesizable, then drawn in the defense of the drive by Empedocles's theory, and

finally substantiated in the five antitheses against the concept of mourning. Although Freud never quoted Hegel, or even read him as far as we know, his certainty is phenomenological: that the ethical can at no point become ontic. What Freud is certain of, to go back to Brassier's formalization, is that "there can be no narrative about overcoming the need to overcome; [ergo] there is no self-relation uncontaminated by estrangement" (Brassier 2019, p. 104). In fact, Ferenczi provides such a narrative, but then the narrative itself is a fact of the need to overcome, of which it narrates the overcoming. In fact, Freud tells us not to bother searching there for a purpose of analysis, for what can be found in this realm does not exceed ideology.

Any concept of a finality to psychoanalysis must align with this impossibility that he shows us the analysand coming to realize in what he calls an "internal conviction":

No analogous transference can arise from the female's wish for a penis, but it is the source of outbreaks of severe depression in her, owing to an internal conviction that the analysis, will be of no use and that nothing can be done to help her. And we can only agree that she is right, when we learn that her strongest motive in coming for treatment was the hope that, after all, she might still obtain a male organ. (Freud 1964, p. 252)

Does Freud go so far as to claim that transference can be liquidated? As a matter of fact, Freud only speaks of a resolution of the transference neurosis — never a liquidation — when he doesn't address what this resolution really involves; he introduces this resolution in most of his writings as a gateway to another articulation, but never addresses it as a problem itself. Now, the quote we have before us is clearly distinct from this usual dismissive affirmation of the resolution of the transference neurosis. Freud doesn't venture such a claim here, he rather approaches the question of transference comparatively — "no analogous transference can arise" — as if there is something in transference that doesn't

allow such a clear distinction on the matter as the one there is in a resolution. And although this inability to distinguish may stem from Freud's limited understanding of castration and the feminine position, his comparative approach also poses the question whether transference is limited to the analytic situation in the first place for it to assume such a responsibility as that of resolving it. In other words, this comparative approach poses the question whether there is a subjective rapport that is exterior to transference. On that, Freud claims, as early as in *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1909), that "transference arises spontaneously in all human relationships just as it does between the patient and the physician," so the "myth" of the resolution of transference loses its conceptual ground early in the history of psychoanalysis (Freud 2000–10, p. 2236). Now, I am certainly not claiming that what Freud advances here is the last thing that could happen to a transference in analysis; but I am pointing out that Freud is approaching transference quite correctly, he is speaking in terms of what is realizable, a "non-analogousness" of transference—as opposed to a transcendence of transference.

There can be "no analogous transference" to that which was sustained, Freud claims, by the "wish for the partial object" along the analytic treatment, and which falls, in the end, through an "internal conviction." So what Freud claims is that transference subsists, but with a cut that is this "internal conviction." This is far more nuanced than what Ferenczi proposes about the "feeling of equality in relation to the physician," and the "far clearer separation of fantasy from reality, obtained by analysis" (Ferenczi 1982, pp. 47–51). Although Ferenczi has led analysis beyond Freud, Freud's conceptual delicacy maintains a greater sobriety against the ideological outcomes of analysis that were derived from Ferenczi's claims. For if one thinks transference at the end of analysis through this "equality in relation to the physician," or the "clearer separation of fantasy from reality," or, even better, the "internal freedom that is quasi unlimited," one cannot but end up

in the idea of the resolution of transference—which stems from the very misunderstanding of transference (*ibid.*, p. 47).

Now let us approach this “internal conviction,” the central element of the proposition, which Freud says he “can only agree she is right” in. What internal conviction does he agree she is right in? Is it that she will not obtain a male organ after all? Or that her analysis had been motivated by this desire all along? Or that, after this conviction, analysis has become useless? Isn’t “conviction” a rather strange word to be used in psychoanalysis? Have we ever seen this word written in a psychoanalytic text—other than Freud’s and Ferenczi’s on the end of analysis? Doesn’t Freud tell us, by naming this an “internal conviction,” that something has gotten out of hand? Does he not tell us that this analysand is all alone in her conviction? That he does not share with her this same conviction, but that in a certain way—the way of the evident perhaps—he gets forced to agree? Does he not tell us that by this conviction the internal has gotten concealed again for him, inasmuch as conviction doesn’t demand acknowledgement? It is so strange that he who has led analysis as far as destitution—Ferenczi—hasn’t given us a single word on the unbeing of the supposed subject of knowledge, for he dumps it all in negative transference, while what Freud tells us in all the fury of this *passage à l’acte* is that it was all about his destitution as supposition of knowledge.

To have conviction, after all, is neither being certain nor needing to know; and Descartes is accountable enough by his precipitation to create the non-deceiving God out of his first certainty for how demanding certainty is in its relation to knowledge, inasmuch as it aims at truth (Lacan 1981, p. 36). The conviction that Freud tells us about, and that he qualifies as internal, is something else, it is of a different category than that by which Descartes had to get rid of God (if I reached the certainty that “I am” by pure reason, then God wants me to) and which since Lacan has been called a sleight of hand. The analysand’s conviction does not assume that

the Other agrees, but that it forced him to: he "can only agree that she is right," that the right is in her. Doesn't that involve the Other's becoming a lack? For what else does this conviction lead Freud to than lacking conviction? Doesn't this conviction preclude a stumbling of the Other? The very last lines of Freud's article are astonishingly precise on this matter. He says not only that the Other falls with his knowledge or "mastery" (as he calls it using Ferenczi's words, "the mastery of the castration complex"), which requires then that he "consoles" himself with something, but also that what he falls into, or back to, is "certainty"—that is being divided:

It would be hard to say whether and when we have succeeded in mastering this factor [the repudiation of femininity] in analytical treatment. We can only console ourselves with the certainty that we have given the person analyzed every possible encouragement to examine and alter his attitude to it. (Freud 1964, p. 252)

What Freud says is that he doesn't know, but he is certain. And what does his certainty account for, what is he certain of, other than the will he places against his doubt? To return to the conviction in the name of which this fall has taken place, that is the suspended evident inseparable from experience and irreducible to knowledge, one can see it laid in the same lines Mladen Dolar writes to substantiate Hegel's absolute knowledge:

One could say that the absolute knowledge is a crossroad, a partition. There are two ways that follow from it: having reached this point, having climbed to the top of this ladder, one can only revert to the experience, which was there all along—the way to truth is truth itself, the absolute knowledge is nothing but the realization that the truth was produced on the way, unwittingly, and that there is nothing more to learn there, no wisdom to possess [...] except for what has been learned on the way. (Dolar 2017, p. 88)

Isn't this absolute knowledge the internal conviction—in its three propositions combined—that Freud calls “the source of outbreaks of severe depression in her”? That 1) there is nowhere else to go from there, other than to the beginning; 2) that truth, after all, is what she already experienced; and 3) that there was nothing else left for her to learn? Is there not in this absolute knowledge the very failure of knowledge as supposed, the failure of the phallus whose absence is projected on infinity? Dolar's further explanation of the function of the cut produced by absolute knowledge interprets with great precision the nuance that Freud introduced in the axiom “internal conviction, ergo non-analogousness of transference”:

The absolute knowledge thus rejoins the sense certainty, the most naïve beginning of the *Phenomenology*, experience is caught in a circle, one is thrown back on one's own experience, on its beginning—yet with a cut, after the break produced by the absolute knowledge. Is there life after the absolute knowledge? The parallel has been already suggested a number of times: it is like continuing to live one's life after analysis, after the break produced by analysis, and the absolute knowledge is in structural analogy with the end of analysis. (*Ibid.*)

Although backing absolute knowledge by the end of analysis might not surpass elucidation—for if there is anyone who may testify and give evidence on the end of analysis, that doesn't make it more graspable than absolute knowledge—Dolar's comparison permits the reverse. Can absolute knowledge back the end of analysis in its conceptualization? What Dolar tells us is that absolute knowledge is, on the one hand, the cut in knowledge by which experience gets disentangled from it and starts leading back to itself, and on the other hand, the cut in experience to which experience is led back to, in itself—an opening in experience that leads “from consciousness to subject,” out of itself, and thereby to logic (*ibid.*). So this cut is, in fact, a departure from knowledge



as supposed and, at the same time, an entry into knowledge as produced, in a closure of experience on itself in infinite cycles.

The critical fact that Dolar questions at this point is how experience becomes *estranged* from itself while realizing its fall into repetition and similarity to itself; how it becomes "non-analogous transference," while continuing to function as transference. Dolar explains this non-analogousness of experience after absolute knowledge by two factors: absolute knowledge leads to a recognition that (1) experience repeats experience in cycles, that experience is but a loop there is no way out of, and (2) that experience is "subtended" by a cut in experience, whose opening submits it to a logic out of itself (*ibid.*). These are, indeed, Hegel's two scars on experience by absolute knowledge—that are not so distinct from Freud's—in sequence with which Dolar asks: "Is there life after the absolute knowledge?" Hegel tells us there is *the pure decision to think*, which Dolar translates into: there is "the life of the concept" (*ibid.*, p. 89).

Should we ask the same question about the end of analysis? Is there life after the end of analysis? This is a far more complex question than the first, for Freud doesn't say "there is the life of the concept," he says "Analysis [is] Terminable and Interminable." At one pole of the article, he writes, "no analogous transference can arise from the female's wish for a penis," and at the other, "what analysis achieves for neurotics is nothing other than what normal people [who are not excluded from this wish for a penis] bring about for themselves"—which is then a temporary solution to a temporary strength of the drive (Freud 1964, pp. 225, 252). Freud's constant perplexity when approaching the end of analysis shows that the true question he was burdened by is not "does analysis have an end?" but "what is the termination of analysis an end of?" What is it in the order of ends that analysis terminable must realize, and thereby become interminable? What Freud was asking is "What is it an end of, that reduces the terminality of analysis to a negligible factor, in approaching the question of

the end of analysis?” This is the question that Freud finally opens by the internal conviction that equates to absolute knowledge.

“The end” is a term with a long philosophical history, which I certainly cannot sufficiently address in this paper. I shall only approach it very briefly through Hegel’s phenomenology with the aim of deducing Freud’s answer to the question formulated above. The spine of “the end,” which Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda extracted in *The Dash*, is in the question whether there is such a thing as an ended end, whether there is a final and fully consummated end, or if the end—as Hegel shows us—is an unend “forcing us not only to begin anew but to think of beginning in a new way” (Comay and Ruda 2018, p. 109). And this is what Freud shows by his long section on the drive, and more specifically by Empedocles’s theory: that there is no separation that one can conceive of as final, there is no final end, there are only different entries to repetition. This leads to the second point, which Alenka Zupančič explains with the idea that the end and repetition (just like desire and castration) are one and the same thing, inasmuch as repetition is driven by the end (repetition seeks the end) and therefore the end is the cause of repetition (Zupančič 2016, p. 1). The third point that Zupančič offers is crucial for understanding Freud’s answer to the question:

The fact that there are real causes of concern here [in Zeno’s obsession with health] (if concern it is) in no way contradicts the fantastic character of many of these representations of the end. What I mean by this is that the idea of even the most radical, definitive, irreversible End serves as a framework through which we contemplate (and interpret) our present reality; and it often serves as means of its ideological consolidation. It serves, first, to give us an idea of just how much is needed to change our present reality, that is, it provides a spectacular answer to the question: what has to end in order for our present troubles to end? (*Ibid.*, p. 8)

Zupančič’s formulation of “the end” as framework, perhaps of fantasy as such, insofar as fantasy is the kernel of desire’s

positivization of lack, allows us to posit now that what Freud describes as radically lost in the analysand's "internal conviction" — the cut of absolute knowledge — is nothing other than this framework, this idea of the final end. It is the internal conviction that there isn't a final end that analysis can reach — "analysis will be of no use and that nothing can be done to help her" — whereby this suffering of hers can be done with once and for all. So what is it an end of that reduces the terminality of analysis to a negligible factor in approaching the question of the end of analysis? Is it not the end of the one and final end? The only possible end to analysis, Freud tells us, inasmuch as the end is repetition, is the end of the one and final end; in which case the cut of absolute knowledge would have elucidated that the end has already taken place, and that it will continue to do so indefinitely. This is the only logic — Hegel's logic — able to make sense of "Analysis Terminable and Interminable": analysis may be considered as terminated when it has become interminable, when it has ended the idea of its final end.

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