

Psychoanalysis and culture: some contemporary challenges¹

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The evolution and current usage of the concept of culture is briefly discussed. Two divergent views on the initial relationship between psychoanalysis and culture are presented and the influence of the former on the latter illustrated, both in the previous decades and at present. Some general aspects of present-day western culture are then outlined, among them the great flood of information, the culture of narcissism, the temptations of conventionality, the ideology of visual and media and the "light culture", and five propositions that attempt to characterize 'post-modern sensibility'. Finally, four challenges faced today by psychoanalysis are discussed: the changing nature of philosophical and cultural cross-currents as it influences psychoanalysis as a discipline; the empiricist versus the hermeneutic approach; attacks on psychoanalysis as an elitist discipline and profession; and the movement away from the subjectivist and existential concerns and the focus on a more collectivist and pragmatic relationship to reality. The author suggests possible ways to face each of these challenges.

Key-words: Western culture; philosophy; history; perspective.

Psicanálise e cultura: desafios da contemporaneidade

A evolução e o uso corrente do conceito de cultura será brevemente discutido. São apresentados dois pontos de vista divergentes sobre a relação inicial entre a psicanálise e a cultura, bem como a ilustração da influência da primeira na segunda, tanto em décadas passadas como no presente. Alguns aspectos gerais da cultura ocidental dos dias atuais são apresentados, incluindo: a avalanche de informação, a cultura do narcisismo, as tentações da acomodação, a ideologia da mídia visual e a cultura "light" e cinco proposições que tentam caracterizar a "sensibilidade pós-moderna". Por fim, quatro desafios enfrentados atualmente pela psicanálise são discutidos: a natureza variável de contracorrentes filosóficas e culturais, enquanto influência na psicanálise como uma disciplina; o empirismo em contraposição à abordagem hermenêutica; os ataques à psicanálise como sendo uma disciplina e uma profissão elitista; o enfraquecimento de preocupações subjetivistas e existenciais e um maior interesse em uma relação mais coletivista e pragmática com a realidade. O autor oferece sugestões para lidar com cada um destes desafios.

Unitermos: Cultura ocidental; filosofia; história; perspectiva.

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*Chega mais perto e contempla as palavras.
Cada uma tem mil faces secretas sob a face neutra
e te pergunta, sem interesse pela resposta, pobre
ou terrível, que lhe deres:
Trouxeste a chave?*³

Introduction

Culture is considered to be one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This seems to be so because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but especially because it has now come to be used in several different intellectual disciplines and also in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought (1, 2).

In German, *Kultur* was used in the eighteenth century as a synonym for civilization; firstly in the abstract sense of a general process of becoming 'civilized' or 'cultivated'; secondly, in the sense that had already been established for civilization by the historians of the Enlightenment. A decisive change came when Herder (1) suggested an innovation, that is, to speak of 'cultures' in the plural. By this he meant the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but he also considered the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation.

When Freud wrote about human civilization as including 'all those respects in which human life has raised itself above its animal status and differs from the life of beasts - and I scorn to distinguish between culture and civilization' (3, p.5-6) he was employing the current German usage. Nowadays, three broad active categories of usage can be recognized: 1) a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; 2) a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general; 3) works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This last seems now to be the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre and film, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history (1). Mario Bunge (2) suggested that culture should be considered as a sub-system of society, different

from other sub-systems such as the economy and politics, but keeping a relationship with them. In this sense of a sub-system, culture comprises other sub-systems (art, ideology, technology, humanities, science). So it is possible to speak of 'the culture of a society', to avoid generalizations and to try to focus our attention on some restricted areas that are included in this specific sub-system. With this ideas in mind, what follows is an attempt to look at some aspects of western culture, culture here understood as the second and/or third category mentioned by Williams or the sub-system described by Bunge, and to discuss the challenges that these features present to psychoanalysis.

In the beginnings: Freud, culture and psychoanalysis

The complex relationship between psychoanalysis and culture can be briefly illustrated when we consider that it appeared in fin-de-siècle Vienna, a cultural milieu in which the 'intelligentsia' was developing innovations in many areas simultaneously. The Viennese cultural elite had a rare combination of provincialism and cosmopolitanism, tradition and modernism, which produced a sort of cohesion greater than in other cities. Cafés and frequent meetings were solid institutions, and kept their vitality as places and moments when intellectuals communicated ideas and values, thus stimulating each other (4). Recently, Mezan (5) explored the contrasting views on this relationship, considering two opposite statements. Bettelheim (6) considered that Viennese culture provided the curious simultaneity of the Empire disintegration and the apex of intellectual development, in which the understanding of ambivalence, hysteria and neurosis was a natural consequence; in other words, psychoanalysis could not have appeared in any other place but Vienna. On the other hand, Gay (7) strongly objected to this idea, and suggested that psychoanalysis could perfectly well have developed elsewhere.

Mezan (5) pointed out that psychoanalysis shares certain features with other cultural productions of that period, but no real reciprocal influence can be demonstrated, for the simple

3 Andrade CD. Antologia Poética. Rio de Janeiro: Edição do autor; 1963.

reason that they are contemporaneous, appearing independently, and also because Freud's Vienna was not the same as the cultural elites described by Bettelheim. He was 35 years old when the great transformations associated with effervescent fin-de-siècle Vienna began, and at this point his mind was ready and fully equipped for the discoveries he was already beginning to make. Following Gay's reconstruction, Mezan (5) suggests that Vienna offered a stimulus for the emergence of psychoanalysis, and this consisted in the presence of professors such as Brücke and others at the university, in a school system that provided the students with the best of western, especially German, culture, and in the complex relations between Viennese Jews and their environment, characterized by a combination of mutual attraction, hate and contempt. But the decisive element can only be found in Freud's own singularity and in the many influences he suffered throughout his personal and intellectual development (8). This question was also explored, in as scholarly a way as ever, by Steiner (9), who stressed the significance of Freud's education and the influence of the late eighteenth - and nineteenth-century tradition of the German-speaking intellectuals. He advanced his thesis of the complex interaction between Freud and his cultural background, and stressed that just as Freud's interpretations of Oedipus Rex show the influence of the cultural context in which he operated, our interpretations are also part of a changing historical process, at the same time containing some permanent values.

By choosing Oedipus, Freud seems to tell us that he considers his work no more than the beginning of an indefinite exploration of his patient's symptoms and the cultural products of civilization... starting in the particular time and place, Vienna, that he found himself, and within that particular cultural tradition (9).

Whether we accept Gay's and Mezan's view or we hold to the one suggested by Bettelheim and Steiner there will probably be no dispute as to the enormous influence of psychoanalysis on western culture in the following decades, 'when all intellectuals were playing with the ideas of Freud and his followers' (10).

This was a widespread experience, with varying impacts on different places, but keeping in common the excitement and interest that the new field of knowledge raised almost everywhere. This general trend, with regional differences, was well documented by Kutter (11). More recently, however, the humanistic culture concerned with the development and maturation of the individual, with self exploration and subjectivity is being questioned by a cultural trend to immediate adaptation and social effectiveness, that has led to a decrease in the interest in psychoanalysis on the part of cultural and intellectual elites (12).

In spite of many problems in different areas that led to the general designation of an 'actual crisis of psychoanalysis' (13), 'in many university settings psychoanalytic thinking has continued to grow, for example in the area of literary analysis, art, and the humanities in general...' (12). A recent example of the ambivalent attitude towards psychoanalysis, however, can be found in Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (14), in which he explores the Western literary tradition by concentrating on the works of twenty-six authors central to the Canon, among which he includes Freud. Bloom considers him 'possibly the best mind of our century' (p.373), or 'a powerful and sophisticated mind... indeed it is the mind of our age...' (p.375).

In his view, however, Freud suffered from a literary influence and its anxieties; in this sense, Shakespeare was the real inventor of psychoanalysis, and Freud, only its codifier. He charged Freud with misreading Shakespeare and also with trying to dismiss his greatness. In the chapter entitled 'Freud: a Shakespearean reading', Bloom shows very clearly his own ambivalence towards Freud, identifying himself with Shakespeare, and trying to demonstrate that the central conflict was that of Hamlet, and not of Oedipus. He goes so far as to say that 'Shakespeare is everywhere in Freud, far more present when unmentioned than when he is cited' (p. 391), and that 'Freud was anxious about Shakespeare because he had learned anxiety from him, as he had learned ambivalence and narcissism and schism in the self' (p. 394). In spite of Bloom's arrogant and provocative attitude, he is a good example of how

psychoanalytic thinking has deeply penetrated into the Western culture and, at the same time, or exactly because of that, is raising this kind of ambivalent reaction.

Some general aspects of our culture

What follows is an attempt to discern some of the general aspects of our culture and identify the main challenges psychoanalysis is facing in it. The difficulties of this task, which also implies a glance into the future, were well known to Freud (3). Moreover, which culture will be discussing from now on? It has already been stressed that we live in a complex and changing reality, in which many versions of culture can be found. National, regional, economic, social, educational, religious and political differences influence culture on various levels (15). However, as a recent study of the House of Delegates has shown (13), many problems are common to different regions, maybe because on the whole we are dealing with more similarities than differences, in urban centers that share common concerns and in which culture is developing in a growing tendency towards globalization.

With this in mind, I will review some recent contributions that have tried to capture the spirit of the age, our *Zeitgeist*. In an attempt to describe what he called Modern Times, Van der Leeuw (16) presented a precious summary that included these trends: 1) a great flood of information, quantification and massive growth that leads to superficiality, hampers independent thinking and is accompanied by a levelling process, as a consequence of which silence, solitude and privacy become endangered, and congestion disturbs man's consciousness of space and the experience of space he needs for his life; 2) changes in the role of the family as the basis of society, motherhood being increasingly neglected; 3) the dominant role of seductive advertising, encouraging immediate gratification and creating the illusion that total gratification is possible; 4) the increasing search for excitement, stimulation, brief explosions of emotions and the urge for rapid discharge, instead of the cultivation of warm, tender feelings, in particular where children are concerned; 5) as a positive development, the disruption of standards in a society that for a

long time was static, which has made it easier to assume an independent posture and to acquire experience in an individual way. As a general conclusion, Van der Leeuw suggests that contemporary society needs a renewal of social ideals.

From another perspective, Christopher Lasch (17) characterized 'the culture of narcissism' as a result of the breakdown of the family as a moral guidance system, the avoidance of conflicts by compromising and the accentuation of instinctual gratification. Lasch produced a synthesis of the ideas of Freud, Marx and the Frankfurt School, which made the first contributions to understanding the individual's dissolution within mass culture. Lasch's central thesis is that capitalism has produced an unprecedented cultural and psychological devastation, eroding our capacity for self-help and self-discipline. As social pressures have invaded the ego, it has become harder to grow up and to acquire maturity. This leads to a failure of normal superego development. So in a world dominated by images, individual progress can only come from projected images and erroneous impressions produced by insecure egos. In this world it is difficult to discriminate reality from fantasy, and what we really are from what the products we consume suggest that we are. The 'culture of narcissism' abolished collective discipline and concentrated work, in favor of a world of impressions, appearances and disguises.

From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, Kernberg (12) explored the nature of the appeal of mass culture, particularly as it is communicated by the mass media. He examined the regressive effects of group processes on the recipients of mass culture, and the striking correspondence between the conventional aspects of mass culture and the psychological characteristics of latency. In his study, Kernberg stressed some points relevant to our attempt at characterizing contemporary culture. Among them he described: the simultaneity of communication; the illusion of being a member of a crowd connected with a central figure who communicates what is important and what one should think about, the denial of complexities; the predominance of conventional assumptions over individual thinking; the stimulation

assumptions over individual thinking; the stimulation of a narcissistic dimension in the receiver, and also a paranoid one, in the form of justified suspicion or indignation; the application of a simplistic morality to social and political matters in the form of clichés (for instance, that good people together will solve problems).

After studying earlier and recent perspectives on conventionality, Kernberg suggested that at this moment it would seem reasonable to conclude that the regression induced by and reflected in mass culture and mass entertainment actualizes tendencies of value systems and morality of latency years triggered by large group activated by mass media (12).

He considers that conventionality may be the price of social stability, in spite of the danger of more severe group regressions. Most people may submerge themselves temporarily in the conventionality of mass culture for recreational purposes, in relatively mild or benign ways; but for some, conventionality might become a permanent prison. In this stimulating paper, what emerges is a clear picture of 'the temptations of conventionality' as a feature of our culture.

Ahumada (18) explored this further in his essay on the crisis of culture and the crisis of psychoanalysis. In his view, what we are witnessing is a crisis in the very possibility of thinking about oneself in a global society. This one is characterized by a radical change from acculturation into the family and through the written word towards acculturation by images, in more and more virtual realities. From this follows the disavowal of primitive mourning and an identificatory deficit leading to endless adolescence. Castoriadis (19), in the same vein, describes a current crisis in the identificatory process due to the lack of a self-representation of society as a shelter for meaning and values. After studying Gaddini's (20) seminal paper on the changes presented by psychoanalytic patients, Ahumada suggests that the 'psychopathologies of immediate gratification' show a growing ambiguity, with mimetic defences against insight, defences that are considered essential for psychic survival. In the emergent culture of virtual reality, one can observe the tendency towards the annihilation of thinking, as an instrument for more effective

advertising. Another important feature is the correspondence of the ambiguity in the social and cultural reality with the very idea of psychopathology, and more intensely of sexual psychopathology. In this current 'normality', dominated by ambiguity, the 'culture of Prozac' and alternative styles of living might be considered as social ideals.

The ideology of visual media and the 'light' culture leads us to equate information with mental growth. Ahumada thus considers that we are facing an intolerance towards what Bion termed 'negative realization'. It is on a tolerance of 'negative realizations', that is, of absence, that mental growth depends.

The same concern was expressed by Medici de Steiner (21), who discussed the endangered spoken word. In her view, the growing presence of the image substituting the real contact, the indispensable dialogue that makes it possible to exchange facts, images, narratives and affects of the daily world and the unforgettable world or literature, of stories that must be told. So this is the current dilemma: family versus machine.

Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (22) has become an essential part of any discussion of our culture. In spite of many confusions and difficulties attached to this term is it a result, the aftermath, the afterbirth, the development, the denial or the rejection of modernity? Lyotard clearly stated that 'this term defines a state of the culture. Modern societies based their discourses on truth, justice and in great historical and scientific meta-narratives. The present-day crisis is precisely the crisis of these discourses' (p. 12). Even if some consider that post-modernity is more of a programme developed by theorists than the common reality of contemporary society and culture, it is necessary to consider this 'condition', 'program' or sensibility, since it has clear connections with the challenges psychoanalysis is facing. Among many authors, Arditi (23) offered five concise propositions in an attempt to characterize the 'postmodern sensibility'.

1. In contrast with modernity, the postmodern condition privileges scepticism, challenging basic assumptions of the project of Enlightenment; to the three 'masters of suspicion' (24), Marx, Nietzsche and Freud,

must be added the influences of Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard, Feyerabend, Vattimo.

2. There is a recognition of the complexity of the world, which leads to a weakening of concepts such as progress or absorption of the old into the new.

3. There is a challenge to the simplistic model of power; as a consequence, one must consider the presence of a center and a periphery, in terms of power or ideology, and also the existence of pockets as 'microclimates' or 'micropowers' more or less omnipresent in each system.

4. The claim to the right of being different and the tenacious determination to follow alternative ways of living, which leads to the politicization of sexuality, ecology, human rights, daily urban life and so on.

5. The expansion of social demands for participation, in which issues such as citizenship, the state of well-being, and the rights of women, pacifists, homosexuals and other minorities are overtly claimed.

As a whole, it is possible to discern a present-day 'crisis of modernity' or a 'malaise in modernity' (25-27), in which 'the strong ideas of modern ages, including a reigning reason (Descartes), a single history in continued evolution, a teleological vision with theological derivatives, Kantism, positivism and all their "neo" expressions are presently being openly questioned by philosophy and science' (28).

At the same time, it is possible to observe remarkable progress in the area of communications, in that new technologies have led to an unprecedented democratization of information and a wider sharing of knowledge.

With these elements in mind I will now examine some of the challenges psychoanalysis is facing in this culture.

Challenges in the culture

The changing nature of the philosophical and cultural cross-currents of contemporary western culture as they influence psychoanalysis as a discipline

The present-day discussion proposed by the many authors who can be included under a general designation of post-modernist, offers a

curious challenge to psychoanalysis. On the one hand, as mentioned, Freud is considered part of the changing move towards complexity and paradigmatic changes.

But if we are witnessing an era of the end of great meta-narratives, can psychoanalysis be considered to be injured to death? Some may consider it so, if seen as a closed system, not open to questioning and developments, but having reached definitive categories and concepts, such as the unconscious. In this respect the idea of a common ground, suggested by Wallerstein (29), is a useful one, since it encompasses the simultaneous existence of a shared clinical theory and a variety of symbolisms or metaphors designed to grasp and to give coherence to our internal unknowables, our past unconscious (30). In this sense, there are many psychoanalyses, characterizing a metapsychological pluralism. Or, in other words, psychoanalysis can no longer be seen as a great meta-narrative, but as many versions of a basic initial theory. The 'crisis of modernity' is under discussion. Psychoanalysis is presented either as a clear example of modernity (for instance, 25) or as a different and proper field, in which rationality is no more the central concern (e.g. 27). It seems that psychoanalysis is somehow in a central position in the current debate: there are many invitations, many criticisms, some scepticism, but there is a general sense that it is one of the tools intellectuals are handling in order to justify and convince with their own ideas. This debate is producing a new and interesting trend: the rapprochement between psychoanalysis and philosophy, even in places where its positivistic tradition still prevails. The French experience seems to be spreading (31), and the challenge that lies ahead consists in how to integrate psychoanalytic thinking with the various philosophical currents, and to evaluate which of these can better contribute to ongoing psychoanalytic thought.

For instance, two areas of current interest both for psychoanalysis and philosophy are the studies on subjectivity and intersubjectivity (32, 33) and its usefulness as a criterion of truth in communication, and the studies on identity, from both viewpoints. Comparative studies may produce wider areas of co-operation and better

understanding of similarities and divergences.

The challenge of the empiricist's scientific tradition of the hermeneutic approach in psychoanalysis

This is possibly one of the more fascinating areas of the current challenges faced by psychoanalysis, but it is not possible to do justice to the magnitude of this debate in a few lines. As Etchegoyen puts it, 'the problem of the epistemological status of psychoanalysis is extremely topical' (34; p. 8), 'one of the most burning questions within our discipline' (35; p.1110), and it was intensely discussed at the San Francisco Congress (36). Whether psychoanalysis belongs in the realm of the natural sciences, or is a hermeneutical discipline or it has, like every science, a method that is unique but appropriate to its aims (37), is an open question, whose answer would bring us to face the situation described by Blanchot's sentence: 'The answer is the misery of the question' (38). But in spite of the impossibility of going further here, contributions such as those from Bowlby (39), Etchegoyen (34, 35), Grünbaum (40) and Klimovsky (37), among others, illustrate this debate. This discussion and the current pluralism of psychoanalytic theories may be seen as a sign of decadence, as the disintegration of the Roman of British Empire, after a wide expansion of its boundaries. However, this situation provides the stimulating challenge of developing and deepening the discussion, of comparing different approaches, of formulating more clearly its convergences and divergences (41). Two recent events that illustrate this point were the symposium on 'Psychoanalysis as a science', held at the Freud Museum in Vienna in November, 1996 (25) and the discussion on psychoanalytic research between Green (31) and Wallerstein (29) in *International Psychoanalysis*. In both, the main question was the epistemological status of psychoanalysis, and, as a consequence, what kind of research (if any) can be produced by it. After following the arguments presented by Green and Wallerstein, which summarize a lifelong effort to conceptualize and formulate two different positions regarding empirical research, my own

conclusion is that we should not choose one or the other. Rather, we should develop both, reinforce them and invest strongly towards their growth. Another remarkable achievement was the way in which the *International Journal* chose to celebrate its 75th anniversary, after which Tuckett suggested that the challenge for the next 25 years is to build 'a discipline that does not have to rely on past authority, character assassination and assertion, but one whose confidence is based on what we mostly agree we have really learned or still need to learn' (42; p.661). In this arena, what can emerge is the picture of a living discipline, completely committed to the reflection of its own nature and structure.

Attacks on psychoanalysis as an elitist discipline and profession

The public attacks on psychoanalysis have been challenging psychoanalytic societies in many countries, leading to a growing awareness of a certain isolation of our institutions within the social, intellectual and scientific environment, as Kernberg (12) and Sanville (10) have recently pointed out. While an early generation of psychoanalytic pioneers established our discipline in many countries by means of public lectures, information and participation in the life of cultural elites, what we observe now is a turning inwards and a lack of systematic investment in the socio-cultural and scientific milieu. Active efforts to counter this tendency can be observed in places such as Michigan, Santiago, Buenos Aires, São Paulo (43-45).

In university settings where psychoanalytic thinking has continued to grow, mainly in the humanities in general, this interest has often been fostered by academics disconnected from the psychoanalytic community itself, or by the Lacanian movement, presented as an alternative to traditional psychoanalytic thinking, as observed by Kernberg (12).

In an attempt to identify who is talking about psychoanalysis in the press, I reviewed the cultural sections of two of the most important Brazilian newspapers over a 6-month period. In one of them, 50% of all the articles were

written by journalists or PhD students of literature; 40% by members of Lacanian societies and 10% by members of IPA societies. In the other, 50% of the articles were written by former IPA members, mostly with critical or ironic remarks towards institutionalized psychoanalysis; 40% by Lacanians and 10% by journalists.

Despite the many different issues discussed, the general conclusion to be drawn, at least in this sample, is that psychoanalysis is presented, discussed and understood by the general public as something produced outside the IPA walls.

This leads us to the difficult issue of the diffusion of psychoanalysis and its perils. Ahumada (18) shows an overt scepticism, considering that the real danger rests on the banalization produced by a mimetic appropriation of psychoanalytic concepts or its academic versions. The same discussion can be found in Figueira (46), who suggests that we should realize how ready we are to apply psychoanalysis to everything we see and how little we seem to be willing to apply it to itself, thus creating a new area of clinical development. He also tried to demonstrate that, beneath the 'common ground' shared by different types of psychoanalysis, there is a common foundation, that is seldom discussed: the fact that any psychoanalysis has the potential to become a *Weltanschauung*. Addressing the many problems of contemporary society, Etchegoyen (34, 35) stated that it is absolutely necessary for psychoanalysis to make its voice heard, but the main precondition for this is the reinforcement of our theoretical and professional identity. Kernberg (12) also stresses the need to increase the concern with the immediate social, cultural and scientific environment.

Other fields that should be more developed are the application of psychoanalytic theory to other treatments, in the sense of a 'new beginning' of our former intimate relations with psychiatry and the psychoterapies and the application of psychoanalysis to help to understand relevant social problems, such as violence, poverty and discrimination against specific minorities.

The movement away from subjectivist and existential concerns and the focus on a collectivist and pragmatic relation to reality

This shift of interest in contemporary culture was well described by Van der Leeuw (16), Kernberg (12) and Ahumada (18). Baladier (47) speaks about a 'super modernism', an era of simultaneity, a culture of the image and of the immediate accomplishment of ideas, wishes and purposes. In this culture, the private relationship between two persons that characterizes the analytical situation may be experienced as 'unheimlich' (uncanny), says Van der Leeuw, asking whether psychoanalytic treatment is still justifiable in our rapidly changing society. In Ahumada's view, thinking about oneself and the recovery of individual identity - two central instruments and objectives of psychoanalysis - may turn psychoanalysis into a sort of 'enemy of the people'. Moreover, when drugs, brief therapies and alternative treatments are intensely offered and idealized, psychoanalysis may seem old-fashioned and outdated. In a broader sense, however, could it be that psychoanalysis as a system of thought has become irrelevant to or incompatible with the current needs of our culture? We cannot provide quick answers, nor does our way of operating follow the *cito, tuto, jucunde, motto*. The temptations here are to seek a rapid and anxious adaptation to our practical culture or to embark on 'an apocalyptic or melancholic attitude, as might be the case in any field of culture as we advance towards the 'end-of-the-century' myth' (28).

A third way, just as an example of the many ongoing efforts that need continuous support and diffusion, is constituted by the studies being carried out into different models of psychoanalytic training (48) and on the specificity of psychoanalysis (49).

If we observe more carefully the recurring waves, we may begin to discern a growing malaise in the present state of affairs of our culture. For instance, a Time Magazine (50) cover admonishes against 'The New Wars' and says: 'Print! Cable! The Internet! We're being bombarded by information, gossip and commentary as never before. Is more news

good news?' What may happen when all the current excitement and the search for more and more virtual realities of the illusions of mass culture reach the end of the rainbow? Certainly psychoanalysis will have something to say about the future of so many current illusions. Psychoanalysis can be used as an effective tool for the understanding and critique of present-day superficiality and conventionality. A more effective presence in the cultural milieu should be sought out, and our voice should be heard beyond our own walls. At the same time we must increase our ability to employ new technologies, as the International Journal, for instance, is doing. The Internet is good example of an effective way of fostering exchanges, both internally and externally. Moreover, as clinical experience has shown in this century, and as psychoanalytic technique is improving and now allows us to work in closer emotional contact with our patients, the resulting evidence is that this is the best way of exploring and developing subjectivity, both as an ethical and therapeutic enterprise.

In this, as well as in the previous issues, even considering the many challenges and critical points to be faced, in a world of so many complexities and uncertainties, there is such an impressive amount of work already done, and to be done, that we can begin our second century with at least one shared conviction: our key was used to open many doors; there are a thousand others waiting for us.

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