Subjectivity and Psychoanalysis: a conversation with Ian Parker

Subjetividade e Psicanálise: Conversando com Ian Parker

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The interview centres on Ian Parker’s book Psychoanalysis, Clinic and Context: Subjectivity, History and Autobiography. London: Routledge (2019). In this publication Parker provides an account of psychoanalysis and history, situating his own biography. In this critical analysis of psychoanalytic theory and practice, Parker explores key psychoanalytic concepts based on Marxist and Foucauldian perspectives, through a biographical journey. Parker brings important contributions to a critical view on psychoanalytic theory and practice, exploring deadlocks of psychoanalytic theories and insights towards subjectivity.

Interviewer: First of all, thank you very much for participating in the interview. We could start by talking about your book Psychoanalysis, Clinic and Context: Subjectivity, History and Autobiography (London: Routledge, 2019), which brings important insights into psychoanalytic theory and practice, particularly on the contributions from Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Marxist perspectives for critical perspectives in and outside psychoanalysis.

Ian: What you have been describing are all of the things that are in the book, and I think the first thing to say is that the book, is one book simply focusing on psychoanalysis, there is going to be another book that will be published next year that will be focused on psychology. I think those are two very difficult questions for us here in Britain. I am not sure whether the same applies for you in Brazil, but in Britain the discipline of psychology usually treats psychoanalysis as a strange subspeciality and usually gets Freud out of the way in the first year of the degree, and then there are studies of developmental psychology, neuro psychology, cognitive psychology, etc., etc. without any references to psychoanalysis.

So, that’s one thing, psychoanalysis, which we are focusing on in this book, is a study and experience of human subjectivity in the practice of care in the clinic that has operated usually outside the discipline of psychology and usually outside the universities. So, I’m focusing on the way that I encountered psychoanalysis, the way that I trained in psychoanalysis, and I look at the limitations of psychoanalysis as an epistemological framework to comprehend political matters and matters that psychology should be concerned with.

The psychoanalysis book starts of with my suspicion of psychoanalysis because I was training as a psychology student and then worked as psychology lecturer, and also very importantly because when I trained as a psychologist and worked in the early years in psychology, I was also a Marxist, which I still am. And I could see around me many people in the discipline of psychology who wanted to find an alternative approach to subjectivity and I could see that many of them eventually found this alternative approach in psychoanalysis, but the problem was they became evangelists for psychoanalysis as if it was a kind of worldview, as they broke from psychology, so we would say that they went out of the frying pan into the fire, they went from bad discipline

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of psychology into something that was actually
deeper and more insidious and more dangerous in
the way that psychoanalysis is practiced in Britain,
in the mainstream services. So the first book is
about my suspicious in psychoanalysis, and why I
kept away from it for so long, and then I describe
how I started to take it seriously because so many
theories of political action, and so many developing
feminist theories of subjectivity were starting to
refer to psychoanalysis in some way, and because
so many old political activists from the left were
starting to go into therapy, psychoanalysis, or group
analysis, in the 1970's and 1980's, I started to think
that I needed to take it seriously, even if I was
going to keep my distance from it. That I needed
to understand how it worked from the inside, so I
moved from avoiding psychoanalysis to some sort
of critical engagement, and during that critical
engagement I started to encounter the practice of
therapeutic work and I started to think that the level
of distress, individual distress in capitalist society
is such that we can’t wait until the revolution for
everyone to be happy, and even after the revolution
everyone isn’t going to be happy, and there need
to be some kind of therapeutic support for people
who are living under these conditions of alienation,
precarious work, developing neoliberalism, and
so on. And psychoanalysis seemed to me, to offer
one way of addressing that distress, which didn’t
psychologise it.

And that’s the crucial distinction that runs through the
book, time and time again, which is, psychoanalysis
tells us something that is qualitatively different about
the nature of subjectivity to psychology. Psychology
is concerned with one cognitive behavioural being,
a kind of unity in the individual which operates in
relation to other individuals, or as psychoanalysis
is instead concerned with a deeper level of
subjectivity, and that subjectivity is not restricted
to the individual, and I realized that mainstream
psychoanalysis, in the English speaking world, in
the International Psychoanalytic Association, has
actually adapted itself to capitalist society and has
accepted many of the assumptions of mainstream
psychology, has accepted the assumption that our
treatment should be of individuals and our model

of the self should be a model of the individual self,
whereas I was beginning to encounter alternative
readings of Freud, which we find for example in the
work of Jacques Lacan, which shift focus from the
individual to the level of the relation of the subject
to the other, and in that necessarily a relation of
the subject to politics. So I moved into therapeutic
practice into psychoanalytic practice within a
Lacanian framework which wasn’t individualizing,
which wasn’t psychologizing, and then I describe
in the rest of the book some of the conflicts within
the Lacanian psychoanalytic movement, and then
look at some of the limitations of psychoanalysis,
because I am still, although I work as a Psychoanalyst
now, I’m still critical of psychoanalysis and we have
to understand that psychoanalysis came into being
at one moment in history, with the development of
capitalism, to understand a kind of subjectivity that
is being formed under capitalism, and psychoanalysis
just as it had a beginning, it will have an end! So, we
need to think critically about psychoanalysis now
to open the way for the time when we won’t need
psychoanalysis.

**Interviewer:** Until this time comes, psychoanalysis
will have lots of work to do...

**Ian:** Yes, exactly...

**Interviewer:** Some psychoanalytic practice can
be seen as adaptative, what do you think is the
difference between this practice and another one
that’s more, let’s say subversive, what do you think
is the difference in the practice, as they can be slight
differences?

**Ian:** Yes, it is a very subtle difference...

**Interviewer:** Even among Lacanians

**Ian:** I agree, I think that some psychoanalyst
work in what we call the British tradition, that is,
Melanie Klein or Donald Winnicott or even Ana
Freud, some of those psychoanalysts in the British
tradition can work in a radical way, if they are
true to the ethos of psychoanalysis. And there are
Lacanian psychoanalysts I know in England, Lacanian
psychoanalysts who work in a very adaptative way

**Interviewer:** This can be thought also in Brazil
Ian: So you can’t simply solve the problem by replacing Lacan with these other psychoanalytic theories, I think the issue comes down to a political understanding of how the clinical context is created as a specific context in which people can talk about their distress, talk to another, that is the analyst, in a way that they never talk about themselves before and in a process to understand there are two things at stake: on the one hand they, as a subject, are implicated in the phenomenon they describe. That it isn’t good enough to simply reassure people and tell them they have a bad job, they live in poverty and they live under capitalism and racism and sexism and therefore it is understandable they should be unhappy, no, we need to work on the way which they configure their understanding of their distress in such a way as to ignore their own complicity in their distress. Distress is a real thing and a preession is a real thing, but psychoanalysis has a specific task I think, to understand how someone positions themselves in relation to that distress in such a way that they aren’t able to move out of a particular way that they been encouraged to think and talk about themselves.

So that’s one thing, and the other thing is something you see more in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is the psychoanalytic process is as much about the relation to the other as it is about the individual subject. And that relation, to the other, is configured in the transference in the psychoanalytic clinic, but it must also include critical reflection on the relation to the others, the familial other, but also group other and political other, cultural, symbolic other. So, the radical aspect of psychoanalysis is to think about the possibility that we are collective social beings as well as being individual, alienated beings. And I think we see that in Freud. We see that in Freud but we see that aspect of Freud lost in the 1940’s 1950’s when the psychoanalysts moved from Europe to the United States, and to other countries, but I think we see it particularly in the United States, they adapted themselves to US American society and they start to see the aim of psychoanalysis as the adaptation of the individual to the society. Really psychoanalysis theoretically is concerned not with the adaptation of people to society or to civilization in general. I think Freud doesn’t show us show how we are adapted to civilization; he shows us the way we are always dis-adapted. There’s always something that escapes, there’s always something that conflicts, always something that rebels. And although some of Freud’s political writings were rather conservative, the ethics of psychoanalysis is an ethics of dis-adaptation, that is, only to remain true to that in our practice and be concerned with how people can take a distance from the social symbolic forms that have conditioned who they are, to take a distance from that and to think critically about that.

And there’s a link here between Lacanian psychoanalysis and group analysis which I also discuss in detail in the book. The book is about my training as Lacanian psychoanalyst but the book is also about my encounter with group analysis and the way that I made a choice between Lacanian psychoanalysis and group analysis. I think group analysis is still very important and very interesting, and one of the things I like about group analysis is that group analysis does not aim to make the group or the organization function better, it is very explicit about that. So I think we should bear that in mind when we are thinking about our clinical work, we are not aiming to make people function better.

Interviewer: When you say about functioning better, do you mean in a better way for whom?

Ian: Yes, it is a very good question. I mean this question of better for whom is the key question here, so psychoanalysis doesn’t aim to make people function better within the social system, let’s put it this way. But yes, I agree that psychoanalysis does enable people to better understand who they are, and the way is in which they fit into that social system...

Interviewer: Or not...

Ian: Or not, or not yes... it gives that space of critical reflection, yes, I agree.

Interviewer: Now looking at the practice again, when you say that different psychoanalytical backgrounds may also have a critical view of the profession, very much connected to the ethos of psychoanalysis, how can we continue being critical to listen to the other and be aware of mainstream discourses? How do you
think we should position ourselves? In a nutshell, how can we keep our listening open and critical.

**Ian:** I think there are two issues here. One is some of the lessons that we learn from Lacanian psychoanalysis in our practice as we differentiate between the symbolic register, which positions the subject that we are listening to in a particular way. Differentiates that from the imaginary dimension of experience, in which we could imagine that we are understanding what that subject is saying, as they speak to us. And one of the lessons of Lacanian psychoanalysis is that you should be very careful when you are listening, not to understand. It’s one of those moments when the analyst thinks they understand what the analysand is saying, that you could be led into all kinds of traps. And so, there is something in Lacanian psychoanalysis that enables you to listen in a specifically sceptical critical way. And to enable the analysand, and this is crucial, to enable the analysand to listen to themselves as they are speaking. So they hear the words and the phrases, the narratives, they hear these things in their speech and they are able to take a distance from those things, so there’s not only the lure or the trap of the imaginary misunderstanding between the analyst and the analysand, but it is also the way in which the analysand is attached to that speech and analysis enables the analysand to create a little distance between themselves and their speech, so they hear what language is doing to them, this is the first issue.

The second issue connects with discourse analysis, I think. Because what we learn from discourse analysis is that we should take nothing for granted in the representations of the world that are around us, in the television and films, newspapers and advertisements, in every-day conversation, that we can take any aspect of this text that we move through in everyday lives, we can take any aspect of this text and we can submit it to critical examination. Not only the text that we disagree with, that is reactionary, homophobic, racist, etc text, but also the text that seems to be oppositional and seems to speak the truth. Discourse analysis tells us that we can dismantle every form of language in order to understand how that language is constructed, constructs an image of the world, constructs subject positions, to understand how it functions in order to position people in certain ways, ideologically and to attend to the contradictions in that text, the spaces for resistance, and the spaces for resistance include, for every subject, the space to find another kind of text, another kind of discourse. Within which they can be interpellated or offer themselves up for interpellation or can accept as a designation of their subjectivity. So, as we listen in the clinic, I think there’s a lesson from Lacanian psychoanalysis, but I think also there’s a lesson from forms of discourse analysis as well, I think every good psychoanalyst is also a discourse analyst. I didn’t think I would ever say this when I moved from discourse analysis in psychology into psychoanalysis, but I think it’s true. The more I learn about clinical psychoanalysis the more it seems to me that these analysts are operating as discourse analysts, and also seems to me that the end of analysis for the analysand is a point at which they also become discourse analysts themselves. Discourse analysis is not an academic specialty, but discourse analysis is a critical function in our relation to language that can give us more space to think about alternatives.

**Interviewer:** This is very interesting. I think probably because I’ve done my studies here with you, I am part of the discourse unit, I see in my practice the impact of discourse analysis. I was going to ask you this, how do you think that discourse analysis impacts psychoanalytic practice and theory.

**Ian:** I mean, for me it’s easier to make a connection between discourse analysis and Lacanian psychoanalysis, because Lacanian psychoanalysis is a practice of language. It is not concerned with underlying ages and stages of development or functions of the ego, no, it’s concerned with our relation to language, so I think it’s easier to make that connection and that’s why in the discourse unit we always have had four main theoretical resources, and one is psychoanalysis and when we say psychoanalysis, we mainly mean Lacanian psychoanalysis, though it also includes group analysis. And the other theoretical elements maybe we can talk about a little bit in a moment were ideas from Foucault, on the historical constitution of subjectivity
and forms of discipline and surveillance, which pose questions for psychoanalysis of course and in our role as analysts, feminists’ critic of patriarchy which psychoanalysis is implicated in and Marxism. So, when I do my psychoanalytic work I do have those theoretical resources in the background as well.

**Interviewer**: I was thinking about this critical listening, as a psychoanalyst, how do these theoretical backgrounds that you have mentioned impact into the listening to the Other?

**Ian**: I think that the key question is whether someone who’s trained as an analyst has the ability or the willingness to put aside the presuppositions that are given to them about the nature of the individual subject to, and to instead to treat each subject that is speaking to them as a singular subject, that’s the key. I think there are many practices that we are tempted by, as psychoanalysts, which are psychological, or psychotherapeutic rather than psychoanalytic. And I think there are moments in all of our practice when we slip into psychological or psychotherapeutic ways of listening and responding to the other, I don’t think we can guarantee a hundred percent that we will be listening and responding as a psychoanalyst in the sessions.

And I think this is where I am so suspicious of the status, divisions that there are between different kind of practitioners in Britain today, so we have a status hierarchy in which psychoanalysts are supposed to be the most, do the most intense work, understand how to construct clinic, analytic experience, and second level which is the level of the psychoanalytic psychotherapists who see people for less time, do less intense work, and then the third level of counsellors or counselling psychologists who see people to deal with specific problems but don’t go into the problem in any depth. And I think that kind of status division, misleads us about where psychoanalysis takes place, I think it’s quite possible for a psychoanalyst to operate as a psychotherapist or psychologist, and it is quite possible for a counsellor who has some psychoanalytic, analyst training, to work psychoanalytically. I don’t think there’s any guarantee that psychoanalyst will be psychoanalytical all the time.

There’s always a temptation, for example, if someone comes in and complains about it is raining outside, to agree with them that it is terrible that it is raining, whereas in fact, their understanding of the rain might be very different from our understanding of the rain and it might actually be pleasant for them, you know, there’s this trap all the time. Not only in the big thing, about saying “you must be feeling this”, or “that must be very traumatic for you”, no, we have no idea. So, we have to step aside from those assumptions when we are listening to the subject.

It doesn’t mean, as some psychotherapists say, it doesn’t mean abandoning knowledge, abandoning understanding, but it does mean being able to use your understanding of the nature of language as a base on which to listen to the ambiguity and contradiction in each subject’s speech.

**Interviewer**: Taking seriously the idea of not taking things for granted. Could you speak a bit, based on your trajectory and your theoretical development, how do you think psychoanalysis can contribute for a critical view?

**Ian**: I think the first thing we need to do is to set aside the temptation to use psychoanalysis as if it were a complete theoretical, political framework. And I suppose it’s easier for me to say that because I was a Marxist when I trained to be a psychoanalyst and I am still a Marxist today, so I still have that other domain of my activity which I use as an anchor point to understand political and ideological phenomenon. And also to understand the historical construction of the psychoanalytic clinic as a particular kind of private space that reflects the separation of subjects from each other under capitalism, a particular kind of private space that deals with the individual alienated subject of capitalism. So that gives me a framework to understand the historical practice of psychoanalysis.

But I think it’s important not to use psychoanalysis as your overall framework, I mean Freud is very clear about this, that psychoanalysis is not a worldview, he says, is not a worldview. He says the closest to a worldview that psychoanalysis comes to, is the worldview of science, but even then he qualifies that statement by making it clear that it’s the closest that
it comes to a scientific worldview, it’s not actually a worldview in itself. But many psychoanalysts who start to talk about culture and politics attempted to use psychoanalytic language as a frame, as a discourse within which to interpret the phenomenon that they are describing. I think we need to avoid that. We need to treat the psychoanalytic discourse itself as a particular kind of construction, itself as a particular kind of problematic representation of subjectivity, a problematic configuring of individuals as psychoanalytic subjects, so we need to step aside from that and if where to use psychoanalysis politically, it should be more to do with understanding the place of psychoanalytic discourse in these political cultural phenomena that we are examining, understanding the place of that discourse rather than treating psychoanalysis as the key. Psychoanalysis seems to so many people to operate as the key to unlock the secrets of culture and politics, precisely because the lock has been historically constructed in a certain kind of way, so we need to step back and understand how, why, the key seems to fit the lock.

Interviewer: That’s very important, so on the one hand, there is the importance of avoiding the use of psychoanalysis as a worldview and the only key, while, on the other hand, are there psychoanalytic notions that we could use in a strategic way, to deconstruct a phenomenon?

Ian: Yes, I think there are. I think there are ways of taking psychoanalytic concepts and linking them with our political theoretical understanding, whether that is political theoretical understanding that comes from Marxism, in my case, or whether it is a political theoretical understanding that comes from feminism or post-colonial theory, I think there are ways of doing that and I think that those concepts include for example, first of all, the unconscious. Not as an unconscious field of mental operation operating inside the individual, which is a psychologized way of understanding the unconscious, but unconsciousness as an experience of otherness that we have to ourselves. The fact that the human being is not the centre of the universe, and each separate human being is not the master of their own house, is not able to control the words in the way they speak, not able to control the social relationships that they are part of, there is something in them, running through them which is a contradiction, as a form of knowledge, a form of discourse, a form of sedimnted social practices that are part of their being, that they are not completely aware of, they are not conscious of, and that mean unconscious in that kind of way, not as a sedimnted realm, but as an unconscious, other to consciousness. I think psychoanalysis gives us an attention to that, there is something other to consciousness in our personal relationships, in our work relationships and in our politics as well, something other to what we can immediately control.

And if you wanted to make connections between that and political theory, you can find immediate connections with Marxism, in the way that Marx talks about alienation, in which in capitalist society we are separated from our own creativity, we are separated from each other, in a competitive relationship with others, we are separated from our bodies, anxious about whether our bodies will be able to take us to the workplace, to give labour and receive a wage, and we are separated from nature as such. that is, we experience nature as something threatening if it’s not controlled, exploited, subject to human needs, and so I think, in different ways, all of these aspects of alienation that Marx speaks of, also speak of something unconscious to us, and poses the question of how we might connect with that unconsciousness, you know Freud has the phrase “where Id was there Ego shall be”, and Lacan reinterprets this phrase to show us that it doesn’t necessarily mean reinforcing the Ego and driving away the Id, but rather it means that where Id was there I shall become, that I take my place and be part of that broader stuff of subjectivity that is other to us, so that is one concept I would take from psychoanalysis. You want another one?

Interviewer: Yes, sure.

Ian: What about drive, the drive as something eminent to human experience and subjectivity, which takes us beyond ourselves. I am very wary, cautious about making universalistic statements about the nature of human subjectivity, but I think that at least from where we are now in history, I
I think we can say that is as well as unconsciousness there is also within us, among us, drive. But we need to understand drive not as an energetic hydraulic force, that is pushing something essential about the nature of the self against social restrictions. That’s the way that sometimes is understood in psychology textbooks, you know, psychoanalysis is supposed to be talking about this underlying, desires or forces that need to be released, and civilization is blocking things and preventing us from realising our needs. We find that kind of quasi-psychoanalytic discourse not only in some psychoanalytic writing but we also find that quasi-psychoanalytic discourse in the writing of humanist counsellors drawing on the work of Carl Rogers, where there is the notion of underlying organismic-self, attempting to self-actualize itself and it is the task of the counsellor to give recognition to the human subject so they can become authentic selves, you find this in many different places, this energetic hydraulic notion of drive.

What I would say is that, drive is as much about how things are constructed as desires when they are prohibited as it is about underlying desires that exist in and off themselves. In fact I think it’s more about that construction, the prohibition of certain kinds of activities, certain kinds of access to certain kinds of objects, itself creates, in the moment of repression, creates certain kind of force, of rebellion, and drive to transgress and surmount those social group restrictions, so we need to understand drive in this socially constructed way rather than as something...

**Interwiever:** Biological...

**Ian:** Certainly not as something biological.

**Interwiever:** It reminded me of the text you have written on the dialogue between Zizek, Butler and Laclau. In this article there is a passage when you comment on the problematic of using psychoanalysis to look at social phenomenon taking society as a human body, analysing society as a subject, as an individual in front of us, we shouldn’t...

**Ian:** No.

**Interwiever:** But I think it’s also hard not to

**Ian:** Hard no to. Yes, I agree.

**Interwiever:** Mostly for psychoanalytic students, and perhaps for some Lacanian psychoanalysts, because for some, Lacan provides a kind of worldview, as Lacan has spoken about many issues, taking for example the four discourses and the capitalist discourse, so students attempt to read social phenomenon in this way, and they understand how hard it is not to read this way.

**Ian:** Yes, but I think this is a problem in the ways in which psychoanalysis is read, in the same way that there’s a problem in the way that Freud is read by the psychologists, which turns psychoanalysis into a kind of psychology. There is a problem in some of the social theory where people read Lacan through Zizek, for example, and attempted to treat Lacan’s work as elaborating a worldview. I would read Lacan in a different way and I agree that there’s that temptation, and I’ve seen it around in Britain as well, but I would read Lacan as talking about the four discourses for example, as trying to understand the conditions for psychoanalytic practice, not as a theory of society, which can then be applied to everything else, but he’s specifically concerned with psychoanalysis. The place of the psychoanalyst within the social links, and the place of the psychoanalyst in the social links is, of course, intimately connected with the forms of the social bond in which the clinic operates, whether those are dictatorial social bonds which kind of reminiscent to feudal times, in which there’s a discourse of the master operating or a more bureaucratic orientation to knowledge, where the psychoanalyst pretends that they know everything that the analysand is saying, which is the discourse of the university, just to take those two examples.

**Interwiever:** I also work with discourse analysis and psychoanalysis, and when the students want to develop their own research, to analyse something, many times they ask ‘how can I use the four discourses’? And when I ask ‘why don’t you use a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis?’, they say ‘no’, because they want to fit into these four discourses.

**Ian:** I think Lacan must take some responsibility for this, in his own, but you know, there are contradictions in Lacan’s...
**Interviewer:** Yes, there are.

**Ian:** own writings and seminars as well, he wasn’t perfect Lacanian subject, let’s put it like that, it would be impossible for him not to fall into traps, the symbolic stuff that was around him, of the imaginary and a certain image of what the real is, it would be impossible for him to escape that, and so when he declares that the structures walk in the streets then that does give invitation to people to think that you can find the four discourses everywhere.

I think two things are important about the four discourses, one is that Lacan is concerned with the conditions in which psychoanalysis is operating, he is not giving a general theory of society, and the other is that he is concerned is how we think about the position of the analyst in the clinical practice, and in that clinical practice, you don’t have a discourse of the master on Tuesday and a discourse of the university on Friday. You have a moment by moment transformation of the discourses, he says somewhere, love is a sign of a change in the discourses, and if we take that seriously, “love is a sign of a change in the discourses”, love isn’t something that happens once a week, it is something that is operating in the psychoanalytic clinic all the time in the transference, all the time. So, you would expect that to be constant turning around of the discourses as the analyst might make a statement that is functioning within the discourse at the university, or at another moment the analysand speaks within the discourse of the hysteric but then within ten, twenty seconds they may flip back into accepting the discourse of the university that is being offered to the students, by the analyst. I think it is a much more fluid thing, I think the problem is that we reify the four discourses when we treat them as fixed frames that we can then use to understand phenomenon in other places, as if we can say here’s this discourse and here’s that discourse, I don’t think it operates like that.

**Interviewer:** Yes, it can reify and remove power from them. If we discourse analyse the hysterical discourse, although Lacan makes an important claim that the hysteric points to the lack, she asks, she questions, there is also a risk of hearing this as someone complaining about something, as the position that women were given throughout history, as hysterical people. So when one says, this social movement is occupying a hysterical position, they are doing a hysterical discourse occupying this position, it can point to an important claim, but it can also sound as not legitimate what they are claiming.

**Ian:** Exactly, it’s used as a diagnosis which is also normative and moralising. Makes it seem also as if that hysterical complaint is mistaken and problematic, or as in fact, in the psychoanalytic clinic, we aim to hystericise the analysand. And when we “hystericise” the analysand we don’t mean as something negative, we mean it as something absolutely necessary for the psychoanalytic clinic. When someone speaks from within the discourse of the hysteric that is a moment to be worked with, not condemned, any Lacanian will tell you that, so it becomes all the more bizarre when the social theories take this and make political pronouncements about this or that social movement is being hysterical, as if it’s a bad thing and no I don’t think so, questioning and rebelling, show you the stuff of psychoanalysis.

**Interviewer:** In this sense psychoanalysis can work both ways, because it’s about rebelling and about questioning, but depending on the way it is listened, it can also be without truth. That is, she’s rebelling, she’s questioning but she doesn’t have a real question to make, it is just the way she is, she keeps on asking, she keeps on rebelling, which can be problematic.

**Ian:** Yeah, but I think it draws attention to another trap in psychoanalytic practice, alongside the trap of psychologizing that is thinking that you have a particular understanding of what’s going on inside someone’s head, what the development was, what the personality is, etc. And alongside the trap of psychotherapeutic orientation to the work which is when you think you understand or you are releasing some pre-given understanding and enabling it to be spoken, these are a psychological
or psychotherapeutic traps, alongside those two traps, there’s the trap of turning the psychoanalysis into a form of psychiatry. That’s where the normative and moralizing that we see outside the clinic in psychoanalytic discourse starts to appear inside the clinic as well. It’s a particular version of psychoanalysis, it is psychiatric psychoanalysis.

And it’s very difficult, maybe pure psychoanalysis is impossible ok, but it’s very difficult to avoid psychological psychoanalysis, psychotherapeutic psychoanalysis and psychiatric psychoanalysis, that’s something that was my concern in the Lacanian psychoanalysis book, but it’s something that runs through this latest book, on psychoanalysis, clinic, and context as well, that we need to be very aware of the way we are operating in relation to institutions that we lay psychological, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric notions. These notions, these discourses, are still very powerful today, very powerful today, and under conditions of psychologization in society we have these discourses becoming even more powerful. I think we can you can see this in Brazil...

**Interviewer:** Yes!

**Ian:** In Brazil where you have a long history of psychoanalysis, you also have even more, today, an encroachment from US American notions of psychology and psychotherapy, and US American psychiatry, as well.

**Interviewer:** Psychiatry is very powerful in Brazil, and many people rely on diagnosis. So they expect from the psychoanalyst also to give one.

**Ian:** But in our practice we would never give a diagnosis, would we? Even the very limited conceptions of clinical structure that we have, obsessional, hysterical, psychotic, perverse, we would never say this to the analysand, never, would we? And I don’t think as an analyst receiving an analysand from another professional, I don’t think we should ever take seriously the diagnosis that is being given to them. In this way, we invite the analysand right from the beginning of the treatment to start operating as a discourse analyst, that is, starting to question and speak about the diagnosis that they heard.

**Interviewer:** It’s exactly like this... it is important to analyse the way that the diagnosis operates to them, it’s something that I actually studied for my PhD. If we think about alienation this fits very well, so it’s not that the person is anxious about something she’s got anxiety. It’s not her, she’s got a disease. And it separates the disease from the person, as if the disease doesn’t make sense, which I think Freud was very precise on this, claiming that this is actually important for the subject, a defence mechanism, a symptom, it has a function for the person. But I think there is this danger of diagnosing also as psychoanalysts, when they fall into the trap of diagnosis... it can happen some quick diagnosis from psychoanalysts maybe when we think about gender, so women are hysterical, and maybe she’s not hysterical. And the same with trans people, when are quickly seen as psychotics, and it doesn’t mean they are.

**Interviewer:** You have brought up many important issues. Thank you very much.

**Postscript**

The book about psychoanalysis Ian is discussing was published by Routledge and is available in English here: https://www.routledge.com/Psychanalysis-Clinic-and-Context-Subjectivity-History-and-Autobiography/Parker/p/book/9780367144333 The book on psychology was also published by Routledge, available here: https://www.routledge.com/Psychology-through-Critical-Auto-Ethnography-Academic-Discipline-Professional/Parker/p/book/9780367344177 Ian has also since co-authored a book on psychoanalysis and revolution which is available now in English, Italian, Spanish and Russian, and will be available soon in Portuguese, published by Autentica Editorial: https://grupoautentica.com.br/autentica The website for the Psychoanalysis and Revolution book is here: https://psychoanalysishistoryrevolution.com/

**Contribution**

The researchers declare no conflicts of interest.
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