The text below is a translation from Ukrainian.

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NOT A PLAGUE ANYMORE?
THE FATE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS ON THE CONTINENT OF THE VIRTUAL
(Conference opening speech)

In 1903, at one of the first Mercedes Benz car exhibitions in Berlin, German Kaiser Wilhelm II comments the model: *"A truly beautiful engine you have here! But it's not as simple as that, you know»,* though several years before he asserted: "*I do believe in the horse. The automobile is no more than a transitory phenomenon*". A more straightforward skeptical comment comes from the president of French Republic Felix Faure at the car exhibition in 1898. He calls what he sees *"ugly carts that smell badly"*. However, cars, as we witness, have later become more in priority than horses and carts.

The events described, as you could notice, take place almost at the same time when Sigmund Freud publishes *"The Interpretation of Dreams"* (1900). I shall remind that 600 copies of the book were printed back then, and they were being sold slowly for as long as 8 years. Psychoanalysis itself at those times would meet just the same skeptical reaction of the public

as cars: a silliness of fashion, nothing more. However, quite soon Freud writes two more important fundamental works – Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901) and Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) – and already in 1909, whilst on board of George Washington heading to America, he tells his younger colleagues Carl Gustav Jung and Sándor Ferenczi: *"We are bringing them the plague".* And Freud turns out to be right – psychoanalysis becomes the prevailing theory and clinical practice in different continents for decades, taking later the honourable place among the constellation of other psychotherapeutic approaches.

A revolutionary approach, insistence on the truth of clinical discoveries, attempts to describe and re-describe, correct its own theories of mental processes, as well as readiness to use psychoanalytical discourse to describe many other areas of being (social processes, cultural phenomena, arts etc.) – those are the significant features of psychoanalysis at its beginning. Psychoanalysis at those times decisively improves and insistently spreads its 'plague'. I assume, for the sake of that spreading, much in psychoanalytical theories describing mental life used also aspects from the discourse of technological progress: the term of mental *apparatus*, and defensive *mechanisms* are a classic example.

However, we also know about the similar periods of resistance that for some time stood in the way of new discoveries in psychoanalysis itself. For instance, the well-known report by Sabina Spielrein (1912) about destruction as the cause of coming into being was first smashed by Freud as it contradicted the pleasure principle described by him. Nevertheless, 8 years later he himself admits the existence of something beyond the pleasure principle (1920) due to his clinical practice and admits existence of the death drive. Basically, we see that Freud required time to process something that had been presented to him too early. The same goes to the initial non-readiness to adapt psychoanalytical technique to non-neurotic patients, especially psychotic ones, which was later brilliantly implemented by the practitioners of future generations.

It's interesting that the same reactions – rejection and decisive 'no', and then with time gradual acceptance and search for the strong advantages –

are described by some psychoanalysts in their works on their attitude towards online sessions (Kudiyarova, 2018; Eiguer, 2018). Last decade has presented more short clinical and fundamental works (Lemma, Caparrotta, 2013; Russell, 2018; Scharff, et al., 2018), dedicated to psychoanalytical practice in its remote form. They are focused on its various aspects:

- what the appearance of communication means and what are its influences on sessions for subject's **unconscious** (for instance, I. Dettbarn (2018) reflects upon Skype as something terrifying, meaning Freud's 'uncanny' and compares it to punishing Super Ego; E. Malater (2020) thinks about the meaning of the 'leave meeting' button in Zoom that the analysand presses at the end of sessions; M. Gerald (2011) points at the double picture in which every subject at the session sees not only the other person but also himself/herself; D. Neumann (2018) writes about the influence of internet means of communication on the way of associations and transference/counter-transference);
- how exactly the lack of non-verbal information (when it is impossible to observe analysand's entire body and respond to it with one's entire body) influences the **communication** in analytical dialogue (Bayles, 2012; Merchant, 2016; Brahnam, 2017; Neumann, 2018; Elise, 2020; Wolson, 2021), including the opportunities for diagnostics (Biliavska, 2021);
- how the use of a gadget influences **analytical attention and technique** (R. Fishkin et al. (2011) raise the question of the shift from *'free floating attention'* to *'attention floating free'* that jumps to all icons and new messages that pop up on analyst's screen and distracts from listening; G. Bodner in the sectional report (2017) develops G. Russel's idea that remote analysis deals with more with the 'states of mind' than with the 'states of being'; C. Juhos, J. Mészáros (2019) emphasize the influence of remote format on the setting of work; D. Lichtenstein (2021) describes the change of sight's and hearing's weight in analytical work);
- what **means of remote connection** can be of highest priority (say, D. Miermont-Schilton proposes Skype for psychotherapy but phone calls

for psychoanalysis; while J. Churcher proves the unreliability of Skype's safety);

- what causes personal and institutional **resistance** against remote psychoanalysis (Caparrotta, 2013; Scharff, 2013) and what consequences it has for the becoming of psychoanalysis (Aryan, Carlino, 2018);

- how to fix the **ethical** issue (Schön, Kadish, Green, Hanson, Kuhn, 2018; Wallwork, 2018) and **legality** of this kind of practice (for example, in the USA analysts must have a license to perform practice in his/her own state as well as in the state where the analysand resides, see Scharff, 2018).

In 2020 and 2021 one can see a boom of works dedicated to remote psychoanalysis due to the quarantine limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic. In cases when this is the first experience of online sessions for psychoanalysts, clinicians in fact describe the consequences of this double experience that consists of: 1) common crisis because of coronavirus and 2) shift to the remote form of work which, to my view, differentiates essentially the focus of these observations (Kegerreis, 2020; Miermont-Schilton, Richard, 2020; Rizq, 2020; Pozzi Monzo, Micotti, 2020; Castrillón, Marchevsky, 2021; Hart, 2021; Lichtenstein, 2021). However, most of the authors marked the value of remote sessions to maintain the analytical relationships (e.g. Rossi, Ferro, 2020; Lichtenstein, 2021).

Several clinical observations and researches of remote psychoanalytical practice were published during the mentioned period by the author of this work (Velykodna, Tsyhanenko, 2020; Velykodna, Tsyhanenko, 2021; Velykodna, 2021). In general, I suppose, we are still to add to and systematize our observations and reflections on our online work in order to be ready for fundamental studies of its special phenomenology.

Nevertheless, I think that the area of psychoanalytical questions about the Virtual is currently much wider:

1. If we assume that the Virtual has become a new continent, megalopolis of our joint accommodation, governed by the algorithms of

internet, then what new phenomena of mass psychology may we observe here?

2. If the subject and subject of analysis become virtual – what is the metapsychology of its existence in this new space?

3. What traces and consequences can connection between the two have in the virtual field? A connection so similar to a dream: body is immobile in one room, however it sees, hears, imagines and even changes under the virtual influence on it?

4. And if we decide that the horses are forever, i.e. that the Virtual is something harmful that is important to resist – isn't this continent worth active spreading our plague in it – inviting to the terrestrial and embodied in our psychoanalytical rooms?

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