

# What kind of presence in the absence when working online? Between freedom and discontents.

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## Abstract Content (EN)

Most of the contemporary psychoanalytic studies dealing with the specificities of the teleanalytic process and setting are intended to implicitly search for a suitable way to “adapt” and to take advantage, if possible, of the freedom that the rapid development of the new technologies are supposed to give us.

Freud seems very concerned when writing in *Civilization and its Discontents*: “The urge for freedom, therefore, is directed against particular forms and demands of civilization or against civilization altogether” (Freud, 1930, p.96), which appears as some continuation of his reflections from *The Future of an Illusion*, where he states: “it seems rather that every civilization must be built up on coercion and *renunciation of instinct*<sup>[1]</sup>” (Freud, 1927, p.7).

As we know, Winnicott tries to explore some middle way to tame the omnipotent narcissistic urges in the face of the restrictions of reality by proposing in *Play and reality*: “I am attempting to get in between these two extremes” (Winnicott, 1971, “The Place where we Live”, p. 105). And adds “It is useful, then, to think of a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality. This intermediate living can be thought of as occupying a potential space, *negating the idea of space and separation between the baby and the mother, and all developments derived from this phenomenon.*<sup>[2]</sup> (ibid. p.110)

So, what freedom and what discontents does online psychoanalytic work confront us with?

The already mentioned, mainly phenomenological contemporary inquiries have led, ultimately, to a basic acceptance of the psychoanalytical work at a distance and to persistent clinical-theoretical efforts to find a way to “overcome” the new disturbing and disruptive split analytical situation, and to imaginatively re-construct the missing other, from both sides of the analytic couple.

But it is just within this same movement of “overcoming”, that the virtual analytic relationship marked by its split double setting<sup>[3]</sup> is invited and instigated to secretly convert into a regressive symbiotic depositary (J. Bleger, 1967) for the most archaic, agglutinated nuclei and psychotic parts (Bion, 1957) of the analysand and the analyst, much strongly than usual mobilized by this split presence in the absence, reduced solely to the audio and visual channels {J. Steiner, 2006}. By using the “bastion” of the virtual reality, build through the unconscious collusive efforts from both sides of the analytic couple, they tend to disavow their mutual disturbing absence, to turn a blind eye (J. Steiner, 1985; H. Segal, 1987), in order to alleviate the threatening separation anxiety and to preserve the fragile online “fantom” contact. Primitive regressive fits of functional splitting and fragmentation, with polymorph-perverse characteristics and catastrophic anxieties, emerging as if beyond the transference-countertransference process, are striving to turn the online technically mediated interaction into a self-soothing fetishistic instrument.

The need for a thorough metapsychological exploration of this hidden dynamics and for a successive

“analysis of the split analytical setting within the setting itself” will be explored, as well as its limitations, in order to foster the creative transitional “illusion” (D. Winnicott, 1971) of the presence in the absence, rather than the symbiotic “delusion” of the permanence of this presence. A transitional negation, transformed into a play, rather than turned into a perverse fetishistic disavowal (Freud, 1927; Wulff, 1946).

PS. The Ad hoc group on remote analysis tries to go beyond the phenomenological exploration of these actual changes in our work and to give priority to meticulous research of the impact of the split analytical situation and of the restricted channels for connection, mainly through voice and image, to the transferential-countertransferential dynamics and to the development of the analytic process as a whole.

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