

# Psychoanalysis and the Crises of the Present

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## Short Communication

Is psychoanalysis obsolete? Is it still needed today? The French psychoanalyst Colette Soler, a student of the great analyst Jacques Lacan, argues that psychoanalysis is enormously important, indeed urgently needed, especially in light of the current crises - the Covid crisis, the climate crisis, the war in Ukraine. In her Freud Lecture, which Soler gave in 2021 in a lecture series organized by the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna, she draws the contours of a turning point in time: The time of the "order of the Lord" (35) was over, the time in which social relationships were structured analogously to that between father and child and in which heterosexuality was considered the norm. A new era has begun in which egalitarian demands have prevailed and difference is increasingly recognized, not least in the sexual sphere. We live, Soler argues, in a world of "unique singularities," but one that is simultaneously a time of "unifying," indeed, "suffocating oppression" (44). And in this time, Soler asserts, the current crises have led to the emergence of a "bio-urgency": to "live at all costs because life is threatened on all sides." (49) Everything, she argues, ultimately revolves around "warding off death." (50) In view of the current crises, life has become the "dominant value" (51). This urgency is accompanied by the fact that medicine has acquired enormous importance. It has acquired the character of a religion, and politics takes advantage of it by legitimizing itself with reference to medicine. And because people believe in medicine, they are willing to submit to and obey this policy.

Soler contrasts this with another urgency, that of psychoanalysis. This urgency arises in view of the traumatizations that have arisen as a result of the current crises. It is to them that psychoanalysts must devote themselves, whose profession, according to Freud-like that of educators and politicians-is an impossible one, because they are dealing with the unconscious. The goal of the analysis is ultimately a "satisfaction" of the analysand, but not such as was sought earlier, at the time of the "order of the Lord", when it was linked to a heterosexual norm. Rather, it is simply a matter of-by way of working through problems or traumatizations-the subject becoming satisfied in the sense that he or she is simply "happy to be alive" (Lacan) (72). Soler's reflections could be taken further with Hannah Arendt, for according to the political philosopher, the subject cannot ultimately become happy if it does not also have the opportunity to participate in the political shaping of the future. I.e., in relation to the present: the satisfaction brought about by psychoanalysis should not be an end in itself; the- temporarily useful, indeed, necessary-submission to hygiene rules should finally be overcome and the solution to the crises of the present tackled. Finding this solution will be extremely difficult. Psychoanalysis can, indeed should, make a certainly modest but nevertheless important contribution to it.

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<sup>1</sup>Soler C (2022) Psychoanalyse und Politik. Sigmund Freud Vorlesung 2021, Wien: Verlag Turia+Kant; Deutschland.