

# The Founding Act, the Cartel and the riddle of the PLUS ONE

Cormac Gallagher

**Abstract:** *In his Founding Act (1964) Jacques Lacan established a School organised around small working groups tasked with enabling each individual to produce written work. Their radically innovative character lay not just in a curious name – cartel – but also in the very tightly defined structure requiring a strict limitation of 3–5 members PLUS ONE as well as an obligation to permute on a regular basis . For almost half a century attempts to implement this apparently well-defined project have met with successive failures caused mainly by a confusion, partly cultivated by Lacan, around the real or imaginary status of this plus one and its function in promoting the work of the cartel.*

**Key words:** *Ecole Freudienne de Paris; cartel; plus one; bureaucratisation; the mathematician as model*

## Introduction

*‘When, after passing through a narrow defile, we suddenly emerge upon a piece of high ground, where the path divides and the finest prospects open up on every side...we find ourselves in the full daylight of a sudden discovery’.<sup>1</sup>*

For Freud, this sudden discovery was that his method revealed the dream as the fulfilment of a wish and, upon the notion that it was the first in a series of formations of the unconscious, he constructed the whole of psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the sudden discovery was that psychoanalysts could work together in a school held together by a new social bond founded on the psychoanalytic discourse, and that the cartel was the basic organ that would allow such a body to be established.

The strange fact is that, just as Freud’s successors abandoned his reliance on the dream and the other formations of the unconscious to ground their practice, in neither the *Ecole Freudienne de Paris* during his lifetime nor in any of the schools and associations that lay claim to Lacan’s inheritance has this basic organ of the cartel functioned in the way that he envisaged. In particular the element that he described as PLUS ONE – in capitals in his text - has been volatilised, so that Guy Le Gaufey, who organised the 1975 *EFP* debate on the cartels, can say that Lacan accepted that it was a ‘latent infinitude’ and Christian Fierens who presides over a association based on cartels can say that ‘I have heard a lot about it but I have never come across a genuine +1’.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Freud *The interpretation of dreams*, SE IV, Hogarth Press, p. 200

<sup>2</sup> I have no direct knowledge of the fate of the cartel in the *Ecole de la cause freudienne* which was launched in Lacan’s dying days with a great display of catalogues of cartels and their plus one’s. Its website contains some interesting material, but the vast bureaucratic structure it has developed is very far from the easily managed, circular, non-hierarchical, cartel-based association envisaged in the Founding Act.

So my question is: can the Irish School for Lacanian Psychoanalysis (ISLP) do any better than our predecessors in implementing the vision of Lacan's Founding Act, or should we bow to the evidence of history and accept that the organisation he dreamt of constructing on the basis of his specific invention of the cartel is simply that – a dream?

### 1. 'What if the dream come through...?'

There is very little in the rhetoric of the Founding Act that is not familiar to readers of the Lacan of the 1950's and early sixties: the betrayal of Freud's radical message by Anglo-Saxon psychoanalysts, the refusal of the IPA to engage with the findings of the new sciences of the human subject, the preference for theories of development based on behavioural psychology over the formations of the unconscious revealed by the talking cure. Nor is there much originality in the three broad themes proposed for investigation: the nature of the training – for Lacan didactic – analysis, the clinical applications of psychoanalysis, the assessment and criticism of what passes for psychoanalysis in learned journals. And the idea of working in small task-oriented groups was very much in the spirit of the anti-authoritarian sixties.

Yet there is no doubt that Lacan was certain that he was taking a new and unprecedented step forward in his own engagement with the psychoanalytic cause and in what he was demanding of potential followers. The theatrical gesture that had him record his text and then have it played to his pupils and colleagues in his absence had more than an echo of General de Gaulle's 1940 radio broadcast calling his defeated countrymen to arms. And the opening words: '*Je fonde...*' may indeed point to his belief in the proposition of a Belgian analyst that, while Freud had invented psychoanalysis, Lacan had founded it. For this had been his constant reproach to Freud – that he was ultimately responsible for the pitiful state of analysis by his failure to isolate a specific psychoanalytic discourse and for having left his momentous discovery in the hands of masters and academics.

But is there any justification for such a belief? If we look for what is radically original in his Act, we are brought back to the paragraph in which the structure and function of the basic organ of the School is declared:

*For the execution of the work, we shall adopt the principle of a sustained elaboration in a small group. Each of these (we have a name to designate these groups) will be composed of three people at least, of five at most, four is the right measure. PLUS ONE charged with the selection, with the discussion and with the outcome to be reserved to the work of each.<sup>3</sup>*

Two initial remarks. First, the insistence on a range of four to six people to constitute a small group is not usual in group work – even when it is inspired by analysis. The Institute of Group Analysis (London) who established the group training in St Vincent's, saw small groups as composed of around ten people and there did not seem to be any sense of the importance of a particular number as there is in Lacan's cartels. We will come back to this because it is of crucial importance for the subjective effects produced in the group.

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<sup>3</sup> The text of the *Acte de foundation*, the *Note adjointe* and the *Préambule* are translated from the 1975 *Annuaire* of the *Ecole freudienne de Paris*. They will be referred to as *Founding Act*, *Adjunct* and *Preamble*. An English version is available in [www.lacaninireland.com](http://www.lacaninireland.com) under translations/ecrits

Second, the PLUS ONE is *PLUS UNE* in the text and thus agrees in gender with the French *personnes* who make up the rest of the group. This will be central to the later acrimonious discussions on whether Lacan intended the plus one to be incarnated in a real individual or simply saw it as referring to some imaginary or symbolic presence.

In the years that followed the Founding Act there is little trace of a discussion on the structures it lays down. But when the place of the cartels in the school does come up in the mid to late 70's, most debate and disagreement will centre, not on the notion of the small working groups, but on the nature and role of what had initially seemed to be the clear, if radical, insistence on introducing an additional active agent – the *PLUS UNE* - to steer the work of their participants.

## 2. From directing an analysis to directing a school

Lacan does not simply found a school. In the opening sentence of the Founding Act he promises to *personally direct it* for the next four years

### (i) *Directing the treatment*

It is hard not to see in this choice of words a reference to *The direction of the treatment*<sup>4</sup>, written six years earlier to show how psychoanalysis had lost its therapeutic and subversive power because psychoanalysts had forgotten Freud's basic recommendations. It is not simply a matter of telling the stranger who addresses himself to us to say whatever comes into his head. The effective use of the psychoanalytic method, we already learn in *The interpretation of dreams*

*...involves some psychological preparation of the patient. We must aim at bringing about two changes in him: an increase in the attention he pays to his own psychical perceptions and the elimination of the criticism by which he normally sifts the thoughts that occur to him*<sup>5</sup>

Neglecting this fundamental rule, to which Freud would return again and again in his technical papers, has led analysts into the error of seeing themselves as educators and models of the normal behaviour they hope to produce in the patient. But if the analyst 'must not direct the patient' Lacan insists that

*The direction of the treatment is something quite different. First of all, it consists in making the subject apply the analytic rule, that is, the directives whose presence cannot be ignored at the origin of what is called 'the analytic situation' on the pretext that the subject would apply them better without thinking about them.*

*These directives are initially communicated in the form of instructions which, however little actual comment the analyst makes on them, will reveal, through the way they are presented, the analyst's own understanding of them and the importance he attaches to them.*<sup>6</sup>

### (ii) *Directing the school*

The direction the school also involved some psychological preparation of those who want to commit themselves to the re-conquest of the Freudian field from those who illegitimately dominate it. This work '*is indissoluble from a formation to be dispensed*' to those who wish to engage in it. This concerns in the first place the subjective position of each one, alone

<sup>4</sup> J. Lacan, *La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir*, Ecrits, Seuil, 1966,

<sup>5</sup> S. Freud, *ibid.* p. 175

<sup>6</sup> J. Lacan, *ibid.* p.586 (My translation)

before the psychoanalytic cause in the cartel or in analysis. What stands out here is this notion of ‘formation’ more usually attached to the preparation of workers in the field of spirituality, in opposition to the education and training usually associated with access to a scientifically based profession. What it means in practice is nailed down by what reads at first sight as a shockingly doctrinaire prescription:

*‘Those who come to this School will commit themselves to fulfilling a task submitted to both internal and external supervision. In exchange they are assured that nothing will be spared so that everything valuable they do will have the repercussions it deserves, and in the appropriate place.’<sup>7</sup>*

If you want to be part of this enterprise it is not enough to work – you have to work under a supervision (the French *contrôle* sounds even more restrictive!) which is further qualified as ‘both internal and external’ and your recompense will be that what you produce will be assured of an ‘appropriate’ fate. There are of course profound psychoanalytic resonances here, with the recall of the twin mechanisms of prohibition and promise crucial in the dissolution of the oedipal crisis. But on the face of it this is an outrageous interference with scientific investigation and academic freedom and goes way beyond the prescriptions of the IPA which simply required adherence to the easily understood professional norms of an approved training and a respect for the patient’s right to acceptable standards of treatment in terms of time and money.

(iii) *‘Exposing the deviations...that degrade its use’*

The issue here – and it is one that will flare up a decade later and lead to the final dissolution of the school – is one that had plagued psychoanalysis from its beginnings. ‘Who has a right to be called an analyst?’, or even more fundamentally ‘What is psychoanalysis?’ In Freud’s early circle Jung, Rank, Adler and Ferenczi, to take only the personalities who have left prominent movements behind them, each had their own version of the crucial features of the theory and practice of the new science of the unconscious. Freud, as Lacan repeatedly pointed out, had despaired of ever forming a coherent body based on his own idea of analysis and after an abortive attempt to protect his teaching through a secret committee had confided this task to an international organisation which was inspired more by ideas of professionalism – the academic and the master discourse – than doctrine.

And so it was that at the International Congress in London, after reporting the shock of some IPA colleagues that the secession of the French group not based on a scientific disagreement, Lacan records the reaction of the *‘penetrating Mr Walder ...that if we were to confront the principles on which each one believed his experience was founded, our walls would very quickly dissolve into the confusion of Babel.’<sup>8</sup>*

Lacan saw his return to Freud as a return to the fundamental truths of his doctrine. Although ‘truth’ and ‘doctrine’ are notions that scandalise the scientific community he argued, especially in *The Freudian Thing* (1955) and *Science and truth* (1965), that they are essential reference points to ward off the psychological relativism which is completely inadequate to ground psychoanalysis as the science of desire.

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<sup>7</sup> *Founding Act*

<sup>8</sup> J. Lacan, *Function and field of speech and language, Ecrits*, Seuil, Paris 1966, p.239 (My translation)

I believe that it is this context that the central role of supervision is to be understood and that the plus one – even though his role seems to be advisory - is part of this attempt to ensure a purity of doctrine without which the whole Freudian discovery is ‘degraded’. This also shows how the Founding Act could only be produced at the end of a year in which Lacan had reminded the analytic community that the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis were not to be found in the stages of developmental psychology, nor in the cultivation of ego strengths based on the reality principle, but in the largely neglected fundamental foursome of the Unconscious and Repetition, Transference and the Drive.<sup>9</sup>

(iv) *‘What guides me....’*

But many of his pupils and colleagues had put what they heard at the seminars to their own use and, far from drawing from them the practical consequences Lacan intended, they had accepted the demand of the IPA that Lacan be removed from any position where he could influence the formation of budding analysts. It was only as a ‘training analyst’ that he had, against considerable opposition, been able to adequately form a certain number of pupils as he explicitly states in the text. By being restricted to a strictly teaching role, without access to the accompanying didactic analyses and supervision, he would have become no more than an interesting, and eccentric, academic performer. Seminars found nothing.

So here we have his motive for founding a school which *‘is to be taken in the sense that, in ancient times, it meant certain places of refuge, indeed operational bases against what could already be called the discontents of civilization’*. Or in this case *‘the discontents of psychoanalysis.’*<sup>10</sup>

*To those who may question themselves about what guides me, I will unveil its reason. The teaching of psychoanalysis cannot be transmitted from one subject to the other except along the paths of a work-transference. The ‘seminars’, including my lectures at Hautes Etudes, will found nothing, if they do not refer on to this transference. No doctrinal machinery, and especially mine, however auspicious it may be for the direction of work, can prejudge the conclusions that will remain from it.*<sup>11</sup>

This dense apologia needs to be unpacked but what it meant in practice was that a place now existed where those – analysts or not, Lacanians or not - who wanted to restore its cutting edge to psychoanalysis, and bring it back to the duty it owed to the world, could find in the company of others, direction and support for their efforts. But there is a novel condition for entry:

*‘People will join the School by presenting themselves to it in a working group constituted as I have said.’*<sup>12</sup>

In fact, as we will later learn, this condition was almost never fulfilled and indeed Christian Simatos, who was Secretary of the EFP throughout most of its existence, is reported as saying that J-A Miller and some colleagues from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* were the only ones who initially applied for admission as an already functioning working group.

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<sup>9</sup> J Lacan *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1977. Both the French establishment of the text and the English translation are deeply flawed but it is worth noting that the Founding Act was produced in the week between the penultimate and the final sessions of the seminar.

<sup>10</sup> *Preamble*

<sup>11</sup> *Adjunct*

<sup>12</sup> *Founding Act*

### 3. Is the Founding Act a practical proposition?

Having reviewed the main features of the Founding Act the immediate question is whether its structures and modes of operation have any practical relevance to Irish psychoanalysts in 2010? Did it all really hang on the charismatic position of a unique personality and does the failure to effectively implement it over the past fifty years, and the abandonment of the numerical limits and the plus one, simply confirm that fact?

*The director:* Setting a time-limit of four years to his own involvement as director strongly suggests that Lacan assumed that others would assume that post once the school had survived the current crisis. The functioning of the school is 'easy to program' and it seems to be designed to ensure that all the members would be able to get on with their analytic work without being bogged down by bureaucratic procedures. So that, even though there is provision for a committee and a general meeting, the 'circular organisation' and the permutation of the membership of the groups will guard against the setting up of individual 'fiefdoms' that would obstruct the work.

*Formation:* The modification of subjective positions, in particular one's ethical stance with regard to desire, through the experience of personal analysis, is what most distinguishes the analyst from other specialists in mental health. But the way in which the small group is set up also involves a serious personal involvement and one that is designed to have an ongoing formative effect. Even though one joins the school in a group 'constituted by mutual choice', the permutation of its elements is designed to ensure a constant challenge to the imaginary, narcissistic bonds that unite a band of brothers or sisters. The limitation of 4-6 members avoids the traps of both the 1-1 mirror relationship and the escape into a large group where patriarchal leadership figures can emerge to spare the individual the anxiety of having to take up her or his own position.

*Supervision and criticism of work:* Supervision and criticism is of course part and parcel of any learning process and in the case of highly skilled professional work it can last a life-time. For an analyst consulting a supervisor is an ongoing requirement in learning the trade. But what shocks in the Founding Act is the apparent implication that certain lines of enquiry are taboo and that if one is to be a member of the school one must toe the party line.

I think this initial impression is mistaken for two main reasons. *Firstly*, the audience Lacan was addressing had already chosen to follow his teaching over that available in the IPA and was largely made up of trainee analysts who would have seen the statement about supervision and criticism as a promise of serious formation rather than a threat. They had chosen him mainly on the basis of what they had heard in the seminars and the prospect of a formation based on a teaching so innovative and at the same time so faithful to Freud was attractive rather than threatening. As events would show, it was his contemporaries and senior associates, who had fought against the IPA for his right to analyse and supervise students, without feeling they were his pupils, who would have most trouble with the School. Perrier and Aulagnier and eventually Dolto and Leclaire would all end up by profoundly disagreeing with the discipline he wanted to impose and going their own way. And the option of an alternative approach to psychoanalytic formation is still open today. *Secondly*, Lacan has insisted that in the treatment the analyst does not direct the patient, and that the successful outcome of any particular analysis is not based on objective societal standards of normality but on the accession of the subject to his own desire. The parallel insistence here is that the individual's work is not to be measured against received notions of Freudian or Lacanian theory but by its contribution to the renewal of psychoanalysis.

In fact the small groups were specifically invited to submit his own work to examination and criticism:

*There will be proposed for the study thus established the features whereby I myself break with the formulated standards of didactic practice, as well as the effects imputed to my teaching on the course of my analyses when it is the case that my analysers attend it in the capacity of students. Included therein, if required, will be the only impasses to be remembered from my position in such a School, to wit, those that the very induction my teaching aims at, would engender in its work.*<sup>13</sup>

In fact the criticism and supervision is envisaged as fulfilling the role of the instructions and interventions of the analyst in the course of the treatment. The analyst is there to ensure that the work is carried out in a particular way – that it is in fact an analysis. And not just anything can be said. A Lacanian analyst does not engage in a continual analysis of defences with the provocation of frustration, aggression and regression. But that does not mean non-intervention and complicity with every idea put forward by the analyser. There is no reason to think that the criticism and supervision ‘dispensed’ will not bring those who accept it to an ever-keener awareness of the way in which their own complexes interfere with their analytic work and allow them to achieve what they really desire.

‘*Selection...discussion...outcome*’: In 1789 the French Revolution appointed supervisory officers to its forces to provide political education and ensure loyalty to the revolutionary cause. And this notion of a *commissaire politique* was adopted by the Russian Provisional Government in 1917 to ensure the same ideological conformity. The political commissar was equal in rank to the unit commander and could advise him and eventually override his decisions in the name of political correctness.<sup>14</sup>

The suspicion arose in later years that some of Lacan’s successors saw the plus one as an instrument to be used in the ideological control of a quasi-military organisation. But the original emphasis on the non-hierarchical, circular nature of the organisation argues against the notion of the plus one as an instrument of centralised control.

Philippe Girard, in an intervention praised by Lacan admired the concept of the cartel but questioned its effectiveness. His remarks are worth quoting at some length:

*Is the cartel not a way to avoid two types of groupings or of regroupings, let us say a totalitarian type with phenomena of identification etc and a type which is present currently that of liberalism. In other words the plus one functions as an instrument to avoid what one could call mass psychology with all the effects that one knows, and on the other hand not to sink into a republic of egos which is obviously equally fictitious. Under what conditions can we escape from these two modes of social institution of social bond? If we had to define the function of cartels, it would be with respect to this; by taking into consideration the dominant forms of the past like the army the church, more recently the party... [238]*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Founding Act*

<sup>14</sup> The *International Herald Tribune* reports that in response to wide-spread criticism the Israeli army plans to ‘appoint officers for humanitarian issues to accompany every battalion and update its directives on protecting civilians.’

<sup>15</sup> The page numbers refer to the report of the 1975 Cartel Study Days available on the website of *Lettres de l’Ecole Freudienne de Paris* and translated in [www.lacaninireland.com](http://www.lacaninireland.com) under Other works

How does the choice of the three functions delegated to this plus one contribute to this goal? It seems to me that they can be best viewed as editorial. You come to the school with the title of the work that you intend to pursue. But good intentions have a habit of remaining just that and the purpose of the structures Lacan has devised is to counteract that habit.

*Let us remember that the worst objection that can be made to Societies in their existing form is the drying up of work, manifest even in the quality, that they cause among the best of people.<sup>16</sup>*

Being a member of the school means not simply working in a group but, with the other members, choosing an editor who will do the sort of things that good editors do when they are offered a piece of work. Sharpen the focus and select the best line of approach, discuss ways of approaching the task, find the best medium in which the work can be communicated. This is at least one way of seeing why the plus one is part of the structure of the fundamental organ of the School and why he has been ‘charged’ with these specific functions. When all is said and done, Lacan insists:

*The success of the School will be measured by the production of work that is acceptable in its proper setting.<sup>17</sup>*

A final point should be made: the responsibility of the plus one is limited to the production of this work. S/he is not a group analyst and is not concerned with the internal dynamics of the group or the relationship between its members or the direct creation of the new kind of social bond that is envisaged. But Lacan’s insight seems to be that without the plus one the bond linking the members to one another and to the school would be different as would the analytic quality of the work that is produced.

#### 4. The signifier ‘Cartel’

We have managed to discuss the setting up of the school and its operations without once mentioning the word that most characterises it.

*It is as signified that we find, in the Founding Act of the Ecole Freudienne de Paris, the first reference to J. Lacan’s signifier, **cartel**.*

*The module is defined: a small group of at least 3, at most five, plus one person.*

*The objective is fixed: a work subject to an internal and external supervision. The duty of the ‘plus one’ is specified: selection, discussion and outcome to be reserved for the work of each one.<sup>18</sup>*

In the Founding Act itself Lacan simply talks about small working groups. He adds, ‘we have a name to designate these groups’, but it is only in the *Adjunct* that he reveals the peculiar name that he has chosen and that in the context of admission to the school:

*‘The group constituted by mutual choice according to the Founding Act and which will be called a **cartel**, presents itself for my approval with the title of the work that each intends to pursue in it.’<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Preamble

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> C. Dumézil *Du cartel dans le champ de l’analyse freudienne – quelques remarques*, Tribune 2, CCAF, Paris, 1986, p.29



The first reaction to this name is to think that, whereas it may be acceptable in French, there is no way that, with all its resonances of political and business combinations or even international drug-dealing, this word could be fit for purpose, in English, to describe the basic unit of a school of psychoanalysis in which each individual is challenged to do his own subjective work and to produce a written result.

In fact 'cartel' in contemporary French has pretty much the same sense as in English. However, what we have to realise is that in both languages this popular everyday meaning is of recent vintage and that only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did the word take on, from the German *kartell*, its economic and political overtones. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines it as a 'Written challenge to a duel' and, if we consult the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, we see that it also means 'a written agreement as to an exchange of prisoners' and derives from the Italian, *cartello*, a placard or a challenge.

It still remains a curious word to have chosen and in fact it is hard to see why a particular word was necessary. After all why not continue talking about small groups? Why introduce it into the Adjunct which is supposed to answer questions that have been raised about the Founding Act?

One clue to Lacan's motivation may be the fact that writing is everywhere stressed in the definitions, and that he is unwavering in his insistence that the product he expects from each subject in the cartel is a piece of writing. For Lacan of course the ultimate goal in the transmission of psychoanalysis is the production of mathemes and writing is seen as a step on the way to this. But a recent biography of Barack Obama has highlighted the place of writing in the history of American slaves, as a way of asserting their own identity over against the way they were viewed by their masters.<sup>20</sup> Psychoanalysis has still to win its place as a serious discipline, since genuine sciences owe their rigour to a mathematical writing. So 'cartel' reminds psychoanalysts who want to contribute to the effectiveness of their praxis to play whatever part they can to giving it a written form.

But perhaps the 'challenge to a duel' is the most relevant connotation.<sup>21</sup> A duel after all involves not just the two combatants but their seconds and a referee – four plus one as in the ideal cartel. And just as in a duel – as in any serious analysis - the stakes are high the risk Lacan is taking and is inviting us to take is a matter of life and death. Not giving up on your desire is always a very costly business!

## 5. The Cartel Study Days 1975

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<sup>19</sup> *Adjunct*

<sup>20</sup> David Remnick *The Bridge: the life and rise of Barack Obama*, London, Picador, 2010

<sup>21</sup> Here Guy Le Gaufey refuses:

'I've read over your paper, and it is certainly one of the best, the most complete I've ever read on this topic! Just one remark.

Page 9: your reference to the meaning of cartel as 'challenge to a duel' is definitely not 'the most relevant connotation'. It is a rather unknown meaning for French people, it was not present in Lacan's choice of this term, and as far as I remember nobody alluded to it during the Cartel days in 1975. So this paragraph is rather dubious. But all the rest is good and precise. It could be considered as a sort of 'founding' paper for ISLP.'

*The spirit without the form*

One way of summarising the fate of the cartels after the Founding Act is that while the signifier remained the signified was forgotten. Nowhere does this appear more clearly than in the three set-piece discussions on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1975 in which large numbers of the School participated and in which Lacan was pushed to express his own position on the crucial issues of the Plus One and the 3-5 restriction on members.

Guy Le Gaufey had begun the morning session by pointing out that the study days had been organised by a cartel comprising Eric Laurent, Erik Porge, Juan David Nasio and himself under the 'impulsion' of Solange Faladé, but the afternoon plenary session began with the chairman, Pierre Martin, striking a rather pessimistic note and feeling it necessary to remind his audience of the basic proposals of the Founding Act regarding the cartel.

*It is in effect interesting, sometimes even a little bit disturbing, to note how these cartels are constituted most of the time.*

*The cartel, in the perspective of the Freudian school, is not a meeting of people who simply want to meet to exchange ideas, still less is it a locus for direct or magisterial teaching, in a small group.*

*What the cartel is concerned with is to be found very explicitly and in a very clear fashion in the Founding Act of the school in 1964 eleven years ago. What we want to encourage among you, is in some way to resurrect a text and its implications which remain, we have to admit, completely under a veil... it is not in this spirit, I believe, or rather in this form that most of the cartels that I know about are constituted and work.*  
[219]

He goes on to specify that his concern regarding the constitution of the cartels he has come across is precisely the plus one. His question to his colleagues is:

*What place have you given in the creation and the organisation of your working group to this little word: plus one? It is not a matter of un en plus (an additional one), of three plus one equals four, or four plus one equals five, it is: plus une; there is something here that was, I am convinced, put in that way to give rise to a whole problematic.*

*The lure of the Borromean knot*

And Lacan, in his first contribution to the debate, is in full agreement:

*Martin was quite right to intervene on this point. I mean that this plus one would have deserved a better fate...*

This might have led to a debate on the practical aspects of the cartel but Lacan is in the full sweep of his discovery of the Borromean knot and its possible role in the ultimate attempt to mathematicise psychoanalysis. So the plus one he is concerned with is no longer that of Founding Act which Martin has tried to focus on but the much more enigmatic additional ring that he is exploring in his current seminar *RSI*.

*....since to the best of my knowledge it does not seem that this thing which truly, I don't want to be boasting about having anticipated in that something that I am trying to articulate in the form of the Borromean knot. One cannot fail to recognise in this*

*plus one the something which I obviously did not tell you the last time because I do not always manage in a seminar to say everything that I have contributed but anyway which is to be referred strictly to what I would write as  $X+1$  it is very precisely what defined the Borromean knot, starting from the fact that it is by withdrawing this 1, which in the Borromean knot is any one whatsoever, that one obtains from it a complete individualisation, namely that what remains – namely in terms of the  $X$  in question – there remains only the one by one.[220]*

This intervention was to leave the field open to those who wanted to theorise about the plus one and eventually culminate in Daniel Sibony – who admits that he has never been in of a cartel – proposing the term ‘latent infinitude’ which Lacan accepted, justifying a shift from the ‘problematic’ of the real plus one to its mystification. He is delighted to find someone who has worked in a group of mathematicians:

*When mathematicians get together, there is incontestably this plus one. Namely that it is quite striking that the mathematicians, I could say, they don’t know what they’re talking about, but they know who they are talking about, they are talking about mathematics as if it were a person. One might say up to a certain point that what I might call my wish was, in the functioning of groups, that they would function like any group of mathematicians function. [224]*

But how can this plus one of the mathematicians perform the tasks the plus one of the Founding Act is charged with?

#### *Imaginary and absent presences*

Lacan goes on to inquire into the concrete experience of those present, since whatever the logico-mathematical reasons for the way he has structured the elements of the school ‘it is first of all necessary that the thing should be put to the test’ and on current evidence ‘.. the School has perhaps not really yet begun to function. We could say that. Why not?’

Colette Soler is the first to be called to testify to her experience of the cartel and her answer will set the tone for the pattern of avoidance that will follow. What does she make of the notion of a real agent to supervise and criticise, to select, discuss and determine an outcome for the work produced?

*...the question that I have asked myself is whether in fact the plus one should necessarily be a person ... the element which made the connection was perhaps the idea that we were attached to the School by means of the cartel or perhaps to your name, I don’t know. But I don’t see, at the level of a person, who had a role in the group of the plus one.[222]*

This is followed by another exchange

*Jacques Lacan: What is it that fulfils this role according to you, in your group?*

*Maurice Alfandari: I don’t know. I think it is because I don’t know that it functions.*

*Jacques Lacan: Yeah... (laughter).*

Alfandari argues his position by suggesting that the role of the plus one is most effectively held by whoever happens to be absent from a particular meeting. This is not what the Founding Act says but Lacan is determined to cut his interlocutor as much slack as possible:

*there is no trace of a signal by absence in my 'plus one' of the text, but why not question oneself about this; there is perhaps a certain angle from which this person can be focussed in the absent person, your experience of a cartel may suggest some answer to you on this point. [ibid.]*

There is much, much more along this line – ‘*That’s the plus one...? The one who doesn’t understand anything? Why not ?(laughter)*’ - with Lacan being extraordinarily tolerant with people who clearly had no idea of what he had specifically written about the cartel. And his approach certainly seems to lead some people to think that the work they were doing alone or with colleagues might have been changed by the presence of a concrete figure. Here is Pierre Kahn:

*The question that I am posing after what Martin set out earlier is the following: this work which was satisfying for me, what difference would have been introduced into it if the plus one which was there imaginarily had been not an imaginary person but a real person. Without being able to advance very far on this I want simply to express my conviction that there would certainly have been an influence on the work if the plus one person had been something other than the imaginary person that each one put there, certainly. [223-4]*

There is one real person that Lacan warns against and that is the one who assumes the mantle of leader. The cartel must function in a psychoanalytic way, one which he is exemplifying by his patient questioning and his refusal to adopt the role of master:

*‘...habitually, make no mistake, it is a habitus, habitually it is always the same person and this is what people resolve on without measuring the consequences of it, I mean that everyone is very happy that there is one who acts as what we currently call the leader, the one who leads, the Führer ...this plus one is always present in some forms or other that can be absolutely incarnated, the case of the leader is manifest but analysts can notice that in a group there is always a plus one and adjust their attention to that. [224,226]*

*‘We had never really read the Founding Act...’*

To conclude this section which has taken aspects of the discussion of Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning let us look at two further contributions, one from Jacques Crépin, an analyst from Amiens, and the other from Jacques Lacan which might be taken as a reply and a rebuke to those who were neglecting what should be the core of their School. Crépin honestly states what appears to have been the situation of most of the members present:

*Currently and from the beginning there are nine of us; I must admit that it is only since yesterday evening and since this morning that we have begun to pose the question about the three and six. I would also say that we had not reflected on the question of the plus one, probably moreover because at the time we set up the cartel we hadn’t really read the Founding Act of the aforesaid cartels. [243]*

Even though it had been delivered by way of concluding the discussion of the previous afternoon, Lacan’s clarification of his reasons for constructing the Founding Act in the way he had may be taken as a direct response. As regards the plus one:

*I wanted to make of it by this text, something altogether nodal for the formation of a small group. The fact that it is small is altogether essential, it is essential for its functioning; if I said that it can't go beyond six, it's for the best of reasons, it is for theoretical reasons that are very profound. Taking on a very large group involves such limitations, this is what I think at least, that there is not much to be expected from it in terms of real progress on the effects of analysis. This is what inspired me when I produced this Founding Act and to which after all I have no reason for thinking that you should in principle be resisting. I absolutely cannot see what could justify this resistance, especially if what I was trying to get from a certain number of you, all of whom I thank, what I tried to get from a certain number was: to put it on the agenda. [228]*

### *The exchange with Safouan*

Possibly because so many of the senior members of the School – Clavreul, Leclair, Dolto, etc - had not thought it important enough to be present, Lacan is anxious to engage those who were. His questions to Jenny Aubry did not lead very far but, once he had given Moustafa Safouan time to reflect over lunch, he was luckier. So what did he now have to contribute to the debate:

*Safouan: I had time to read the Founding Act. I noticed that I had forgotten this text.*

*Lacan: You're not the only one!*

He has an obvious question that has not been clearly put before:

*Why is the term plus one underlined? It is even the only term that is underlined in the text. Why were you concerned to underline this term?*

And he is rewarded with an answer that shows that Lacan had been deliberately provocative but that it had taken a long time for people to react:

*First of all so that people would notice it, which in fact has only happened recently ... this plus one which has become such a riddle*

Safouan's quick read of the Founding Act has left him with some interesting ideas of his own about this riddle. His first thought is that 'it is a function like the Socratic maieutics' but then he decides that this is too pretentious:

*I don't know why I had made such an exaggerated idea of it that I went so far as to talk about Socrates, but as I can glimpse it here I see the function would be completely comparable to the function of tutor in an English college; I want to stress everything that relates not to a theoretical direction but an arrangement which has an empirical character; I repeat the style appears to me to be that of a tutor in Cambridge or Oxford charged with the selection the discussion and the outcome to be reserved for the work of each individual. It is not his function to knot the relation between him and the other members of the cartel, but to support the relationship that each one may have in his work to what he has to say. That seems to me to constitute the essential of the function.*

Lacan seems very happy with this way of putting things and goes as far as to say that this was why he had wanted Safouan to speak. But there is one further point that he has picked up on:

*Has it happened effectively after a certain time of functioning that the elements of a group are permuted into another? Because it seems to me that precisely without this permutation, the rest has no value. But has that been done?*

Again he elicits an important remark, reflecting Lacan's dismal assessment of how his plans for the School have been implemented:

*It has never been done ...There is no kind of veritable realisation of a cartel. [248-251]*

It is at this point that he is engaged by someone who admits he has never been part of a cartel but who has very definite theoretical ideas about it - in particular about the plus one – which will come to determine the views of many Lacanians down to today.

#### *The plus one and mathematics*

Daniel Sibony's dialogue with Lacan is the most substantial of the study days both in the sense that it occupied most of the Sunday afternoon session and that it seems to have changed Lacan's position on the nature of the plus one and led him to accepting, despite his immediately preceding approval of Safouan's remarks, that it did not have to be incarnated in a real person. The *RSI* seminar, with its complex formulations on the Borromean knot, is nearing completion and it is within this context that Sibony situates his argument.

The mathematical abstractions he develops are beyond me, as indeed was the case with Nasio, Nassif and Safouan. But they delighted Lacan and indeed help him to develop his idea that the model for the cartel was the group of mathematicians who made progress in their field by addressing themselves to a personification of mathematics which for them took the place of the plus one.

Here is something of the tone. To begin, Sibony wants

*to give as testimony some reflections that came to me since last night's meeting, independently of course of any experience of the cartel since, even though I have functioned in different groups I have never found myself in a group that was called a cartel. This troubled me so much that I said finally that there is no other problem than that of the plus one in the group. I mean that the function of the one or the une en plus, entitled en plus, finally there is nothing but that. So then I am going to try to explain what I mean. By reason of the effects of speech, human sets however small they may be, know both the sensible determinations of their manifest finitude – there is no infinite meeting of individuals - and, in addition to this manifest finitude, the paradoxes of what one could call their latent infinitude which comes there as an extra imposition, which comes to overdetermine in a crushing and plural way the individuals who are present. Thus the effect by which such a set flees the fact that there are leaks....*

It is here that Lacan makes his fatal response:

*Latent infinitude, that is precisely what the plus one is.*

And Sibony replies

*Precisely, that was what I was trying to articulate. Therefore the effects by which such a set is closed or is opened, that of its pulsations finally is the effect by which there is traced its frontiers and its limits. [251-2]*

This indeed is very abstract but the curious thing is that this long dialogue is punctuated by some very poetic and even practical points. Joseph O'Connor puts as an epigraph to his latest novel two lines from Sylvia Plath's 'For a Fatherless Son'

*You will be aware of an absence, presently,  
Growing beside you, like a tree...<sup>22</sup>*

This echoes one of Sibony's descriptions of the plus one:

*It's a very well known idea that whoever adds a knowledge adds a pain. And it is really true in this case: the plus-one, this plus-one unit of knowledge, makes a hole, a void and brings with it an additional one as a less, as an insistent absence that torments you. [253]*

And later, remembering perhaps a central religious insight of Judaism that God's presence is felt as a form of absence, he adds this postscript:

*There are religions where when three of the faithful are together, there is a presence of the One that they invoke, which is dispersed when they disperse. This une-en-plus has therefore no need to be incarnated in order to function [259]*

Lacan too breaks with his mathematical abstractions when he states:

*That, when all is said and done, is what is at stake. What is at stake is that each one imagines himself to be responsible for the group, to have to answer for it as such, as himself. [254]*

This leads finally to something that is of radical importance and which echoes the opening words of the Founding Act. The cartel with its plus one is there to support the individual subject in his relationship to psychoanalysis just as the mathematician is sustained in his work by his relationship to mathematics.

*A mathematician in mathematics is dealing with a person...It is not the mathematical community which is the final judge. The proof is when Cantor put forward his whole machine, there were some mathematicians who spat in his face, and at the same time he felt that he was mad. But all the same he held on and he continued. He was*

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph O'Connor, *Ghost Light*, Harvill Secker, London, 2010. Marion Deane reflecting on her experience of the Plus One referred to Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey: And I have felt/A presence that disturbs me with the joy/Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused...*'

*dealing with mathematics. It is not at all the same thing for analysis because analysis is still to be created... [256]*

and so, for now at least, the psychoanalyst needs an interlocutor to whom he can address his work. It is not the IPA or any other of the conventional groupings that can provide this support. It required the subtle genius of Lacan to develop the kind of group that could. But as he surveys his school, 11 years on, he seems to be taking the view that his message had not been heard.

His participation in these study days had been prompted by Solange Faladé who was one of his closest confidantes and no doubt concerned by the direction the School was taking. He ends this session by acknowledging her concern:

*Anyway I believe that all the same I have, in accordance with the wishes of Faladé, avowed what is behind this tentative proposition that the cartel represents. That would perhaps all the same mean that people might at least get to know a little bit more about what I mean. [258]*

Faladé introduces the closing session with her own assessment of the past and her hopes for the future:

*Though it is true that up to now cartels in the sense that Dr Lacan understands them have been rare in the School, starting from what has been contributed during these days, a re-launch of this form of work is to be foreseen [263]*

Though Lacan initially returns once more into his notion that ‘*it is not excluded that one can push things as far as to identify mathematics to a person*’, he seems to be fully behind her in her hopes for the renewal of the strict application of the Founding Act:

*If I found myself present in this place where the function of the cartel was being discussed, it is indeed because I was particularly keen to do so. I was particularly keen that what I put forward in my propositions for the functioning of the School, following these days, should receive (that’s how it can be expressed) a crack of the whip. I would like that these cartels whose practice I thought up should be installed in a more stable fashion in the School [264]*

He even reaffirms his first idea that admission to the School should be by way of an already constituted cartel rather than as an individual. But it has to be said that the bulk of his concluding remarks are concerned with the problems he is dealing with in RSI. The practicalities he is leaving to Faladé and the organising cartel.

A further discussion on cartels took place in November 1975 and Lacan, though he had not been present, took the opportunity, in his closing remarks, to reflect on the report he had received. Again the exchanges had centred on the ‘*un en plus that I formulated*’ and whether it is incarnated by someone, and Lacan’s position, though it could scarcely be clearer, seems



to amount to a definite repudiation of the Founding Act: '*Nothing indicates in what I wrote that the un en plus should be incarnated*'.<sup>23</sup>

However, far from settling the matter, we are entering here into a period of confusion. In the first place, Lacan had previously denied that his plus one was simply the additional one (*en un plus*) which is the term he uses here. And then as the cartels are resurrected there is no doubt that the form they take and the pronouncements attributed to him in his final seminars point very distinctly to a real live plus one who '*if he may be anyone at all, must be someone*', charged once more with very specific tasks.<sup>24</sup>

Let us now turn to this difficult and contradictory phase in the history of the cartels.

## 6. The revival of the cartels and the dissolution of the School

### *The neglect of the cartels*

In the 1975 discussions Lacan's disappointment at the fact that the Founding Act had not been implemented is palpable and he seems driven to cling to theoretical abstractions about numbers and the plus one as a way of getting at least some return for his current reflections on the Borromean knot from a program of formation that had once been pragmatic and centred on stimulating the work of his followers.

In part at least he had only himself to blame but events too had played their part. The publication of the *Ecrits* in 1966 brought him worldwide recognition; the 1968 revolution turned some of his closest associates away from analysis towards direct political action; the reform of the universities in the early 1970's opened up a new forum for his teaching. And all the time the numbers at his seminars and the demand for analysis and supervision grew and grew. Within the School, with the 1967 *Proposal on the analyst of the School*, he had shifted the focus away from the small working cartels to the identification of those who could do the best theoretical work – the AE's – and those who could best represent the school as clinicians – the AME's. To the extent that the first document the newcomer to the school was presented with, and the one that took pride of place in the directories, was not the Founding Act but the Proposal, and a cartel became any group of Lacanians who came together to study a text.

### *The bureaucratisation of the cartels*<sup>25</sup>

The Department of Cartels was introduced by an undated letter signed by Eric Laurent and Jacques-Alain Miller in which they set out '*the spirit in which we are tackling the task confided in us by J. Lacan*'. It reminded us that the creation of cartels was contemporaneous with the foundation of the School and that in the first Directory in 1965 '*the list of members was preceded by that of the 27 cartels then active*' and that '*the name of each member was followed by the mention of his cartel and the work in progress*'. Laurent and Miller proposed to methodically update the existing lists and to hold a meeting in November-December to consult with the cartels on desirable innovations.

<sup>23</sup> [www.ecole-lacanienne.net](http://www.ecole-lacanienne.net), Pastout Lacan. Christian Simatos links the Plus One to to the notion of '*y a d'un*' ('there is something of the one'). An insistent reminder that our individual work contributes to the realisation of this 'one'.

<sup>24</sup> J. Lacan, *Dissolution*, 11.03.80.

<sup>25</sup> I am unaware of any publication dealing with the link between the focus on the cartels in the late 70's and the dissolution of the school. Therefore much of what follows is based on letters and circulars issued at that time.

Extracts of this meeting on 10 November 1979 were circulated in December and January in numbers 1 & 2 of *PLUS-UN*. It seems to have begun quietly enough with presentations on the nature of the cartels and their link with membership of the School – there is the rather curious fact that even though the cartel is the basic organ of the School you did not have to be a member of the School in order to join a cartel recognised by the School. However the tone began to change when Philip Girard among others began to question what was behind the organisation of a department, with the bureaucratic control this implied and Miller's seeing this as an extension of the accusation of tyranny that had been made against Lacan at the general meeting the previous September.

What begins to surface at this meeting is the suspicion that the members of the School are being organised into cartels so that those who are behind Lacan can be clearly distinguished from those who want to use his name – and the locale of the School – to promote their own agendas. Two aberrant tendencies in particular are targeted: the Catholics and the feminists. Denis Vasse, a close friend of Françoise Dolto, had been sacked from his post as vice-president because of his ecumenical advances towards non-Lacanian groups, and Serge Leclair and Michele Montrelay had been refused the use of the School premises to promote their views on psychoanalysis and feminism. The vote on Vasse's dismissal at the September meeting had shown an amazing 110 votes against the proposition out of a total of 350, indicating substantial support for the view that Lacan was now a capricious old man who no longer had the best interests of the School at heart.

Whether or not this was the purpose of the creation of the department of cartels is a matter for speculation, but in the short term at least the appeal to the Founding Act and the call to rally behind Lacan against those in the School who were calling for his head was successful. An impressive catalogue of the cartels that had declared themselves before mid-November was drawn up as if to show that the work of the School as originally envisaged by Lacan was going to continue in a new and vigorous way. But on 8 January 1980 the members of the school received a letter dissolving the *EFP* and calling for all those who wanted to join Lacan in a new association to write to him within the next ten days.

More than a 1000 responded and received a formal acknowledgment announcing the establishment of *La Cause Freudienne*. In the months that followed Lacan returned again and again in his seminars to the cartels and to the text of the Founding Act. The statement on 11 March 1980 is the most explicit. With those who have written to him he intends to restore:

*...the basic organ taken up again from the foundation of the School, in other words the cartel, the formalisation of which I am refining, with the experience that has been gained.*

*Firstly – Four choose one another, to pursue a work which must have its product. I specify: a product proper to each one, and not collective.*

*Secondly – The union of the four takes place around a Plus-One, who, if he can be anyone at all, must be someone. He is charged with overseeing the internal effects of the enterprise, and to provoke its elaboration.*

*Thirdly – to guard against stickiness, permutation must take place, at a fixed term of one year, two maximum.*

*Fourthly – No progress is to be expected, unless there is a periodic opening to public view of the results as well as crises in the work.*

*Fifthly – The drawing of lots will insure the regular renewal of the reference-points created in order to vectorialise the whole.*

To this can be added two further remarks on 18 March and 23 October:

*Is the Plus-One to be drawn by lots? .....No, the four associates choose him.*

And

*The cartel is functioning. It is enough not to place any obstacles in its way, except to vectorialise it, for which I give the formula, and permute.*

Apart from the neologism ‘vectorialise’, these are the clearest statements that Lacan has ever made on the importance he accords to the cartels and how he intends them to function. There is only one problem. It seems very likely that, even though they were read out by a now visibly failing Lacan at his seminar, they were written by those he had put in charge of the department of cartels. But whether they were or not, there is no doubt that the emphasis put on the cartel with its plus one as the basic organ of the school he founded, dates from a time when he was at his most dynamic and creative and there is nothing inconsistent between the prescriptions of the Founding Act and these extracts from his final seminars. What is missing is any hint of Lacan’s more recent acceptance of a question hanging over the incarnation of the plus one in a real, active individual. It is doubtful, especially in the light of the exchanges at the cartel study days, whether in his later years he would have been fully satisfied with the unambiguous five-point plan outlined above.

In any case the vast majority of ‘the 1000’ had by now ‘cartellised’ themselves, so that when the new catalogue appeared in early 1981 it listed no fewer than **279 cartels**, almost all with their very real plus one’s, organised under eleven different areas of work: neurosis, psychosis, perversion, clinic, the unconscious, repetition, the drive, concepts and mathemes, technique<sup>26</sup>, ethics and practice. The cartels contained the names not only of newcomers but of the grandees of the EFP: Clavreul, Conté, Dumézil, Melman, etc., though not those of the dissidents mentioned earlier. So the stage now seemed finally set for the realisation of the dream.

But on 9 September 1981 Jacques Lacan died. By the beginning of the New Year the consensus around the cartels had shattered and different personalities and groups emerged to found new associations and schools while many others simply drifted away to work as psychoanalysts as far as possible from the pressures and supports of the group.

## **7. The cartels after Lacan**

*The Parisian scene*

Claude Dumézil<sup>27</sup> was able to draw up a list of eight Lacanian associations set up in 1982 and 1983 alone. They would be followed by many more but the striking feature of their statutes is that none of them give a major role to the cartel. The exception is the *Ecole de la Cause Freudienne* which requires candidates to apply for admission through a cartel and reproduces the Founding Act as well as a number of the seminars of 1980.

Some of the new groupings do mention the importance of working in cartels but the structure of these and particularly the role of the plus one is not modelled on the Founding Act. My

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<sup>26</sup> Among the 31 cartels listed under this heading we find a cartel on *The logic of the phantasy* comprising Russell Grigg, Bill Richardson and myself. Our plus one remained to be determined!

<sup>27</sup> Cf footnote 18

own impression is that those who were mourning Lacan's loss felt that Miller and Laurent had hijacked the cartel by bureaucratising it under cover of carrying out Lacan's wishes. They regretted the naiveté with which they had joined the rush to cartellisation in Lacan's dying days and decided to go forward rather than taking what appeared to be a regressive step back to an idealistic dream of analysts working together in a new social bond based on the analytic discourse.

### *The cartel today*

On 6/7 June 2009 the *Inter-Associatif Européen de Psychanalyse* held a seminar on *The formations of the psychoanalyst* in Brussels under the auspices of *Le Questionnement Psychanalytique (QP)*. The position papers prepared for the meeting give a valuable account of the current state of thinking about cartels and the usual small discussion groups were set up as cartels drawn by lot.

*QP* had been set up in 1984 by 8 Belgian psychoanalysts who had explicitly chosen the cartel in order to reflect together on the questions that preoccupied them after the dissolution of the *EFP*. They were determined to resist the lure of the hierarchical organisation and even though they were Lacanians also rejected the *passee*. Their innovations in the practical use of cartels in recruitment and formation would merit an extended reflection but I would simply like to give a brief quotation to highlight how even after 25 years of cartel-based work the plus one remains an enigma:

*Another question, that of the Plus-One which, in QP, seems to remain in suspense, never really posed. We work essentially in cartels but we abandon the question of the Plus-One. To it we prefer...to welcome a 'cartelliser' outside the association. His presence is precious. His acceptance is quasi-universal. But does he correspond in the contrivance to the function of the Plus-One? Could it be that the old haunting memory of the master is still producing its effects.<sup>28</sup>*

It is hard not to hear in this an echo of the suggestions made in the 1975 debate. Now it seems the solution is to invite someone outside *QP* to join the cartel presumably to prevent it becoming too cosy and inward-looking. But once again the tasks the plus one is charged with in the Founding Act have vaporised and we are left with someone who seems to have been chosen in order to introduce a stranger into the dynamics of the group rather than to ensure a criticism and supervision of the work of each member. Neither do the notions of the 4-6 limit and the permutation so highlighted in Lacan-Safouan exchange play a part.

In short, the contemporary evidence from the association that has most explicitly made the cartel the centre of its thinking and practice is that the structure and functioning of this device still defy implementation.

### **Conclusion**

Nothing, since I first encountered his work almost forty years ago, has changed my conviction that in our time Lacan is the best available interlocutor in any attempt to promote a style of psychoanalysis that is theoretically rigorous and relevant to our contemporary clinical and social concerns.

But as the English-speaking world has struggled to come to terms with the obscurities and mistranslations of the seminars and the *Ecrits*, it has been easy to overlook the importance

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<sup>28</sup> Anne Debar *Le cartel d'association en questions*, IAEP, June 2009

Lacan accorded to the cartel as an instrument of on-going formation in psychoanalytic theory and practice. This oversight has been encouraged by the fact that, for various reasons I have tried to outline in this paper, it was shared by many of the francophones who have taught and inspired us.

However the experiment the ISLP has been carrying out, with psychoanalysts and other specialists, of attempting to implement the prescriptions of the Founding Act has shown that Lacan's project is not Utopian. Perhaps it may persuade colleagues to mobilise the resolution required to tackle in this innovative and productive way a task imposed on us by our duty to those who are still waiting for the enlightenment that Freud's discoveries can bring.

END