

**JACQUES LACAN'S SUMMARY OF THE SEMINAR OF 1966-1967
(Year book of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes)**

Translated by **Cormac Gallagher**

The seminar on The Logic of Phantasy was held during the academic year following the publication of Lacan's Ecrits. It has not been published in French and to the best of my knowledge the only English version available is the privately circulated translation produced and worked through by a group in St Vincent's Hospital in 1997-1998.

Students seeking guidance in the reading of the seminar will find some in Jacques Nassifs Pour une Logique du Phantasme which appeared in 1970 in issue 2/3 of Scilicet. An earlier version of this article had been presented at the seminar on the psychoanalytic act and had been warmly praised by Lacan.

However, Lacan's own summary of the seminar, written for the yearbook of the institution under whose auspices it was held, must have a special place in its correct interpretation. This is an extremely condensed and labyrinthine piece of work that like many of Lacan's scripta makes no concessions to the reader. The translation has attempted to follow Lacan's text as closely as possible and for that reason may appear to be equally impenetrable.

When it was presented at the Congress the summary was accompanied by a rather detailed commentary which made it somewhat more palatable. We decided to offer it here unadorned in order to allow readers an uncluttered opportunity of seeing what they can make of the only published version of this very significant element of Lacan's work¹

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My return to Freud brings each of you up against the void central to the field that he, and no less those who work in it, sets up.

¹Translator's note

Some people would be relieved to reduce its keynote to the history of Freud's thought, or even indeed to his vocabulary, a classic operation in philosophy. The new terms with which I structure an object are turned into something for booksellers to feed on.

Pushing ever further the logical primacy that is truest to the experience reduces this trick to the dust that it is raises.

'Either I do not think or I am not', to put forward in this formula the reversed ergo of a new *cogito*, involved a hey presto! that you must agree was successful.

In fact it confronted those it was directed at with the surprise of finding in it the virtues of my schema of alienation (1964), which emerges here right away as opening up the join between the id and the unconscious.

A difference of De Morgan-like appearance comes to life in the fact that a forced choice makes it asymmetrical. The 'I do not think' which in effect grounds the subject here in the least bad option for him, remains deprived of the 'am' of the intersection denied by its formula. The not-I, which is presupposed here, is not, by not being, without being. Indeed the *id* designates it with a finger pointed at the subject by grammar. The *id* is the stub carried by the *not*, a knot that slips along the sentence to assure its unsayable metonymy.

But quite other is the 'think' which subsists by complementing the 'I am not' whose affirmation is primarily repressed. Because it is only at the cost of being like it a false non-sense, that it can enlarge its empire free from the complicity of consciousness.

The arms of the square thus drawn are operations called alienation and truth. In order to rediscover the diagonal, transference, that connects its extremities, it is enough to notice that just as in Descartes' *cogito*, all that is at stake here is the *subject supposed to know*.

Psychoanalysis postulates that the unconscious where the 'I am not' of the subject has its substance, can be invoked from the 'I do not think' insofar as it imagines itself to be master of its being, namely, not to be language.

But what is at stake is a Klein group or simply the scholastic *pons asinorum*, namely, that there is a fourth comer. This comer combines the results of each operation by representing its essence in its residue. This means that it reverses their relationship, which can be read by writing them by a passage from a right to a left that is here distinguished by an accent.

The cycle through which the impasse of the subject is consummated by revealing its truth must in effect be closed there.

The lack of being that constitutes alienation is established by reducing it to desire. Not that it is not thinking (here let us be Spinozian), but that it takes up its place through this incarnation of the subject called castration, and through the organ of failure that the phallus becomes in it. Such is the void that is so uncomfortable to approach.

It can be handled by being enveloped in the container it creates. Rediscovering in order to do this the droppings which testify that the subject is only an effect of language; I have promoted them as o-objects. Whatever their number or the way they are fashioned, let us recognise in them why the notion of creature, which adheres to the subject, is prior to any fiction. There has simply not been recognised in them the very *nihil* from which all creation proceeds, but the *Dasein* invented to cover these same quite uncatholic objects, does not make us look any better in their regard.

So then, it is from the void that centres them that these objects borrow the function of cause that they become for desire (a metaphor incidentally that can no longer be eluded in reviewing the category of cause).

What is important is to notice that they only have this function in desire by being glimpsed in it as solidary with this split (by being at once unequal to it, and joining together to disjoin it), with this split in which the subject appears to himself to be a dyad - or take the lure of his very truth. This is the structure of phantasy noted by us with the brackets whose content is to be pronounced: S barred diamond o.

Here we are again then at the *nihil* of the impasse thus reproduced of the subject supposed to know.

To find its hilum, let us notice that it is only possible to reproduce it because in producing itself it is already repetition.

The examination of the group, in effect, does not show up to now in its three operations that we are - alienation, truth and transference - anything that allows a return to zero by reduplicating them: Klein's law positing that negation is cancelled out by reduplication.

Far from it, when there are opposed to it three formulae. The first of these, long ago minted by me, states: there is no Other of the Other, in other words no metalanguage. The second dispatches to its inanity the question whose enthusiasm already denounced who was going to split away from my propositions: why does he not say the true about the true? The third gives the continuation that is announced by it: there is no transference of transference.

To fix the one way streets on a graph is instructive because it demonstrates a convergence that specifies each vertex by a number.

Again it must not be masked that each of these operations is already the zero product of what inserted into the real, what it is dealing with, namely, this time proper to the field that it analyses, the one that Freud reached by saying that it is repetition.

The pastness it contains is something quite different to domination by the past which has rendered it futile.

It is this act through which there occurs, anachronistically, the interference of the difference contributed by the signifier. When repeated, what was, is different, by becoming subject to restatement. With regard to the act insofar as it wants to say something, every *passage a l'acte* simply operates in the wrong direction. It leaves to one side 'acting out' in which what speaks is not a subject, but truth.

In pushing this exigency of the act, I am the first to announce correctly what is poorly sustained by a frivolous statement commonly made: the primacy of the sexual act.

It is articulated by the separation of two formulae. First, there is no sexual act, to be understood as: which is weighty enough to affirm in the subject the certainty that it is of a particular sex. Second, there is only the

sexual act, implies: which gives thinking a way of defending itself since the subject is split in it: cf., the structure of the phantasy above.

Biological bisexuality is to be left to the legacy of Fliess. It has nothing to do with what is at stake: the incommensurability of the o-object to the unit that the conjunction of beings of opposite sexes implies in the subjective exigency of its act.

I have used the golden number to demonstrate that it cannot be resolved except in the manner of sublimation.

I have already articulated repetition and haste at the foundation of a logical time'. Sublimation completes them so that a new graph, oriented by their relation, gives satisfaction by reduplicating the previous one, because it completes the Klein group - inasmuch as its four vertices are equal because they gather together as many operational conjunctions. Again, by being two, these graphs inscribe the distance of the subject supposed to know by its insertion in the real.

In this way they satisfy the logic that I have proposed for myself, because it pre-supposes that there is no other entry for the subject into the real than the phantasy.

Starting from there the clinician, who testifies that the discourse of his patients takes up mine every day, will be authorised to make room for some facts of which nothing is made otherwise. First the fact that the phantasy is a sentence on the model of *a child is being beaten* which Freud left us to be used. Or again, that the phantasy, this one for example, and it is a feature that Freud underlines in it, is found in very distinct neurotic structures.

He will then be able not to miss the function of phantasy, as is done by using, without naming it, my reading of Freud, by claiming an understanding of his texts, only to better repudiate what they require.

Phantasy, to take things at the level of interpretation, plays the function of an axiom in it, namely, is distinguished from the variable laws of deduction which specify in each structure the reduction of symptoms, by figuring there in a constant mode. The least set, in the mathematical sense of the term, teaches enough about it for an analyst by exercising himself at it, to find its grain.

Restored in this way to the logical register, phantasy will make him sense all the better the place he holds for the subject. It is the same one that the logical register designates, and it is the place of the real.

This means it is far from the neurotic *bargain* which with its forms of frustration, aggression, etc., has taken psychoanalytic thinking to the point of making it lose its Freudian criteria.

For in the enactings of the neurotic it can be seen that he only approaches the phantasy through opera-glasses, so busy is he sustaining the desire of the Other by keeping it in suspense in different ways. The psychoanalyst would do well not to make himself his servant.

This would help him to distinguish from him the pervert, much more closely confronted with the impasse of the sexual act. Just as much subject as he of course, but one who makes of the toils of the phantasy the conducting system through which he steals by a short-circuit an enjoyment from which the locus of the Other separates him no less.

With this reference to enjoyment there opens up the only ontics we can avow. But it is not nothing that it cannot even be approached in practice except by the ravines which are traced in it from the locus of the Other.

With this I have sustained for the first time that this locus of the Other is not to be seen anywhere else than in the body. It is not intersubjectivity, but scars on the tegumentary body, peduncles which by being connected to its orifices play the function of plugs, ancestral artifices and techniques which erode it.

I have blocked the route to the mistake which, taking its theme from masochism, drowns in its dribble the analytic discourse and makes something sickening of it.

The displays of masochism are enough to reveal in it the most general form of cutting short the vain attempts in which the sexual act is lost, displays that are all the easier because it goes on to be reduplicated by an ironic proof.

Anything that elides the salient aspect of its features as perverse event, is enough to disqualify its reference as metaphor.

I think I can help to suppress this abuse by recalling that the word 'cowardice' is provided us as being the most proper to pinpoint what designates it in the very discourse of patients. They thus testify that they perceive better than the doctors, the ambiguity of the relation that links their desire to the Other. Moreover the term has its letters patent of nobility, having been recorded by Freud from the mouth of the Ratman, as worthy of being picked out for us.

I cannot omit the moment at the end of one year when I was able to invoke number as a factor of my audience, in order to recognise in it what made up for this void whose obstruction elsewhere, far from yielding to me, draws comfort from responding to me.

Logical realism (to be understood mediaevally), so implicated in science that it fails to notice it, is proved by my labours. Five hundred years of nominalism could be interpreted as resistance and would be dissipated if political conditions did not still gather together those who only survive by professing that the sign is nothing more than representation.

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