

**SOME CLINICAL CONSEQUENCES
OF THE LOGICAL DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE SEXES**

We have tried to follow as closely as possible the movements of the writing by which Lacan arrived at his formulae, in the hope of dissipating while doing so some stubborn obscurities, due in large measure to the interpretations that he was the first to make of them – among others, the one that sees in the exception, in $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$, the logical writing of the totemic father, of him who is supposed by definition to escape the phallic law valid for all, except for him. Taken in an uncritical way, this interpretation confuses a singular (there are never x totemic fathers per hoard) and a particular which, by definition, does not as such lay claim to singularity. At least in logic, where it is of overriding importance to distinguish between a particular proposition and a singular proposition which, for its part, implies one and only one individual, posing by this fact other problems a propos the existence of the element with respect to which it asserts something. Lacan, though giving the example of the totemic father, does not get involved in this confusion since he believes it appropriate to name this $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$ ‘theatleastoneman’ (*l’hommeinzun*), and therefore leaves open the possibility that there are several of them capable of supporting this exception. By reducing the particular affirmative to a singular proposition, one is exposed inversely to missing out on the difficult status of the exception that this particular encircles because by bringing its extension down to just one individual, we may as well let the narcissism of each do as it will to reduce this exception to a ‘self’ (momentarily projected into the exceptional other), and in this way play half the fish caught by Lacan.

Likewise, a number of commentaries search in the notall for some essence or other of femininity, or for the enjoyment described as feminine, involving everything in a hopeless misunderstanding since what is at stake, from one end of the writings to the other, is deconstructing the possibility of a duality of essences in order to write a non-relationship.

We are nevertheless left with a serious problem on our hands. To have set aside from the outset any sense that might come from the appellations ‘man’ and ‘woman’ obliges us to give its place and its function to this bipartition. The initial a priori, that the formulae take over and deal with things in their own way but that they do not invent, comes down to

distinguishing two sides, one for which it is affirmed that there does not exist an essence 'Woman'¹, and therefore no strictly symbolic mapping out of this element, and the other where inversely we support the existence of an essence 'Man' which, for its part, develops a symbolic value of the element. At first sight, we are therefore dealing with an oppositional couple, and Milner might have been right to reduce the whole affair to the presence/absence of a distinctive stroke.

The all and its strict bipartition

The refusal of the Freudian myth – 'there is no *all women*' – is not very solidly supported in this case. How conceive that 'Woman' does not accede to the pure symbol? One of the rare reasons that may here be invoked comes from the absence of the phallic stroke, which would prevent the reduction of an individual to this single stroke taking the place of symbol. Alas, a certain common sense, crossbred today with a structuralism decreed moreover to be superseded, has no longer any difficulty in seeing in the absence of a stroke a decisive stroke. Which is how, in this precise case, it is mistaken.

To become aware of this, we must come up anew against the difficulty that punctuates this journey from the beginning: the impossible relationship between *difference* (which articulates relative terms), and the *quality* (which founds absolute, namely separate terms). If only the first, this man/woman difference, were at stake, it would be self-evident that the absence of a stroke on one side would respond to the presence of the same stroke on the other side, and would therefore be valid as a stroke qualifying Woman *as opposed* to Man. But let us now try to establish the quality that qualifies Man and the quality that qualifies Woman, without articulating them to one another from the outset. The absence of stroke is no longer as quick to act as a reference point to subsume the diversity of (logical) individuals which do not find their place from the side of the presence of the stroke, and we better understand Lacan's prudence in noting that in denying Man, one goes over to the Woman side, but that in denying Woman nothing

¹ Reminder: when each sex is considered as an essence, it is given a capital.

guarantees that one will go back to the Man side². If in effect I deny the presence of a given stroke, I get its absence, but if I deny its absence, how can I know that I am going to rediscover that very stroke or a completely different one, or nothing at all? I would only rediscover it if I had given myself at the start a set composed exclusively of two sub-sets, 'Man' and 'Woman', in such a way that everything that is not be on one side will obligatory be on the other. Lacan, as we have seen on several occasions, refuses this dualism, and this is the reason why the absence of phallic stroke has no *complementary* value as compared to its presence, opening up by this very fact another space, liable to other rules.

Why does he reject this dualism? It would have been enough to adopt it to settle matters in the most classical way, by setting up the woman as the sexual object of the man and reciprocally, making both of them waltz with more or less happiness to the rowing-boat rhythm of the phallus. Now what creates an objection to this harmony is nothing but this little grain of sand, decisive for any self-respecting Freudian: *the drive does not entertain any natural and pre-established relationship to its object*. It indubitably aims at its own satisfaction, but the object that it requires to arrive at is said by Freud to be any one whatsoever:

Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together – a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bonds that exist in our thoughts between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object attractions.³

² J. Lacan, *...ou pire*, 10 May 1972, 15: '[...] this bipartition that is fleeting at every instant, this bipartition between the man and the woman. Everything that is not man...is it woman? One might tend to admit it. But since the woman is 'notall' why would everything that is not woman be man?'

³ S. Freud, *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*, SE VII 148

Here is the turning point that Lacan, in his way, pursues beyond what Freud himself had been able to conclude from it. He was all the more inclined to do so in that there was spread out before him, under the colours of the most orthodox Freudianism, the enormity of the genital object that Freud himself had never produced. We have seen that if the drives *converge* on the primacy of the phallus, it is assuredly not under the heading of their object, or thanks to it. The silent and naïve forging of the genital object in the French psychoanalysis of the fifties de facto brought Freud's invention back into the mould of a normalizing thought which no longer read in the aporias of the Oedipus complex any more than the matrix of a heterosexuality conceived as the therapeutic finality of analytic work. This genital object did not owe a whole lot to Freud, but a great deal to the French psychiatric tradition which, ever since Moreau de Tours, was based on the notion, at that time almost obvious, of the reproductive instinct (*instinct génésique*) which reduced human sexuality to procreation, as in the finest days of Christian moral theology since the 11th Century⁴. Since an instinct guided the man towards the woman and reciprocally, it was enough to miss the Freudian step that uncoupled *Trieb* and *Objekt* to fall straight onto this genital object. Every deviation with respect to this instinct allowed the new concept of 'perversion' to be thought out with the musty smell of unhealthy pathology that accompanied this nosographical term. To slip up on this point, to hold men and women to be naturally *complementary*, came back therefore to abandoning psychoanalysis to psychology which, under the cover of 'the science of man', was in the process of acquiring its academic dignity, and already sought to establish on the Freudian terrain a clinic suitable to give some lustre to a psychopathology wanting to distinguish itself from psychiatry. One can imagine why Lacan was intent on fighting against this current, and for that reason to set up a fundamental disequilibrium in the inevitable bipartition of the human being.

He found himself in effect warned by the fact that the same logical gesture serves to establish a strict duality between the sexes (even if it

⁴ For Moreau de Tours and the reproductive instinct, see Donald Davidson. For Christian theology, Mark Jordan, *The invention of sodomy in Christian theology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997

entails refining it subsequently in ambiguous cases), and to partition living beings into normal and pathological (with the same innumerable border problems). In both cases, one is silently presupposing a world, a closed well circumscribed given, that one then divides in a clairvoyant way into two opposed and complementary parts, with the then unavoidable consequence (109) that being absent from one side equals being present on the other. Inversely by becoming attentive to the mutual support lent by a strict bipartition of one class into two subclasses and the universal which, thanks to its 'forall', is able to find in each of these subclasses what is not in the other, one can better divine how the logical regulation of the sexes insofar as they are supposed to be substantially two and the sovereign hold of the universal in the operation of the concept are two sides of the same coin. Sex and logic have indeed a shared interest, at least in their way of impressing by counting up to two.

The merit of the formulae of sexuation comes down first of all to not treating separately these two aspects of the same question, and operating on the universal so that, by making it trip up at the right place, to deconstruct the sexually opposed couple which, in a first phase, served to pose it. The whole trick depends on ensuring that this equilibrium does not generate any symmetry, that the stroke present on the left (which grounds the all) and the absence of stroke on the right (which requires a notall) do not share any already circumscribed space. Within a completely different horizon, when rewriting the Saussurian algorithm of the sign to accommodate it to his preoccupations, we remember that Lacan was careful to leave entirely to one side the band that encircling signifier and signified, both separated by the bar⁵. It is the same here: one must go to the trouble of exploding the circle, not drawn, to be sure, but oh how easily thought, that could surround the formulae and bring them back to an inner articulation of one and the same space, that of the phallic function insofar as it is numerically restricted.

⁵ G. Le Gaufey, *L'incomplétude du symbolique de René Descartes à Jaques Lacan*, Paris, EPEL, 1991, p.147-158.

From the universal to the concept

To get to the point of taking one's distance vis-à-vis so natural a suggestion, which tends to enclose a field once it has been posed, it would be well to return to the reasons that fortify Lacan in his struggle against the universal affirmative proposition, in a clear way since at least 1962. Why does he insist that at the level of the universal negative, and in accordance with the example that he takes of the universal affirmative 'all strokes are vertical', there should be stated, not 'all strokes are not vertical' but 'there is no stroke (not vertical)'? Why privilege the nothing where Aristotle, Apuleius and Kant (among so many others!) saw only a plurality of subjects denying the predicate of the universal affirmative? We have to look hard to encounter some clear affirmation on this point. On 7 March 1962 nevertheless, he puts forward:

In the first disc of the circle [in other words the top right quadrangle, the universal negative] it is a matter of preserving the rights of the nothing, on top, because it is what creates below the perhaps, namely, the possibility. Far from being able to say as an axiom – and this is the stupefying error of the whole abstract deduction of the transcendental – far from being able to say that anything real is possible, it is only starting from the not possible that the real takes its place. What the subject is looking for is this real qua precisely not possible; it is the exception [...]

We have been able to see that such a decision only found its consistency much later in Lacan by basing itself on the *maximal* particular, but from 17 January of this same year 1962, from the bringing into operation of different logical propositions on the basis of a universal negative affirming 'there is no man who does not lie'⁶, he comes to ask the question: 'What interest do we have in using a system like this?'. His response is worth quoting at length.

What we contribute to renew the question is the following: I am saying that Freud promulgates, puts forward the following formula: the father is God or every father is God. There results, if we maintain this proposition at the universal level: there is no other father but God, which on the other hand as regards existence is in Freudian reflection rather *aufgehoben*, rather suspect, indeed radically in

⁶ The choice of such a statement shows that already in 1962 the reference to Peirce in Lacan was accompanied by a conception of the universal negative equivalent to the universal affirmative. 'There is no man who does not lie' (universal negative) is in effect equivalent to 'all men are liars', *omnis homo mendax* (universal affirmative).

doubt. What is involved is that the order of function that we are introducing with the name of the father is this something which, at the same time, has its universal value, but which leaves to you, to the other, the task of determining whether there is or not a father of this stature. If none exists, it is still true that the father is God, simply the father is only confirmed by the empty sector of the dial [...] it is precisely these two sectors [...] which gives their full import to what we can state as universal affirmation.

What limits the range of the universal affirmative in Lacan's eyes is therefore double: not alone does it find itself denied by the particular affirmative which supports the existence of exceptions, but by reason of this choice of the maximal particular, the universal affirmative agrees with the universal negative (they are conjointly true or false) while this latter no longer takes account of any subject – this is the novelty. We have here, all of a sudden, a handling of the universal that right away goes beyond the sexual question since the central concept produced at that time by Lacan – the name-of-the-father – is for its part also liable to the same economy, as we have just read: its truth is not brought into play at the simple level of the particulars (yes, there are some of them that verify this statement, and others not), but it tolerates very well the total absence of realization. Here is the nothing whose 'rights it is a matter of preserving', and which explodes Pierce's well-circled quadrangle to which people too often reduce Lacan's formulae (it is true that, here also, he was the first to do it).

It is a matter of hammering in at every level that the Other is not one; that what is valid for the big-Other-treasury-of-signifiers is valid for the sex-Other; that no *heteros* encloses the *allos*; that no *alter* subsumes the *alius*; that man and woman are not aliquot parts in sex, but indeed aliquant; that the sets that do not belong to themselves are not to be accounted for like those that belong to themselves, etc. The incompleteness which already gave its makeup to the Lacan style of symbolic is indispensable in the question of sex once it is a matter of writing its internal logic, to put to work this symbolic by which are announced the universal propositions which allow to be predicated a certain number of individuals, to be fabricated a knowledge on the different postures with respect to phallic enjoyment. But this incompleteness, henceforth taken up again in the form of logical formulae which in detailing its functions, also involves a different

positioning vis-à-vis the theory that psychoanalysis requires. How do these formulae take umbrage at the classical handling of the concept? How do they come to cut across this other fateful couple, theory/practice?

The two types of logical contrariety

To understand this, we must allow ourselves to return for the last time to the double acceptance of the particular, maximal and minimal. That Aristotle should have judged it right to set one of them aside to better settle the question which concerned him, and that via Apuleius and some others this decision should have weighed heavily on the history of logic, all that has not got rid of the problem that is at once logical, language-dependent and sexual since it depends on the ambiguity of the opposition of contraries at the level of universals, which determines the double value of the particular: sometimes the contraries are presented like the two extremes of the same genus (from the one to the other, there is a continuity), and sometimes they are incarnated in terms which cannot tolerate being united and mutually exclude one another (between the two there is a separation).

How differentiate with complete clarity contrariety by contrast and contrariety by incompatibility? There is little chance that their negation will produce the same result! And we have been able to see that this question is par excellence the one posed by the sexes, which sometimes oppose one another without excluding one another, reciprocally complement one another, and sometimes are excluded one from the other, incarnating in their own way the double value of the 'or', sometimes inclusive sometimes exclusive (respectively *vel* and *aut* in Latin). But the approach through the particulars presents first of all the interest of showing us how the logical square which seems to inspire respect by its perfect order, is itself defective.

What differences can one legitimately conceive between the particular affirmative ($\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$) and the particular negative ($\overline{\forall x. \Phi x}$)? For the first, the tongue comes to our help by saying 'some' and for the second Lacan takes over an expression of Aristotle and raises it to a neologism with his 'notall'; on the one hand, an affirmation of existence: yes, there are indeed at least some, and on the other hand a restriction: some, yes, but not

all. A precious detail...for the logician much more than for the speaker, who has most often perfectly well interpreted ‘some’ in its restrictive value with respect to the all. If I learn that some passengers have lost their lives in an air crash, I will not for a single moment imagine that all having been lost, I am informed that at least some have been. Brunschwig’s ‘maximal’ sense is the first that the tongue promotes, and, far from being complex (the union of the partitive and of the restrictive), it appears there as most simple term: the partitive is from the start a restrictive, and if one wants it not to be so, if one leans, like the logicians towards the minimal sense of the particular, then and then only is it appropriate to go against the tongue by specifying what is not self-evident, namely that ‘some, because not all’, that the particular affirmative is only a partial instantiation of a universal truth (in the universe of the chosen discourse, the scientific one par excellence which, in its search for universal truths, is only interested in minimal particulars). Leibnitz himself strained his ingenuity in distinguishing between the restrictive some, and the indeterminate some, when the Venn diagrams⁷ proved, for their part, to be incapable of representing separately the two types of particulars, which in logic earns them the qualification of ‘troublesome propositions’ in the measure that the senses that they distinguish refer to affirmative and negative universals that are sometimes contradictory and sometimes equivalent.

The logical square in effect associates each particular to its universal according to quality: the affirmatives to the left, the negatives to the right. Besides, in both cases of particular (maximal and minimal), a relation of contradiction is maintained between each universal and its opposite particular according to quality: the particular affirmative denies the universal negative, and the particular negative denies the universal affirmative. The double sense of contrariety, that was difficult to read at the

⁷ Taking up again the initiative of Leonhard Euler (1707-1783), who wanted to educate a princess by explaining syllogistic reasoning to her with the help of intersecting and non-intersecting circles, John Venn (1834-1923) generalized them in the form of ‘Venn diagrams’, which respond to the following definition: ‘A schematic representation of sets by closed plane curves without a double point whose interior points are the elements of the set represented, commonly called *patate*’ Alain Bouvier, Michel George et Francois Le Lionnais, *Dictionnaire des mathématiques*, Paris, PUF, 1979, p.774. In *Le Lasso spéculaire* (Paris, EPEL, 1997), I tried to penetrate a part of the mystery of this *patate*.

level of two universals, is transparent then in their negation in the measure that the tongue only offers a single word for the existential particular affirmative and the restrictive particular negative: some. By choosing the minimal sense, Aristotle and the logical tradition privileged the ‘some’ of the particular affirmative which denies the ‘null’ of the universal negative, without any restrictive nuance, and leaves the field free to the *dictum de omni*, to the fact that this ‘some’ is implied by the universal affirmative: ‘some because all’. By only coming second, the restrictive negative particular, the one obtained by denying the universal affirmative, loses a lot by also using ‘some’ since, to remove the equivocation of this supposedly simple element, we have to add ‘some but not all’, in other words the restriction which qualifies this position in the maximal version.

Lacan for his part remains within the limits of the classical logical square (at no time does he take on board the ‘logical hexagon’ proposed by R. Blanché in his *Structures intellectuelles*), but he inverts its values. Under its apparent symmetry, the Aristotelian logical square inclined to the left by favouring the particular affirmative, as much by the fact of its agreement with the universal affirmative as by its ontological weight resulting from its contradiction with the universal negative; that of Lacan inclines, for its part, to the right by giving priority to the not all, to the particular negative, to the point that the particular affirmative, the $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$ only manages to be written as a negation of the universal negative and not as a part of the universal affirmative, since it contradicts it. Blanché himself, in tackling the same logical square, explicitly takes into account the difficulty in conceiving the particular affirmative at first as the negation of the universal negative: ‘The only true opposites, the remark has been made more than once, are those that are mutually exclusive, namely the contraries and the contradictories. That is why, in the logical square itself, the construction of the fourth position *i* (the particular affirmative) with the negation has something indirect and forced about it⁸.’ The fact that this particular affirmative produced in this way enters into contradiction with the universal affirmative ($\forall x. \Phi x$) is therefore not first (as a number of commentaries try to establish

⁸ R. Blanché, *Structures intellectuelles*, op. cit., p.59.

in interpreting from the start this particular as an exception to the rule of the universal), but results from the prior affirmation of the not-all (first stage in the construction of the particulars of the square of the formulae of sexuation) since, by denying the universal affirmative, this particular negative leaves the field free to the $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$ of the particular affirmative (it will be remembered that they are equivalent, that they are therefore true or false conjointly).

By privileging, with its notall, the restrictive aspect of the particular negative which has kept in check the universal affirmative as well as the negative, Lacan at once agrees with the tongue and empties the universal of its residual ontology. In the classical Aristotelian acceptance, ‘all men’ possessed indeed some existence, supported as it was by this particular existential which had lent it assistance by offering it the shelter of a ‘some’ in harmony with it. With the Lacan version of the logical square, we are finished with that: ‘all men’ becomes a strictly symbolic element on which it is of course permitted to predicate ($\forall x. \Phi x$), but whose existence nothing assures for the moment. The universal negative makes the thing still more explicit since in it we allow ourselves to predicate in the absence of a subject: $\overline{\exists x. \Phi x}$.

The particular existentials, affirmative and negative, are therefore no longer the partial instantiations of universal truths. Quite the contrary, they are only valid by wrong-footing it, by objecting to the universality that they reject by common disagreement. To suppose that all say yes $\forall x. \Phi x$ and that there are none who say no $\overline{\exists x. \Phi x}$, those who say no $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$, and those who say yes $\overline{\forall x. \Phi x}$ cock a double snoot at the universal statements that claim to govern them.

The consistency of analytic knowledge

The logical arrangement explained in this way creates a new epistemological situation, and the degree to which it suits psychoanalytic knowledge remains to be appreciated, in as much as it also presents a very singular *consistency*. First some remarks to approach the latter, impossible

to pinpoint using a local observation in the measure that it involves a global property.

After a century of proliferation, one can affirm that this knowledge is cumulative to an extraordinarily small degree. Who could claim to have yet added a stone to the Freudian edifice? The men and women who have worked in this field (today they are almost legion) may be accepted as having built on Freudian foundations - otherwise the adjective would escape them - , but their developments scarcely amount to adding to the Freudian corpus to form a new homogeneous whole. Disparity remains essential for the comprehension of their work, and if Freud lends to each of them more or less of his knowledge⁹ (just as everyone is very careful to anchor in the Freudian text the essential of his own inventions), the respect for the heterogeneity of the corpus remains the condition for an attentive reading of the different authors. Which is why psychoanalysis is resolutely not a science since, in this field, if the historian knows how to render to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, the manuals which serve to transmit established knowledge have no need to scrupulously respect the diversity of contributors.

Each generation of analysts must in this way 'learn its lessons' by reading Freud, most often through the spectacles of some lineage of commentators. A major part of analytic literature is thus composed of exercises in learning the Freudian language (Lacanian, Kleinian, Bionian, etc.), which have scarcely any ambition to innovate, but serve as a step at the entrance of the corporation. No criticism in this remark which is only there to underline the style of the acquisition of a knowledge of undeniable richness in texts to be shared and of a no less certain poverty in experiences with which to sympathize. On this last point, each one only refers to itself and to its presuppositions regarding the others that surround it, a great difference to the scientific researcher who has almost more facilities for sharing his experiences than his theories.

⁹ Example: I do not know of a specific theory of repression in Lacan. His specular ego is not an agency suitable to repress, nor is the 'I', and still less the subject. Will it be the signifier itself? Impossible. And therefore, even though he clearly rejects Freud's perception/consciousness ego, he continues to need it to use the notion of repression.

Faced with this particularity, perilous for the transmission of their practice, analysts have rather quickly reacted along two different and even divergent paths, each one seeking nevertheless to constitute a homogeneous field, apt to subsume the diversity of authors and situations that it claims to include. On the one hand, the academic path, which offers to psychoanalysis the consistency of a higher education knowledge with its degrees, with its titulars, its diplomas, its regularly renewed audience; on the other, rather relegated in institutes and other schools despite its frankly medical model, a clinic is put in place which, saddled without any other form of procedure with the adjective 'psychoanalytic', aspires to what academic knowledge does not even lay claim to: to transmit the very core of analytic experience, beyond theoretical diversities held to be irreducible. And with them to install the psychoanalyst in his operational legitimacy.

Such a clinic nevertheless suffers, at first sight, from a constitutive defect. The one that medicine invented presents itself on a sort of irreducible tripod in which the natural signs of illness offer themselves (anyway, almost! I am not forgetting that it is very often necessary to circumscribe them, which has nothing neutral about it, but there is no question of fabricating them) to a double look: the partly naïve one of the pupil desiring to establish the difference between his book learning and the reality of illness; the learned and pragmatic one of the experienced clinician of the fundamental equivocation of signs held to be pathological. Psychoanalysis, for its part, obliged as it is to refuse any third party in its arrangements, cannot produce any clinical sign as a natural sign, observable by anyone whomsoever lay or professional. How could a clinic be constituted while being incapable of offering to the signs that it promotes the space in which they might be unfolded without any other artifice?

On the vignette style case

This crucial (and constitutive) deficiency has led to a terribly ambiguous conception of the case. Since it has from all time had its Freudian letters patent of nobility, many pretend not to see any problem in it: if Freud did it, why should we not do it, we who want to be Freudians? Here, the etymology of the word 'author' can help, because indeed it is

‘authority’ that is at stake. When Freud wrote some of the different cases that punctuate his work, he based himself on a historicity of events of which he gives more or less an account, inviting us by this very fact to swallow his version of the facts¹⁰. Can one imagine a clinical tutor who would be happy to ‘recount’ the signs that the student should be able to identify in the perceptual magma that awaits him in his medical practice? Magisterial lectures overflow with these descriptions of signs, accompanied by their rational explanations! What is expected, on the contrary, from a clinic worthy of the name, is that a sign not invented by the clinician might find its place in the theoretical knowledge which integrates it into the heart of a rational texture. The clinic appears in this sense as the locus of a deictics charged with making the liaison between a fragment of theoretical knowledge, where the sign is described in its rational and relational complexity, and the *hic et nunc* of a sign received and perceived in the opacity of its presence.

Nothing of the kind in what concerns the account of a psychoanalytic case, where one is bound to believe the one who recounts it. Just as much as if it were a master, otherwise...the case runs the risk of being forgotten before even having touched existence. Hence the paradox: the psychoanalytic clinic is only sustained by magisterial cases, and leaves in the shadows of its immense unpublished literature the swarm of clinical accounts. Even Lacan, who is so often accused of not having spoken about ‘his cases’, will have left behind him enough to construct a certain number, the man of the fresh brains, Joyce, Lucie Tower, without forgetting his entry into psychoanalysis, Marguerite Anzieu, Aimée. The fact that they have in the main been constructed by his pupils more than by himself does not change the deal: they derive their authority first of all from his first footprint.

This style of transmission of the case is evidently not the prerogative of psychoanalysis. Psychiatry itself has produced throughout its short

¹⁰ Today now that witnesses or historians have produced texts dealing with the same events, one can read some partiality in Freud as narrator. Should we for all that content with **XX** refusing to relent towards him? What relationships between psychoanalysis and history?

history celebrated cases¹¹, which have served as a touchstone for theoretical confrontations in this field. And one might just as well launch oneself here into a detailed study of moral or religious casuistry to discover the same phenomenon. Nevertheless people do not for all that speak there about ‘clinic’: they are content to start from a common narrative, to open up the range of possible interpretations. What therefore in our day is called ‘clinical’ in psychoanalysis?

If one puts to one side the flood of psychopathological publications, who think they depend on the clinic because they treat of entities that are themselves held to be clinical (hysteria, phobia, infantile psychosis, negative transference, etc), there remains a swarm of little texts, disseminated in general in articles or books that can be differently described, but which all take a case into account, in a few lines or a few pages (maximum). This has been called for thirty or so years, (no more) clinical vignettes, and the success of appellation has been such that it has passed without difficult into English (clinical vignette), as well as Spanish (*viñetas clínicas*).

The word ‘vignette’ appeared at first in the form of *vignature* to designate ornaments in the shape of a fig leaf that framed medieval miniatures. But when typography got involved in it, it took over the word to signify ‘the ornamental motif printed on top of the first page of a book or a chapter, then to any position on the page¹². From then on, the word, without changing its first sense, invaded multiple sectors of daily life: playing cards, commercial labels, fiscal stamps (the *vignette automobile* and others¹³), without neglecting its first love: cul-de-lampes. It is even charged already with a stereotyped sense with the expression ‘*faire vignette*’ towards the end of the 19th Century¹⁴.

¹¹ Example: Ernst Wagner, Robert Gaupp, *Un monstre et son psychiatre*. trad., Claude Béal et al., Paris, EPEL, 1996. Also: Raquel Capurro, Diego Nin, “*Je l’ai tué, dit-elle, c’est mon père*”, trad., Françoise Ben Kemoun, Paris, EPEL, 2004

¹² *Trésor de la langue française, TLF*, tome XVI, p.1145.

¹³ ‘In 1963, the government established by legislation the placing of a vignette on tobacco, designed to contribute 5.5 million francs per year to social security’, *Le Monde*, 21 May 1986, p.21, col.2-3.

¹⁴ The poet Jules Laforgue, in his *Imitation de la lune*, written in 1886: ‘Absolute, draped with layettes,/At the honeymoon of l’Hymette./We had far too much the air of vignette!’ quoted in the *TLF*, tome XVI, p.1145. The expression ‘*faire vignette*’ had gone out of fashion but a certain psychoanalysis is giving it a new lease of life.

Whatever the difference of workmanship in these vignettes that ornament, decorate, garland, enhance, embellish, adorn remarks that one fears lack some flesh, it is remarkable that they all accomplish the same task, which moreover justifies their appellation: *to illustrate*, by a demonstrative example, some statement that is too arid and because of this is qualified as ‘theoretical’. Rather than falling back on what is very often caricatural in this literature, I am choosing here in something I have recently read a text of some amplitude, which sets out to describe the course of a treatment in a dozen or so pages¹⁵. After a very detailed account, approaching the conclusion, we read the following:

It thus appears to me that, in the Winnicottian perspective which I hold to, the phobic manifestations described here can be completely understood as so many means Pauline used to protect herself against this threat of a collapse, ‘a danger that one looks for in the future even though it took place in the past’.

I would not dream here either of criticizing a reference to Winnicott rather than to some other author, or of casting doubt on the pertinence, relative to the case, of this theoretical and practical support taken by the analyst throughout this treatment. What is important to me on the contrary is the ‘can be completely understood’ which states in the apparently prudent style of possibility, a link of implication between the Winnicottian thesis of the fear of collapse in phobias because of a melancholic kernel inherited from the time before the ego/non-ego differentiation¹⁶ and the tribulations of the aforementioned Pauline. This link, present throughout the text, is reaffirmed in the summary:

In a Winnicottian perspective, the course of the treatment has, in fact, allowed there to be progressively highlighted a defensive organisation against a subjective collapse of a melancholic type.

The particular affirmative – Pauline and the account of her undoubted and romantic existence – does indeed fall, even if it is *grosso*

¹⁵ Laura Dethiville, ‘Chambre avec vue’, in *Les lettres de la SPF* no.14, Paris, SPF-Campagne-Premiere, 2005, p.55-67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.67. Winnicott’s sentence presented in this quotation is not particularly reference, except by apparently referring back to the..., mentioned on the preceding page of her article. This link, present right through the text, is reaffirmed in the resume:

modo, into the abstract category that every reader of Winnicott knows, at least in its major lines; but why produce a harmony of this kind between a case and what it is supposed to depend on to respond to a certain idea of the clinic according to which knowledge is congruent to the reality that it describes. In a first phase this appears so obvious, so simple, that it is not easy to see the bundle of hypotheses that accompany this vision.

If I produce a concept, it is indeed in effect with the idea that a certain number of objects and/or situations *correspond* to its definition, and that therefore the links that it entertains with its colleagues, the other concepts, are so many directions for research proposed to my study. There is no fault to be found in this; most knowledge, including scientific, goes along with it. Now a concept is like a universal in that it claims to state something that is valid for *all the individuals* who ‘fall’ under it. It intends to subsume them to make itself the bearer of a truth which, belonging to each one, is valid for all, and allows this plurality to be treated as a unity, liable to relations up to then unexpected with other unities of the same order.

Nevertheless, our prior logical journey has shown that such an implication of the universal towards its particular only takes up the minimal particular, and that this type of logical functioning cannot claim to be the only rigorous one; the maximal can just as well do so, even though it objects to the universal of the same quality (and what is more to the other). It then becomes possible to free oneself a little from the intimidation with which a certain rationality intends to reduce every use of the concept to the subsuming of positive occurrences, and to envisage the relationship of the concept with every existence, whatever it may be, in an eminently contradictory way: no longer a relationship of congruence, but of active refusal. *The stroke that the object, the situation or the individual presents, and which allows them to be ranged under a particular concept, is in effect not of the same nature as the stroke present in the concept*¹⁷. This point, almost illegible in the minimal particular, explodes in the maximal. To take a trivial example, if ‘all say yes’, to affirm that ‘there exist some who do not

¹⁷ It would be well to remember here the debates evoked in the first chapter on the question of specific identity and of ‘abstractive induction’.

say yes' right away places these some in an existence that gives first place to the presence of the symbolic stroke since I take them into account even when they do not flaunt it. In affirming existences that do not fall under the concept, I give precedence to existence, and in so doing, without in any way attacking the conceptual order itself, I offer it on the contrary a possibility of consisting otherwise than as the map of a country that is already there, otherwise then as a map that might offer me, to scale and with a great economy of effort, an opportunity for me to locate myself, thanks to a cohort of organized signs, in the overcomplicated and diverse world of my perceptions.

To give precedence to one or other of the two types of particular does not depend therefore simply on a technical choice, as Aristotle's decision might be thought to be, but involves almost diametrically opposed perspectives in the way of making a knowledge operate relatively to the experiences that it frames. The promotion of the 'polemical fact' in Bachelard's epistemology is characteristic of a dominance of the maximal particular in the search for the experiment that is going to bring a contradiction to a scientific law received up to then, even though the teaching and the transmission of this very law will be inscribed, without having any need to specify it, in the framework of the minimal particular. However exclusive they may be to one another, neither of these two opinions can claim to lay down the law and to reign alone, without our being able moreover to articulate them rationally with one another. There is here a hiatus that gives rise to two often enemy spiritual families, often deaf to one another, something William James took account of in the following way:

The strife of these two kinds of mental temper will, I think, always be seen in philosophy. Some men will keep insisting on the reason, the atonement that lies at the heart of things, and that we can act *with*; others, on the opacity of brute fact that we must react *against*.¹⁸

¹⁸ William James, *The will to believe* (1896), New York, Dover, 1956, p. 90. (The italics are his). One might also invoke Dr. Pangloss and Voltaire's *Candide*.

For one side, conceptual architecture first of all expresses the order of the world. For the others, first of all it misses it, and from this very missing the object shines forth, is anchored in existence: ‘Is there a concept of a footstep arriving in the dark?’ asks Yves Bonnefoy¹⁹, ‘of the fall of a stone in the undergrowth, of the impression made by an empty house? Of course not. Nothing of the real has been kept except what preserves our peace.’ I have no intention here of reconciling these two approaches, but on the contrary of marking the divergent paths that they open up in the ‘psychoanalytic clinic’.

The clinical vignette and its order

The clinical vignette was born in the crucible of the minimal particular by reason of its belief in conformity (up to that, nothing serious), but it very quickly surrounded this exercise with a naivety that makes it ignore the limits of its relevance, and inflates it then with a false scientific and moral rigor which tends to exclude it from the very clinic that it lays claim to. For, by wanting to only illustrate, it is prevented and forbidden from criticizing, so that the theoretical fragment taken as a reference, whatever may be its breadth, emerges from it with a fearsome reality coefficient.

Since there are existences – those of which an account is being given – that are organized more or less according to the conceptual scaffolding invoked, then the latter is not simply a symbolic construction, a bundle of articulated meanings, but the exact reflection of the workings of the real world! The Platonic cave, always lying in wait for a thought that is organizing itself, surreptitiously regains the upper hand once one leaves the field free to the idea according to which existences are above all shadows taken from Ideas. Add up the clinical vignettes, and you will no longer be able to get out of a realism which erects the chosen theory into a superego with a voracity that goes beyond its knowledge: immense, meddlesome, despotic – protective.

¹⁹ Yves Bonnefoy, ‘Les tombeaux de Ravenne’, *L'improbable et autres essais*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1993, p.13

In this way the clinical vignette triumphs in what Thomas S. Khun was able to call the ‘normal’ periods and surroundings of psychoanalysis, those in which a paradigm has acquired such power in a given milieu that to question it as regards its own consistency is ruled out. It both reigns and governs since, fully occupied with organizing a supposed bric-a-brac, it clothes itself with a legitimacy that affects naturalness by basing itself on common sense: one cannot use a tool and at the same time make it, no? This is the obligated riposte of all established powers: they take all sorts of trouble to dominate the world for its own greater good, and people want them in addition, at the same time, to be transformed, even be soft-sawdered! A kind of indignation often disturbs the evocation of such perspectives, which are to be expected from irresponsible people.

Since paradigms do not show themselves openly, it is moreover necessary that the power in place should produce, or at least authorize, a vulgate of this knowledge that serves as reference; to reinvigorate from time to time its major outlines; in a more hidden way, that it and it alone should be recognized as having access to alterations of the fundamental pattern, because it is from it that all life comes. This textual and theoretical model that focuses the collectivity must therefore be at once living and fixed, life giving and organizing, present and in reserve. Its power has the responsibility to get to the bottom of the diversity of the real since, as an interpretative grill, the vocation of this model is to deal with the variety of situations, but – outside the official retoucher – no one is authorized to question it because then there would be a risk that the boxes of the grill would begin to operate in an anarchic fashion, and run the risk of invalidating the interpretations already given, would run the risk finally of revealing the flaws of this prestigious construction.

The vignette is therefore not a little ornament that is added on to make things look true, and which one could well do without. It shares in a general economy which joins to an unacknowledged philosophical realism a centralized political order, the (local) holder of the legitimacy of the founding text. It promises a semiotics in which the sign is at its foundation an index of the real. It is certainly the reason why we have been able to see such an insistence, among certain Lacanians who are great users of clinical

vignettes, on the anchoring points mentioned by Lacan who, in one or other session of his Seminar on the psychoses, engages himself to give ‘the minimum number of fundamental points of attachment between the signifier and the signified necessary for a human being to be called normal and which, when they are not established, or when they give way, produce the psychotic²⁰’. Subsequently he hardly ever mentions these very risky anchoring points, but it was a godsend for the clinical vignettes, still to come at the time, which are based on this conviction that there are, all the same, a minimal number of unmistakable signs. Thus one can read, in number 52 of the journal *La Cause freudienne*:

Lacan posed that there is in the experience of an analysis an anchoring point, that of the traversing of the phantasy, that it is a matter of demonstrating one by one in accordance with a regular procedure. If subsequently he did investigate the beyond of this anchoring point, it nevertheless remains that he set up from 1967 on the examination of analytic experience, of its results and of its conclusion, at the heart of the analytic community, forcing it to say each time, case by case, what a psychoanalysis is²¹.

The vignette confines us to a determined type of relationship to the text since the relations of authority between the two are such that the victor is known in advance. It being ruled out that one should brandish a case that would make up a proof by direct observation, just imagine the number of pages needed to establish one that would try to contradict...let us say Lacan’s statement according to which ‘there is no sexual relationship’? With this complication, fatal on the Freudian terrain mined by denegation: whoever wants to prove too much...

This order in which the vignette is inscribed would not call for so much criticism if it did not go against, not alone a certain number of theses present in the theoretical corpus we are illustrating, but even its most immediate aims. At first sight, the vignette in effect presents, in narrative mode, using a style of language that in the best of cases is without

²⁰ J. Lacan, *The psychoses...*

²¹ Christine Le Boulengé, ‘La formation des analystes: deux orientations’, *La cause freudienne. Revue de psychanalyse*, no 52, November 2002, p.4-5.

affectation, individuals and events towards which our interest is naturally drawn. In fact, the first lines of a well written vignette are rather agreeable to read, and give the feeling of opening a window in a stuffy room. But this impression invariably turns sour and the Pauline's, the Bernard's, the C's and the P's rather quickly become strange ectoplasms; once their use has been divined, they become really needy, as white as Gilles rolled in flour, with their big red clowns' nose. The singularity that they seemed to have as mission to defend against the steam roller of a faceless theory is reduced to the little finger on the seam of the trousers supposed to accompany the vibrant and sonorous 'Present!' that responds to the roll call in a barrack room. The living flesh expected, blanches by showing itself so submissive, and it is still worse when the proliferation of details thickens without anyone ever causing any speculative difficulty for the interpretation which in the end is going to imprison them.

One might nevertheless think that we are dealing with a complex and varied rhetorical form, so developed in Freudian literature for almost a century that it would be excessive to reduce it to such a servile function. People still take pride in the little spontaneous writings of a Ferenczi, the clinical richness of a Klein. But the promotion of the clinical vignette is more recent, and denotes something other than the Freudian appeal to the case: it responds to the fixation of the Lacanian paradigm and its setting up as a battery in a collectivity engaged in acquiring a professional mastery and of structuring itself on this foundation. Nevertheless what is most important, beyond its sociological function in the analytic milieu, is that the clinical vignette should be based in such a massive and unsuspected way on the minimal particular because, from that, an imperious logic determines how it is used and predisposes it to miss out on some of Lacan's fundamental intuitions regarding the sexes and the standing of analytic knowledge in the clinic of that name.

'There is no sexual relationship' marks a disparity between the sexes such that, far from reducing sexual difference, it amplifies it to the point of making them incommensurable; now this is only obtained by basing oneself from the start on the maximal particular, which invalidates the universal affirmative, which therefore right away puts a spoke in the wheel of the case

which would be content to illustrate the veracity of a theoretical statement. If a particular affirmative happens in effect, in the supposed naivety of its existence, to confirm the universality of a concept (or of a conceptual concatenation), and by so doing puts in place a minimal particular, goodbye to the notall! It will no longer have any chance of emerging, except emptied of its sense, or charged with the misunderstanding which would make of it the brand of a Woman essence – for one does not navigate without consequences between the logical squares.

The realism that the vignette insidiously develops leads, for its part, to more direct and more visible consequences as regards the medicalization of analytic knowledge. The apparent promotion of the clinical point of view, with its well advertized distrust of theory, is in this regard mistaken: since the account that is given derives its power from its value as a direct index, from its way of pointing towards a reality as rigidly as a Kripke-style index, the theory becomes a reservoir of names, a heap of terms, a toolbox. All of a sudden, its internal architecture, its possible contradictions, uncertainties or bragging, no longer have any status, and practically do not exist. The theoretical statements are positive or are not. This obviously silent reduction withdraws them from the field of polemics emptied by this of its substance, and produces a sort of irenism of the vignette, which has nothing fortuitous about it since any internal debate relative to the consistency of the paradigm is ruled out – only the modalities of its application to the case are open for discussion. This same irenism is nevertheless reversed into warlike passion once it is a matter of considering, in however small a way, a paradigm foreign to it, which in that case scarcely depends on anything more than stupidity, ignorance or bad faith, nothing that is worth discussing. In this way the vignette leaves a free hand to the *practitioners* who intend to exercise their art in connecting a knowledge (constructed by others) and a nature (that God, or Evolution, or society have made such in its profuse pathology). Now they have become doctors of the soul, psychotherapists.

Here, I have stressed the stroke to separate out one of the axes between two heterogeneous, logically incompatible positions. It is self-evident that things are more complex, more overlapping, in part because

analysts, as practitioners, are not – here we are hoping! – so consequent, do not set up rigor as such a constant ideal, and know how to let go of it...at the right time. I maintain that we are not continuously moving from one logical square to the other; but nothing stops people from doing so...in a discontinuous way! Thus, anyone who chances a vignette is not ipso facto obliged to swallow all its deviations, and it can happen that someone momentarily follows this path without becoming too bogged down and hung up on its underlying logic²². But it's rare.

Outline of a maximal clinic

It now remains to see some clinical consequences of the maximal particular, when the affirmations of existence effectuated at the level of particulars each wrong-foot the two universals, the affirmative as well as the negative. The existents constitute an *exception* - that is their status - without our rushing into thinking that because of this they are rare as compared to the all (since the all of the maximal universal does not imply any existence at its level, and the universal negative is empty). We must therefore now come to think of the *existence* of the exception as a *qualitative* phenomenon, without unduly basing ourselves on the quantitative which, by isolating a minimal percentage of individuals over against a majority put into the position of quasi-universality, would surreptitiously draw from it the notion of exception.

Having posed the very terms of the problem, Lacan proposed a solution by producing the asymptote of the hyperbola as an example of exception able to serve as foundation. I had in this very book the opportunity to criticize this solution which singularizes the exception too much, and tends to maximize the existence of the elements of all (the infinity of the points of the curve) and to minimize the exception value (the zero, corresponding to the ordinate axis). The advantage of the figuration – the curve does indeed give the impression of being ‘based’ on its asymptote – is reversed in the respective ontological weights of the regular values of the curve and of the zero of the abscissa of the asymptote, which itself

²² One example among a few: Michel Gribinski, ‘Furtiva Nox’, in *Le Démon de l'interprétation, Le fait de l'analyse* no 4, mars 1998, p.60-65.

reproduces the exception to singularity. This figurative support does not therefore suffice to express the fact of the plural exception on the left of the formulae (it totally misses the *atleastoneman, hommoinzum*), nor its absence on the right; in this, Lacan does not do justice to the discovery in his writings, and his mathematical commentary falls short of his logical audacity²³.

In fact, we may begin to have a presentiment that no example will allow us to grasp status of the exception that Lacan produces in his formulae for this exception cannot be reduced to one or several cases which would be excepted from the universal affirmative, leaving it amputated as it were from these elements which contradict it. This very set-oriented or Eulerian comprehension, considers the universal as a sort of general rule capable of undergoing some exceptions without ceasing for all to govern the majority of cases. We too quickly find ourselves with this kind of vision in the quantitative considerations which treat the universal and the particular on the same existential footing, and make of the exception nothing other than a minority derogating from the common law. Now this silent deduction is no longer appropriate once there has been launched the Lacan-style notall, which goes well beyond the Brunschwig style of maximal particular by reason of its treatment of the affirmation of existence (reduced to particular propositions), even though universals are totally deprived of it.

If these short logico-ontological considerations appear abstruse, we can here have recourse to the elementary logical rule of *modus ponens*, which brings to light the same dislocation by postulating that if the implication ‘if A then B’ is true, and nothing more...nothing follows from it. However true this statement may be, it will not bring about any consequences unless someone is in a position to affirm that it is true that A, in which case the above mentioned implication unfolds its truth, and affirms then, and only then, that B is true. As long as no existence is affirmed from the point of view of the antecedent, from the point of view of A, the implication remains inert. It conveys a certain knowledge by describing the

²³ Is this what made him describe a hyperbolic function as ‘exponential function? See on this point *L’Etourdit*, in its first version *Scilicet* (no 4, p. 15) as well as in that of *Autres écrits* (p. 458), which both prefer to add to the error rather than to correct Lacan on this faulty adjective.

constraining relations between two terms, two propositions, two concepts, but as long as the antecedent is not realized, this knowledge remains ineffective.

What then is the mode of subsistence of such an implication *before* some existential or other comes to affirm of one of these elements that it is (or is not) the case? This question, or others in the same vein, crisscrossed the first steps of the new formal logic. In Frege, for example, it is found in the form of the fundamental opposition between ‘objects’ and ‘functions’. A function is a sort of proposition which always presents (by definition) an empty place, which must be occupied by an object for the aforesaid function to be activated and gives birth to a meaning, which itself possesses (or not) a reference, and at the same time a truth value. As long as it is not endowed with any object, the function presents a very curious level of existence. One cannot really say that it belongs to this world in which we live. Objects, from their point of view, do not present any internal lack (by definition), and quietly wait until a function wants to engage with them so that they can participate in a knowledge. They exist, without for all that ‘being’ in the sense that Quine was able to detach by his formula according to which ‘to be, is to be the value of a variable’: as long as an object is not possessed by a function *qua* variable, the question of its being is not even posed: its existence, curiously, takes precedence over its essence. Inversely, the same Quine spoke in connection with functions waiting for their objects as ‘semi-twilight entities’ in the sense that none of them possesses any clear identity as long as it is not engaged with any object, that it remains holed by the empty place that qualifies it. If we think, still like Quine, that there is no entity without identity, we must agree that the Fregean functions remain on the edge of an affirmed existence that will only arrive at the furtive moment that they will disappear as such when, once satisfied by an object, they will have produced a meaning and a truth value.

We find a partially identical intuition in the Husserl of *Logical investigations* when he distinguishes the ‘connection of things’ and the ‘connection of truths’, that he holds to be ‘indissociable’, adding:

But this obvious indissociability is not an identity. The real existence of things and of connections of things is expressed in

truths or the connections of truths that agree with it. But the truth connections differ from the thing connections that are ‘really’ in them; and we right away find the proof of this in the fact that these truths applying to truths do not coincide with the truths applying to things posed in these truths²⁴.

It is finally, ‘last but not least’, the Lacanian symbolic which, as treasury of signifiers, prescribes that these arrangements should be conceived in a certain independence from the real and/or imaginary order that they are supposed to ‘represent’ (for the function of representation, however decisive it may be in the economy of the subject, is not foundational of the symbolic order as Lacan proposes it).

In all these cases (and others, sometimes quite differently inspired – Popper and his ‘third world’ for example), there is stated an autonomy of knowledge with respect to a referent at which it does not cease to aim to produce sense and meaning. This level of knowledge conceived ‘apart’ from its possible denotations possesses its exigencies, its local rules of validation, and above all a specific property that no one ever had an idea of before someone succeeded in isolating it as such: incompleteness.

The effects of internal limitation

The choice of Lacan’s style of maximal resituates us right away in these complex (but at the same time vivifying) coordinates where the universals (the concepts) go their way, respond to one another, overlap one another, intersect one another, clash with one another and contradict one another. In this conceptual network, tensions are organized which demand to be read, without there being any need to precipitate oneself to offer them the shelter of particular existences. When a reader animates this web in however small a way, something happens in effect very like the putting to work of a tongue: a sort of general credit is right away opened according to denotation. It is not necessary to brandish in the second a referent to assure a sense. One speaks, and that is valid even before it is proved that one is

²⁴ E. Husserl, *Logical investigations* (1900–01)

indeed talking about *something*. Walter Benjamin weighed his words in stating this fact:

The word must communicate *something* (outside of itself). This is really the original sin of the linguistic spirit. Insofar as it communicates to the outside, the word is in a way the parody by the explicitly mediate verb, of the explicitly immediate verb²⁵ [...].

That the concept, like the word, can act as a mediation in speaking about something contributes here the qualifier of parodical with regard to its pure declaring, its explicit and jaculatory immediacy. The poet in Benjamin forces the stroke here, but – yes, it is quite true - , there can be something grotesque in this mediate function of the verb, in its wish to be forgotten and to only operate intermediaries to highlight something other than itself. This apparent modesty, this obligingness that no one can do without, extinguishes a glimmer which depends on the simple manifestation of the sign, before any relating to anything whatsoever, which Charles Sanders Peirce named for his part the firstness of the sign, that he describes in this way:²⁶. {English quote?}

²⁵ Walter Benjamin, 'Sur le langage en général et sur le langage humain', in *Myth et violence.*, Paris, Denöel, 1971, p.93

²⁶ Charles Sanders Peirce, in *Collected papers of C. S. Peirce*, (8 volumes, 1931-38), Vol. I Bk II 1.357.

We are dealing here with a borderline concept, which does not suffer any realization since it claims to aim at something that would stay outside any representation. Peirce needs all his verve to give it existence, needs to make the tongue vibrate to sustain its signifying face without binding it too quickly to a reference that would fully constitute it as sign. There is scarcely any other recourse to reach such an objective than to pile on meanings, to heap them up until one is out of breath, to ruin any bi-univocal sign/referent relation, and in this way to let there be understood a function of the tongue most often deafened by the representative baggage-train.

Benjamin, to end up with the quotation that we have read, used another stratagem to produce, for his part also, a pure manifestation free of any reference to a goal but determined: anger.

An unmediated function of violence [...] is already revealed in the experience of daily life. With man, anger, for example, provokes in him the most visible explosions of a violence which is not linked as a means to an end already fixed. It is not a means but a manifestation²⁷.

This varied obsession of the immediacy of the signifying manifestation is one of the rare indications that can be advanced to judge the exception as quality and not as (negligible or hyperbolic) quantity. In these attempts (Peirce, Benjamin) we in effect witness a sort of determined exhaustion of the concept which does what it can to designate what escapes from its orbit, what refuses designation: this existence of an object which is not one, of a sign which is not one, but such that, without it, without that, it's goodbye to signs and objects! Farewell to the endless mediations of meaning and the meanderings of the representative process.

We will have been careful not to forget here that this is precisely the function devolved by Lacan onto his *o*-object whose initial charge sheet carried the mention, via the Kantian *nihil negativum*, of not falling under any concept. Why such a requirement, if not to set to one side whatever deferring there may be in any referential use of a sign, of a concept? This secondness, denounced by Peirce in his research of a firstness which is such,

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'Pour une critique de la violence...', in *Myth et violence*, op. cit., p. 141

Lacan also, in his way, sets it aside with his object, just as Benjamin in his entanglements with the forms of violence in law; all three attempt to give a status in the order of knowledge to an *unmediated manifestation*, present at the heart of the representative process without the latter which claims to value each and every thing, laying hands on it.

Here comes what is most delicate. None of these three authors wants to take up again the romantic complaint about the *outer* limits of the world of representation, about the fact that the concept seems to allow to escape the most precious part of what it claims to circumscribe, that the porstroke ??? always misses its model, ignores life in its mysterious incarnations, etc. Of course, from here and there, one will find some accent of this so orphic, so poetic (see Bonnefoy above) complaint, but it is not constitutive of their position. It is much more a matter of correctly localizing what constitutes an exception to the regime of representation, otherwise eminently useful, but which of itself proves to be incapable of (134) recognizing the inner limitations of the symbolic systems that it puts to work to constitute knowledge. Perhaps the word ‘limitation’, banal in logic, is deceptive here in what it suggests in terms of handicap, of restriction of the field of action, while it only serves to state the very consistency which allows this knowledge to operate ad lib in the field of representation.

The exception that these formulae quite clearly separate out thanks to the maximal particular, with its particular affirmative ($\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$) which visibly goes against the universal of the same name, is therefore not to be considered numerically, but plastically, insofar as it manifests this existence which gives form to the traits. While in the minimal particular affirmative ($\exists x. \Phi x$), these traits (Φx) take the ascendancy over the existence of this form by blending in the resemblance with the model or the specific identity stated at the level of the universal ($\forall x. \Phi x$), in the maximal particular affirmative ($\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$), the affirmation of existence comes into the foreground, without having to attach itself to the presence of universalized strokes. But at the same time, this exception is also the poorest imaginable:

we can say nothing about it, we are only allowed to affirm it – and even then we have seen that Peirce, in his disheveled rigour, rhetorically refused it.

The extreme point reached here also bears in logic the appellation of the ‘elimination of singulars’. No settling of accounts or genocide in perspective: it is only a matter of getting rid of the problems linked to the question of the reference of singular nouns (*noms*). If I affirm ‘Socrates was Plato’s master’, I am confusing in the name ‘Socrates’ a conviction about his existence and the fact that he was Plato’s master. Now a whole movement of modern symbolic logic has tended to make this duality explode and to distinguish the brute fact of existence and the predicate that one wishes to attribute to it. In so doing people try to separate out from logical calculus the ontological *a priori*’s that do not belong to it and graft on to it considerations that reduce its possible developments (this movement begins with Frege and his *Begriffsschrift*, and once started, nothing stops it). It was therefore agreed to say rather: there exists an x such that x is Socrates and such that this x was Plato’s master:

$$\exists x. (x = \text{Socrates}); (x = \text{Plato's master})$$

In this way the space of the calculus is separated out by isolating, through writing, its existential hypotheses, as if by a sort of common factorizing. This is moreover the work of the maximal particular affirmative promoted by Lacan ($\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$): it distinguishes the existant and the calculation that besides it deploys, in the operation of strokes and functions, from their negations, conjunctions and other implications. The existant finds itself posed separately, ex-tracted (*ex-stroke*) from the symbolic determinations that it supports, which eventually determine it on its journey, but with which it is not confused²⁸. This x deserves to be called ‘subject’, even if this *hypokeimenon* suitable for supporting predicates is no longer here inflated by some substance or other. How respect its consistency once one claims to value it?

The forced aspect of the clinical vignette comes from the fact that it fails here almost in principle: if the x is only so convoked under the heading

²⁸ Just as the Freudian quantum of affect, constrained to follow the tribulations of the representation [*Vorstellung*] to which it finds itself soldered [*verlötete*] in its *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. The same formal figure.

of the relevance of the strokes that it displays, it will never be anything more than the shadow cast by the concepts whose colours it defends (willingly or unwillingly). How then approach it in order to allow it its place, since there is no question of plunging into the negative theologies of the subject and of praising its merits along the style of ‘Thou wilt always escape us’? The maximal particular here opens up a track, which might well convey a different clinic.

On the Freudian case and its relationship to the universal

Freud happens to have left to his posterity a text in which, from the title, he inscribes himself in the in the frame of our maximal particular since he takes up the challenge of a case of paranoia that contradicts the theory²⁹. How does he get out of this opposition to a conceptual construction with pretensions to universality that he himself had taken the trouble to produce?

Four years after the writing of the Schreber case, he is in effect in possession of his thesis on paranoia, already sketched out at the time of his rupture with Fliess: the paranoiac ‘struggles against the reinforcement of his homosexual tendencies’, in such a way that, because of a certain number of annexed considerations and reasonings, the persecutor must be of the same sex as the persecuted. Now the female patient – that a lawyer friend of Freud has brought him – presents an undeniable delusion where the persecutor is, in just as obvious a way, a man. ‘We did not maintain, it is true,’ Freud then writes, ‘*as universal and without exception* valid the thesis that paranoia is determined by homosexuality; but this was because our observations were not sufficiently numerous.’³⁰ Here is something that sounds like an appeal to induction: his study of the Schreber case had indeed met with a certain consensus from those around him, but this does not seem to have sufficed here for Freud-the-scientist, with his position of only endorsing his hypotheses if they have been confirmed by numerous experiments. Moreover he immediately drives his point home, not without entering into the general problematic of cases:

²⁹ S. Freud, ‘A case of paranoia running counter to the psychoanalytic theory of the disease (1915’, SE XIV, p. 261-272; *Mitteilung eines der Psychoanalytischen Theorie widersprechenden Falles von Paranoia*, Studienausgabe, vol. VII, Frankfurt, Fischer Verlag, 1973, p.207-217.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 265. My italics.

The thesis was one of those which in view of certain considerations become important only when universal application can be claimed for them in psychiatric literature there are certainly no lack of cases in which the patient imagines himself persecuted by a person of the opposite sex. It is one thing however to read of such cases and quite a different thing to come into personal contact with one of them.³¹

The authority of the thing seen takes precedence here over the 'literature', as is de rigueur in good clinical practice where the sign is first apprehended in its context. Freud hastens therefore to summon the young woman for a second time, the lawyer being from now on outside the affair. She, for her part, is not asking for anything, shows herself right away distrustful, and afterwards does not come back. She nevertheless accepts this second conversation that Freud forces on her, courteously but firmly it seems³². 'The additional details she supplied', Freud immediately writes, 'resolved all doubts and difficulties'. In effect, there then appears behind the masculine character who is in the position of official persecutor another character, an elderly lady (with white hair, like her mother).

The patient considers that she has reasons to suppose that this woman has received from the man some confidences concerning the timid beginnings of a sexual life between the two of them. With these new data in his possession, Freud rediscovers right away his Oedipal markers:

It is easy to see that the white-haired elderly superior was a substitute for her mother, that in spite of his youth her lover has been put in the place of her father, and that it was the strength of her mother complex which had driven the patient to suspect a love-relationship between these ill-matched partners, however unlikely such a relation might be

Because of this the contradiction with psychoanalytic theory vanishes, evaporates (*verflüchtigt*), and the thesis about the homosexual roots of paranoia emerge quite cheerfully: the real persecutor is the elderly

³¹ '[...] *aber es blieb ein anderer Eindruck, von solchen Fallen zu lesen, als einen derselben selbst vor sich zu sehen.*'

³² 'I therefore said that I could not form an immediate opinion, and asked the patient to call on me a second time, when she could relate her story at greater length and add any subsidiary details that might have been omitted.' *ibid.* p. 266

woman, therefore of the same sex as the patient! There nevertheless remains to be explained the displacement which made a change in the delusion from the old woman to the young man. Here, Freud's article suddenly becomes more complicated and more interesting. Up to now, Sherlock Holmes has won out: the clinician has not let himself be undone and was able to rediscover under the deceptive tinsel of appearances, the truth of the profound connections which have produced the situation under observation. Freud is by this very fact all the more at home in that he has rediscovered, not simply his Oedipal model, but also and above all his fundamental schema of intervention, which had acquired paradigmatic value ever since the *Interpretation of dreams*: take a text, consider it as the manifest face of another latent text, and once this latter has been exhumed (reconstructed?), explain the passage from the latent to the manifest, and you will see how the censor has intervened to allow it to get through without repression being lifted.

Abandoning psychosis for a moment, Freud regains the field of the neurosis to remark that some neurasthenics, because of their unconscious liaison with an object of incestuous love, cannot approach a strange woman and must content themselves, in this respect, with what their phantasy life offers them. But on that terrain - and here is the add-on that throws light on the case of paranoia - these same neurasthenics can very well succeed in substituting strange women for the mother or for the sister. They therefore succeed on the plane of reverie what remains forbidden to them in acts, and in this way they can convince themselves that they are in love with women outside the family circle. Scarcely has he posed this consideration, than Freud enlarges the debate: does the symptom always make the neurotic conflict disappear? Yes, but in fact no:

Indeed we can hardly draw any conceptual distinction between these two classes of phenomena. We are too apt to think that the conflict underlying a neurosis is brought to an end when the symptom has been formed. In reality the struggle can go on in many ways after this. Fresh instinctual components arise on both sides, and these prolong it. The symptom itself becomes an object of this struggle;

certain trends anxious to preserve it conflict with others which strive to remove it and to re-establish the *status quo ante*.³³

Ill-wishers who might try to catch Freud out on a theoretical forcing would here have their work cut out: thanks to a double somersault, he rediscovers his hypotheses in such a way that being in possession of such a complex theory and of such a pragmatic clinical attitude, one feels that in the end he will always be right and will manage to get out of any eventual contradictions. But it is of little interest to us to criticize him in this way for what is important is precisely the rebound which forces him to this add-on which, going far beyond the contradictory case, puts in question the first affirmation according to which the symptom puts an end to the neurotic conflict that gave birth to it.

‘There are’, writes Freud, ‘many similar processes occurring outside paranoia which have not yet been looked at from this point of view’.³⁴ It is therefore decisive that the article does not stop on the rediscoveries of the Oedipus complex and of the persecutor of the same sex, but that the interpretative paradigm coming from the work on the dream relegates the latent content (constructed in great part by theoretical convictions) to a role, that is certainly necessary, but nevertheless subalternate. When Freud rediscovers his theoretical markers in this case, he is more or less as far (139) advanced as when in the writing of the *Interpretation of dreams*, he notices that he is dealing with one of his numerous dreams inspired, at that time, by his wish to be named as extraordinary professor. He does not despise them, he knows only that the latent content is not the alpha and the omega of his work: nothing but a stage in the process of deciphering which must account for the passage from *this* latent to *this* manifest.

His convictions on the homosexual foundations of paranoia (and not the paranoiac foundations of homosexuality!) are not of the order of hypotheses which could be invalidated by cases, despite the presentation that he gives of them. This posture of honest scientific experimenter, that Freud quite often affects, masks the semiotic and epistemological situations at work. As regards the first, the presence of signifieds (in a latent position)

³³ *Ibid.*, pp 271-2

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ...

are not enough for the signifying distribution observed (in a manifest posture): that the persecutor should be, in the end, of the same sex as the persecuted does not constitute a point of arrest from which the Freudian clinician might have peace of mind since he still has to account for the displacement which allows there to be adjusted what is clinically observed and the theory that predicts it.

As regards the epistemological situation, it is fairly clear: Freud, with all due respects, is never in the situation of a Bachelard, or a Popper, in which a polemical fact can, just by itself, bring down a theory by obstinately resisting all the explanations that it proposes for it. He is on the contrary (the case here studied in this respect 'is a vignette') in an epistemological situation known under the name of the 'Duhem-Quine thesis' in which no statement can be experimentally tested to the point of putting in question the validity of the totality of theoretical statements that have participated in its production. Duhem had stated this thesis from the beginning of the 20th century as it related to physical theories, and Quine took it up again in the middle of the same century to give it its logical foundation³⁵. The attachment of analysts to their theories being at least as lively as that of scientists to theirs, it is ruled out that we should see, on the level of cases, crucial combats that would allow one theory to be invalidated in favour of another. One can at the very most note the different cravings of each theory for particular types of case: phenomenological psychiatry has written its most beautiful pages on melancholy and states of mania, Freudian psychoanalysis excels on hysteria, behavioral therapies hold fast to the phobias, Winnicottians have an affection for the supposed borderlines, etc. Each seems to lose a bit of its relevance by enlarging too much its field of action as regards cases, obliged as it then is to become more complex, sometimes to excess; none of them cover a hypothetical 'field of psychopathology', delimited for its part by norms that escape as much from each one as from the unthinkable 'alls'. We should take this point as a given and seek starting from there the status that can be granted to our

$\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$

³⁵ Cf. Sandra Laugier, *L'anthropologie logique de Quine. L'apprentissage de l'obvie*, Paris, Vrin, 1992 especially the pages devoted to 'La révision impossible', p.199-210.

Passing through Crete

By reading only the left hand side of the logical square of the maximal particular, $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$ encounters the paradox of Epimenides the Cretan, stating the universal affirmative according to which ‘all Cretans are liars’: $\forall x. \Phi x$. This universal, which supports a supposedly truthful theoretical statement about a generic plural – the Cretans – , is stated by some x who does not claim for all that to escape, either from the totality to which he belongs, nor from the law that he states as a truth, and according to which he himself would be a liar. Now, in so doing, he really does intend to tell the truth in this respect, and positions himself therefore as this x who, while stating a universal, contradicts it by this very stating: $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$

In order to read this paradox, to make it resonate beyond the refrain to which it is often limited by being satisfied to mention it, we must first of all become sensitive to the redoubling of the quality in operation here: logical formulae, whatever they may be, all claim to be either true or false according to whether the predicate is or is not in the subject (at least in classical logic, but we are deliberately keeping to this frame), and this is what we will agree to call their ‘value’. But here we have the proposition of Epimenides, not content to have, like all its consœurs, a truth-value, also intending to make of the truth, the predicate of the subject that it requires. Are we truthful when we tell the truth? The least domestic quarrel would be enough to know that this is not so: by telling the truth, one can do a lot of other things, as Nietzsche had already noticed (take power, corner one’s interlocutor, play the fool, satisfy the gods, etc). What then is Epimenides doing when he affirms a mode of relationship of Cretans (therefore of himself) to the truth, in an assertion which has also, on its own account, something to do with the truth? Let us imagine that he had said instead ‘all Cretans are big’, and that the testimonies agreed in letting us know that he was rather small for his time and his milieu: no problem – all Cretans are big (Epimenides says so, and we have our own reasons to trust him), except him. He constitutes an exception in the most banal sense of the term, and it’s all settled: take all those who possess the predicate, and add all those

who do not possess it (but are picked out under this heading³⁶) and you have an all, *tous*, and therefore an every, *tout*, that are perfectly sound.

With the truth in the position of predicate *and* in the position of value, a chiasm is produced which gives the statement all its charm in that it awaits our verdict, if at least we set aside a reading that would only take account of the simple predicate (as above with size), and we treat the matter numerically by considering that all Cretans are liars except Epimenides – but then we envisage the fact of telling the truth uniquely as a psychological property, that one can possess or not, the Cretans yes, Epimenides no. If on the contrary one considers together the truth as value of the proposition and the truth as predicate of the subject, then we fall feet first into the paradox formally presented by the structure of Russell's paradox: if Epimenides tells the truth, there is at least one Cretan excluded from the universal in which they are collected, therefore the universal proposition is false and Epimenides is telling a falsehood (he is lying) when he states it; if he is lying, he rejoins the lying Cretans, therefore all are so, which makes the statement of the universal proposition true, and therefore he is telling the truth...when he is lying³⁷. If he is right, he is wrong; if he is wrong, he is right. This turnstile offers no exit.

The 'sets that do not belong to themselves', dear to Russell and fatal for Frege, dance the same jig: if they belong to themselves, they do not belong to themselves, and if they do not belong to themselves they belong to themselves. All that because 'belonging' is a noun to designate the link between the set and its elements, just as truth designates the nature of the link between the subject and its predicate (for the proposition in classical logic), or between the function and its object (in Fregean logic). However little such properties are, as it were, folded back on themselves to participate

³⁶ C.f. above, the question of the absence of the stroke. The set 'Cretans' being founded for its part, on a geographical entity other than size or liar, it becomes possible to qualify an individual by the absence of one or other stroke, which is not the case of woman in the perspective of the formulae where no set previously collectivises them as such.

³⁷ To lie is presented as a deliberate act, which puts much more psychology into the affair than what classical logic is in a position to take responsibility for. The psychologist, for his part, will not see a great paradox in the fact that someone can tell the truth by lying – or lie in telling the truth, which already is not the same thing.

in their own gestation there follows a local disturbance, which nevertheless threatens the whole the edifice.

In the light of the preceding, what are we to think of $\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$ as a 'hopeless requirement' ('*requisit désespéré*') having in view an 'at least one' that is not slave to the phallic function, not submitted to castration (equivalent formulae for Lacan)? For all are so! It is useless therefore to arm oneself with an *Urvater*, an originating father, after having set aside without appeal an 'all women' since, being implied in one another, these two statements are logically equivalent. The exception no longer designates here any element that would be extracted from the set for which the universal is valid any more than Epimenides does not cease to be a Cretan by decreeing that they are all liars.

An exception that would not be the case

Let us now recapitulate the characteristics encountered around this exception cornered in the formulae of sexuation in the position of the particular maximal affirmative. It is not singular, nor even in a minority with respect to the universal affirmative that it wrong-foots. It is produced only as a contradiction of the universal negative which, for its part, would be an affirmation of the 'nothing' that Lacan has pursued from the beginning, this nothing which is neither that of Hegel nor that of Freud, the very absence of subject about which one can predicate. It is therefore first-off an affirmation of what exists with respect to the function (and to the predicate), without for all that satisfying it (possessing it). So then, far from being based on a supposed rarity, the exception veers towards the common regime and every speaking being, linked by this fact to the phallic function, becomes a sort of sexual Epimenides, lending its voice to the establishment of this all (*tous*) to which it belongs, but whose consistency it ruins by its very declaration, neither more nor less than any living being in the process of stating 'all men are mortal' not without arranging for itself *in petto* room for an exception – the one that religions trade on.

Here let us thank Abelard for having offered us early on the refuge of his *status*, for having suggested to us the idea according to which

between ...let us say things, for want of anything better, and the sonorous (or scriptural) nature of words, there exists, there is, we suppose, entities which allow individuals to be collectivized, without nevertheless their enjoying any ontological weight whatsoever. It is really what we need to appreciate the proper weight of $\forall x. \Phi x$, *once one asks oneself who is saying it, who is performing it.*

For the question posed by the exception that Lacan is circling comes back to the mysteries of belonging (from which Russell's paradox is generated): we have seen that, to use the quantifier 'for all', it was necessary to have a set peopled by elements that belong to the aforesaid set. On this condition, it was permitted to take any one of them with this tweezers of the $\forall x$. But if I affirm the existence of (at least) one which does not satisfy the function, which in this way is excepted from the all of the universal, does it cease belonging to this all? Yes and no (Freud would say)!

Logic cannot be constructed on such ambiguity, and settles the question: in the logical square of the maximal, either the universals are true, or the particulars are true, but it is ruled out that a universal and a particular should be true at the same time because they are linked by a contradiction. With Lacan, as with Epimenides, there is on the contrary preserved an essential ambiguity in the measure that, because of the function (or of the predicate) at stake, the truth of the particular statement does not annihilate the truth of the universal statement, since on the contrary it establishes it by the very fact of objecting to it (*dixit* Lacan, cf above) by providing it with the existent that states it, that lends its voice to the declaration of this universal from which nonetheless it is lacking. But with his logical square, Lacan all the same tells us more about it than the Cretan who for his part does not have a good word to say for the female Cretans.

He in effect gives himself a 'woman' side where any exception finds itself denied ($\overline{\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}}$), where therefore the way of writing proposed for the universal negative affirms that, in this *deixis*, there does not exist any x that does not satisfy the function, at the very time that the elements which satisfy it, present only at the level of the particular negative, do not constitute a set.

To recall the formula proposed as a conclusion to the preceding chapter: *inasmuch as an all is stated ($\forall x. \Phi x$), it is founded on the existence of exceptions ($\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}$), and inasmuch as there is no exception ($\overline{\exists x. \overline{\Phi x}}$), what exists is not collectivized in any all ($\overline{\forall x. \Phi x}$). In both cases, the all takes a hit. The universality of the concept, which finds its basis in that very all, is nonetheless manhandled by it (even though differently) on the left and on the right, and we realize then that the notall goes beyond its quality of quantifier in giving the reason for the set of formulae.*

Lacan's merit comes from the fact of letting himself be guided by the exigencies of this particular, by forcing himself to write each of his four positions in a way that allows there to be read there from the start the attack directed against an all that would possess any ontological weight whatsoever. This leads consequently on the epistemic plane, to the status that it is appropriate to grant to the concept in this teaching of his: the precision that the concept requires (and of which it is often the object) says nothing about the reality of its possible denotations. Between the concept and the individuals that might fall within its orbit (something which obviously is not denied, the minimal particular continues to work just as well), there will remain active this **o**-object which, for its part depends entirely on the maximal particular, does not fall under any concept and maintains itself as existence without essence, an existence decisive in the subjective process.

There is another consequence that I deliberately left to one side since tackling these formulae, for fear that the imaginary weight of the terms utilized – man/woman – would charge the ways of writing with unwarranted values in order to pretend to find them afterwards. Now that we have glimpsed the solidarity of the left and the right sides in this logical square that we continue to call the 'formulae of sexuation', in what way does one deserve to be called 'man' and the other 'woman'?

Did you say 'relationship'?

In the Christian tradition, the sexual relationship is indeed always such since every sexual act possesses a value. Either there is fecundation

and birth, and the child is the value which results from this relationship. Or there is a sexual act without reproduction, but in the sacrament of marriage (and according to the prescribed rules), and this becomes a duty, 'conjugal duty'. For all the rest, if there is a sexual act, whatever it may be, it is sinful. Therefore every case of a relation held to be sexual is entitled to the name 'relationship' in the sense that interests Lacan, the mathematical sense, when one writes: $a/b = c$. If two terms enter into relation in such a way that they produce a unique value, then there is a 'relationship'. How write that such is not the case when, mindful of the Freudian saying which breaks all pre-established harmony between the drive and its object, we refuse to consider any 'reproductive instinct' whatsoever that would take as given a 'nature' of the relationship between the sexes, on a basis that would henceforth see itself as hormonal, or genetic, or anything else whatsoever, preferably of a really scientific style?

Therefore it comes down to the 'man' to declare the universal affirmative, but moreover, in doing this, to withdraw himself from it, in this wheeling around that we have just seen. To follow Lacan, man supports the universal of the same name by reason of his own defection at this level. He produces the essence of his being while objecting right away by his existence. The 'anything but that', a scream if there ever was one of this same man faced with castration, here takes on the form of a 'anyone, but not me' which proves to be the condition *sine qua non* for an all of this caliber to be declared. This donation of a universal is brought about by the withdrawal of its particular, which is excluded from the all the better to pose it in its classificatory virtuality. There is here a turning movement lacking which we exhaust ourselves enumerating the contradictions present in the formulae: every 'one' that is excepted from the all the better to perform it (*le performer*) deserves to be qualified as 'man', whatever may be the sex that nature may have attributed to it.

By what right, in these conditions, name 'woman' the position according to which the elements which satisfy do not form any all, without generating the least exception? What imaginary lends itself to this symbolic distribution? For the contradiction is striking: if there is no exception, how can those present not form an all? The response forces itself on us: that

each one is not as one as all that. That their gathering together does not seem right. That each existence affirmed in this way (by the particular negative, the 'notall' having the value of 'there exists' which would display its restrictive value) is either in excess or in default with respect to unity – a Lacanian theme if there was ever one since in this teaching unity emerges, either from a specular (unian, *unienne*) or from the symbolic (unary, *unaire*) value. This indeed is why no value, neither symbolic nor imaginary, will be right to qualify an element in the measure that none will here be identical to itself (otherwise this identity would be enough to integrate into the 'all' of a set).

With all due respect to feminists who may feel themselves attacked by such a distribution of tasks, and far from being a loss as compared to the symbolic unity put on the side of 'man', this dissonance on the right finishes the work engaged on the left by inscribing in the order of sexual determination this \circ -object which we have seen leads to the statement 'there is no sexual relationship' precisely because with it 'there was no relationship', not even this very elementary one of possessing this stump of unity that would have made it suitable for the stamp of concept, and by that of entering into relation, of 'making a relationship'.

In this way the left/right, man/woman, ways of writing have the ambition of expressing the fact of non-relationship by placing side by side an x whose functioning allows us to think an essence (for all x): and an existence (there exists an x), and an x whose functioning does not authorize any essence but is entirely based on an existence which remains resistant to any unity whatsoever. At this price, one can always write man/woman or the reverse, this will give us nothing, no value to mark the existence of a relationship. To make a relationship, at the level of essences one is lacking, and each of the existences classified to the left or to the right is said to be incommensurable to the other. The numerical and set metaphor which served to arrange the man/woman deixis maintains us in the ir-rational, in the non-relationship, no common terms coming to subsume the putting into relation – for Lacan holds firmly then to his definition of the relationship inasmuch as it produces a tertiary term. Neither the child nor the drive and still less the phantasy plays this role, and therefore the sexual encounter –

which is of course undeniable – connects two beings which, neither make one, nor make three. The phallus, the all-purpose object of Freudian dialectic, is henceforth disqualified as a tertiary element³⁸; it disappears into the phallic function which only serves to distinguish and disconnect two functionings irreducible to one another.

Lacan – this is remarkable – was very careful not to write x on the left and y on the right, which he could have done if he had thought for a second that man and woman present themselves as such with such different qualities that they deserve to be written and described separately. On the contrary it is the same x that is everywhere valid, which everywhere designates the same speakbeing (*parlêtre*) confronted with the enjoyment linked to sex and to language. This little detail draws us still further into the refusal of taking into account an initial duality. Without plunging into a too substantialist conception which would make of this x something ante-sexual, we are thus led to conceive that sexual bipartition results from enunciatory arrangements: the x which is excepted from the all that it poses as the locus of its belonging will be called man; the x which exists without belonging to some all will be called woman. We see that this performative perspective is not in contradiction with Freudian bisexuality for, however different the two positions may be, the one and the other offer themselves to this x with just as much veracity.

To enjoy (*Jouir*)

There remains the Φx function, an enigmatic function since, far from being a pure corporeal event, it blends body and spirit much better than the gland – nevertheless pineal – dear to Descartes. Its obscurity grows still more when we learn that the term enjoyment (*jouissance*) is quasi-absent in Freud, where the word *Genuss*, that is met with here and there, could be translated in this way, without however ever reaching the concept. To be (148) sure its trace is given in the very Freudian notion of ‘beyond of the pleasure principle’, but it requires the genius of the French or Spanish tongues to welcome with the greatest naturalness a notion that neither

³⁸ It was on the contrary its status at the time of the seminar *Desire and its interpretation*, c.f. above, the quotation at the beginning of chapter II.

German nor English put into practice so easily. ‘*Jouissance*’, ‘*goce*’, say unambiguously that it is a form of pleasure that is in no way pleasure in the Freudian sense, this more or less brutal lowering of tensions which almost led Freud to the ‘Nirvana principle’, but on the contrary a form of the intensification of certain tensions, those whose anticipative liberation will be the source of pleasure. While waiting for this deliverance, *jouir* raises the stakes, along paths that turn to account the body and its different erogenous zones as well as the symbolic machinery that allow there to be forged desiring postures, to convoke the phantasies considered by Lacan, at a certain epoch of his teaching, as ‘that by which desire condescends to pleasure’.

But enjoying (*le jouir*) does not develop only these orgiastic perspectives. We also suppose it to be at the heart of the symptom, in what strengthens repetition, confers on it this absurd force that wants to obstinately go over again the signifying traces that often ageless desires once opened up. In both cases however, the same soldering is at work between the determined fragments of the symbolic installation and corporeal investments. From then on, there is a great temptation to renew the difference between the sexes by seeking to base it on two disparate modes of enjoying, according to a report whose real foundation we are never sure of or only results from a certain effect of perspective, like a sort of anamorphosis: penile enjoyment is clearly manifested in its cycle (erection, ejaculation, detumescence), vaginal enjoyment being oh so latent. The first would seem to be as open to observation as sensation; the second, even though it can be noisy, seems above all to remain of the order of sensation. And as regards the clitoral, which in our day is refinding some prestige in emerging from its bourgeois, then Freudian, purgatory however similar it appear to be to the penile, does not possess the obviousness of the phallic cycle. This without prejudice to other erogenous zones, beginning with the rectum, that open up just as many paths to enjoying and enjoyable high points without for all that making a display of their end-point, to such an extent that people hasten to uncover in them some ‘infinite’ or other that would seem to be in confinement here, and whose quickly pacified

corporeal somersaults would be only a sort of foam, abandoned by the waves of a limitless pleasure on our little private beaches.

Raquel Welch, in the days when she was a *sex symbol*, did not hesitate to say loud and clear in the feminine media: ‘The most important sexual organ for a woman is her brain.’ Again a statement subject to the Duhem-Quine theory, because it is not easy to see what polemical fact, what atrocious experimentation, would invalidate it. But we divine in this remark, authoritative from the point of view of the media, the idea which makes of the rhythm imposed on certain feminine organs nothing other than the musical score waiting for the notes of the melody. It is not a matter of ‘thinking’, but of ‘thoughts’ that offer a sense, a direction, to what is happening in the circuits of sensibility...and with that seems to designate a *terminus ad quem* for them? A hypothesis! The trouble for anyone who would wish in effect to establish here a separate mode of enjoying, comes from the fact that this cerebral quality of a supposed feminine enjoyment scarcely appears absent on the man’s side. Masturbation is said there, more than on the other side, to be the ‘enjoyment of the idiot’, but who will say the degree to which this solitude is acephalic or not? Up to what point could phallic enjoyment – the only one that the formulae takes account of³⁹ - take place without disturbing neuronal networks, without the bringing into play of the language and the images that support it, matrices of phantastical postures that free up the approaches to pleasure? No one is satisfied with the mechanics, and we quickly divine the illusion there would be in wanting to classify men and women according to whether orgasm is quicker in the first than in the second. The chronometer will not be of much help in separating out the sexes in function of their style of orgasm.

Might these formulae, with their arid ways of writing, be able to throw some light on this obscure and lightning-like entertainment. Their greatest advantage come from the monotony of this Φx function: whatever it may be, on the one side it is affirmed by the one excepted from it and

³⁹ The ‘enjoyment of the Other’, J (O), makes its appearance late in the seminars, in the course of the Borromean elaboration, as a pendant to phallic enjoyment J (Φx) This goes beyond our reading of the formulae, centred on what it is permitted to do with the simple Φx function.

makes itself the hub of this revolving movement; on the other side, it is experienced by the one that cannot nail down any unity because of it⁴⁰, but it does not change its nature. Might it be a matter of two ‘know-hows’ with the same function, the difference of organs and of something else or other prescribing two specific, uh, pardon...generic...no, pardon, opposed modes of enjoying? Here is something that would go against our efforts since external qualities would preside over this bipartition! It would be much better to return to our starting hypothesis, and to agree that the duality of sexes, with whatever anatomical, psychological and chromosomatic reality one burdens or decorates it, can only be written by coming up against this fact of language: terms that oppose one another – logical contraries – can moreover be incompatible and therefore separated, only by being bound by a whole chain of relatives and validated by one another. Duality is a concept that itself is irreducibly double, marked by what Lacan distinguished at one time⁴¹ as ‘separation’ and ‘alienation’, and then reunited in the figure of a diamond which he makes the operator – fancy that! – of his way of writing the phantasy.

Noting a difference thus comes down to affirming the coexistence of two axes that are themselves contrary, one that states bringing into relationship, the other which poses non-relationship. So that the constant bringing into relationship of every human being with the phallic function can very well go along with the affirmation of the non-relationship between the sexes, of which the formulae give an account. The unfolding of the logical square of the maximal particular comes then to refine the opposition inscribed at the heart of the notion of duality by writing how the sexes are separated and alienated at the same time, in their way of managing the exception, this root of unity. It must be that one of the two should be one by excluding itself from the all, but that the other should also do so, is what

⁴⁰ Which also suggests the idea of infinity because what no unity encircles deserves to be considered as a ‘multiplicity of multiplicities’, an expression that serves sometimes to designate the actual infinity of real numbers. But these references to mathematical realities, however instructive they may be in proposing appellations and images that are not too deceptive, also lead us astray sometimes by taking as guide a knowledge that is too certain, too impressive, which disturbs the operation, all comings and goings, of the metaphor.

⁴¹ J. Lacan, *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*, trans., A. Sheridan, London, Hogarth, 1977, p 209-213.

Lacan rejects. And as regards who makes the one and who makes the other...

We cannot conclude without evoking the special poetry that arises from non-relationship itself, for anyone who wants to make of it a concept in its own right, of the hard and exigent kind (we have just seen that it is only the second member of a pair that admits only one clear-cut moiety). In this vein, as he completes his first seminar at rue d'Ulm, on 24 June 1964, Lacan announced the following:

The analyst's desire is not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it. There alone may the meaning of a limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of the law, where alone it may live.⁴²

Absolute difference, this time, would be one that magnifies non-relationship, would speak only of it; it would be such that between the two elements that it separates, there would not even be it to make the slightest bond. Hence the mythical vein that immediately follows such an impossibility, where we see the subject as on his baptismal-font signifiers. He who will never be anything but represented by a signifier for another (Lacan *dixit*), now lands for an unbelievable first time on the stage that he will never again leave and encounters THE signifier which will mark him with a branding iron. In these lines so often quoted, he who was happy to lampoon the myth of *Totem and taboo* pays his tribute to the thought of origins, which alone offer him a between-the-two where the first term would be missing. This impossible 'time zero' that anxiety alone renders likely by highlighting it as cause, pushes towards this wild rhetoric (already encountered in Peirce) in which thought, which is only able to produce relations, tries to hand over to the tongue so that it may be able to outline, in its own way and with the means at hand...an edge, a true edge, something which is not a frontier, constituted by a lack of neighbourhood which alters its relational capacity, its aptitude for 'entering into relationship'.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 276

In this repetitive attempt to embody difference, to isolate non-relationship as an ingredient indispensable for the constitution of the subject, Lacan, in the last years of his teaching, was to come up against a strange difficulty that he insisted on making his own, and that I propose to visit as what comes to confirm the impossibility of putting one's hand – even if it were topological – on what has the pretension of escaping the concept.