

OVERVIEW OF *THE PSYCHOANALYTIC ACT*

Translated by Cormac Gallagher

*Lacan's summary of the seminar of 1967-68
for the year book of the
Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes*

This, Lacan's own, summary of the seminar on The Psychoanalytic Act, written for the yearbook of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, must prove a vital element in the correct interpretation of his years teaching for 1967-68. The only English version of that teaching is the unpublished translation which has been the focus of the working group at St. Vincent's Hospital in 1998-1999 and which provided the theme for the November congress of APPI. The translation of his Summary attempts to follow Lacan's text as closely as possible.¹

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The psychoanalytic act, neither seen nor heard of before me, namely, never mapped out, much less put in question, we suppose here to be something belonging to the elective moment when psychoanalysis passes to psychoanalyst.

This is the most commonly admitted recourse as regards what is necessary for this passage, all other conditions remaining contingent as compared to it.

Thus isolated from this moment of installation, the act is within the reach of everyone who enters into a psychoanalysis.

¹ Editor's note.

Let us say first of all: the act (simply) takes the place of an assertion, whose subject it changes. It is not an act to walk if all one says is 'it walks, *ca marche*', or even 'let us walk, *marchons*', but only if it ensures that 'I am getting there, *j'y arrive*' is verified in it.

The psychoanalytic act seems suited to throw greater light on the act, because it is an act that reproduces itself from the very doing that it commands.

Through this it remits to the in-itself (*Ven-soi*) of a logical consistency, to decide whether indeed the relay can be taken up from an act which is such that it dismisses (*destitue*) at the end the very subject that establishes it.

From this step it can be seen that it is the subject here of whom it must be said whether it is knowledge.

Does the psychoanalysand, at the end of the task assigned to him, know 'better than anyone' the subjective dismissal to which it has reduced the very one who commanded him to do it? For instance: this in itself of the o-object which at this end is evacuated by the same movement in which the psychoanalysand drops, because he has verified in this object the cause of desire.

There is knowledge acquired there, but by whom?

To whom does it pay the price of the truth that at the limit the subject treated cannot be cured of?

From this limit can a subject be conceived who offers to reproduce what he has been delivered from?

And when this itself subjects him to bringing about the production of a task that he only promises by presupposing the very lure that is no longer tenable for him?

Because it is starting from the fiction-structure in which truth is stated, that from his very being he is going to create the stuff for the production ... of an unreal.

Subjective dismissal is not any the less in prohibiting this pass because it must, like the sea, always be recommenced.

One nevertheless suspects that the gap revealed here between the act and the dignity of its purpose, is only to be taken to instruct us about what makes of it a scandal: the fault perceived in the subject supposed to know.

A whole indoctrination entitled psychoanalytic, still does not know that it is neglecting here the point that makes all strategy vacillate because it is still not clear about the psychoanalytic act.

To say that there is an unconscious means that there is a knowledge without a subject. The idea of instinct crushes this discovery: but it survives because this knowledge never proves to be anything but legible.

There is a line of resistance to this work that is as inordinately advanced as a phobia can be. This means that it is hopeless and shows that one has understood nothing about the unconscious, if one has not gone beyond it.

Namely, that what it introduces in terms of a division into the subject because a knowledge that moreover holds up does not determine it, presupposes, simply by being stated in this way, an Other, that for its part knows it before it has been perceived. We know that even Descartes makes use of this Other to guarantee at least the truth of his scientific starting point.

This is why all the philosophical -logies, onto-, theo-, cosmo-, as well as psycho-, contradict the unconscious. But since the unconscious is only understood by being crushed by one of the most bastard notions of traditional psychology, people do not even attend to the fact that to affirm it makes this supposition of the Other impossible. But it is enough for it not to be denounced, for it to be as if the unconscious never happened.

From which one sees that the worst people can make 'a return to general psychology'¹ their slogan.

In order to disentangle this, a structure of the Other must be stated which does not permit it to be overridden. Hence this formula: that there is no Other of the Other, or our affirmation that there is no metalanguage.

Let us confirm the latter by the fact that what is called metalanguage in mathematics is nothing but the discourse from which a language wants to exclude itself, namely, strives for the real. Mathematical logic is not, as cannot be imputed to me except in bad faith, an opportunity to rejuvenate my type of subject. It is from the outside that it bears witness to an Other whose structure, and precisely because it is logical, does not overlap itself: this is the $S(0)$ of our graph.

That such an Other should be explored, does not condemn it to know nothing about the effects that it involves for the living being that it carries as being subject-to its effects. But if transference appears to be already sufficiently justified by the signifying primarity of the unary trait, there is nothing to indicate that the o-object does not have a consistency that is sustained by pure logic.

It must then be advanced that the psychoanalyst in psychoanalysis is not a subject, and that by situating his act in the ideal topology of the o-object, it can be deduced that he operates by not thinking.

An 'I do not think' which is the law, *de facto* makes the psychoanalyst depend on the anxiety of knowing where to give it its place to still think about psychoanalysis without being doomed to miss it.

The humility of the limit in which the act is presented to his experience, blocks by the reprobation of stating it to be missed (*manque*) the surest paths to arrive at this knowledge that it conceals.

Moreover we started, to encourage him, from the testimony that science gives of the ignorance it is in as regards its subject with the example of the Pavlovian approach, taken up to make it illustrate Lacan's aphorism: that a signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier. From which it can be seen that it is by holding onto the rail when it was still in the dark, that the experimenter gave himself some cheap hope by putting the hat into the rabbit. This ingenuity of the slip is nevertheless sufficient to account for a rather broad equivalence of Pavlovian statements, in which the deviation of someone who only thinks of the banks between which he wants to force the analytic crisis, finds a good university alibi.

Still more naive than is the one who hears echoes of this whole apologue and corrects it by saying that the subject of science is never where one thinks it is, since that is precisely our irony ...

It remains to make an appeal to where the affair takes place. And it can only be in the structure that the psychoanalyst shows as a symptom, when suddenly struck by an inverted Grace, he comes to raise an idolatrous prayer to 'his ear', a fetish that has arisen in his breast along a hypocondriacal path.

There is an area of stigmata that living in this field imposes, because of failing to map out the sense of the psychoanalytic act. It presents itself rather painfully in the penumbra of councils in which the collectivity identified by it, takes on the image of a parodied Church.

It is certainly not ruled out that there should be articulated there confessions that are worth collecting. For example this forgery called *the self*, the first perhaps from this surface to *go* outside the list of morphemes which make it taboo that they should have come from Freud.

The fact is that it took on its weight or even its very discovery from the doings of the psychoanalyst you have to meet in order for there to be imposed on you the respect for the imprint received from the passion for psychoanalysis.

We have brought to life the writing where in the light of the self there is honed, and made tangible by proving to be an effect of compression, the avowal that passion has only place and strength by going beyond the very clearly recalled limits of the technique. They would serve it better, nevertheless, by being inscribed in the charter of the act once it has been restored to this page that can only be turned by a gesture changing the subject, the very one by which the psychoanalyst is qualified in act.

This self that has been launched will be nevertheless - the theme proliferates and in the sense of the auspices under which it was born - the ruin of the psychoanalyst, who is disqualified by it. The cult element of his profession is, as in other cases, the sign of being unequal to the act.

Moreover the act itself cannot function as a predicate. And to impute it to the subject that it determines, the whole *inventio medii* has to be put in new terms: this is what the o-object can test itself against.

What can be said of *every* psychoanalyst, except something that makes it obvious that none at all exists?

If on the other hand nothing can ensure that a psychoanalyst exists, except the logic by which the act is articulated with a before and an after, it is clear that predicates take on a dominance here, unless they are linked by an effect of production.

If the psychoanalysand makes the psychoanalyst, there is still nothing added except the bill. For it to be due, we must be assured that there is something of the psychoanalyst.

And this is what the o-object responds to.

The psychoanalyst is constituted by the o-object. Is constituted, to be understood as: is produced; from the o-object: with the o-object.

These remarks are too close to the place where logical quantifiers appear to stumble, for us not to have flirted with them as instruments. We feel the psychoanalytic act yielding by breaking hold in the universal that they have the merit of not satisfying.

(And this is what is going to excuse Aristotle for oscillating, in a still more inspired way than in isolating the *upokeimenon*, in not being able to avoid retrieving the *ousia* now and then.)

Because what this act perceives is the kernel constituted by the hollow by which the idea of the whole is justified, by circumscribing it in the logic of quantifiers.

From then on perhaps it allows it to be better named as a *desaification* [deconsecration?].

Here the psychoanalyst finds company in carrying out the same operation. Is it at the level of the open field offered to discourse for this purpose?

Such indeed in effect is the horizon traced out by the technique, but its artifice depends on the logical structure that it rightly trusts, because it never loses its rights. The experienced impossibility of a pulverulent

discourse is the Trojan Horse through which there enters into the city of discourse its master who is the psychotic.

But there again, as we see, the corporeal deduction is already made from which *something of the* psychoanalyst is to be made, and this is what the psychoanalytic act must be harmonised with.

We can only outline the abrupt logic of the act by tempering the passion it gives rise to in the field that it commands, even if it only does so by withdrawing from it. It is no doubt because he failed to include this tempering that Winnicott believed he had to contribute to it something of his own *self*. But also to receive from it this transitional object from the more distant hands of the child, that I must indeed render to him here, since it is starting from it that I first formulated the o-object.

Let us reduce the psychoanalytic act then to what leaves to the one that it alleviates what it has begun for him: it is that there remains declared to him that enjoyment (*jouissance*), privileged in that it commands the sexual relationship, is offered by a forbidden act, but that this is to mask the fact that this relationship is only established by not being verifiable because it requires the middle term that is distinguished as lacking in it: this is what is called making a subject of castration.

The benefit of this is clear for the neurotic because it resolves what it represented as passion.

But the important thing is that to whomsoever it gives only the enjoyment held to be perverse, is well and truly permitted by this, since the psychoanalyst makes of it the key, in order to withdraw it, it is true, at the end of his operation. Which means that it has only to be taken away from him in order to restore to it its proper use, whether he makes use of it or not.

This cynical outcome should clearly mark the secondary nature of any benefit with regard to the passions. That the axiology of psychoanalytic practice proves to be reduced to the sexual contributes to

the subversion of the ethics that depends on the inaugural act only because the sexual is shown by negativities of structure.

Pleasure barrier to enjoyment (but not the inverse). Reality constructed from transference (but not the inverse). And the principle of supreme vanity because the verb is only worthwhile under the gaze of death (gaze to be underlined, not death which slips away).

In the ethics inaugurated from the psychoanalytic act, less etiquette, if you will forgive me, than was ever glimpsed because of starting from the act, logic commands, this is certain because one finds its paradoxes in it.

Except, which is also certain, that types, norms, are added to it as pure remedies.

In order to maintain its own chicane, the psychoanalytic act must not become diluted by them.

Because from its reference points it becomes clear that sublimation does not rule out the truth of enjoyment, which is why heroisms, by being better explained, are organised according to whether they are more or less alert.

Moreover the psychoanalytic act itself is always at the mercy of *acting out* and we have sufficiently depicted above the figures in which it grimaces. And it is important to highlight the degree to which the approach of Freud himself is of a nature to warn us about it, when it is not so much from myth that he first supported it, but from a recourse to the stage. Oedipus and Agamemnon represent stage productions. Today one sees the full import of a feeble-minded clinging to it, in someone who put his signature to a mishap, by venturing on an exegesis of the o-object.

Because if the moral act is organised from the psychoanalytic act, it is because it receives its In-I (*En-Je*) from the fact that the o-object is coordinated from an experience of knowledge.

It is from it that there takes its substance the insatiable requirement that Freud was the first to articulate in *Civilisation and its Discontents*. We are highlighting this insatiable with a different accent by the fact that it finds its balance in the psychoanalytic act.

Why put it to the credit of this act that we have reduced, introduced, its very status in time?

Nor push back this in-time, by having uttered it six months ago in the proposition that anticipated it and unleashed not simply a theoretical, but effective kind of house-breaking in our *Ecole* that since it got very close to me makes me dare to recognise it as bearing witness to a *rendezvous*.

Is it enough to remark that in the psychoanalytic act the 0-object is only supposed to come in the form of a production for which the means, because it is required for all supposed exploitation, is supported here by knowledge whose proprietorial aspect is properly what precipitates a precise social fault?

Shall we *go* on to question whether it is indeed the man that an anti-eros would reduce to a single dimension that is distinguished in the May insurrection?

On the other hand putting the In-I into a mass by getting a grip on the knowledge that crushes not so much by its excess as by the auditing of its logic that makes of the subject a pure cleavage, here is where there is conceived a change in the very moorings of anxiety and it must be said that having laid down that it is not without an object, we have here also just grasped what was already disappearing over a ridge.

This is not enough for the act that is required in the field of knowledge, to collapse into the passion for the signifier for there to be some one or no one to take on the job of starter.

There is no difference, once the process has begun, between the subject devoted to subversion to the degree of producing something incurable in which the act finds its own end, and what takes on a revolutionary effect from the symptom, simply by no longer marching under the Marxist baton.

What people believed they were pinpointing here about the virtues of speaking out, is only the suspect anticipation of the *rendezvous* that is indeed there, but in which the word only comes because the act was there. This should be understood as: was there a little more, even if it only arrived, was there at the very instant that it finally arrived.

This indeed is why I hold that for my part I did not fail to be at the place that the drama of today's psychoanalysts confers on me at this juncture, recognising that I know a little bit more about it than those who ridiculously did not miss this occasion to display themselves as actors in it.

Here, as always, we find the lead I enjoy and it is enough for it to exist for it not to be something slight, when I remember the judgement, made by a particular person, that in the case from which there remains to be found everything that we know about obsessional neurosis, Freud had been 'taken in like a tyro (*rat*)\ This in effect was what was enough to read of the *Ratman*, for someone to be able to sustain oneself with regard to the psychoanalytic act.

But who will understand, even among those who are emerging from my meditation on this act, what is nevertheless indicated clearly in these very lines, where the psychoanalyst will come to be relayed from tomorrow, and also what held this place in history?

I am not a little proud, people should know, of this power of unreadability that I have been able to maintain unspoilt in my texts to protect against, here for example, what the historialising of a situation offers as a blessed opening for those who are only in a hurry to histrionicise it for their own comfort.

To be too easy to comprehend is to give a way out to avoidance, and it is to make oneself the accomplice of it, in that in the same package which sends each one to his ruin, you provide a supplement from Elsewhere so that he may hurry to put himself into it.

Was I careful enough in approaching what is required to situate the psychoanalytic act: to establish what determines it from enjoyment and the ways at the same time it must protect itself from it? One can judge by the crumbs that have fallen from it onto the following year.

Here again we do not think it an unimportant augury that a cut was made that spared us from doing it.

Let the interest remain on this hither side, since it is not lacking in what is proliferating because of simply ignoring a lemma like this, bequeathed by me, in passing: to the act, of this seminar, 'that there is no

transference of transference'. This nevertheless is what the report in an upcoming Congress stumbles over, for want of having the least idea of what it is articulating (cf. 'The non-transference relationship' in *IJP*, 1969. Parti, vol. 50).

If it were not irremediable because of having spent so much time in the commerce of the true about the true (the third lack), this Roman Congress might have been able to pick up a little bit more of what, once upon a time, was uttered in act there about the function as well as the field that language determines language.

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