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INTRODUCTION

Encore is Lacan's obstinate, almost heroic fight to abandon the deadlocks of the classical binary oppositions: mind/body, nature/nurture, sex/gender, and finally man/woman. It is a fight that continues Freud's original efforts. Freud, without wanting to or even knowing it himself, produced an alternative to these classical oppositions. Indeed, in his theory there is always an internal split, and the idea of an external agency is drastically reconsidered. Hence, his recurrent inner topologies: conscious/unconscious, Ego/Id/Super-Ego, and the splitting of the Ego as such. Both Freud and Lacan demonstrate that any binary opposition fails to get the picture right. Descartes' ideas about the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* are too poor to grasp the complex dialectics of the human condition.

The danger of a paper like this lies in its interpretive nature. This is always a problem with secondary elaborations and with a mania for understanding, about which any analyst should be cautious. It will become clear that secondary elaboration is especially important with respect to the subject of this paper. It will also be made clear that we cannot do without it, that it does not stop not being written: this is one of Lacan's conclusions. This is all the more the case since Lacan's seminars are "works in progress" belonging to an oral tradition of teaching and thinking, which cannot be adequately rendered by any written transcription. The latter will always be "not-whole" compared to the disappeared original. Hence the inevitability of interpretation. In my interpretation – there are others – I will follow the basic analytical rule: consider the text as part of a larger text. Any meaning has to be situated within the larger whole. *Encore* cannot be read and studied in an isolated way, it is one of the highlights of a long series of seminars. And since Lacan considered himself to be a Freudian, his text cannot be studied in isolation from the text of Lacan's Other, meaning Freud.

I want to address three questions:

What is Lacan's theory of the age-old mind/body deadlock?
What does this teach us about knowledge?
What is their relationship with *jouissance*?

The binary deadlock of the first question is left behind by Lacan. There is no opposition between these two terms. Instead, there is an open-ended

dialectical relationship. The discussion concerning “essentialism” versus “constructivism” is all too naive. The body that we “have” exists only through the mind. The Other constructs the body, but in and through this construction the shape of something else becomes more and more clear, something which is contained in that constructed body while at the same time being strange to it. This idea of “something else” is not new. It has been studied for a long time, in such a way that this “something else” is often made into a mirror image of ourselves, a Being underneath our being, different but similar at the same time. Such an underlying Being necessarily leads to some notion of a further underlying Supreme Being, a necessary ground and final point. Lacan denounces the deadlocks of this line of reasoning. Instead, he presents us with the notion of what he calls a circular but not reciprocal relationship that keeps itself going, a relationship between two terms that contain but do not absorb each other. From object *a* to the body, to the ego, to the subject, and to gender, but in reversed order: what is “previous” comes into existence retroactively, starting from the “next” in which it ex-sists.

Reconsidering this binary deadlock is impossible without also rethinking the idea of knowledge based on it, and hence, rethinking knowledge as such. Lacan opposes another form of knowledge to a more familiar form of knowledge. The latter belongs to the Other of the signifier and is monotonous, completely determined by what he calls the phallic One. Traditionally, the former is situated in an outside, again thought of in terms of a mirror image of ourselves: a supreme Other of the Other who possesses an ultimate Knowledge. Again, Lacan will take his leave from this binary system: this unknown form of knowledge is not something separate but belongs to the Other as well, only it belongs to a part of the Other that is a “not-whole” part, a gap in the Other in which something else of this Other appears. For Lacan, this is a form of knowledge of a different kind, a knowledge of the Other of the body. The next question concerns the relationship between these two forms of knowledge, but the most important question for Lacan involves the way in which this other form of knowledge is inscribed. Indeed, if this other knowledge does not belong to the Other of the signifier, its inscription presents us with a huge problem. The answer to this question entails a rethinking of the theory of the Unconscious.

Last but not least, there is the first subject, first from a clinical point of view: the deadlocks of pleasure. The pleasure principle fails, as Freud discovered soon enough. Lacan describes another form of pleasure operating

within phallic pleasure. This other *jouissance* stands outside the signifier, outside the phallic symbolic order, albeit from the inside. It is by no means a coincidence that Lacan needed the help of topology in order to demonstrate how “inside” and “outside” are continually part of each other. The Freudian idea of drive fusion (*Triebmischung*) receives a new illustration here. This other form of *jouissance* belongs to the “not-whole” part of the Other of the signifier. This means that this other form of *jouissance* can only be made clear

through this Other of the signifier, albeit at the point where this Other meets its limit.

These three subjects are not easy ones. I cannot treat them in an exhaustive way. Moreover, due to their very nature any exhaustive presentation is impossible. It is no coincidence that Lacan evokes the idea of “infinity” several times, and it is obvious that the three subjects are not in any way separate subjects. Isolating them is just another illustration of the way in which our Symbolic cognitive system functions through the signifier.

ENCORE:

“VINGT FOIS SUR LE METIER, REMETTEZ VOTRE OUVRAGE.”¹

1. Jouissance.

Here, the problem concerns a *jouissance* beyond the phallic pleasure principle – what typically insists of *jouissance* after the failure of the sexual relationship. Even the psychopathology of everyday life demonstrates the necessity of an “*encore*”, which is sufficient proof in itself of the unattainable nature of the pleasure principle’s goal. On top of that, it seems that these forms of pleasure are opposed to each other, which calls into question the very nature of “pleasure”. And the fact that masculinity and the phallic pleasure principle are associated with each other implies that the other form of pleasure belongs to woman.

The *familiar* pleasure, familiar also meaning “well-known”, is phallic pleasure, which understandably falls under the heading of the masculine. It must be noted that “masculine” is a psychosexual position, and not a sex as such. Phallic pleasure is, first of all, a pleasure through the signifier, and therefore

the sole pleasure attainable for the subject. The fact that this phallic pleasure is never enough is not so much due to castration. Here, Lacan corrects Freud: on the contrary, symbolic castration creates the very possibility of this pleasure. The fact that there is “not enough” has to do with the *jouissance* that is supposed to lie beyond phallic pleasure. This other *jouissance* may have to do with woman, but Lacan specifies that it is an asexual *jouissance*. Hence,

¹ “Hâtez-vous lentement; et, sans perdre courage,

Vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage:

Polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez;

Ajoutez quelquefois, et souvent effacez.”

Boileau, (1928). *L'Art Poétique*. Paris, A. Quillet, p. 105.

the relationship between the subject and this other *jouissance* is to be situated outside the Other of the signifier, more exactly in a place where the Other is not-whole.

The basic questions are: who or what enjoys this other *jouissance*? How and where is this other *jouissance* inscribed, if it does not belong to the Other of the signifier?

LACAN

Lacan starts with a question: “*Jouissance* – *jouissance* of the Other’s body – remains a question” (p. 11)². And he will make sure that it *remains* a question by avoiding the all too easy answers, and by making it clear to us why it has to remain a question. Indeed, his first answer brings yet another question: where does this *jouissance* of the Other’s body, as an answer to the Other of the signifier, come from? He offers us the idea of traces on the body coming from a beyond that must have to do with life, death and reproduction (pp. 11-12; pp. 32-33). He does not elaborate on this much further (see seminar XI, cf. *infra*), but stresses the fact that these traces are not originally sexual ones. Their sexual character is secondary: “The body’s being is of course sexed, but it is secondary, as they say” (p. 11; pp. 11-12). Asexual in this context means: not-phallic, hence not signified by the symbolic.

There is already more than enough here for an in-depth study. This other form of *jouissance* has nothing to do with sexual pleasure, meaning phallic pleasure. It originates in an elsewhere, and has to be understood as belonging to Being, although the term “being” will be seriously redefined in this seminar.

This is announced from the very beginning of the seminar, when being is mysteriously defined as follows: “Where there is being, infinity is required” (p. 15). And this is understood to be the opposite of the Other, where one finds the requirement for the One.

This other *jouissance* concerns an “enjoying substance” (“the substance of the body”) which is confirmed, Lacan says, by analytic experience (p. 26).³ In

² All references to seminar XX are given in the paper itself. Since the translator, B.Fink, had the splendid idea of including the original French page numbers in the English version, all references are to these original pages.

Lacan, J. (1998). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX. Encore (1972-73). On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by B.Fink. New York, Norton (Lacan, J., 1975. *Le Séminaire : Livre XX. Encore (1972-1973)*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller, Paris, Seuil).

this experience, this *jouissance* appears as the correlate of a failure in matters of the sexual relationship (p. 55). The fantasy fails to offer a substitute for the non-existent sexual relationship. The idea of a “correlate” is important here. It does not mean independent of, or opposite to – on the contrary, it evokes the idea of a kind of implication.⁴ Seminar XX is one long elaboration of this implied otherness that is always in opposition to what it is *not*. In this way an opposition is introduced that will never become a real binary opposition. On the one hand there is a *jouissance* through the signifier, meaning the pleasure principle, meaning phallic. On the other hand something has to be situated beyond this *but at the same time incorporated in it*, providing *jouissance* to the Other. The real question concerns the status of this Other. It is impossible to place the Other of the signifier here because this Other belongs to phallic pleasure. Lacan specifies: the part that enjoys involves a not-whole part, something which he still has to elaborate on at this (early) stage of the seminar: a not-whole *within* the Other, meaning a part of the Other that is other, that is not completely covered by the Other of the signifier. It is in this part that the traces, coming from an elsewhere, are operative.

Of course it is very tempting to situate woman at this place, woman as the materialisation of *jouissance*. It is the very same temptation that led to courtly love, as well as to its counterpart – the rejection of femininity by the Church, the defamation (“*diffâme*” – defame; “*dit-femme*” – called woman, p. 79). Both reactions amount to the same thing: an attempt to recuperate, by means of articulation, something that ultimately cannot be recuperated by the signifier. The first is tied to love, the second sleeps with hate (p. 64).

For Lacan, men, women and children are nothing more than signifiers. There is no prediscursive reality in these matters (p. 34).⁵ In so far as woman has something to do with this otherness, it lies beyond her subjectivity and thus beyond her ability to say anything about it. The postlacanian hype about “feminine *jouissance*” is nothing but a hysterical attempt to recuperate something that, due to its very nature, cannot be recuperated. Lacan presents

³ This clinical experience can easily be found in Freud’s case studies: in his four actual clinical cases, it is not too difficult to find the infantile drive root or fixation, as Freud calls it.

⁴ This idea goes a long way back in Lacan’s work: “(...) you can see the difficulties of topological representation. The reason is that *das Ding* is at the centre only in that sense that it is excluded. (...) something *entfremded*, something foreign to men although it is at the heart of the me” (Lacan, J., 1992. *The Seminar of J.Lacan, Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-60*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by D.Potter. New York, Norton, p. 71).

⁵ “In the psyche, there is nothing by which the subject may situate himself as a male or female being. In his psyche, the subject situates only equivalents of the function of reproduction – activity and passivity, which by no means represent it in an exhaustive way. (...) the ways of what one must do as man or as woman are entirely abandoned to the drama, to the scenario, which is placed in the field of the Other – which, strictly speaking, is the Oedipus complex. (...) that the human being has always to learn from scratch from the Other what he has to do, as man or as woman.” Lacan, J., (1994). *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated by A.Sheridan, introduction by D.Macey. Penguin books, p. 204. (Lacan, J., 1973, *Le Séminaire, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Texte établi par J.A.Miller, Paris, Seuil, p. 186).

us with only one clear statement, although made almost casually, about the occurrence of this other *jouissance* in women. And with this statement, he implicitly picks up again the comments he made on it elsewhere: comments to the effect that it concerns life in combination with death through reproduction. In so far as this other *jouissance* appears in women, it has to do with their children: “She finds the cork for this *jouissance* (...) in the a constituted by her child” (p. 35). In my opinion, this is a clear hint that female perversion needs to be rethought, and taken beyond the myth of maternal love.

This other *jouissance*, in its relation to the beyond, might very well be interpreted as an original one, a primary one from a chronological point of view followed by a later, second *jouissance*. Lacan corrects this reading in a very explicit way. Primary does not mean first (pp. 52-53). The not-whole is an after-effect, it is *nachträglich*, only to be delineated by the impact of the Other of the signifier, which tries to establish a totalising effect by means of the One of the phallic signifier.⁶ As a result, this Other is condemned to a kind of double vision. Indeed, it wants to see, by means of the signifier, something that is defined by this very signifier as something beyond itself – hence its cross-sightedness (p. 71).

This argument leads us back to a central line of thought in seminar XX: “‘The Other’ here is more than ever thrown into question” (p. 39.) Indeed, throughout the different lessons of the seminar the status of the Other changes (p. 21). Since this happens in the course of the seminar itself, as part

of Lacan’s work in progress, studying it becomes all the more difficult. The main shift takes place in chapter VI, which still begins with the idea of “another satisfaction, the satisfaction of speech” (p. 61). This will be reversed: by the end of the chapter, we read that the reason for “the being of signifierness” (beautiful paradox!) has to be found in the “*jouissance* of the body” (p. 67). The Other, as the Other of the signifier, does not dominate the scene anymore. It is the body, the “being of the body” that enjoys, not the “being of the signifierness”.

In the meantime, this other *jouissance* has changed sides and no longer belongs to the “familiar” Other anymore, the Other of the signifier. From now on it belongs to the other Other, the Other of the body, albeit not the body of the mirror image. It seems that we are faced with an opposition between, on the one hand, the Other of the signifier, and on the other hand the Other of the body. Of course, this is not so new. The innovation resides in how these two Others are redefined beyond the Platonic binary psyche-soma scheme. *Jouissance* of the body may very well lie beyond the phallus. Nevertheless, it ex-sists within this phallic *jouissance*, and this has to do with a-natomy (p. 87).

⁶ The identification made by Lacan between the symbolic order, the master-signifier, the phallic signifier, and the One might not be clear to some readers. I understand it as follows.

This a-natomy demonstrates, again, that this jouissance is related to the traces mentioned earlier, which testify to a corporal contingency (p. 86). This demonstration takes place in a retroactive way. It is only when these traces have become (secondarily) sexualised (i.e., phallicized) that they become visible, together with the a-sexual remainder that ex-sists in them: a transition from a to (a)/-phi. Phallic pleasure, and especially the insufficiency of phallic pleasure, makes this remainder manifest. In clinical terms: beyond the truth (the failure of the sexual relationship), the Real makes its appearance. This remainder – the “enjoying substance” – resides in the objects a (oral, anal, scopic, and invocative) which are indeed, by virtue of their use value, not so much known as they are enjoyed. They obtain an “exchange value” during the nurturing process and as a result get phallicized.⁷

It is this exchange that introduces them into the dialectic between subject and (m)Other, and, ultimately, into the phallic exchange. But even in this exchange they ex-sist as foreign bodies, Freud’s *Fremdkörper*.

Who or what enjoys? By the end of the seminar, it becomes clear that it is not being that enjoys – a being that would be the mirror image of the subject – but something else, something infinite, for which a is the ever-failing denomination. Object a is only a semblance of being (p. 87). Moreover, “it (the object a) only dissolves, in the final analysis, owing to its failure, unable, as it is, to sustain itself in approaching the real”. And that is the truth (pp. 87-88).

The riddle that remains, Lacan says, involves the economy of jouissance. Who or what enjoys? The answer actually never gives us a “who” but focuses on a “what”. The other jouissance can only be defined in a negative way: it concerns neither gender, nor the Other of the signifier, nor being. It always has to be understood not so much as something that lies beyond, but as something whose basis is found in the fact that all the previous ones are not-whole. It is within this whole not-whole that it flourishes. Coming from a beyond (p. 101), it has to do with the combination of life and death

The symbolic order as a system is based on difference (see de Saussure). The first signifier to denote difference as such is the phallic signifier. Hence, the symbolic order is based on the phallic signifier. As a signifier it is empty and it does not create a difference between two different genders. It creates a mere difference between the One and the not-one. This is its major effect on the symbolic order: it operates in a unifying way by applying a dichotomous reasoning: one or not one. Lacan returns to this at the very end of seminar XX, when he questions the origins of this idea of one (XX, pp. 63-64; pp. 130-131). See also Lacan, J., 1990, *Television, a Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Translated by D.Hollier, R.Krauss and A.Michelson, edited by J.Copjec. New York, Norton, p. 10 (Lacan, J., 1973. *Télévision*. Paris, Seuil, p. 22).

⁷ This transition from “use value” to “exchange value” is one of the major themes of Seminar IV. *La relation d’objet, 1956-57*.

within sexual reproduction. Its elaboration takes place within the dialectics of corporal contingency (“to stop not being written”), necessity (“it doesn’t stop being written”), and impossibility (“it doesn’t stop not being written”).

How is this *jouissance* inscribed? The inscription takes place on the body in a contingent way, coming from this beyond. This body is not the body of the mirror stage, but concerns the points where this body interacts with the outside (see the particularity of the four objects *a*)⁸. This contingent inscription on the body (Freud’s “somatic compliance”) must necessarily be taken up again by the speaking subject, in and through the articulation of the signifier, where it becomes impossible. Instead of a binary opposition, we end up with an open ended dialectic. We will meet with this dialectic again in our next part.

FREUDIAN ANTECEDENTS

In Freud, we find the same clinical experience, although it receives a different elaboration. In his initial search for the truth with his hysterical patients, he encountered the Real beyond the reality of the trauma. At that moment (letter to Fliess, September 21, 1897), Freud stopped, and concentrated on what

was a mere envelope of this Real: the fantasies of the patients and their symptoms. Nevertheless, Freud already had a clear insight into the fact that something was wrong within the pleasure economy itself, independently of socio-cultural inhibitions: “In my opinion there must be an independent source for the release of unpleasure in sexual life”.⁹ But at the time, he did not develop this insight any further.

Twenty years later, after all the possible elaborations and analyses of fantasies and symptoms (i.e. elaborations on the pathology of desire) had been exhausted, Freud again met with the Real. This time, he grasped it much better: he read it as something that lies beyond the pleasure principle. The failure of the pleasure principle is his formulation for what Lacan calls, half a century later, the failure of the sexual relationship.

In his elaboration, Freud was reluctant to include this factor in the economy of pleasure. He was reluctant because from his point of view, it was precisely something that worked against the pleasure of the pleasure principle, and it thus presented him with a major obstacle to therapeutic success. For him, it was first and foremost something traumatic. Even more so: it was the traumatic factor par excellence, a structural trauma in the sense

⁸ “The common factor of *a* is the fact that it is associated with the orifices of the body” (my translation; “Le facteur commun du *a*, c’est d’être lié aux orifices du corps” (Lacan, J., 1975-1976. *Seminar XXIII. Le Sinthome*. Unpublished, lesson of 21/01/1975).

⁹ Freud, S. (1892-1899), *Draft K to Fliess*. S.E. I, p. 222.

that the ego could never get hold of it by way of word-presentations.¹⁰ Lacan echoes this idea when he talks about the “bad encounter” in seminar XI – strangely enough, in seminar XX, he speaks about an encounter with love in a more optimistic way, although he adds that this requires courage (11, p. 64; XX, p. 87; p. 132) and leads to a form of ethics beyond sex (XX, p. 78). According to Freud, this structural trauma gave rise to the repetition compulsion and traumatic dreams, which were nothing more than endlessly repeated attempts to include the traumatic Real within word-presentations, to articulate this Real inside the secondary process and bound energy.¹¹ But these attempts fail, and he finally formulated his theory of the life and death drives in an attempt to articulate something coming from a beyond.

A further elaboration can be found in Freud’s metapsychology, where the resemblances with Lacan’s issues are striking. Firstly, the pleasure beyond the pleasure principle was for Freud impossible to articulate; indeed, if something is outside the pleasure principle it is also outside the secondary process and any binding to word-presentations, which makes it an energy that belongs to the unbound primary process. As a result, it cannot be discharged through the use of words. This evokes Lacan’s idea of infinity. Secondly, according to Freud there is not a linear sequence or a binary opposition. On the contrary, what he described was a fusion, which he tried to understand

with his final drive theory: a fusion between Eros and Thanatos. In Lacanian terms, the other *jouissance* ex-sists within phallic *jouissance*. Thirdly, as a result of the impossibility of being able to signify this traumatic *jouissance*, there is an endless attempt to signify it, evinced by the repetition compulsion. But the impossibility of interpreting it (for lack of a signifier) and, hence, the impossibility of analysing it, remains. As a result, analysis is interminable, because analysis as such cannot reach down to this problem. Endless phallic interpretations circle around the not-whole of the phallic order, delineating it without signifying it.

According to Freud, the *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle was first of all related to the trauma. It is interesting to note that this was also Lacan’s first approach to the Real. His conceptualisation in seminar XI is so crucial with respect to seminar XX that we can not afford to neglect it. It will permit us to bridge the gap between Freud and Lacan, and will also provide us with a better understanding of seminar XX.

At the time of seminar XI (1964), the Lacanian audience was under the spell of the signifier and the opposition between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, between empty speech and full speech. But they were in for

¹⁰ Freud, S. (1939a). *Moses and Monotheism*. S.E. XXIII, pp. 71-73, p. 126, p. 129.

¹¹ Freud, S. (1920g). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. S.E. XVIII, pp. 32-35.

something new, something real.¹² Right from the start of the seminar, Lacan introduced them to another kind of unconscious, the unconscious of the *Unbegriff*, the not-understandable, the non-conceptual (11, p. 26), represented by a cut, a gap, and operating in a causal way (11, pp. 21-22). Lacan shows us an interaction between what he calls automaton (the network of signifiers) and tuchè (the Real). In terms of seminar XX, the network of signifiers is the Other of the signifier, and tuchè or the Real is the other jouissance. The automaton is organised, containing verbal thoughts, and it shows us how recollection works. Owing to its organisation, this recollection works perfectly, automatically, although only up to a certain point (11, p. 49). This is best illustrated by the productions of the unconscious, which always demonstrate a failure and an impediment at that particular point (11, p. 25). This point is not so much a point but a discontinuity (11, p. 25), and is the causal gap of the unconscious as such. Hence Lacan's descriptions of this unconscious as unborn, unrealised (11, p. 23), and pre-ontological: "it does not lend itself to ontology." "Manque-à-être", a lack of being is the right way to describe it (11, p. 29). At this gap where recollection fails, something else enters

the scene, something that repeats itself through the repetition compulsion. This something else is the Real "which always comes back to the same place" (11, p. 49). This encounter between the network of signifiers (the Other) and the Real (the other jouissance) is always a failed encounter. It is the failed encounter between reality and the Real, at very particular points. Indeed, reality (constructed by the Symbolic, by the Other), is *unterlegt, untertragen* (supported, sustained) by radical points in the Real which is thereby condemned to a painful pending ("en souffrance", 11, p. 55). These radical points are the asexual traces mentioned in seminar XX, with which the network (the Other) fails to meet. In so far as the subject thinks (in signifiers), he or she does not encounter the real (of the other jouissance).

This was already made clear in Freud's study of traumatic neurosis, to which Lacan refers. But in Lacan's conceptualisation, this impossible although necessary relationship between tuchè and automaton tells us something about the very nature of the unconscious as such. The unconscious is a causal gap *compelling* the Other into the creation of an automaton of articulated thinking in order to master something beyond this kind of thinking as such. Automaton and tuchè are two sides of the same coin which can never meet but which are bound to try to meet. Automaton is the not-whole, the not-enough of the network. Tuchè is the Real as the "unassimilable" (11,

¹² Lacan, J., (1994). *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1964)*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated by A.Sheridan, introduction by D.Macey. Penguin books.

References to the English translation indicated by (11, pp. //). It should be noted that Lacan develops his theory of the Real in seminar XI very hesitantly, with the result that from time to time he uses the term "reality" when he is talking about the Real.

p. 55), but Lacan does specify what it is. It is the Real of the drive, “the drive to come” (11, p. 60). Indeed, dream analysis demonstrates to us that the most important characteristic of the drive is its lack of representation. We have nothing but a substitute representative of it, a replacement representative (“un tenant-lieu de la représentation”), by means of which the failure, the impediment of every production of the unconscious can be seen. Lacan concludes that the question of the Real and reality must be reinvestigated (11, p. 55). Seminar XX is one of the major results of this reinvestigation.

CONCLUSION

The other jouissance ex-sists within phallic jouissance, functioning as a foreign body. It causes an inner split in the subject. If there is any opposition to something external involved here, it is to a vague “beyond”. Freud’s theory of Eros and Thanatos reappears in Lacan’s attempt to make a distinction between “the advent of the living” and “the advent of the subject”, and, especially, in his attempt to study the dialectics between the two forms of jouissance and their relations to the signifier.

In view of the close relationship between phallic pleasure, the pleasure principle and the signifier, it is obvious that knowledge is involved in these matters. Hence the fact that the subject knows “everything” about this. The question that remains involves the relationship between the other jouissance and knowledge. Is there something to know about this other jouissance, and,

if so, who is the one who knows? This last question necessarily implies a reconsideration of the relationship between the Unconscious and knowledge as such.

2. Knowledge.

The subject’s “wish to know” (Foucault’s *La volonté de savoir*) is always suspect. The subject knows everything it has to know, and supposes that the same knowledge exists in the Other. Based on this mirroring, it provides itself and the Other with a being, a substantial identity. The crack in this mirror was made clear in our previous part: in spite of this supposedly whole knowledge, there is a form of jouissance that escapes from this totality. The subject produces in this respect a mere “mi-dire”, a half-telling of the truth, and thus meets up with a not-whole in the truth itself. The not-whole of the Other is here displaced onto a not-whole in the field of articulated knowledge.

Which leaves us with the following questions: what is the status of the Other in this other knowledge? How does this other knowledge get inscribed, if it stands outside articulated, signified knowledge? And what is its relationship with the Unconscious?

LACAN

Lacan reads the history of knowledge as the history of an increasing decentralisation and desexualisation. The Copernican revolution is not a genuine revolution, he says, because it keeps the idea of a center intact. The genuine revolution is found in Kepler's work: more particularly, in the shift from a circle (with a center) to an ellipse (without a center) (pp. 42-43).

The idea of a center within traditional (pre-)science always amounts to thinking of a being-in-the-world in terms of a One, a One that acquires knowledge of the world within a mirroring process. Lacan denounces this argumentation in Aristotle's work. Indeed, the latter's assumption of such a being led necessarily to the assumption of a "supreme sphere" (p. 77). In Lacan's reading, this supreme sphere is nothing but an imaginary implementation of the jouissance of the Other, where woman would be situated if she existed (p. 77). In the Catholic interpretation of Aristotle, God took the place of this supreme sphere as the supreme Being, the center of all love and knowledge to which all the little beings belong in one way or another and to which they long to return. In this way, the Church saved both God and the father – and Freud produced the same salvation with his myth of the primal father (p. 99).

Such a line of reasoning entails an endless mirroring process. It also produces the illusion that an underlying being exists who is supposed to contain the same knowledge as our own being. Beyond the thinking of the thinker lies the thinking of a hidden Thinker who has the reins in his hands (pp. 96-97).

For Lacan, this is more a matter of tinkering... It is a brutal reduction of the Real to the One. Moreover, it is a reduction that provides not only the I and being with an existence ("I think, therefore I am"), but the supreme being as well.

The knowledge that follows from this mirror operation, i.e. knowledge, as traditional (pre-) science understood it, is therefore always a sexualised knowledge and is accompanied by a deadlock. In other words, this form of knowledge is nothing but an attempt to come to terms with the non-existence of the sexual relationship. As an example, Lacan refers to the relationship between form and matter described by Plato and Aristotle. In their theories, they always assumed an impossible relationship between two terms that were nothing more than mere replacements for man and woman (p. 76). The working through of this relationship led to a predictable deadlock: for lack of a sexual relationship, they ended up with an asexual line of reasoning: "The Other presents itself to the subject only in an a-sexual form" (p. 115). And in this line of reasoning again, the longed-for "two" of the imaginary sexual relationship is brutally reduced to a One. God becomes a sexless father and angels have no sex whatsoever. The ultimate effect of such a line of reasoning is that it prevents us from gaining access to whatever our "being" might be; although the impasses of this line of reasoning may provide us with some access to it (p. 48; p. 108). Finally, this whole line of reasoning is

nothing but a philosophical elaboration of the mirror stage, by means of which the ego fosters the illusion of a unified, substantial identity: “m’être/maître à moi-même”, to be myself, to be master of myself, to belong to myself.¹³

Modern science takes its leave from the very idea of a center, and thereby also from the mirror and sexualisation. In mathematics, the concept of the One is no longer used in a fusional-amorous way (that is, in a way that makes up for the non-existence of the sexual relationship), but indeed as a one. It becomes a letter that can be written down (pp. 46-47). This letter in modern science differs from the One of traditional pre-science by not designating an assemblage. It *makes* one. In this way, modern science tries to create an entrance to the Real in a different way (p. 118).

Lacan finds the same movement of desexualisation and decentralisation in the very process of analysis. Through the process of free association, a psychoanalytic treatment automatically entails a decentralisation of the ego. Indeed, free association endorses the splitting of the subject, and obliterates

the idea of any center. Finally, this becomes the goal of analysis, expressed in the notion of subjective destitution. Analytic experience demonstrates that so-called being is only a para-being, the agent of any discourse is only an apparent agent, and every idea of substance has to be left behind (pp. 43-44).

At the beginning of an analysis, the analysant “knows” and “understands” everything, due to a mirroring process with the Other in the place of the one who is supposed to know. He or she understands everything through the phallic signifier, S_1 , which entails a reduction to the One (pp. 74-75). As a result, the a-sexual object *a* gets sexualised, i.e., phallicized. Hence there is an ever-present confusion of (*a*) with A (p. 77). This is an individual implementation of the mirroring process discussed above in traditional science. The articulation of this knowledge leads the subject to talk endlessly about “d’eux”, meaning “about the two of them”, again in an attempt to make up for the non-existence of the sexual relationship. This occurs with one eye fixed on the imaginary being in the mirror. But the unconscious also testifies to a knowledge that escapes from this kind of talk, and it is there that something is to be gained (pp. 125-127).

Analytic treatment drives this articulated, sexualised knowledge to a limit point where the subject meets with the difference between the truth and the real. The truth can only be half told and is limited by phallic jouissance.

¹³ Lacan, J., (1991). *Le Séminaire : Livre XVII. L’Envers de la Psychanalyse (1969-1970)*. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Seuil, Paris, p. 178.

The latter is merely a semblance, an envelope around something else. This half-telling warns us against the imaginary aspect of the symptom-envelope and refers us to the Real beyond this half-telling. This Real, situated beyond and at the same time in the Symbolic, can only be inscribed by way of a deadlock in formalisation. How is it possible to write something that does not belong to the phallicized symbolic order? Again, Lacan will refer to the function of the letter without meaning, found in mathematics, as something that permits us to go beyond a brutal reduction to the One (pp. 85-87).

The question then is: what is there to know about this other knowledge, and how does this other knowledge relate to articulated knowledge? "What we want to know is the status of the Other's knowledge" (p. 81). If the Other knows by means of articulated signifiers, then we are in the deadlock of the mirror stage again, this time resulting in an entelechy. Hence the fact that the last quote has to be rephrased in the form of a question: "Does the Other know?" (p. 82). The major difficulty in this respect, Lacan says, has everything to do with the eternal ambiguity of the term "Unconscious" and its relation to knowledge (p. 81).

From this moment in the seminar onwards, Lacan attempts to define this "other" form of knowledge. Again, he evokes the idea of traces inscribed in a contingent way on the body, coming from an elsewhere. Psychoanalysis demonstrates that the ground of this knowledge consists in the fact that the *jouissance* of its acquisition is the very same as the *jouissance* of its experience: "For the foundation of knowledge is that the *jouissance* of

its exercise is the same as that of its acquisition" (p. 89). The body, or rather parts of the body, "knows" something because it enjoys this something, and this enjoyment brings about an inscription of both this knowledge and this *jouissance* on (part of) the body itself. This inscription does not belong to the order of the signifier (and hence, not to the Other), but takes place through what Lacan tries to understand as the "letter". "Use value" is here much more important than "exchange value" (p. 89). Hence the fact that Lacan, by the end of the seminar, focuses on what he considers to be the most important question: learning how to learn (pp. 128-129).

This acquisition of knowledge through "use value" has nothing to do with being, but has everything to do with the letter. The letter, in this respect, must not be understood as a message. It has to be understood in analogy to a germ cell, a meaningless carrier of a possible further development (p. 89). This development will always be an attempt to recuperate the letter by means of an articulated signifier: from the objects *a* (oral, anal, invocative, scopic) to *a*/ ϕ (fellatio, anal penetration, exhibitionism, telephone sex); from "use value" to "exchange value" with the mother, with motherly language. As Lacan said at the beginning of the seminar: these traces get sexualised secondarily. But this attempt at recuperation never completely succeeds, and thus creates within the signifier and within the Other a part that is not-whole, through which the letter keeps ex-sisting as a letter.

As a consequence, Lacan has to accept that the Other of the signifier does not know anything about it. This constitutes the not-whole part in the Other of the signifier: "It is the Other that makes the not-whole, precisely in that the Other is the part of the not-knowing-at-all in this not-whole" (p. 90).¹⁴ Hence the fact that the unconscious is not a thinking being, but first and foremost an enjoying being who does not want to know anything about it (p. 95). This cannot be captured within traditional, articulated knowledge. Beyond the illusion of mirroring, there is a "relation to being" that cannot be known. There is a discordance, a cleft between being and knowledge on *our* side, that is, at the side of the subject where the latter is indeed not-whole (pp. 108-109).

Having arrived at this point in his line of reasoning, Lacan finds himself obliged to call into question the very idea of being, and along with it the idea of essentialism. Being is a mere supposition based on articulation: "it is but a fact of what is said" (p. 107). Knowledge beyond articulation is literally and

figuratively "inter-dit", in the double sense of the French: "prohibited", but also: "said, evoked between the sayings as such" (p. 108). The question is: to which kind of Real does it give us access? (p. 108) For Lacan, this real takes the place of the ever-presumed being, a presumption based on the mirroring process. Lacan associates this real more and more with the body, although not with the body constructed through the Other. He concludes: "The real is the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious" (p. 118).

This knowledge is an enigma demonstrated to us by the unconscious. Analytic discourse, on the contrary, teaches us that knowledge is something that is articulated. By means of this articulation, knowledge is turned into sexualised knowledge and functions as an imaginary replacement for the lack of a sexual relationship. But the unconscious especially testifies to a knowledge that escapes the speaking being's knowledge (pp. 125-126). This knowledge which we cannot grasp belongs to the order of experience. It is thus effected by *llanguage*, the motherly llanguage that presents us with enigmatic *affects* that go further than what the speaking being can articulate in his or her articulated knowledge (p. 126).

The unconscious can be considered as a way of coping with these affects coming from the motherly llanguage. This llanguage contains the *stocheion*, the primary letter of the alphabet of knowledge (p. 130), and it is this *stocheion* that has to be turned into a sign of the subject. Analysis must

¹⁴ My translation, because the English translation introduces a different interpretation. The original reads: "C'est l'Autre qui fait le pas-tout, justement en ce qu'il est la part du pas-savant-du-tout dans ce pas-tout". Indeed, "pas-savant-du-tout" implies at least two meanings: "not knowing of the whole" and "not knowing at all".

aim at reading these letters beyond what the analysant says (pp. 29-30). The analysant is supposed to be able to read and to be able to learn to read these letters through his analysis (p. 38). This provides the mysterious bridge between the a-sexual traces and the signifier, between knowledge and subject. This sign can only be inaugurated through the operation of a master-signifier (S_1) that assures the unity of the body and the subject. The next step brings along an “exchange value” by means of which the subject gets divided by signifiers and enters the dialectics of desire. Thus, the unconscious is a way of coping with the affects coming from the motherly language by applying the signifier One, which does not come from the body but from the signifier as such (pp. 130-131). “There is One.” Hence, the question that remains is: what does this One mean? From where does it arise? (pp. 130-131).

Lacan asks this question several times throughout the seminar, but he does not come up with an answer. As a matter of fact, he pursues this question throughout his work, especially in seminar XIX, *Ou pire*, the one preceding *Encore*.

FREUDIAN ANTECEDENTS

The links with Freud are very obvious and illuminating in several respects. During his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* he elaborated the idea of “facilitations” (*Bahnungen*): psychological material gets inscribed by means of these *Bahnungen*.¹⁵ Exchange value arises later on. In his *Project*, he expresses this theory in pseudo-neurological terms. The same line of reasoning reappears right from the very start of his theory on the Unconscious, where he puts forth the hypothesis that psychic material is inscribed in different layers, and in different scriptures for each layer (*Niederschrift*). Every further step in development requires a translation of the previous material into the next layer’s form of inscription. This in itself creates the possibility of defence: dangerous, unpleasant material can be left behind in the previous layer’s form of inscription. Since it is not translated into the new form of inscription, it insists in a strange way.¹⁶

This theory receives a further elaboration with the concept of repression. It is important to acknowledge the fact that with this theory, Freud

¹⁵ Freud, S. (1895). *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. S.E. I, pp. 295-397. The idea of *Bahnungen* is used almost constantly in this paper. See also *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g). S.E. XVIII, p. 26.

¹⁶ See Freud’s letters to Fliess, dating from May 30, 1896 and November 2, 1896 (S.E. I, pp. 229-240).

introduces us to two different forms of the unconscious, and hence, to two different forms of knowledge. Repression proper – literally, “after repression” (*Nachdrängung*) – targets verbal material, word-presentations that have become bearers of displeasure. The process of repression takes the energetic investment (“cathexis”) away from these word-presentations, thus making them unconscious in the dynamic sense of the word. This investment is displaced onto another word-presentation in which the return of the repressed takes place. “After repression” forms the basis for the “repressed unconscious” or the “dynamic unconscious”.¹⁷ Here, it is not so difficult to recognise Lacan’s idea that the unconscious is structured as a language. Indeed, the repressed unconscious involves signifiers coming from the Other during an exchange (“The unconscious is the Other’s discourse”) based on desire (“Man’s desire is the Other’s desire”). This is the exchange value of the material. As signifiers they contain a knowledge that comes from the Other. This knowledge can be fully known by means of the return of the repressed. The subject knows “everything” in these matters, but it doesn’t know that it knows. This knowledge concerns sexual, phallic knowledge, which led Freud to complain that interpretation always comes down to the same thing.

This knowledge which can be known reaches a limit in Freud’s thinking as well. Beyond “after repression” lurks a “primal repression” belonging to another form of the unconscious, and hence also possessing another form of knowledge as well. As a process, this primal repression is first and foremost a primal *fixation*: certain material is left behind in its original inscription.¹⁸ It never gets translated into word-presentations. This material concerns an “excessive degree of excitation”: the drive, the *Trieb* or *Triebhaft* to which Lacan refers when he interprets the drive as “the drift of jouissance” (p. 102).¹⁹ Based on this, Freud develops the idea of a system Ucs. This system

¹⁷ Freud, S. (1915d). *Repression*. S.E. XIV, p. 146; *The Ego and the Id* (1923b). S.E. XIX, pp. 60-62; *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933a). S.E. XXII, p. 15, pp. 70-72.

¹⁸ Freud, S. (1911c). *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*. S.E. XII, pp. 66-68; Freud, S. (1923b). *Op. cit.*, p. 18; Freud, S. (1915d). *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

¹⁹ Freud, S. (1926d). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. S.E. XX, p. 94; Freud, S. (1920g). *Op. cit.*, p. 27ff. It is fascinating to see how this problem is present from the beginning of Freud’s theory. As early as *The Neuro-psychoses of Defence* (1894a), Freud struggles with the relationship between what he calls at the time “the memory-traces” of the “repressed ideas” and the quota of affect. Repression takes place at a “traumatic moment” and operates on the “sum of excitation”, “the source of the affect”. But he is left wondering whether these processes are of a psychological nature, or if “they are physical processes whose psychological consequences present themselves as if what is expressed by the terms ‘separation of the idea from its affect’ and ‘false connection’ of the latter had really taken place” (S.E. III, pp. 50-53). In later

exerts an attractive force on the material of the “after repression”, the material in the dynamic, repressed unconscious. From a Lacanian point of view, this can be put as follows: sexualised, phallicized articulated material is attracted by the not-whole part within this articulated part, the (a) within a/-phi.

In contrast to the dynamic, repressed unconscious, there are no word-presentations in this system Ucs. The central question, then, is: is it the drive itself that is fixated, or does this fixation involve a primal form of the drive’s representation? Moreover: is there any form of inscription? Freud dubs it the “kernel of our being”, the “mycelium”, but he also hesitates.²⁰ Indeed, the question must be raised whether latent dream thoughts are “present” anywhere at all, whether they are inscribed at all, or if they shouldn’t instead be considered as originally non-existent, such that dream formation takes the place of an originally lacking psychological elaboration.²¹ In this case, dream analysis does not come down to the discovery of a hidden inscription. On the contrary, it amounts to an elaboration process within the signifier, taking the place of something that was originally not there. It should be noted that Freud presents the same kind of argument when he discusses trauma: the traumatic effect of trauma is caused by the fact that trauma, when it happens, cannot be put into words; it lacks an elaboration within the signifier.²² This perfectly tallies with Lacan’s ideas in seminar XI, where he describes the unconscious not as a substantial kernel but as a “cause béante”, a causal gap in which something fails to be realised.

In Freud, there is no final discussion about the nature of the drive’s inscription in the system Ucs (Freud, 1915e). For him, it involves an idea of fixation in general and the body in particular. Hence we find expressions like fixation, constitution, drive root, and somatic compliance. These expressions appear in all his case studies, and they are always linked to a form of infantile pleasure.

From 1964 onwards, Lacan takes up this question and struggles with it. In the wake of the Bonneval conference and the discussion with Ricoeur, as well as with his own pupils Laplanche and Leclaire, he tries to come up with

terms: is the drive inscribed psychically or are we facing right from the start a fundamental incompatibility between the drive and representation as such, thus constituting the nucleus of the system Ucs. as a gap, a failure operating in a causal way? The latter is the option Lacan takes from seminar XI onwards.

²⁰ Freud, S. (1900a). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. V, p. 525.

²¹ Freud describes the dream as an externalisation of an internal process, in which the drive impulses function as source. The dream tries to express the unconscious impulse, i.e., bodily changes, through the preconscious dream-wish. Freud, S. (1917d). *A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams*. S.E. XIV, pp. 222-226.

²² Freud, S. (1939a). *Moses and Monotheism*. S.E. XXIII, pp. 71-73; p. 126; p. 129. See also a letter to Fliess, where he states that fantasies go back to “things heard at an early age but understood only later” (April 6, 1897, S.E. I, p. 244).

an answer. Laplanche and Leclaire put forward the hypothesis that the unconscious kernel contains a representational system: phonemes for Leclaire, imagoes (sensory images without signifiers) for Laplanche.²³ Lacan ultimately rejects both answers, and presents his own solution by developing his theory of object *a* and the letter. In his seminar XXII, *R.S.I.*, he again picks up the idea of the letter as a representative of the drive in the system Ucs. (Lacan, 1975). This letter presents us with the particular way in which a drive is fixated for a particular subject, but it cannot be signified in a definite way, the way of the phallic signifier of the One. As a letter it contains a knowledge, but this knowledge forms part of the not-whole part of the Other, thus making this Other ignorant about it. It is the Other of the body that remembers this knowledge and traces the same tracts each time (Freud's *Bahnungen*) within the economy of *jouissance*. But this economy of *jouissance* remains an enigma (p. 105).

This conceptualisation is important for how the final goal of analysis is conceived. If, in one way or another, the kernel of the system Ucs. is of a representational nature, then it can be verbalised and interpreted during the treatment. If not, then the final aim of the treatment has to be reconsidered, because “full speech” is then structurally impossible. In his final theory, Lacan chooses the latter option, and promotes an identification with the Real of the symptom as the final goal of analysis.²⁴

CONCLUSION

The other *jouissance* that ex-sists as that part in the Other where the Other is not-whole implies a knowledge that is acquired by the body through its experience of this *jouissance*, an experience that causes an inscription on the body. This knowledge concerns the not-whole part of the articulated, phallic knowledge of the Other of the signifier. As knowledge, it does not belong to the Other of language, nor to a presumed underlying being. It can only be grasped through writing, although we must acknowledge the fact that every attempt to formalise it meets with a deadlock.

Associated with this are two forms of the Unconscious, and two forms of knowledge. The system Ucs. is the unverballed gap that contains a fixated drive and *jouissance*, thus operating as a cause. This system Ucs. ex-sists within the repressed Unconscious, where there is an articulated knowledge that can be known by the subject. This latter knowledge has to do with exchange value, and thus with discourse and the desire of the Other.

The way in which this splitting is described between the other *jouissance* and phallic *jouissance*, between articulated knowledge and an

²³ Laplanche, J. and Leclaire, S. (1966). L'Inconscient: une étude psychanalytique. In Ey, H. (ed.), *L'inconscient (Vlme colloque de Bonneval)*. Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, pp. 95-130 (*The Unconscious: a Psychoanalytic Study*. Yale French Studies, 48, New Haven, Conn. Yale).

²⁴ For a discussion of this, see Verhaeghe, P. and Declercq, F., Lacan's goal of analysis: Le sinthome or the feminine way. In Thurston, L. (ed.), *Reinventing the Symptom: Essays on the final Lacan*. To be published, The Other Press. See also: Declercq, F. (2000). *Het Reële bij Lacan, over de finaliteit van de psychoanalytische kuur*. Gent, Idesca.

other knowledge, foreshadows a new topology: new, because it leaves binary oppositions behind. In what way can we elaborate on this new topology with respect to the classic mind/body deadlock?

3. Mind/Body.

Ever since Plato, we have been faced with a binary opposition between mind and body. History contains several translations of this deadlock, of which gender/sex is the latest implementation. This last implementation of Plato's deadlock contains another one as well. On the side of gender we find a binary opposition between man and woman, albeit in a strange way. Originally, gender was defined in terms of the psychosexual difference between man and woman, but its further development (in Butler and co.) has given rise to a scattering of gender as such into a multiplicity of different forms of psychosexual identity. The paradoxical result of this scattering is that it has recently led to a return to the classic, safe male/female opposition within

the biology of sex. Indeed today, especially in the hard sciences (in biology, genetics, brain studies), voices are heard everywhere defending this binary opposition. Even more strange is the fact that this man-woman opposition within the original idea of gender always comes along with a hidden commitment to an opposition between sex and gender as such. The female sex gets implicitly identified with "nature" through the idea of a primal mother, whilst gender and culture are implicitly understood to belong to masculinity.

The question is: how can we rethink this binary opposition? How does this opposition relate to gender positions? And, finally, what about ontology?

LACAN

Without exaggeration, I claim that seminar XX is one long attempt to escape the deadlocks of this kind of binary thinking. The price to pay for this escape is the loss of the advantages such oppositions have. Indeed, they bring an ever-imaginary clarity and safety. Moreover, they provide us with the illusion of a substantial being. Instead, Lacan introduces us to a fundamental indeterminism lying in the heart of the matter itself. His search is not limited to seminar XX. On the contrary, the problem appears for the first time in his talk on the mirror stage (1948). What is innovative about seminar XX is the way in which this question gets associated with the problems of knowledge and jouissance. The innovation is especially to be found in Lacan's particular use of negation throughout the seminar: the "n'est pas" ("is not") and the "pas-tout" ("not-whole"), which are frequently used by him in sentences in the conditional tense. On the basis of these negations, Lacan sketches a relationship between mind and body that is completely different from their classic opposition. Ultimately, this relationship is generalised and comes to be

understood as a basic structure for human beings. Before we go into this, we will summarise Lacan's critique of binary opposition, based on what we have already discussed in our previous parts.

His critique becomes quite clear when he answers the critique of his own theory found in J.L. Nancy and Ph.Lacoue-Labarthe's book (pp. 62 ff). These authors ascribe an ontology to Lacan and criticise him for it. Lacan's answer is to the point. He states that in his theory there is a clear opposition between "the being of the philosophical tradition" on the one hand and the experience that we are played, duped by *jouissance* on the other hand (p. 66). A bit later, this is made out into an opposition between "the being of signifierness" and the "jouissance of being" (pp. 66-67). His elaboration of the notion of "being" has to be emphasised here. In his reading, this "being" of *jouissance* stands in complete opposition to the classical being of the philosophical tradition, as it was elaborated by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, the classical elaboration always gave rise to the assumption of a supreme being.

Let us focus first on the being of classical philosophy, "that is, as rooted in the very thinking that is supposed to be its correlate" (p. 66). Thinking roots itself in the assumption that there is an underlying being that thinks as well – and the thinking of this assumed underlying being has to be rooted in the assumption of a supreme being. If not, it ends up in an endless mirroring process of ever more remote underlying beings, all resembling each other. With this rootedness in a supreme being, classical philosophy provides being with a consistency.

Aristotle's mistake – a mistake that was repeated by his followers – is found in the assumption that what is thought ("le pensé") is in the image of thought ("la pensée") (p. 96). The soul is the supposed identity of the body in an identicalness to this body: "being is supposed to think" (p. 100, p. 103). But such an assumption is based on the idea that the signifier is holding the reins, the *dit-manche* (pp. 96-97).²⁵ Lacan had already exposed the "phallacy" of such a line of reasoning when he criticised the idea of the neurological projection of the body on the brain: if a man has a headache, this has to do with a smaller man in his head having a headache, meaning that this smaller man must have an even smaller man in *his* brain who has a headache, meaning that a still smaller man in the head of the smaller smaller man, etc.²⁶

Lacan rejects the idea of a corresponding analogy between body and mind, between being and subject, and puts forward the idea of a gap "inscribed in the very status of *jouissance qua dit-mension* of the body" (p. 104). And he adds that this is precisely what Freud is talking about. There is

²⁵ For the explanation of this neologism, "dit-manche", see the excellent comments made by B.Fink in his translation, notes 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12 (XX, pp. 97-98).

²⁶ Lacan, J. (1966). *Propos sur la Causalité Psychique*. In *Ecrits*. Paris, Seuil, pp. 160-161. Lacan's critique of the body/mind impasse is already to be found in this paper, dating from 1946.

no being beyond the signifier: “nothing is, if not insofar as it is said that it is” (p. 126; p. 107). The discourse on being is only an assumption, which lends it meaning and substance at the same time. In other words: the idea of a presumed correspondence between body and soul is nothing but a philosophical implementation of the mirror stage, by which the infant acquires a supposed identity and unity which originates in the Other of the signifier, the *dit-manche*. Being always comes down to a being of signifierness, not to an ontological being. Even for us analysts, object *a* seems to be a being, but it is in fact a mere semblance of being (p. 87). At the end of the day, the assumption of such a correspondence is nothing but a way of coping with the unbearable lightness of being (p. 78). It comes down to the creation of a guarantee in the form of an (assumed) existence of an Other of the Other. The effect of this is not that we get to know our being: on the contrary, we are shut off from the very possibility of learning anything about it.

Nevertheless, Lacan says, there is another relation to being that cannot be known through the articulation of signifiers, and it is this relation that he wants to investigate. The question is: to which kind of real does this relationship grant us access (p. 108)? The aim of this investigation is not so much to know more about it – indeed, in this respect knowledge is literally and figuratively “*inter-dit*”, forbidden and said in-between – but to grant us a better access to *jouissance*. Or, more specifically, a better agreement between *jouissance* and its end, and this beyond its typical failure in fucking and reproducing (p. 109). Lacan hopes to find an entrance to this by way of the traces “which constitute for the subject his slim chance of going to the Other, to its being” (p. 110). With this idea of “trace” he refers to the earlier parts of the seminar (p. 11) and to the idea of the letter. Indeed, a trace must be inscribed, but then again this leads us to the deadlocks of formalisation, because there is no metalanguage (p. 85, p. 108, p. 110). At that point, Lacan segues into a discussion of topology, hoping that this will enable him to demonstrate something of this inscription (p. 110ff).

The above permits us to summarise Lacan’s answer to classical binary thinking as follows. The being of “signifierness” faces a lack-of-being (*manque-à-être*) that is included in the being of signifierness. In this way, Lacan puts forward a new kind of dialectic, beyond the mirroring reasoning of classical binary thinking.

In his line of reasoning, it is by no means a coincidence that Lacan systematically describes this lack of being in negative terms – negative from the point of view of the Other of the signifier – since it can never be expressed in signifiers. “Negation certainly seems to derive therefrom” (p. 101). Seminar XX is full of these negative statements, frequently in the conditional as well: “is not”, “not-whole”, etc. It culminates in the negative formulations of contingency, necessity and impossibility. Contingency has to do with the

inscription of certain traces on the body (p. 86) by means of which the body enjoys. But these traces cannot be written in the sense of the signifier. Nevertheless they are not *not* written either, and this in a contingent way that is not understandable or knowable for the Other of the signifier. Hence it “stops not being written”. This writing is necessary for the subject, but since it should take place through phallic articulation, but always fails to, it has a never ending quality: “it does not stop being written”. As a result, we are faced with impossibility: since the traces have to be written on the body but can never be written in a signified way, the sexual relationship “does not stop not being written” (pp. 85-87; pp.131-132).

This negative effect has everything to do with a particular characteristic of this impossible-to-grasp other dimension: its infinity (p. 13, p. 15). This is one of the main differences with the closed symbolic universe of the phallic pleasure principle, which is closed because it reduces everything to the function of the One. Hence a very important remark, made by Lacan almost casually: the ever-impossible combination of the phallic and the other dimension, of the symbolic and the real, does not constitute a closed universe (p. 93-94).

If it were closed, this would imply that any particular exception to it might be just one exception: that is, reducible to the One. On the contrary, we are confronted with an endless universe in which exceptions do not belong to the order of the one, but to the order of the not-whole. Infinity opens up a dimension that cannot be caught in the order of the signifier, and it opens up a beyond to which object *a* might grant us entry. But even object *a* fails to do this, “owing to its failure, unable as it is, to sustain itself in approaching the real” (p. 87).

In this way, Lacan opens up a totally different dialectic, one that is between the individual’s symbolic dimension and something that supersedes this dimension, coming from elsewhere. Lacan alludes to this latter dimension throughout the seminar (p. 11, pp. 32-33, p. 63, p. 89, p. 110) without elaborating on it. Moreover, he demonstrates why it cannot be elaborated on as such. That is why he concentrates on the open-ended dialectics between the two dimensions, between the “advent of the living” and the “advent of the subject” mentioned in seminar XI. It has to do with life and death, in such a way that it supersedes mere reproduction, which is always a half-failed way to continue life. At this point, Lacan’s theory is a further development of Freud’s conceptualisation of the life and death drives, Eros and Thanatos.

FREUDIAN ANTECEDENTS

Again, there are obvious links with Freud. Indeed, right from the start Freud put forward the idea of an internal splitting not between a mind and an external body, but within a functioning whole. From his first conceptualisations onwards he associates this splitting with the (im-)possibility of representing certain elements. For example, in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d) he talks about

bewusstseinsunfähige Vorstellungen, signifiers that cannot enter consciousness.²⁷

The focus on splitting is without any doubt the major difference between Freud and psychology. The latter always tries in one way or another to reintroduce some notion of man as a unity. This is why psychology is not psychology but egology. Freud's focus on an internal splitting also explains the difference between Freud and postfreudian "culturalists" (in the large sense of the word). The latter concentrate on an assumed split between the individual on the one hand and a restrictive culture and society on the other hand. For Freud this is an effect, not a cause.

The Freudian gap is situated on the inside, and its borderlines are delineated by the (im-)possibility of representation and articulation. What makes consciousness possible is a "hypercathexis" of drive material by means of an association with word-presentations. What makes the unconscious possible is the removal of this hypercathexis. The delineating mark between consciousness and the unconscious has to be made at this border.

Freud's entire work can be studied as an elaboration of this splitting in the system of representation and articulation. His topologies of the mind (consciousness, preconscious, unconscious; the dynamic unconscious, the system Ucs.; Ego, Id, Super-Ego) are attempts to acknowledge this gap. Lesser known, but all the more interesting for a study of *Encore*, is his differentiation between the affectionate current and the sensual one.²⁸ Indeed, this tallies perfectly with Lacan's remarks on love and drive throughout seminar XX.²⁹ Freud's last conceptualisation of the gap generalises this splitting into a universal human characteristic, thus anticipating the idea of Lacan's ever-divided subject.³⁰

When we study Freud's different attempts to acknowledge this inner split, it is clear that time and again the main theme concerns the gap between the drive on the one hand and, on the other hand, the (im-)possibility of representation within the ego or consciousness, both of which are organised on the basis of word-presentations. In this respect, it is quite interesting to consider one of his attempts to define the drive: "The simplest and likeliest assumption as to the nature of drives would seem to be that in itself a drive is without quality, and, so far as mental life is concerned, is only to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind to work", the work that is required to introduce this drive into the secondary process, into word-

²⁷ Freud, S., (1895d). *Studies on Hysteria*. S.E. II, pp. 286-287.

²⁸ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, p. 207; (1912d), *On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love*. S.E. XI, p. 180ff.

²⁹ These remarks merit a study of their own. The most beautiful conclusion drawn from them comes, of course, from Lacan himself: "Only love allows jouissance to condescend to desire", Seminar X, *L'Angoisse*, unpublished, lesson of 13 March 1963.

³⁰ Freud, S. (1940e). *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense*. S.E. XXIII.

presentations.³¹ This is Lacan's "necessity": the drive has to be represented in one way or another.

So, Freud does not reason in binary terms but concentrates on a never ending dialectical process between the represented and the not-represented. This is present in his very first writings, and receives more and more attention throughout his work. In the beginning, he talks about a "false connection" in which a word-presentation is wrongly associated to another word-presentation for lack of an original, correct association to something that is barely expressible.³² His study of hysteria teaches him that such false connections are not exceptional. On the contrary, the hysterical subject produces them all the time, in an attempt to include what is unable to be expressed within the normal associative chains. This characteristic of hysteria is so obvious that he

considers it to be typical, and he dubs it the hysterical "compulsion to associate".³³ Later on, he will meet with another variant of this compulsion: the repetition compulsion characteristic of traumatic neurosis, which tries to master a trauma by binding it to word-presentations.³⁴ Further on in his work, he no longer restricts this to hysteria but turns it into a general characteristic of the ego: the ego has a proclivity to synthesis, to associate separate things into an ever larger synthesis. He had met with this proclivity earlier on in his study of dreams. Once awake, the dreamer tries to get hold of his or her dream and turns it into a story. This is a "secondary elaboration", a process by which all the holes and gaps in the original dream are associatively closed and sealed. Moreover, the dream as such is already an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. Its main concern are the "considerations of representability". The dream uses different mechanisms (condensation, displacement) in order to produce an *Ergänzungsreihe* (complementary series), just as Freud does himself. But the umbilical cord of the dream, the *Kern unseres Wesen* remains obscure.³⁵

In the meantime, his clinical experience taught him that there is no chronological-linear sequence. On the contrary, the unconscious does not

³¹ Freud, S. (1905d). *Op. cit.*, S.E. VII, p. 168.

³² Freud, S. (1895d). *Op. cit.*, S.E. II, pp. 67-70 (note).

³³ Freud, S., (1895d). *Op. cit.*, S.E. II, p. 69 (note).

³⁴ Freud, S., (1920g). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. S.E. XVIII. It has to be said that Freud's discussion of repetition and the repetition compulsion is rather confusing. This confusion is due to the fact that he mixes two kinds of repetition: the repetition of the signifier, the "automaton", which is indeed compulsive when a trauma is concerned (hence the traumatic dreams) and is characterised by an attempt to cope with the Real of the trauma. On the other hand, there is the repetition of the Real as such, which time and again reappears in an ex-sistent way, where the chain of signifiers meets its limit. This is the *tuchè*. For a discussion of this, see Seminar XI, chapter 4.

³⁵ Freud, S. (1900a). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. V, pp. 488-508; p. 525.

know of time. His famous archaeological metaphor illustrates the existence of a simultaneity, according to which the so-called “later” contains the “past” in itself, albeit in a different representation.³⁶ The whole contains the not-whole, which ex-sists in this whole. *Nachträglichkeit* (“differed action”) is the rule, and this foreshadows Lacan’s logical times.

All these Freudian descriptions of attempts at recuperation by means of signifiers come down to Lacan’s “being of signifierness”, which necessarily tries to write the contingent but ends up producing impossibility. In Lacan’s theory, not much attention is given to underlying motives – why does the subject feel obliged to introduce the drive into the Symbolic? What is the driving force at work here? Freud tries to formulate an explanation by postulating the existence of two primary drives whose basic characteristic is that they want to return to a previous state.³⁷

All these attempts (from the false connection to the repetition compulsion) are effects of the Eros drive, with its proclivity to synthesis, to the One, and to fusion. For Freud, Eros aims at the reduction of tension by means of the secondary process, i.e., the “abreaction” of bound energy, which is made possible by an association with word-presentations. Over and against this he finds yet another primary drive, which is much harder to get hold of and to define because it operates literally “in silence”, outside the dimension of word-presentations.³⁸ It operates as a resistance, the same resistance Freud discovered at the heart of the system Ucs. itself, setting itself against consciousness, i.e., against any association with word-presentations. The repetition compulsion collides with this same inertia, hence its repetitive effect. This other drive, Thanatos, operates in the same way as the primary process: it is unbound, and causes ever-increasing levels of tension that cannot be “abreacted” for lack of an association with word-presentations. This Thanatos induces a scattering of Eros, it disassembles everything that Eros brought together into One and makes this unity explode into an infinite universe. In Lacanian terms, what we have here is the One of phallic fusion versus the infinity of the beyond. And this Thanatos drive implies a pleasure as well, although it is an incomprehensible *jouissance*, experienced traumatically by the subject who cannot handle it in its usual symbolic way.

Again, this is no matter of opposition for Freud, it is not a matter of a life drive versus a death drive. On the contrary. The two always appear together in a strange mixture, a *Triebmischung* or drive fusion.³⁹ Defusion, Freud says, is very rare, and appears only in extremely pathological cases. In

³⁶ Freud, S. (1937c). *Constructions in Analysis*. S.E. XXIII, p. 259; see also (1915e), *The Unconscious*. S.E. XIV, p. 187.

³⁷ Freud, S. (1920g). *Op. cit.*; (1940a), *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. S.E. XXIII, pp. 148-49.

³⁸ Freud, S. (1923b). *The Ego and The Id*. S.E. XIX, p. 46, p. 59.

³⁹ Freud, S. (1926d). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. S.E. XX, p. 125.

terms of his previous theory, this means that the repressed unconscious is part of the unconscious but does not coincide with it. There is still a system Ucs., the not-whole in the whole. In terms of his early theory, this means that the material fended off by the ego and put into another realm does not reside in an external outside, but continues to form part of the Ego, albeit in such a strange way that Freud uses a medical metaphor for it. This material is a *Fremdkörper*, a foreign body present in the inside but foreign to this inside.⁴⁰ The Real ex-sists within the articulated Symbolic.

Finally, Freud has to refer to something that supersedes mankind as such, something that must have to do with the bare properties of life. He refers to *Philia* and *Neikos*, which lie at the basis of the fusional Eros and the defusional Thanatos.

His reference to another classic couple is even more interesting: *Anankè* and *Logos*. *Logos* is indeed “reason” here, but it refers to the signifier as well. Freud associates it with knowledge, and sees *Anankè* as a necessity from which we cannot escape.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

For Lacan there is no binary opposition between body and soul, between being and Other, between man and woman, between phallic jouissance and the other jouissance. In each case there is an impossible relationship between the two terms, in which one tries to regain the other but never succeeds because this other is already included in the one, albeit in an ex-sisting way: it is the story of Achilles and Briseis all over again (p. 13).

Instead of a binary opposition and its accompanying endless mirroring process, we find in both Freud and Lacan a dialectical process within a whole that contains a part with which it cannot cope, although it is driven to keep trying. The latter part ex-sists in the former, thus turning it into a not-whole. It comforts itself with the illusion of being a finite universe because it operates based on the principle of the one. The other part functions in a different way, and provides an opening to the dimension of infinity. The self-assumed whole amounts to a represented universe, within which consciousness and the pleasure principle coincide. The not-whole part of this whole is not representable in terms of this represented universe, and produces another jouissance that operates in a traumatic way for the representational system.

Considered this way, human ontology has no essential basis whatsoever. Any hoped-for essence comes down to an inner split which gives rise to an open-ended dialectic.

⁴⁰ Freud, S. (1895d). *Op. cit.*, S.E. II, p. 290.

⁴¹ Freud, S. (1924c). *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. S.E. XIX, p. 168; (1927c), *The Future of an Illusion*. S.E. XXI, pp. 54-56.

CONCLUSION

In my introduction, I wrote that *Encore* couldn't be read in an isolated way because it belongs to a work in progress. In my conclusion, I want to address two topics from a larger perspective, in the hope of gaining a better understanding of them.

Firstly, the most well-known theme of *Encore*: the relationship between phallic pleasure and the other *jouissance*, which reappears in the relationship between knowledge and that other form of knowledge, or – still broader – in the relationship between the Other and an ever-assumed being. In Lacan's larger work, it is clear that this relationship entails a never-ceasing attempt on the part of the One to assume that other. But every attempt fails and keeps failing, thereby causing the insistence of the attempt as such. This is called life. As I will demonstrate, this impossible relationship can be written in general terms, and provides us – at last – with some kind of ontology.

The second topic concerns causality. What is the cause of this insistent failure? In the discussion of the different implementations of this impossible relationship (*jouissance*, knowledge, identity), it became clear that in all three there is an underlying direction and aim. Freud's axiomatic answer goes back to the drive and its basic aim – to return to a previous state. What is Lacan's answer to this?

Causality

As long as Lacan was concentrating on the signifier and the symbolic order, a lawful, systematic determination within the chain of signifiers was emphasised (see his appendix to *The Purloined Letter*). This changes drastically once he takes the Real not seriously anymore, meaning: the Real outside the serial of the signifier, the Real as such. At that point, he meets up with a notion of causality that differs completely from the one found in determinism.

Determinism is something that can be found in what Aristotle called “automaton”, but causality is something different, to be understood as *tuchè*. In seminar XI, the notion of “cause” Lacan introduces is to be looked for in something un-determined.⁴² “In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work” (11, p. 22). Later on in seminar XI, this un-determined cause is understood as the traumatic Real, that part of the drive that cannot be represented. In this new theory, the body takes on a new role.⁴³

As a cause it obliges and constrains us to “an appointment with a real that eludes us” (11, p. 53), the real that lies beyond the automaton, the real that cannot be assimilated, in the sense of not mediated and not represented (11, pp. 53-55).

In this sense, the idea of cause implies the idea of failure, of something that does not happen, thus causing something else to fill the scene: a failure of the Symbolic to cover something of the Real. There is an indecision and contingency at the heart of the Real. This implies that the body, through the drive, has a central causal impact on the unconscious as such: “For what the unconscious does is to show us the gap through which neurosis associates with a real - a real that may well not be determined” (my translation; 11, p. 22). This real is the drive in its unrepresentable status (11, p. 60): hence, it is associated with trauma. A reference to failure can be found in the negative denominations used by Lacan in terms like “the not-realised” and “the un-born”, which allow him to make a direct connection between these terms and the “un” of the un-conscious (11, pp. 22-23, p. 26, p. 32).

Lacan's theory of causality allows him to show how the unconscious is homologous to what takes place at the level of the subject.⁴⁴ In the second point of our conclusion, we will meet with a more extensive version of this homology. Indeed, in the wake of this new theory of causality the unconscious is described by Lacan as “une béance causale”, a causal gap characterised by a pulsating movement. The unconscious is a perpetual opening and closing of a gap in which something fails to be realised. A typical example is a slip of the tongue, but this ultimately holds for every production of the unconscious, including the subject as such. (11, pp. 130-131). Hence, the pre-

⁴² Lacan, J., (1994). *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, op. cit. References in the text to the English translation indicated by (11, pp. //).

⁴³ New in comparison to the body image received from the Other during the mirror stage.

⁴⁴ “On the level of the unconscious, there is something that is homologous on all points to what happens at the level of the subject” (my translation; original: “(...) qu'au niveau de l'inconscient, il y a quelque chose en tous points homologue à ce qui se passe au niveau du sujet (...).” *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 27; see also *Seminar 11*, pp. 20-23; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 23-25).

ontological status of the unconscious: “it” fails to materialise, and its opening and closing has to be emphasised instead (11, pp. 29-32).

Thus, the conclusion is that it is not only the Symbolic order, which has a determining effect. The Real as such has a causal function too, and the two of them come together in an ever impossible relationship.

Of course, what this amounts to is a description of a rather peculiar process of non-realisation. So far, causality as such has been evoked, but it has not yet been elaborated on. How does the Real function as a cause? Lacan answers this question by redefining the body and lack. His new theory starts when he interprets the Real of the body as cause, because this Real implies a primordial lack. This lack or loss is logically anterior to the lack in the signifying chain between mother and child (exchange value), although it operates in a retroactive way.

The Real of the organism functions as a cause in the sense that it contains a primordial loss, which precedes the loss in the chain of signifiers. What is this primordial loss? The loss of eternal life, which paradoxically enough is lost at the moment of birth as a sexed being, because of meiosis (11, p. 205).

In order to explain this ultimate incomprehensibility, Lacan constructs the myth of the “lamella”, which is nothing but object *a* in its pure form, as a life instinct or as a primordial form of the libido. This idea refers back to a biological fact: non-sexual reproduction implies in principle the possibility of eternal life (single-celled organisms and clones), whereas sexual reproduction implies in principle the death of the individual. Each organism wants to undo this loss and tries to return to the previous state of non-sexual being. This was the basic characteristic of the drive in Freud’s work – the life and death drives. In Lacan’s work, the “dead” aspect of the death drive is easier to grasp: indeed, a return to eternal life necessarily implies the death of the sexed individual.

The reaction to this primordial loss is an attempt to return to what is lost, and this defensive elaboration takes place within the symbolic and imaginary, which are also the orders in which sexualization and gender formation occur. It should be pointed out that sexualization is a “phallicization”. This means that the first, real lack is “answered” as if it was the second lack, the one in the Symbolic. Thus, the primordial loss at the level of the organism is re-interpreted as a phallic lack in the relation between subject and Other. Object *a* gets associated with bodily borderlines, the orifices through which other losses take place. Moreover, this phallic interpretation of object *a* implies that this original lack and loss is introduced, by way of the mother-child relationship, into the man-woman relationship; this is the effect of the passage through Oedipus (11, p. 64, pp.103-104, p. 180). From this point onwards, the drive becomes a partial drive, containing an ever-present mixture of the life and death drives.

As a result, we end up with a circular but not reciprocal determination (11, p. 207). The loss at the level of the Real is the cause by means of which individual life – the not-whole – is turned into one elaborate attempt to return to eternal life – infinity. This attempt receives an elaboration at another level, in the verbal relationship between mother and child; and even later on, at a third level, between man and woman. In this process, the original lack is re-

interpreted in phallic terms. This attempt to return takes place within the symbolic and imaginary orders, which means that it is determined in a systematic way (automaton) and that it will inevitably run into the original lack in the Real (tuchè). The automatic chain can never produce an adequate answer because of a structural incompatibility. This in itself forces the chain into further production, etc.

This kind of failed interaction gives us an idea of the not-whole and its accompanying ontological process, instead of the classical binary configuration.

The underlying structure: a circular but non-reciprocal relationship

Encore gives us a portrait of an ever-failing relationship within an articulated whole that contains a not-articulated part, by means of which the whole is turned into a not-whole, and is confronted with infinity. This relationship can also be found quite easily in Lacan's earlier theory of the unconscious and causality, and it gives us an idea of an underlying structure that is circular but non-reciprocal (11, p. 207). This structure contains a kind of development, although it has to be read backwards: the "primary" element gets retroactively delineated by means of a "secondary" element in which the primary is included, albeit as a foreign body. But the relationship does not stop at this point. The not-whole whole insistently undertakes attempts to assume and colonise this foreign body that ex-sists in the not-whole itself. These attempts produce the exact reverse of what they set out to do: instead of an assimilation of the "other" part, the otherness of this other part is confirmed, although on another level. At this other level, the whole process starts all over again, with the same (lack of a) result.

Thus, Lacan's theory acknowledges that the body, the unconscious and the subject have a homologous structure.⁴⁵ This structure insists in terms of openings and closings, border structures, gaps, splits, etc. As a principle it turns the relation between life and death into a circular but non-reciprocal interaction. The loss at the level of the Real transforms life into one long attempt to return to a prior form of eternal life. From a structural point of view this leaves us with two elements, one of which operates as an attractive force while the other wants to return and move forward at the same time. Their interaction is staged at each time on a different level, which installs and endorses their non-relationship. The two borders can never meet. As early as

⁴⁵ "Well! It is in so far as something in the apparatus of the body is structured in the same way, it is because of the topological unity of the gaps in play, that the drive assumes its role in the functioning of the unconscious." (*Seminar 11*, p. 181; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165).

1948, Lacan had already written that in mankind there is a primordial discordance in the very core of the organism.⁴⁶ The final result of this primordial cleft is the non-existence of the sexual relationship.

My attempt to describe these homologous structures can be summarised as follows: (11, pp. 203-213):

- The advent of the living: the opening and closing of life at birth. The advent of sexually differentiated life forms implies the loss of eternal life. This loss is summarised by Lacan in object *a*, which involves the pure loss of the life instinct. This eternal life, the *Zoë* of the classical Greeks, functions as an attractive force for individual life, *Bios*, that tries to return to it. The price to pay for this return is the loss of this individual life as such, which explains the other tendency, the one that flees from *Zoë* in the opposite direction. The so-called solution implies and endorses a structurally defined impossible relationship. Indeed, *Bios* tries to join *Zoë* through sexual reproduction, thus entailing a necessary failure and even repeating and endorsing the original loss. From this moment onwards, the life and death drives are fused.
- The advent of the I: the opening and closing of the body. This involves the primary alienation of the mirror stage. The living being acquires a first mastery, a first identity by means of an externally imposed unified image of the body. This unified body gets translated into the master-signifier “I”, to be understood as “m’être à moi-même”/“maître à moi-même” (to be myself, to belong to myself, to be master of myself), an “I” that has a body and has lost its being. This “I” will never stop trying to join its body, that is, the being of its body. But then again, the price to pay for this joining is the disappearance of the “I” – hence the tendency to flee in the other direction. Finally, this solution only provides the “I” with the body of the Other, thus endorsing the loss of its being.
- The advent of the subject: the opening and closing of signifiers. The ever-divided subject appears and disappears under the signifiers of the Other in an attempt to answer the desire of the Other. From a structural point of view such a process has to end in failure because

⁴⁶ This ontology can be summarised by one sentence from his first paper on the mirror stage: “In man, however, this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord (...)”. Lacan, J., *The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience* (1949). In *Écrits. A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock, 1977. p. 4.

the answer can only be formulated in terms of signifiers, whilst object *a* belongs to a different order and is lacking precisely because of the introduction of the signifier. Again, as a solution this implies a structurally determined non-relationship, because the subject's attempt to join the Other must necessarily pass through the signifier, thus repeating and endorsing the original division of this subject.

Thus considered, the subject appears on the scene as the last instantiation of an underlying structure containing all the previous ones. In the first instantiation there is no question of a subject except under the form of what Lacan calls "un sujet acéphale", a headless subject. Continuing with this line of thought, it is reasonable to expect a fourth "advent": the advent of gender, through which *a* and the subject are provided with a specific gender. This is what the Oedipus complex does by interpreting the original loss in terms of castration. As a result, the Oedipal structure inaugurates a gender differentiation that is not a genuine one because it is based solely on the presence or absence of the phallic One.

This phallic interpretation is applied retroactively to all the preceding instantiations, such that each loss gets interpreted in a phallic way. It is during this process that the body is constructed, the body that we have (not the body that we are), clothed in a gender identity that is always secondary. The original circular but not reciprocal relationship between life and death, between *jouissance* and subject, is reproduced and worked over in the relationship between man and woman.

In this way, the gap between *jouissance* and the Other, between being and sense, is reproduced in the gap between woman and man. This reproduction has the same result: despite the subject's efforts to join its body by way of the Other of language, the subject never succeeds because of the gap that is due to this Other of language itself. Whatever the efforts of the subject (be it male or female) to join woman by way of the phallic relationship, it will never succeed because the cleft is due to the phallic signifier itself. The impossible relationship between the subject and its drive reappears in the impossible relationship between a man and a woman on the one hand, and the not-whole part of woman on the other hand.

In my opinion, what we have here is the complete elaboration of the ontological structure announced by Lacan in 1949 in his paper on the mirror stage.⁴⁷ Human beings are always divided between something that they are not or do not have, and something that they will never be or have: "la bourse ou la vie!" (Your money or your life; 11, p. 212). It is this division that insists as a border structure, and corroborates a homology between the body, the drive, the unconscious and the subject. This is the only "ontology" there can be for human beings.

⁴⁷ The implications of this principle go very far indeed. While writing, thinking about, and taking my bearings on this paper, my thoughts went back and forth all the time. For example, what does this mean for racism? Sexism? And heteronormativity, as its latest implementation? To be continued...

Finally, Lacan's refusal of binary oppositions is a refusal of any reduction by and to the one, and an attempt to think beyond this "phallacy". Refusal of the one always leads to a false "*d'eux*" or two: a false binary and an attempt to think an "un-en-moins", a one that is not-whole and faces a never ending dialectic. This thinking, Lacan says, requires courage and has to do with love. Keeping this dimension of the undetermined wide open testifies to Lacan's courage, contrary to the *Eyes wide shut* classical attempts at recuperation, which always create a false sense of certainty.

Every interpretation of Lacanian theory that leads to yet another binary opposition misses the point and is nothing but another form of the return of the repressed.