

BEYOND GENDER.

From subject to drive

Paul Verhaeghe

BEYOND GENDER.

From subject to drive

UNIVERSITEIT GENT
Vakgroep Psychoanalyse
en Revalidatiepsychologie
Prof. Dr. P. Verhaeghe
Henri Dunantlaan 2
9000 Gent - Tel. 09 264 63 56

BEYOND GENDER.

From subject to drive

Paul Verhaeghe



OTHER

Other Press
New York

Keywords:

1. Gender. 2. Drive. 3. Discourse Theory. 4. Lacan.

Copyright © 2001 Paul Verhaeghe
cover painting © Ignace Vandevivere
back cover photo © Ron Zwagemaker

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book, or parts thereof, in any form, without written permission from Other Press, LLC, except in the case of brief quotations in reviews for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or broadcast. Printed in the United States of America on acid free paper. For information write to Other Press, LLC, 307 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1807, New York, NY 10001. Or visit our website: www.otherpress.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Verhaeghe, Paul.

Beyond gender: from subject to drive / Paul Verhaeghe.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1 59051 005 4

1. Psychoanalysis. 2. Freud, Sigmund, 1856-1939.

3. Lacan, Jacques, 1901 . I. Title.

BF173 .V445 2001

150.19'5 -dc21

2001053107

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7
The Riddle of Castration Anxiety. Lacan beyond Freud.	9
From Impossibility to Inability. Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses.	17
Teaching and Psychoanalysis. A Necessary Impossibility.	35
Trauma and Psychopathology in Freud and Lacan. Structural versus Accidental Trauma.	49
Subject and Body. Lacan's Struggle with the Real.	65
Mind your Body. Lacan's Answer to a Classical Deadlock.	99
Dreams between Drive and Desire. A Question of Representability.	133
Obsessional Neurosis. The Quest for Isolation.	147
Bibliography	165

INTRODUCTION

Lacan's work is notorious for its difficulty. Historically speaking, we are still so close to its development that a global understanding is, as yet, not possible. Lacan studies have started only recently. As a result, the present selection of my papers will necessarily contain a number of mistakes and be incomplete. Even so, it presents the reader with my own intellectual journey through Freud and Lacan. The central line of thought in these papers has everything to do with Freud's basic discovery, as re-examined by Lacan in his eleventh seminar, i.e. the discovery of the unconscious as a gap in the subject between what (s)he knows and the real driving forces of the psyche. In the last decades, much of psychoanalytic theory has been taken over by psychology, especially within gender studies and the study of the relationship between man and woman. It is my thesis that this relationship is nothing but a defensive elaboration of an underlying problem. And that is the point where the drive enters the scene—that is, at a point beyond gender as such.

This thesis is already present in the first paper, in which I interpret the idea of castration in a way different from the classic (post-)Freudian interpretation. In my reading, castration stands for a secondary elaboration of an original lack. The latter becomes only obvious through this elaboration, i.e. via the gender differentiation.

The theory of discourse demonstrates (among other things) how the subject wrestles with castration and the failure of the pleasure principle, in order to avoid and to mask the underlying problem, i.e. the *jouissance*. It is no coincidence that Freud (re)discovered this problem when he resumed the study of the trauma, nor that he coined it as something beyond the pleasure principle. The Lacanian discourse theory as such is elaborated in the second paper. At the time of its original publication, I was myself promoted to the position of the other-who-is-supposed-to-know, both academically and

psychoanalytically. The effects of this position are considerable, and I tried to get rid of them in the third paper, "Teaching and Psychoanalysis."

The concept of *jouissance* obliged me to return to the relationship between trauma and hysterical subject. The resulting thesis is that every subject starts with a structurally caused trauma, and that the way in which this trauma becomes elaborated through the relationship with the Other, determines our identity. In the meantime it became more and more obvious to me that the starting-point—coined as the structural trauma—had to be looked for in the drive and the body. Such a point of view evokes the classic idea of the binary relationship between soma and psyche, but the result of my study proved to be radically different. Indeed, the organism is not equivalent to the body of the medical discourse, which is always a symbolic body, organised by the signifiers that summarize the actual knowledge of medical science. Beyond that, we meet with the real body, although "meet" is not the most apt way of describing this confrontation. My attempt to understand this most difficult part of Lacan's theory is to be found in two papers, "Subject and body" and "Mind your body".

All these papers are based on a continuous joint reading of Freud and Lacan. As a consequence, my colleagues—particularly my American ones, but also those in Europe—will be confronted with a different Freud and Lacan than the ones they are used to. The ultimate touchstone remains the clinical practice, and that is the reason why this selection ends with two clinical papers.

Paul Verhaeghe
Laarne, summer 2001

THE RIDDLE OF CASTRATION ANXIETY.

Lacan beyond Freud.

“Mind the gap. Mind the gap. Mind the gap...”
(Continuous warning, courtesy of the London subway)

One of the most obvious observations that can be made about castration anxiety is that it is very difficult to observe. Indeed, in clinical practice it is very hard to find a subject that comes to us complaining about his or her castration anxiety. To my knowledge, the ultimate castratophobia does not exist.

This clinical fact is endorsed by a historical one: the concept of castration anxiety itself only received its general expression at a rather late stage of Freud's theory. For example, as late as 1914, Freud equates the castration complex with “masculine protest” and states explicitly that there are neuroses in which this element does not appear at all.¹ Twenty years later, in 1933, castration anxiety is transformed into the ultimate stumbling block of psychoanalysis, both in theory and in clinical practice. Indeed, in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* Freud describes castration anxiety as the biological bedrock on which every psychological treatment must necessarily fail and where every psychological theory meets its limit. Biology is also held responsible for two different forms, neatly distributed along the gender line: castration anxiety for the male, penis envy for the female. Moreover, as this idea is formulated by way of conclusion of this very important paper, it receives all the characteristics of a postulate, expressing a “nec plus ultra”. Other than that, we only have recourse to other theories (biology, genetics, etc.) and to another practice, of which Marie Bonaparte was the historical example and which can nowadays be found to be reappearing in Donna Haraway's ideas about cyborgs.²

¹ Freud, S. (1914c). *On Narcissism*. S.E. XIV, pp. 92-93.

² For M. Bonaparte, see Millot, C., (1983). La Princesse Marie Bonaparte. In *L'Ane, le Magazin Freudien*, mai-juin 1983, p. 26. For the idea of the modern female cyborg, see D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Women*.

Indeed, in Freud's mind, castration is linked to something biological, anatomical. The Freudian clinic of castration is in this sense very embarrassing (cf. the Lacanian notion of *embarras* in his seminar X on anxiety) for his modern followers, as it is far too real and excessively visually oriented. It tells the story of a real penis that can really be cut off; it involves the visual confrontation with the lack of a penis, resulting in envy. When some of his pupils tried to alleviate matters by extending castration to a more general principle of separation (birth, oral and anal separation), Freud's reaction was loud and clear. The idea of castration was to be restricted to the loss of the penis, and that was that.³

No wonder that in the postfreudian period, the idea tended either to disappear or to become plainly ridiculous. An example of its disappearance can be found in the work of Kernberg, in which the ideas of Oedipus and castration are virtually lacking. An example of caricature can be found in a paper by Bell for whom, obviously, the bell has toll, as she states explicitly that castration does not concern the penis but the balls, and that male anxiety has to be reconsidered accordingly.⁴

Companied to this postfreudian absence, in Lacan's work the concept is omnipresent, and, in contrast to Freud's naturalism, it is a very abstract concept. Indeed, the all-too-concrete penis is replaced by the phallus, of which we even have an imaginary and a symbolic version, each of these denoted by highly suggestive Greek characters. With the postlacanians, the concept becomes ever more abstract, even to the point where it becomes confused with the idea of a constitutional or existential lack, synonymous with *la condition humaine*.

My proposition differs both from the postfreudian and from the post-lacanian position. It runs as follows: *the idea of castration is in the first place a defence against anxiety, and in that sense it is a secondary formation*. I hasten to add that this thesis is not a purely theoretical one, but also highly clinical with important repercussions for diagnostics and treatment. In matters of theory, it implies a transcendence of the biological level; on the practical level, it obliges us to rethink the end of the treatment.

In order to endorse my thesis, I'd like to start with a number of *clinical* phenomena. If one studies the Freudian clinic on anxiety, it very soon becomes obvious that its focus is not on castration but on traumatic anxiety. During what I like to call his 'clinical years', Freud makes a differentiation between traumatic or automatic anxiety on the one hand, and signal or expectancy anxiety on the other hand. The most important clinical difference between

³ Freud, S. (1909b). *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*. S.E. X, p. 8, n. 2, added in 1923.

⁴ Bell, Anita L. (1975). Male anxiety during sleep. In *Int.J.Psycho-Anal.*, 56, pp. 455-464.

these two is that the traumatic anxiety concerns something that cannot be “bound”, which is a Freudian metapsychological expression meaning that it cannot be adequately verbalised and consequently cannot be abreacted; signal anxiety, by contrast, is linked to verbal associations and, hence, can be discharged. Signal anxiety belongs to a further developmental stage of the psyche and has as its function the signalling of the ever-threatening presence of traumatic anxiety. From a metapsychological point of view, the latter is with primal repression, while signal anxiety belongs to what Freud calls literally the “after repression”, *Nachdrängung*. Along the same line of thought, Freud develops the idea of repetition compulsion as being a fruitless attempt of the subject to install a signifier where words were originally lacking.

Throughout this development, Freud’s main preoccupation concerns the relationship between libido and anxiety. Apparently, there is little space given over to the discussion of castration anxiety in the proper sense of the word. Wherever he explicitly mentions this form of anxiety, it almost invariably appears in a fairly typical disguise, that is, instead of the feared loss of the penis, it concerns the feared loss of the eyes, Oedipus in Kolonos being a typical example. Oedipus is blinded as a punishment for his incestuous relationship with his mother. That he tore out his eyes himself, is considered an embarrassing detail, as it does not tally with the general idea of fear. Moreover, with regard to the threat of castration, there is a very peculiar recurrent observation made in Freud’s case studies. In clinical reality, the threats of castration are formulated by women, mostly by the mother; this does not match with the general theory, in which the threat is expected from the paternal side. Obviously, the patients themselves are of the same opinion, as they transfer their anxiety from the mother to their father in this respect. This is indeed a very remarkable thing, especially in view of the fact that Freud generalises it into a principle: the father is obviously the necessary central figure.⁵

Next, we come to the postfreudian clinic, in which we find a not unimportant extension, made by analysts working in altogether different clinical settings

5. This finds its clearest illustration with the Wolf Man. In spite of the fact that the threats of castration are clearly pronounced by women, the ensuing anxiety is directed to the father. The fact that this father is rather a weak figure (isn’t he always in the Freudian case studies?), adds to the surprise. Freud explains this by using an argument that he had already refuted when Jung used it: “At this point the boy had to fit into a phylogenetic pattern, and he did so, although his personal experiences may not have agreed with it. Although the threats or hints of castration which had come his way had emanated from women, this could not hold up the final result for long. In spite of everything it was his father from whom in the end he came to fear castration. In this respect heredity triumphed over accidental experience; in man’s prehistory it was unquestionably the father who practised castration as a punishment and who later softened it down into circumcision.” Freud, S. (1918b). *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*. S.E. XVII, p. 86.

than the ones in which Freud would have worked, for example, clinical work with children or psychotic patients. The analysis of children demonstrates a typical form of primary anxiety: the fear of being devoured, of being incorporated by witches, giants or hungry parents. The same idea can also be found back with psychotic patients who often enough describe states of fusion, immixture with an important other, although the accompanying fears which children experience are mostly absent in the psychotic's case. The most important characteristic of this phenomenon from our point of view (that is, castration anxiety) is that there is no question of sexual differentiation, there are no boys or girls as such involved.

Besides these psychoanalytical clinical data, we have the contemporary discussion about the differentiation between panic disorders and phobic anxiety. As usual, this is nothing but a retake on older ideas, in this case the opposition between phobic anxiety and what used to be called "free floating anxiety", the latter in a manner of speaking being on the lookout for a reason to justify itself, that is, for an object. Once this object is found, the anxiety is not floating any more but becomes linked to a representation, etc. The modern panic disorders are supposed to be biologically determined, in contrast to the more psychological-looking phobias.

Based on these clinical data, we can formulate at least two conclusions. Firstly: from a clinical point of view, the important differentiation has to do with signification - "to be signified or not to be signified, that is the question". Secondly: the link with castration anxiety is not made explicit, to say the least. This differentiation between what is signified and what is not, is so important that it even appears in the psychoanalytic as well as in the general clinic, on condition that one is not too naive. In the case of the contemporary naive DSM-clinic, one will probably focus on the observed presence of an object and presume that anxiety is either with or without an object. In the case of its absence, anxiety would take the form of panic, which is, precisely because of this absence, very uncanny, and thus probably biologically based. Obviously, biology always comes in very handy, whenever we are in need of an excuse. In the case of an object, which is actually present, the diagnosis of phobia is made and the anxiety is considered to be psychological.

This is a very naive conception. From a Lacanian point of view, panic or traumatic anxiety arises precisely where the subject is confronted with the real, i.e. with the irrevocable Object that has no name, that is just waiting around the corner, unseen, unnamed, but very present. Lacan calls this the imminence of the object (just think of the nightmare: we are awakened a split second before we would see or experience 'it'). In the case of a phobia, the subject is confronted with a phobic **signifier or series** of signifiers through which the original anxiety becomes **more and more** elaborated and thus more and more tolerable. The object itself is rather trivial to the matter. Even more so, whenever one is really afraid of a real object, there is probably no phobia present at all.

Thus, clinical practice teaches us a lot about anxiety, but castration anxiety as such remains rather rare. If we turn now to the *conceptual level*, it is surprising to see that Freud worked for years without this concept, and even where we would surely expect it, it is missing. I am referring to the myth of the primal father and his herd.⁶ Instead, all emphasis is put on a very ambiguous father figure. The ambiguity resides in the fact that on the one hand, he is described as a ferocious dictator, on the other hand as a necessary guarantee. And when the concept is finally elaborated in 1937, it confronts us with a deadlock - perhaps I should say, a dead rock, in view of Freud's metaphor - which gave the paper its pessimistic title: *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. Although he considers it to be a biological rock, his elaboration goes way beyond biology.

The rock of castration is gender-differentiated: in boys, it gives rise to castration anxiety, in girls to penis envy. Nevertheless, Freud remarks that there is a common factor at work: "Something which both sexes have in common has been forced, by the difference between the sexes, into different forms of expression".⁷ This common factor is a surprising one: *Ablehnung der Weiblichkeit*, repudiation of femininity. Further on in Freud's paper, it becomes clear that this 'femininity' is synonymous with 'passivity', and Freud even specifies that this passivity has nothing to do with the social aspect of femininity, which makes the idea all the more mysterious.⁸

With this elaboration, Freud returns to a problem that was haunting him right from the start, and the 1937 formulation is the last verbalisation of a long standing problem. Apparently, castration anxiety is just another name for the flight from femininity, that is, *the flight away from passivity*. The core of the problem lies with this passivity, dating back to his early studies on traumatism and hysteria and continuing right into his new formulations in the thirties with regard to femininity.

In summary, this runs as follows. *Primo*, the problem for Freud is that he does not find a signifier that definitely signifies femininity; the recurring answer is given in the idea of passivity, an answer that never satisfies him. *Secundo*, that what is lacking for woman, is also lacking for the mother. *Tertio*, the lack of the mother, being the first great Other, can be filled in by the child, thereby reducing it to a mere object. And that is the original passive traumatic experience, of which the agent is not the father, as Freud originally thought, but the mother, as he discovers in the thirties.⁹ We are confronted with the threatening enjoyment of the Other from which the subject flees.

⁶. The idea of castration as a punishment for the sons exerted by the primal father is only mentioned casually in *Totem und Tabu*, not as something fundamental, but merely as another possibility besides throwing them out of the herd.

⁷. Freud, S. (1937c). *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. S.E. XXIII, p. 250.

⁸. Op. cit., p. 252, n.1.

⁹. Freud, S. (1931b). *Female Sexuality*. S.E. XXI, pp. 181-183 and (1933a), *Femininity*. S.E. XXII, pp. 120-121.

From that point of view, we can reconsider matters in a very fundamental way. The primary anxiety concerns the confrontation with the nameless lack of the first great Other, the *Che Vuoi* of Cazotte or the riddle of the sphinx, during which the subject runs the risk of being reduced to the function of filling in the gap.¹⁰ We already mentioned the clinical manifestations of this anxiety: fear of being devoured, falling into the void, immixture with the other. In short: the fear of disappearing in the enjoyment of the Other. The defence against this primary anxiety consists of denominating the originally nameless lack, sticking a signifier to a part of the Real for which originally there was no signifier. It is on this point that the phallus enters the scene, together with the father. It is the phallus that is lacking, says the subject, and the one who can procure it is definitely not I, it is the father who should take care of that. From this moment on, the emphasis is put on the second great Other, the Other of the Law that regulates enjoyment and pleasure.

Thus, the original threat and the ensuing anxiety emanate from the mother as the first great Other. This explains why the threats are coming from her side and why the castration complex is only implemented after the discovery by the child of *her* lack (and not after the discovery of his own lack).¹¹ The process of denomination implies a transferral onto the paternal side. From this point on the father receives all investment. This transferral explains his two-fold character. On the one hand, he inherits the anxiety that was originally directed to the first Other, which is expressed at its best in those mythical father figures who devour their children. On the other hand, he functions as the father of the treaty, who installs a security-enhancing law. Freud emphasises the first aspect in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913); the second one is discussed in his paper on *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

The trouble with Freud is that he is still looking for tangible realities, while the process he is describing has, precisely, everything to do with the surpassing of this very reality. Insofar as one sticks to this reality, one will not only miss the scope of this process, but, together with Freud, one will stay entangled in a discussion about feminism, matriarchy, mothers versus fathers, etc. One will fail to understand that this process creates the very possibility of the *idea* of motherhood, fatherhood and the ensuing rules. Indeed, what is described right here, is the transition from nature to culture, from biology to psychology. In nature, there are only bodies or organisms emanating from other bodies and eventually returning to them. In culture, the symbolic recognition of fatherhood introduces a number of divisions, along the lines of which certain things become possible and others impossible. It installs the demarcation line of generation and gender, that is,

¹⁰ Lacan, J. Seminar X, *On anxiety*, unpublished.

¹¹ Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits. A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock, p. 282 (Lacan, J., 1966. La Signification du Phallus. In *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 686).

the differentiation between father and mother, between son and daughter, between man and woman. The line is demarcated by the incest prohibition, whose original form is directed to the first great Other, now transformed into a mother, and prohibiting her from incorporating again what originally formed part of her, namely her child.

Thus, the nameless, threatening Real is absorbed by the signifier, albeit by a negative one: the phallus that is lacking in the mother and that is supposedly possessed by the father. Through the application of this signifier, the transition is made from the threatening enjoyment of the Other to the phallic pleasure of the divided subject. In the words of Lacan: "Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire".¹² Castration is in this respect nothing but a *secondary* elaboration of a more primary anxiety, mediated by the father who receives his function right here. Rather than this implicating him as the terrifying, forbidding dictator, as one would expect from Freud's first theory, on the contrary, his function here is to reconcile desire and enjoyment through the Law of which he is the representational instance.

By way of conclusion, I want to go briefly into the consequences of this thesis. First of all, it implies that the human world, being a symbolic world, is strictly reduced to a phallic world. The gender differentiation can only be expressed in terms of phallic presence or absence. This is the reason why Lacan considers human reality as "le monde du semblant", the world of make belief, because it does not allow a symbolically determined relationship between two symbolically differentiated sexes. Moreover, for man as well as for woman, the fundamental anxiety or primary anxiety concerns the threatening first Other who becomes incarnated in woman and her enigma. Its fundamental character is such that it can be constantly found, transculturally as well as transhistorically, in either its positive aspect (reverence for the woman) or its negative expression (misogyny). This fundamental anxiety is experienced as life threatening, and it is only in retrospect that it is linked to sexuality and anxiety in sexual matters. This link is installed precisely by the interpretation of the lack of the Other in terms of castration, and in turn this determines the gender-specific forms it takes. In the case of men, this manifestation is rather easy to understand, as it takes the form of a mere defence.¹³ That is why in Freud's opinion castration anxiety

¹² Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits. A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock, p.324. (Lacan, J., 1966. Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir. In *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 827).

¹³ This aspect of defense explains why the typical manifestation of castration is tearing out one's eyes. Indeed, the interpretation of the lack of the Other in terms of a lack of the phallus - i.e. castration - is the reassuring interpretation, as it is a signified one. There where this interpretation does not hold anymore, the last line of defense is making the visual confrontation with the threatening lack

and “masculine protest” were synonymous.¹⁴ In my opinion, even penis envy can be considered as a typically masculine manifestation of the complex, as it expresses the masculine feelings of (organ) inferiority towards the almighty first Other. In the case of women, things are a lot more complicated as every woman potentially incarnates what she is afraid of as a subject. That is the reason why the vicissitudes of this original anxiety extend, in the case of women, to the entire process of becoming a woman.

A second consequence follows in the field of psychodiagnostics, that is, the differentiation between different subject structures. The neurotic, psychotic and perverse position differ in the way they handle the original anxiety-provoking situation, that is, the confrontation with the first Other. I won't go into that, suffice it to say that the neurotic and the pervert both defend themselves with the idea of castration, as opposed to the psychotic whom does not have the benefit of this idea.

Last but not least, this theory obliges us to rethink the goal of the psychoanalytic treatment. The Lacanian differentiation between imaginary and symbolic castration is all-important in this respect, as are the Lacanian notions of the imaginary father and the symbolic function of the father. In contrast to Freud's pessimism, these notions enable us to surpass the mere biological or anatomical level. In matters of neurosis, this goal could be elaborated as follows. As long as the neurotic subject remains fascinated by the lack of the Other, both by trying to answer it and by fleeing from it at the same time, he remains immobile, reminding us of the rabbit captivated by the headlights of a car. The goal of psychoanalysis is to create the possibility of leaving this imaginary captivity, and exchanging it for symbolic castration, that is, the assumption of a structurally determined lack as the necessary primal condition for the existence of the subject.¹⁵ Instead of remaining at the level of biology, we enter with this into the field of ethics and creation.

And that in its turn gives rise to another form of interminability.

impossible by blinding oneself; this is what Oedipus does in Kolonos. The more moderated form of this blinding process can be found with the fetishist, who diverts his gaze away from the lack by concentrating on other tangible paraphernalia.

¹⁴ He maintains this idea right to the end, as it is still mentioned in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (1937c), S.E. XXIII, p. 250.

¹⁵ This very fundamental idea on causality - that there is a primal lack that functions as Prime Mover - is elaborated by Lacan in his eleventh seminar with the idea of “beance causale”.

FROM IMPOSSIBILITY TO INABILITY.

Lacan's Theory on the Four Discourses.

During the late sixties and the early seventies, the intellectual talk of the town was about structuralism and the structuralists, with Foucault, Lacan and Barthes being the most prominent figures. The fact that each of these three denied being a structuralist was considered irrelevant, and added a bit of Parisian spice and frivolity to the discussion.

As far as Lacan is concerned, I find it rather difficult to answer the question of whether he was a structuralist or not. In such a discussion, everything depends on the definition one adheres to. Nevertheless, one thing is very clear to me: Freud was not a structuralist and, if Lacan is the only postfreudian who lifted psychoanalytic theory to another and higher level, then this *Aufhebung*, elevation in Hegel's sense, has everything to do with Lacanian structuralism and formalism. The rest of the postfreudians stayed behind Freud, even returning very often to the level of the prefreudians.

It is obvious that Freud was fundamentally innovative. He operated on his own a shift towards a new paradigm in the study of mankind. He was so fundamentally innovative that it would seem almost impossible to go any further. So, if we state that Lacan operates an *Aufhebung*, we have to explain what we mean by that. What is there to gain with Lacanian theory?

PSYCHOANALYSIS IS THE SCIENCE OF THE PARTICULAR

In order to appreciate the gain, we have to return to the fundamental difficulty in every psychological study. Within a classical scientific approach one has to start with observation and description in order to take the step towards categorisation and generalisation. This is the approach of prefreudian and postfreudian psychology and psychiatry, and it is an approach which is doomed to fail. The step from the observation of an individual to a generalised category proves to be a very frustrating business. Everyone who has been

trained in psychodiagnostics, being the first step in this kind of scientific approach, knows exactly what I mean. By means of observation and interview with an individual patient, you sample a number of characteristics, which have to match the characteristics dictated by a psychiatric handbook. They have to match, but, of course, they never do. Still within the classical approach, the solution is always a variant on the same theme: one differentiates between primary and secondary characteristics; in that respect, you have for example the primary and the secondary characteristics of schizophrenia. The modern solution to the same problem is illustrated with the DSM, in which there remains an element of choice: a patient is called borderline if he shows at least five symptoms out of a list of eight, etc. There are multiple examples, but these are so boring that I won't go any further into them.

The more interesting part of it is the ever-returning field of tension between clinical reality on the one hand and conceptualisation on the other. Lacan has summarised this tension in one of his paradoxical statements: "Psychanalyse, c'est la science du particulier", that is: psychoanalysis is the science of the particular. One of the reasons why Freud was so innovative lies in his solution to this problem. Instead of making his own categorical system in which every patient had to find his proper place and trying to convince the world that his system, and his alone, was the only useful one, he chose a completely different line of approach. Every patient is listened to, and every case study results in a category into which one and only one patient fits. Already in his *Studies on Hysteria* he remarks that hysteria does not exist as a separate category, that in clinical reality we always find mixtures of different kinds of neuroses, whose pure form is only a matter of 'textbook-psychology'. The paradoxical result of this Freudian approach, focusing on the individual, even on the individual symptoms of one individual patient, is that Freud is the only one who succeeded in making a general theory on the human psyche. His method is not a secret one, on the contrary. In order to take the step from individual clinical reality to a general conceptualisation, Freud makes use of a ready-made theory, or at least almost ready-made. Indeed, the core of Freudian theory is based on classical myths and stories, with the Oedipus tragedy and the story of Narcissus being the most famous examples. In the last volume of the *Standard Edition*, we find ten pages filled with references to works of art and literature. Freud goes even further with his solution: where he did not find a suitable myth, he invented one himself, and that is of course the story of *Totem und Tabu*, the myth of the primal father.

This Freudian approach resulted in a major breakthrough, a new paradigm. Nevertheless, there are a couple of serious disadvantages to it. This method is useful only as long as one keeps the story sufficiently vague. From the moment one studies any individual myth in its own particularity, it becomes part of that science of the particular. Even Oedipus himself had his own version of the Oedipus complex. Within the realm of cultural anthropology, Lévi-Strauss had the same problem, and that is why he

considered each myth as a local variant of a hidden matrix. A second and even more important disadvantage has to do with the content of myths and the possibility that this content gets psychologized, which means that it becomes a substantial reality. That is what happened with Jungian and post-jungian theory. We won't go any further into that, one Lacanian quotation suffices to announce the danger of such an approach. Abbreviated, it runs as follows: "Thus to authenticate everything of the order of the imaginary in the subject is properly speaking to make analysis the anteroom of madness, (...)"¹

In this light, we have to consider Lacanian theory as a major breakthrough. Whereas Freud made the step from the individual patient to the underlying myths, Lacan makes the step from these myths to the formal structures, which govern those myths. The most important Lacanian structure in this respect is, of course, the theory on the four discourses.

The advantages of these formal structures are obvious. First of all, there is an enormous gain in level of abstraction. Just as in algebra, you can represent anything with those "*petites lettres*", the small letters, the *a* and the *S* and the *A*, and the relationships between them. It is precisely this level of abstraction which enables us to fit every particular subject into the main frame. Secondly, these formal structures are so stripped of flesh and bones that they diminish the possibility of psychologizing. For example, if one compares the Freudian primal father with the Lacanian master-signifier S_1 , the difference is very clear: with the first one, everybody sees an elderly greybeard before his or her eyes, roving between his females, etc. It is very difficult to imagine this greybeard using the S_1 ... which precisely opens up the possibility of other interpretations of this very important function. This brings us to the third advantage: these structures permit us to steer the clinical practice in a very efficient way. It makes a great deal of difference, for example, whether one uses a master discourse or a hysterical discourse in a given situation; the respective formulae allow you to predict what the effect of your choice will be.

There is of course one disadvantage to this system. Compared to the Freudian solution, with the myths and the age-old stories, the Lacanian algebraic structures are boring, tedious even. Indeed, there is no flesh to them, since they are concerned only with the bare bones and, therefore, they completely lack the ever-present attraction of the imaginary order that is pre-eminent in those stories. That is the price one has to pay.

The theory of the four discourses is without any doubt the most important part of the Lacanian formalisation. The discourses are the summary and - as far as I am concerned - the summit of Lacan's theory.² This implies that they

¹ Lacan, J.(1993). *The Seminar of J.Lacan: Book III. The Psychoses 1955-56*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by R.Grigg. New York, Norton, p.15.

are very dense and quite difficult. At the same time, they are also very easy to understand and to handle, once one has grasped their inner logic. The ever-lurking danger is that one reduces each discourse to one concrete implementation, resulting in a return to the captivating imaginary scene. In the long run, the only answer to this captivation of the imaginary lies in one's own analysis.

FOUR POSITIONS

The idea of communication has been the focus of attention in many different fields for the last twenty-five years, starting with 'human relations' and on to electronics and to genetics. There is one unifying aim which characterises those different aspects of so-called communication theories: they want to bring communication up to a perfect standard by eliminating any kind of "noise" so that the message can flow freely between sender and receiver. The basic myth governing those theories concerns the existence of the perfect communication, without any failure whatsoever.

Those theories are very different from the original concept of discourse, as it was coined by Michel Foucault in December 1970 during his inaugural speech at the Collège de France. For him, there is a very special relationship between power and discourse. The impact of a given discourse makes itself clear by imposing its signifiers on another discourse. For example, when, during the Gulf war, bombing was described as "surgical measures" carried out with "surgical precision", these metaphors express the power of the medical discourse, because they are used outside the proper field of their application. In this respect, the analysis of discourse is a very useful instrument within the framework of historical research on the evolution of power, which is precisely what Foucault wanted to do.

And now for something completely different. The Lacanian theory has nothing to do with either of those two. His theory is even in radical opposition to communication theory as such. Indeed, he starts from the assumption that communication is always a failure; moreover, that it has to be a failure, and that is the reason why we keep on talking. If we understood each other,

² As we consider this theory to be a condensation of Lacan's evolution, every bibliographic reference to his work is too limited. The theory itself was coined during the seminar of 1969-70 (*Le Séminaire: Livre XVII. L'Envers de la psychanalyse*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil). See also *Radiophonie* (In *Scilicet*, 1970, nr.2/3, pp. 55-99) and the next seminar: *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*. A further elaboration can be found in *Encore*, his seminar of 1972-73, translated as *The Seminar of J.Lacan: Book XX. On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Edited by J.A. Miller, translated with notes by B. Fink. New York, Norton, 1998.

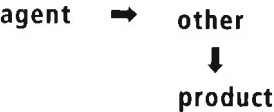
we would all remain silent. Luckily enough, we don't, so we have to speak to one another. The discourses stretch a number of lines along which this impossibility of communication can take place. This brings us to the difference from Foucault's theory. In his discourse theory, Foucault works with the concrete material of the signifier, which puts the accent on the *content* of a discourse. Lacan, on the contrary, works beyond the content and places the accent on the formal relationships that each discourse draws through the act of speaking. This implies that the Lacanian discourse theory has to be understood primarily as a *formal* system, i.e. independent of any spoken word as such. A discourse exists before any concretely spoken word; even more: a discourse determines the concrete speech act. This effect of determination is the reflection of the Lacanian basic assumption, namely that each discourse delineates fundamental relationships, resulting in a particular *social bond*. As there are four discourses, there are four different social bonds.

Before we go into that, I want to emphasize again the a priori emptiness of each discourse. They are nothing but empty bags with a particular form, which determines the content that one puts into them. The important thing to understand is that they can contain almost anything. The moment one reduces a given discourse to one interpretation, the whole theory implodes and one returns to the science of the particular.

What does the discourse bag look like? Each bag has four different compartments into which one can put things. The compartments are called *positions*, the things are the *terms*. There are four positions, standing in a fixed relationship to each other. The first position is very logical: each discourse starts with somebody talking, called by Lacan the *agent*. If one talks, one is talking to somebody, and that is the second position, called the *other*. Those two positions are nothing else but the conscious expression of each speech act, and in that sense we can find them in every communication theory:

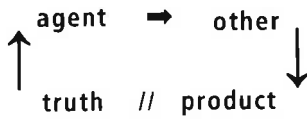


Within this minimal relationship between speaker and receiver, between agent and other, one aims at a certain effect, that is, there is a purpose to it. The result of the discourse can be made visible in this effect, and that brings us to the next position, called the *product*.



An example is when you tell your son to work hard at school and, as a result, he produces one failure after another. Up to this point, we are still within classical communication theory. It is only the fourth position that introduces the psychoanalytic perspective. As a matter of fact, it is not the fourth, but

the first position, namely the position of the *truth*. Indeed, Freud showed us that, while speaking, we are driven by a truth unknown to ourselves. It is this position of the truth which functions as motor and as starting-point of each discourse.



The position of the truth is the Aristotelian Prime Mover, affecting the whole structure of the discourse. Its first consequence is that the agent is only apparently the agent. The ego does not speak, it is spoken. Of course you can come to this conclusion by looking at the process of free association, but even normal speaking yields the same result. Indeed, when I speak, I do not know what I am going to say, unless I have learned it by heart or am reading my speech from a paper. In all other cases, I do not speak but I am spoken, and this speech is driven by a desire, with or without my conscious agreement. This is a matter of simple observation, but it is fundamentally wounding to man's narcissism; that is why Freud called it the third great narcissistic humiliation of mankind.³ He coined it in a very clear statement: "*dass das Ich kein Herr sei in seinem eigenen Haus*" (The I is not master in its own house). The Lacanian equivalent of this Freudian formula runs as follows: "*Le signifiant, c'est ce qui représente le sujet pour un autre signifiant*" (the signifier is what represents the subject for another signifier). In this readjustment of the scales it is not the subject who stands to the fore in the definition; rather, all importance goes to the signifier. Lacan defines the subject as a passive effect of the signifying chain, certainly not the master of it. So, the agent of the discourse is only a fake agent, "*un semblant*", a phoney. The real driving force lies underneath, at the position of the truth.

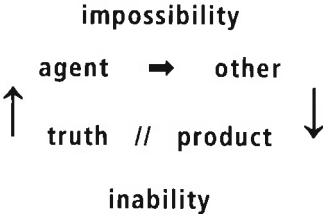
The second consequence of the introduction of this driving force is that the communicative sequence of the discourse is disrupted. One would expect an almost logical line according to which the agent translates the truth into a message directed to the other and resulting in a product which, in a feedback movement, returns to the sender. This is not the case. In Lacanian theory, there is no such thing as a truth, which can be completely put into words; on the contrary, the exact nature of the truth is such that one can hardly put words to it. Lacan calls this characteristic "*le mi-dire de la vérité*", the half-speaking of the truth. This is essentially a Freudian idea: the complete verbalisation of the truth is impossible, because primary repression keeps the original object definitively outside the realm of language, which means

³ Freud, S. (1917a). *A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis*. S.E. XVII, pp. 139-43; *The Resistance to Psycho-Analysis* (1925e). S.E. XIX, p. 221.

at the same time *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, with as a consequence the endless compulsion to repeat, as a never-ending attempt to verbalise the non-verbal. The consequence is the endless insistence of this “*mi-dire de la vérité*”, which was beautifully expressed by Kierkegaard in his book on repetition: “Repetition is a beloved wife, which one never gets tired of.” As a consequence, every discourse is an open-ended structure, in which the open-endedness functions as causal factor. Because of the structural lack, the discourses keep on turning. Already in 1964, at the time of seminar XI, Lacan had described the unconscious as a process of “*béance causale*”, a gap with a causal function, in a typical movement of opening and closing. It is this idea that he retakes in the discourse theory.

TWO DISJUNCTIONS

Besides these four positions, the formal structure of a discourse consists of two disjunctions, expressing the disruption of the communicative line. These disjunctions are the most important and the most difficult part of the whole theory. On the upper level of the discourse, we have the disjunction of *impossibility*; on the lower level, we are confronted with the disjunction of *inability*. The two are interrelated.



On the upper level, there is the disjunction of impossibility: the agent, who is only a make-believe agent, is driven by a desire which constitutes his truth. This truth cannot be completely verbalised, with the result that the agent cannot transmit his desire to the other; hence a perfect communication with words is logically impossible. This is the Lacanian explication of the classical communication difficulties. Besides that, though, this disjunction of impossibility goes much further. What Lacan is expressing here is nothing less than the illustrious “*Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*”, the non-existence of the sexual relationship. This statement, being already a very dense summary of a whole theory, is even more condensed here in the disjunction of the upper part of the discourse. Suffice it to say that the bridge between agent and other is always a bridge too far with, as an important result, the fact that the agent remains stuck with an impossible desire. This is important because it forms the basis of a particular social bond, characterising each discourse.

Each of the four discourses unites a group of subjects through a particular impossibility of a particular desire.

Next, on the lower level, we find the disjunction of inability. This inability concerns the link between product and truth. The product, as a result of the discourse in the other, has nothing to do with the truth of the agent. If it were possible for the agent to verbalise his truth completely to the other, this other would respond with an appropriate product; as this precondition is not fulfilled, the product can never match what lies at the position of the truth.

If we want to depict these two disjunctions in a banal way, we'd better start with the opposite point of view, where the disjunctions would be abolished, the *Sunday of Life* (La dimanche de la vie), where the dreamt-of perfect communication and sexual relationship would be possible. In that case, the truth would find a complete expression in the desire of the agent for the other, thus realising the perfect relationship between those two with, as a product, the final satisfaction, embracing the truth. The necessary condition of this Hollywood scenario is that everything takes place outside the realm of the signifier, otherwise it would be structurally impossible. Once one speaks, one does not succeed in verbalising the truth of the matter with, as a consequence, the impossibility of realising one's desire at the place of the other ("my place or your place?"), resulting in the inability of the convergence between product and truth.

As I already said, these two disjunctions are the most difficult and the densest part of the discourse theory. They condense a major Freudian discovery, namely the ever-present failure of the pleasure principle, and the consequences of that failure. This failure finds its expression in the disjunction of inability, whose consequence is impossibility. Man can never return to what Freud called "*die primäre Befriedigungserlebnis*", the primary experience of satisfaction.⁴ He is *unable to* operate this return because of the primary splitting of the subject due to language. Nevertheless, he keeps on trying, and during this process he gets stuck on the road, and that is where he experiences the *impossibility*. Every biography can be read as a story about this impossibility.

Instead of bemoaning the typical human condition, it is much more important to understand the crucial thing about this impossibility, namely that it is only the upper layer of an underlying inability, and *that the structure in its totality is a protective one*. If we were able to return to this primary

⁴ Freud, S. (1887-1892). *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. S.E. I, pp. 317-320. This idea persists through the whole of Freud's work.

⁵ That is why the psychotic patient is uncanny to us: we do not share the same social bonds, because the psychotic does not share the discourses, due to his solution of the Oedipus complex – a solution that lies outside the discourse of the master, and hence, outside the very structure of discourse.

experience of *jouissance*, the perfect symbiotic relationship would be realised, which would imply the end of our existence as a subject. That is why the psychotic subject, who does not share the discourse structure, has to find a private solution to this ever-present danger of disappearing in the great Other.⁵

A normally divided subject is protected against this danger. To put it bluntly: on the road to the bliss of all-embracing *jouissance* in which we would disappear, we get stuck at the point of orgasm, which means the end of it, and then we can start all over again. Some people are even so afraid that they don't even reach that point, and stop at an earlier roadblock.

FOUR TERMS, FOUR DISCOURSES

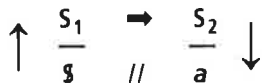
In this sense, the four discourses are four different ways for the subject to take a stance towards the failure of the pleasure principle – that is the upper level, and four different ways to avoid the *jouissance* – that is the lower level. In that way, each of the four demonstrates a certain desire and the failure of it, resulting in a typical social bond. In order to understand this, we need to study the *terms*. The four positions and the two disjunctions always remain the same throughout the different discourses. The difference is situated in the terms, more particularly in the rotation of the terms over the positions. The terms themselves are very obvious, as they originate in the earlier Lacanian theory on the unconscious and the structure of language. We need at least two signifiers in order to have a minimal linguistic structure, resulting in two terms: the S_1 and S_2 . The S_1 , being the first signifier, the Freudian “border presentation”, “primary symbol”, even “primary symptom”, has a special status. It is the master-signifier, trying to fill up the lack, posing as the guarantee for the process of covering up that lack. The best and shortest example is the signifier “I” which gives us the illusion of an identity of our own. The S_2 is the denominator for the rest of the signifiers, the chain or network of signifiers. In that sense, it is also the denominator of “*le savoir*”, the knowledge which is contained in that chain.

The next two terms are both an effect of the signifier. Indeed, once we have two signifiers, the necessary condition for the introduction of a subject is fulfilled; remember: “a signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier”. So, the third term is the divided subject $\$$. The last of the terms, last but not least, is the lost object, notated as object a .

In summary: the result of language acquisition is a loss of a primary condition called ‘nature’. From the moment you speak, you become a subject of language (a divided subject for that matter), who tries to grasp an object beyond language, or, more accurately, a condition beyond the separation between subject and object. This object represents the final term of desire itself; as it lies beyond the realm of the signifier and thus beyond the pleasure

principle, it is irrevocably lost. In that sense, it constitutes the motor, which keeps us going forever. For Lacan, it constitutes the basis of every form of causality for us, humans.

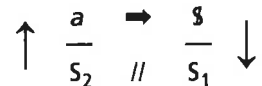
The four terms - S_1 and S_2 , $\$$ and a - are standing in a fixed order. These terms, with respect to the fixed order, can be rotated over the positions, resulting in four different forms of discourse. Indeed, with the fifth rotation, one returns to its starting point, due to the fixed order of the terms.



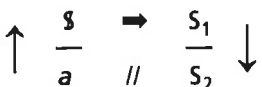
Discourse of the master



University discourse



Analytic discourse



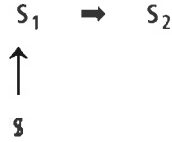
Hysteric's discourse

THE DISCOURSE OF THE MASTER

The first discourse is that of the master. It is the first one because it founds the symbolic order as such, presenting us with a formal expression of the Oedipal complex and the constitution of the subject. It is the discourse in which terms and positions seem to match. The agent is the master-signifier, pretending to be one and undivided. As Lacan puts it: it is that particular signifier which gives me the idea that I am (master of) myself: "*mâitre/m'être à moi-même*". Indeed, the desire of this discourse is being one and undivided, that is why the master-signifier tries to join the S_2 at the place of the other:



This desire is impossible: once there is a second signifier, the subject is necessarily divided between the two of them. That is why we find the divided subject at the position of the truth; the hidden truth of the master is that even he is divided.



In Freudian terms: the father is also submitted to the process of castration, the primal father is only a construct of the subject. The result of his impossible craving to be one and undivided through the use of signifiers is a mere paradox: it ends in the ever-increasing production of object *a*, the lost object.



This object *a*, cause of desire, can never be brought into relation with the divided being of the \S . The effect is that the discourse of the master precludes the basic fantasy in its very structure: $\S \diamond a$ is not possible, the master is *unable* to assume this relation. That is why the master is structurally blind in this respect: $\S // a$. He cannot afford to acknowledge the imaginary part of his identity, as caused by the object *a*.

One of the most interesting things about this discourse is the relationship between the master-signifier at the place of the agent and the S_2 at the place of the other. This implies that knowledge is situated at the position of the other, which means that the other has to sustain the master in his illusion that he is at one with this knowledge. The pupils make the master or, in the Hegelian sense: it is the slave who confirms by his knowledge the position of the master.

A classic example, since the study by Jean Clavreul concerns the medical discourse.⁶ A medical doctor functions as a master-signifier, without any respect for his being divided as a subject; his division is situated underneath, as part of a hidden truth. In functioning as master-signifier, he reduces the patient to an object of his knowledge, and this shows in the terminology used, e.g. when referring to a patient as the "cardiac failure of room 16". The net result of the discourse is the lost object, which means that the master will never be able to assume the cause of his desire, as long as he stays in this discourse. If he wants to do that, he has to turn to another discourse, but

⁶ Clavreul, J. (1978), *L'ordre medical*, Paris, Seuil, pp. 1-284.

from that moment he is no longer able to function within the previous one. For example, one of my patients is an oncologist who had to interrupt his medical career the moment he was confronted with his father as cancer patient. At that moment, he was overwhelmed by his own being as a divided subject, confronted with an ever-receding truth; in his turn, he had to look for a master-signifier which would provide him with a satisfying answer. He had exchanged the master discourse for that of the hysteric and that is when he really started his analysis.

THE DISCOURSE OF THE HYSTERIC

When we turn the terms one quarter forwards, we obtain the hysterical discourse. At the place of the agent, we find the divided subject, which means that the desire of this discourse is desire itself, beyond any satisfaction. The social bond of this discourse is what Freud described as the hysterical identification with an unsatisfied desire. A typical example can be found in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, i.e. the salmon dream of the wife of the butcher. The Freudian theory about this identification is written down in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Indeed, this phenomenon can give rise to a mass movement, which is always mass hysteria.

In this way, hysteria as a social bond puts the impossibility of desire to the forefront. This discourse, being the logical sequence to the discourse of the oedipal master, is at the same time the discourse of every normal neurotic. The moment one speaks, one has lost the primary object and becomes divided between the signifiers. The net result of that process is an ever-unstable identity and an ever-insisting desire, which can never be satisfied or destroyed, as Freud discovered at the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

$$\uparrow \frac{\$}{a}$$

This desire, originating in the primary loss, has to express itself by way of a demand, directed to the other. In terms of discourse, one has to turn the other into a master-signifier in order to get an answer. Hence, the hysterical subject makes a master out of the other, an S_1 who has to produce an answer:

$$\$ \rightarrow S_1$$

When the hysterical students during the May revolt of 1968 interrupted the very seminar in which he was preparing the discourse theory, Lacan gave them a very cold answer: "*Vous voulez un maître, vous l'aurez*" (you are looking for a master, you will surely find one). It took them twenty years to understand.

The questions put to the master can be very different, but basically they are the same: "Tell me who I am, tell me what my desire is". Tell me who I am as a man, a woman, as a father, a mother, as a daughter, a son. Although the master can be found in different places – (s)he could be a priest, a doctor, a scientist, an analyst, even a husband for that matter – they all have one thing in common: the master is supposed to know and to produce the answer. That is why we find S_2 , that is, knowledge, at the position of the product.



Sadly enough, this answer will always be beside the point. The S_2 is *unable* to produce a particular answer about the particular driving force of the object a at the place of the truth:

$$a \quad // \quad S_2$$

This failure inevitably results in a never-ending battle between the hysterical subject and the master on duty, especially if the latter wants to keep his master-position. That is why revolutions always end with the installation of a new master, usually a bit more cruel and more harsh than the previous one, and that is why every master sooner or later ends up with his head in a place where it is not supposed to be.

Structurally, the hysterical discourse results in alienation for the hysterical subject and in castration for the master. The answer, given by the master, is always beside the point, because the true answer concerns object a , the forever-lost object, which cannot be put into words. The classical reaction of the master to this failure is to produce even more signifiers, which creates of course an ever-increasing distance from the lost object at the position of the truth. This in turn results in a confrontation between the master on the one hand and the fundamental lack in the signifying chain on the other, that is, the impossibility of the signifying chain to verbalise the final truth. This impossibility causes the failure of the master, and so his symbolic castration. In the meantime, the master at the position of the other as S_1 has produced an ever-increasing S_2 and thus a body of knowledge. It is this knowledge which determines time and again the fundamental alienation for the hysterical subject. As an answer to his or her particular question, (s)he receives a scientific theory, a religion, a...

Whether or not (s)he complies with it, i.e. whether or not (s)he identifies herself with it, is beside the point: in every case, the answer is an alienating one. The knowledge as a product is *unable* to say anything important about the object a at the place of the truth: $a \quad // \quad S_2$. Throughout history we find grosso modo the following evolution:

a	S₁	S₂	\$
?	priest	religion	saint or witch
?	scientist	science	believer – cured sceptic – not cured
?	analyst	psychoanalytic knowledge	good hysteric bad hysteric ⁷

The bonus is a growing body of knowledge. If we look at the history of science, we can interpret it as a *hystory*: science has always been an attempt to answer the existential questions, and the only result of that attempt is science itself... This is all the more clear in human sciences where, for example, even psychoanalysis is a product of hysteria; the same thing can be said of every development of knowledge, even on a strictly individual level. A developing subject wants to know the answers about his own division: that is why he keeps on reading, speaking etc. He will end up with a considerable body of knowledge, but that doesn't teach him very much about his own lost object at the place of truth.

THE UNIVERSITY DISCOURSE

This knowledge takes the position of the agent in the university discourse. Indeed, if we turn the elements in the master discourse one quarter backwards over the four fixed positions, we obtain this university discourse, as a regression of the discourse of the master, and as the inverse of the hysterical discourse. The agent is the established knowledge; the other is reduced to being the mere object, cause of desire:

$$S_2 \rightarrow a$$

In the university discourse, the social bond results from the desire to reach the lost object through knowledge. This knowledge is presented as an accumulated, organised and transparent unity, coming straightforwardly to us from the textbooks. The hidden truth is that it can only function if one has a guarantee for it, a master-signifier.

$$\begin{array}{c} \uparrow S_2 \\ S_1 \end{array}$$

⁷ The expressions "good or bad hysteric" were naively coined by E. Zetzel in her paper "The so-called good hysteric" (In *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 1968, 49, pp. 256-260). The difference between the hysteric as a saint or a witch was not naively described by G. Wajeman's *Le maître et l'Hystérique* (Paris, Navarin/Seuil, 1982).

Every field of knowledge functions by the grace of such a guarantee: for example, in our field, "Lacan has said that..." "Freud has said that...". The primary example of this relationship between knowledge and master-signifier is Descartes, who needed God to guarantee the correctness of his science. A more recent example is Einstein, when he refused the implications of quantum mechanics with his "God doesn't play with dice".

At the position of the other, we find the lost object *a*, cause of desire. The relationship between this object and the signifying chain is structurally an impossible one. As the object is precisely that element, *Das Ding*, beyond the signifier, the signifying chain is the least appropriate agent for reaching for it. As a result, the product of this discourse is an ever-increased division of the subject. The more knowledge one uses to reach for the object, the more one becomes divided between signifiers, and the further one gets away from home, that is, from the true cause of desire.

In this discourse, there is no relationship between the subject and the master-signifier. The master is supposed to secrete signifiers without there being any relationship with his own subjectivity:

$$S_1 \quad // \quad \S$$

This implies one of the classical requirements of science: the so-called objectivity, which this discourse shows to be a mere illusion.

THE DISCOURSE OF THE ANALYST

This brings us to the last discourse, that of the analyst, being the inverse of the discourse of the master. At the place of the agent, we find the object *a*, cause of desire. It is this lost object which founds the listening position of the analyst, which obliges the other to take his divided being into account. That is why we find the divided subject at the position of other:

$$a \quad \rightarrow \quad \S$$

This relationship between agent and other is impossible, because it turns the analyst into the cause of desire of the other, eliminating him as a subject and reducing him to the mere residue, even the trash beyond the signifiers. That is one of the reasons why Lacan stated that it is impossible to be an analyst, the only thing you can do is to function as such for somebody during a limited time. This impossible relationship from object *a* to divided subject is the basis for the development of the transference, through which the subject will be able to encircle his object. This is one of the goals of an analysis, "*la traversée du fantasme*", the journey through the basic fantasy.

Normally – that is, following the discourse of the Master who sets the norm – the relationship between subject and object is unconscious and makes up part of the inability disjunction: §// a. The analytical discourse, being the inverse of that of the master, brings this relationship to the forefront in an inverted form. From inability it goes to impossibility, but it is an impossibility which can be explored in its effects (coined in seminar XX as “*Ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s’écrire*”, it doesn’t stop not being written).

The product of this discourse is the master-signifier; in Freudian terms: the oedipal determinant particular for that subject. It is the function of the analyst to bring the subject to that point, albeit in a paradoxical way. The analytical position functions through a non-functioning of the analyst as a subject, his/her being reduced to the position of object.

This is the reason why the end result of the analytical discourse is radical difference. Beyond the world of make believe, “*le monde du semblant*” in which we are all narcissistically alike, we are fundamentally different. The analytic discourse yields one subject, constructing and deconstructing itself throughout the process of analysis; the other party is nothing but a stepping-stone. This process reminds me of several folk tales and fairy tales in which the beloved one, the object of desire, can no longer talk for one reason or another, so that the hero has to create a solution in which essentially he is confronted with his own being, unknown to him before.

The position of knowledge is remarkable in this discourse. One of the major turns in Freud’s theory and practice concerns precisely the way in which the analyst makes use of his knowledge.⁸ This is indicated by the discourse of the analyst and it is quite paradoxical:

$$S_2 \quad // \quad S_1$$

The knowledge functions at the position of the truth, but – as the place of the agent is taken by object *a* – this knowledge cannot be brought into the analysis. The analyst knows, oh yes, he does know, but he can’t do much with it, as long as he takes the analytical stance. That is why this knowledge can be expressed by the idea of *Docta Ignorantia*, i.e. “learned ignorance” as it was called by Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century. The analyst has wisely learned not to know, and this opens up a way for the other to gain access to that which determined his or her subjectivity.

⁸ I have described this evolution in Freud as an evolution in discourses, starting with the hysterical discourse, via the discourse of the master to the analytical discourse: Verhaeghe, P. (1999), *Does the woman exist? From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine*. New York, The Other Press, revised second edition.

⁹ Freud, S. (1937c). *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. S.E. XXIII, p. 248.

CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF THE TURNING-WHEEL

The four different forms of discourse are four different social bonds, each time based on an impossible desire. This brings to mind the Freudian formula about the three impossible professions, “*Edukieren, Regieren und Analysieren*”; to educate, that is the university discourse, to govern, the master discourse, and to analyse, the analytic discourse, each giving rise to a particular brotherhood.⁹ Freud forgot the most obvious one, the one that holds us together on a mass scale, namely to desire. What I did not describe are the interrelations between the four forms, and the way each discourse topples over into another. As this is material for another lengthy paper, suffice it to say that this interchange has everything to do with the two disjunctions: the disjunction of impossibility of one discourse gives rise to the disjunction of inability in another, and so on.

In my introduction, I stressed the usefulness of this theory. Its formal character makes it possible to use it in many different particular instances. Nevertheless, in my experience, the greatest danger is that of reducing each discourse to one concrete implementation. The discourse of the hysteric, then, would be the way a neurotic person interrelates to someone else – very annoying; the discourse of the master would be synonymous with a kind of aristocratic narcissistic authority – always suspect; the discourse of the university would be the babbling of teachers – extremely annoying; and the discourse of the analyst would be the true and only one, leading to paradise – very expensive.

Besides the *epitheta ornantia*, these implementations are fundamentally wrong. The discourses, existing as a formal structure even before one speaks, are continually interchanging through the interrelationships between their disjunctions. The reduction to one implementation is *a fortiori* a reduction. Let us take the hysterical subject as an example. He or she can come to the consulting room with a typical hysterical discourse, in which the other is forced to take the position of the master, with the obligation to secrete knowledge and end up castrated. On the other hand, the same hysterical subject can appear on the scene with the discourse of the master – and that is not such an unusual situation. In that case, the patient identifies him or herself with his or her symptom as master-signifier S_1 about which the other functions as a guarantee because he is supposed to possess the knowledge about it. “I have a postnatal depression, I *am* my postnatal depression, *you* are the specialist who knows (S_2) about such things, so just go ahead and cure me, do anything you want, as long as I don’t have to enter the game as a subject”. Thirdly, the same hysterical subject can come to us with a university discourse. He or she can impress us with a considerable sum of knowledge by which he or she reduces the other to a mandatory silent object, and by which he or she avoids looking at the hidden master at the position of the truth.

Just as the reduction of hysteria to the hysterical discourse is wrong, the same goes for every discourse. As the truth can only be half said – “*le mi-dire de la vérité*” – the wheel keeps on turning. In the second chapter of his seminar *Encore*, Lacan tells us that, each time one changes one discourse for another, there is at that moment an emergence of the analytic discourse, as a possibility for grasping the determination from object *a* to $\$$. In the same paragraph he tells us that every crossing of discourse is also a sign of love. As knowledge stops there, it is appropriate to stop this paper at this point as well.

TEACHING AND PSYCHOANALYSIS.

A Necessary Impossibility.

*Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.
(Horatius, Epist. I, I, 14.)*¹

However different the Freud biographies may be, they are unanimous on one point: he wanted to know. From the outset, we see an ambitious man at work whose goal is to reach a master position through knowledge. When he takes his first steps towards psychoanalysis - he is at that stage middle-aged - his goal is still the same, and this colours both his initial theory and practice. The analytic cure is a search for lost knowledge, lost as a result of it becoming unconscious; the aim of the treatment is the re-inscription of this unconscious knowledge into consciousness. The implicit expectation is that the therapeutic effects will follow automatically. In this respect, Freud reveals himself as an inheritor of the Enlightenment, in his belief that the mere transmission of knowledge is enough to induce change. Nevertheless, beyond this Enlightenment, we meet Socrates with his insistent questions: what is knowledge, and how can it be passed on or taught? These are the two questions I want to address in this paper.

KNOWLEDGE IN ANALYSIS

With respect to the first question, I have to specify that the knowledge concerned is rather particular, it is the knowledge that is searched for by every subject right from the start. The Dora case study illustrates the insistence and gives us the gist of this search: through her symptoms and dreams, Dora

¹ "Nobody is bound to swear allegiance to the words of the master." Horatius wrote this in a letter to Maecenas, the archetype of the sponsor.

continually asks what it means to be a woman and a daughter in relation to the desire of a man.²

This particular illustration loses its particularity when Freud begins to study childhood and thus discovers the generality of what he calls the infantile sexual researches, i.e., the original quest for knowledge. Just like the hysterical patient, the child wants to know the answer to three related questions. The first one concerns the difference between boys and girls; the second question concerns the origin of babies; the last question is about the father and the mother: what is their relationship? The child, says Freud, proceeds like a scientist and forges genuinely explanatory theories, that is why he calls them infantile sexual *researches* and infantile sexual *theories*.³ The recurring problem with the knowledge produced is that the answers are never final, with the result that the questions persist. This was also the case with Dora, whose second dream mentions the repetition: “*Sie fragt wohl hundertmal*” (she asks a hundred times).⁴ According to Freud, the infantile sexual researches falter on two specific points: the role of the father (“the fertilising role of the semen”) and the female sexual identity (“the existence of the female sexual orifice”). This failure ends “in a renunciation which not infrequently leaves behind it a permanent injury of the instinct for knowledge”.⁵ Instead of a correct knowledge, the child must content itself with the primary fantasies, combining true, false and lack of knowledge into imaginary constructions. This strengthens Freud’s conviction that neurosis is either the effect of an incorrect knowledge in these matters, or the effect of a lack of knowledge.

Consequently, the first therapeutic solution proposed by him consists of providing patients with what he considers to be the right knowledge, thus putting the therapist in the position of the master. A perfect illustration can be found in the construction produced for the benefit of little Hans: “Long before he (i.e., Hans) was in the world, I had known that a little Hans would come who would be so fond of his mother that he would be bound to feel afraid of his father because of it; (...)”. The reaction of the little boy is very revealing: “Does the Professor talk to God, Hans asked his father on the way home, as he can tell all that beforehand?” This short interaction is very instructive: it shows the analyst in the position of possessing, teaching and guaranteeing the correctness of a knowledge.⁶ Again, the Dora case study is even more instructive. Freud assumes the role of the master who knows in

² Freud, S. (1905e). *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. S.E. VII.

³ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, pp. 194-197.

⁴ Freud, S. (1905e). *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁵ Freud, S. (1905d). *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

⁶ Note the ‘Professor’ form of address! Freud, S. (1909b). *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*. S.E. X, p. 42.

matters of desire and jouissance, and who, by way of treatment, teaches this knowledge to the patient; the patient must accept these insights, etc. And again, the generalisation of this conception can be found in his ideas on sexual enlightenment. In 1907 he writes enthusiastically on the subject: the adult may not withhold the necessary knowledge, on the contrary, he or she has to inform children correctly, in order that their incorrect, fantasmatic birth theories may become superfluous.⁷ For Freud, it is obvious that a general enlightenment will result in a drastic drop in the numbers of neurotic adults.

This generalisation has a very strong impact on the treatment: the cure is transformed into a didactic exercise, the didactics become a cure. A perfect illustration of this confusion can be found in the famous "*Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*" of 1916-17 (Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis) - that is, literally, "What is read in front of the pupils". Both the treatment and the teaching amount to what I want to consider as a "didactical analysis of resistance". At that time, Freud became a real master in discerning the resistances and antagonisms of his pupils/patients, even before they knew them themselves. Time and again, he formulates the critique of his pupils/patients himself - much better than they ever could have done themselves - and each time he takes the edge off the argument.

Such a strategy can only result in two possible reactions: either one is transformed from a patient into a pupil who says yes and absorbs everything, or one reacts as Dora did, by slamming the door and leaving. From a historical point of view, this will give birth to the analysis of the resistance, i.e. the struggle to convince the patient. If she or he does not want to accept the presented knowledge, it is a matter of resistance. No wonder that at that time, Freud considers educability to be the determining factor of fitness for psychoanalytic treatment.⁸

From a psychoanalytic point of view, both reactions represent a failure. The group that remains is transformed into obedient followers who take in knowledge; the individuals who leave remain unknowing. Both of them are identical in that sense that neither of them surpasses the knowledge of the Other. It does not take Freud long to recognise this common point of failure. Indeed, whether the patient gives a categorical 'yes' or 'no' to an interpretation, both answers are suspect and amount to the same thing, i.e. the patient has not accepted the interpretation. Both answers are an effect of something different, something that becomes more and more important in the further development of Freud's theory: the transference relationship by which the analyst is ascribed or refused the position of the master.

⁷ Freud, S. (1907e). *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children*. S.E. IX, p. 131.

⁸ "The qualification which is the determining factor of fitness for psycho-analytic treatment - *that is, whether the patient is educable...*" (Freud, S., 1905a. *On Psychotherapy*. S.E.VII, p. 264, my italics).

TRUTH BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

Based on this experience, Freud changes his course drastically. Knowledge must not be provided by the analyst, on the contrary it is the analysant who has to produce knowledge, and the position of the teaching master becomes forbidden for the analyst during the course of the treatment.⁹ Instead of teaching, the analyst has to be taught. Instead of the analyst's signifiers, those of the patient fill the scene. The patient is the one who knows, only (s)he doesn't know him/herself that (s)he knows. Knowledge coming from an external source is merely an inhibiting factor. This is clearly expressed in Freud's technical advice from this period: ideally the patient should not read analytic works, the analyst should restrain from giving precocious information and interpretation, etc.¹⁰ The distance separating the Dora case study from the Rat Man analysis is tremendous in this respect. In the latter case study, he explicitly confirms the futility of explicative interventions.¹¹ In matters of clinical practice, all attention goes to the creation of a situation in, and by which, the patient can produce as many signifiers as possible.

From a Lacanian point of view, this can be described as the operational character of the transference, i.e. the transference as driving force of the treatment. The analysant expects knowledge from the analyst. Actually, at the beginning of the treatment, the analyst doesn't know anything at all about this particular patient, but (s)he can use his/her position in such a way that it makes the patient produce signifiers, i.e. knowledge, for the one-who-is-supposed-to-know. That is one of the reasons why Freud stated that an analysis can only start where the transference is "positive", and thus entails an abundant associative production. A negative transference, on the other hand, results in silence and must be dispensed with as soon as possible.

This change in direction - knowledge located in the analysant, not in the analyst - is not a final one. A new stumbling block arises with this reversal, experienced by Freud in the epistemological domain when he studied the infantile sexual theories. These precursors of science taught him the difference between knowledge and something beyond knowledge, something that belongs to another register, other than the symbolic order. It is at this point that the enlightenment - indeed, the Enlightenment - falls short.¹² The same goes for the treatment: there is something that cannot be put into words, something for which words are lacking. Originally he

⁹ This change is expressed at its best in Freud's comment on the Irma dream, cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. IV, p. 108.

¹⁰ Freud, S. (1913c). *On Beginning the Treatment*. S.E. XII, pp. 139-142.

¹¹ Freud, S. (1909d). *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*. S.E. X, p. 181, n.1 and p. 185, n.2.

considered this to be the traumatic experience, but later on he calls it the “mycelium”, the “nucleus of our being”, the “originally repressed”.

Freud faces a second difficulty here that will take on more and more the shape of an impossibility. In the first half of his analytic career, he was more or less convinced of the fact that the last word, the ultimate knowledge, could be found, provided the treatment went far enough. In a later stage, he had to conclude that verbalisation is only possible up to a certain point; beyond that, there lies another order, the order of the *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, meaning beyond the representations (*Vorstellungen*, i.e. signifiers). Knowledge as it appears in the signifier is not final, there is a beyond. With Lacan, we meet here the dimension of the truth, and in particular a typical feature of the truth: it can only be half said, “le mi-dire de la vérité”.

Why do we call it “truth”, how does it differ from mere knowledge? One could answer that truth always concerns desire and jouissance, but the same goes for the Freudian knowledge from the very beginning, e.g. his ideas about *Lust* (pleasure) and *Wunsch* (wish). The essential characteristic of truth is that it confronts us with the ultimate point where knowledge about desire and jouissance can no longer be put into words. Knowledge itself always stays within the realm of the signifier, truth starts within this realm but evokes a dimension beyond it, that is the main reason why we invented poetry. The ultimate dimension of desire and jouissance is the driving part of it - and driving comes from drive. This dimension beyond the signifier is the Lacanian real, or, to be more specific, the lost object *a* that is forever lacking for the speaking subject, causing his/her ever shifting desire.

With this, Freud stumbles upon a second impossibility. The one discussed above concerns the fact that it is impossible for the analyst to assume the knowledge-producing and knowledge-guaranteeing master position. The second one concerns something that applies to every speaking subject, namely, the impossibility of saying everything and of producing the final knowledge.

The first one finds its best formulation in 1933, when he enumerates the three impossible professions: mastering, educating, and analysing.¹² It is impossible for any person to impersonate the truth (“and only the truth, nothing but the truth”) for another person, which is precisely what is required

¹² In 1933, he concludes that he has grossly overrated the prophylactic effect of enlightenment: although it installs a conscious knowledge, it does not stop the children from building up their fantasies. Knowledge is not enough, there is another factor at work. (Freud, S., 1937c, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, S.E. XXIII, pp. 233-234).

¹³ In the paragraph preceding this threefold impossibility, he states that analysis and the analytic relationship is based “on the love of truth - that is, on a recognition of reality”. Freud, S. (1937c). *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. S.E. XXIII, p. 248.

by those three professions. Freud knew very well what he was talking about, as he himself had even tried to combine them: in his early period, therapy came down to teaching from a master position.

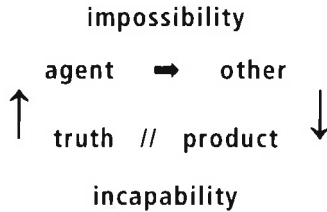
The second impossibility will be elaborated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The elaboration itself faces a fundamental difficulty, as it concerns something that lies beyond the dimension of the signifier, and thus beyond normal knowledge. Something keeps on insisting beyond the representations, the repetition compulsion is a desperate attempt to bind it with signifiers in order to master it, but this fails time and again. This something has to do with the drive, albeit with that part of the drive that lies beyond the pleasure principle and that aims at another finality. Freud's first elaborations are situated both in the field of the traumatic neuroses and in children's games, thus illustrating the general character of this "beyond".

What does not become clear with Freud, is the link between these two impossibilities. They are linked in the sense that each of them tries to answer the other. Assuming the master position functions as a guarantee for the answer that covers the lack in the chain of signifiers, and, vice versa, the cover of the lack in the symbolic corroborates the position of the master: "the father who knew long before the subject was born". Lacan's theory of the four discourses makes it possible to chart those two impossibilities with their respective interdependence. Moreover, this theory demonstrates the structurally determined interactions between them, through the four different discourses.¹⁴

¹⁴ As we consider this theory to be a condensation of Lacan's evolution, any bibliographic reference to a particular part of his work is too limited. The theory itself was coined during the seminar of 1969-70, *L'Envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris, Seuil, 1991, pp. 1-246), *Radiophonie* (Scilicet, 1970, nr.2/3, pp. 55-99) and the next seminar: *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*. A further elaboration can be found in *Encore*, the seminar of 1972-73 (*The Seminar of J.Lacan: Book XX. On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by B.Fink. New York, Norton, 1998).

DISCOURSE THEORY: IMPOSSIBILITY AND INCAPABILITY

Each discourse consists of the same formal structure. It starts with an *agent* driven by a *truth* to speak to *another* with as a result a *product*. Nevertheless, it is *impossible* for the agent to transmit his/her message completely to this other. This impossibility is founded on an underlying incapability: each discourse is *incapable* of producing something that would embrace its very starting-point, i.e. the truth. Both the impossibility and incapability are the effect of the radical heteronomy of the truth: part of it lies beyond the signifier and belongs to the realm of the jouissance.



The four positions of this formal structure can be occupied by four different terms, by which the particularity of each concrete discourse is determined.¹⁵ This theory enables Lacan to formalise the three impossible Freudian professions as three different discourses, each of them with a particular appearance of the impossibility. The impossibility of leadership concerns the discourse of the master; the impossibility of education concerns the university discourse; the impossibility of analysis is demonstrated by the analytic discourse. He even adds a fourth one: the impossible desire installs the discourse of the hysteric. These four discourses are closely related in the sense that there is a structurally determined shift from one to the other, as the impossibility of one discourse results in/is answered by the impossibility of the next discourse, and so on.

The particular advantage of this theory for our subject - knowledge and its transmission through psychoanalysis versus the transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge - is twofold. First of all, it focuses on the transference with respect to the relationship between knowledge (a term)

¹⁵ The four elements are:
the S₁, standing for the master; it is the signifier with which a subject pretends to be complete, without any division at all;
the S₂, denominating the endless chain of signifiers and thus standing for knowledge;
object *a* is what lies beyond the signifier, the primordial object that is irrevocably lost due to the acquisition of language;
§ is the divided and barred subject, barred from the Real and divided between the signifiers.

and truth (a position). Secondly, the discourse theory focuses on transference in a purely formal manner, that is, independent from any particular content of any particular patient. Indeed, every discourse represents a social bond that elicits by its failure another social bond, that is, another discourse with another relationship to knowledge and truth. The application of this discourse theory permits us to chart the relationship between teaching and analysis as a necessary one between two impossibilities.

The relationship between analyst and patient forms the kernel of the analytic practice. First of all, this relationship **must be made productive** in such a way that the patient produces signifiers; **secondly, the relationship** itself must be worked on. The first aspect induces **knowledge, the second** concerns truth.

The productivity of the transference relationship consists in the fact that the patient ascribes to the analyst the position of the-one-who-knows, and that is why the patient produces signifiers, for this Other who-is-supposed-to-know. At this stage, analysis can be understood in terms of a *Master discourse*. Indeed, from the point of view of the patient, the analyst is situated at the place of the agent as a master S_1 , and that is why the patient at the place of the other produces signifiers S_2 , and so, produces knowledge:

$$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$$

This first stage during an analysis results in a considerable growth in knowledge. That is why Lacan considered psychoanalysis an effective remedy against ignorance. An appropriate name for this first stage could be a Socratic discourse: the analyst functions as the proverbial midwife, enabling the patient to formulate a knowledge already there.

Inevitably, that is, structurally, the next step in this discourse is the production of the object a , beyond the knowledge that can be expressed in signifiers:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \uparrow & \frac{S_1}{s} & \rightarrow & \frac{S_2}{a} & \downarrow \\ & // & & & \end{array}$$

This second stage implies the limit of the Master discourse, which means that we are faced with two possibilities: either there is a regression, or a progression from it to another discourse.

The regression brings us to the *University discourse*, where knowledge as such is staged as the agent.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \uparrow & \frac{S_2}{S_1} & \rightarrow & \frac{a}{s} & \downarrow \\ & // & & & \end{array}$$

This regression was the Freudian choice for a very long time, where Freud hoped that knowledge as such would be sufficient to bridge the gap between subject and its object of desire. The result is exactly the opposite of what is hoped for, because the product of this discourse is an ever-increasing division of the subject:

$$S_2 \Rightarrow a \Rightarrow \mathfrak{S}$$

In this light, it is perfectly understandable that Freud's last paper goes about a generalised splitting of the subject.¹⁶ The conclusion is quite clear: producing a growing mass of knowledge, i.e. signifiers, intensifies the loss of object *a* for the pupil and leaves him/her all the more divided. To put it bluntly: the more you know, the more you will hesitate.

The path of progression, on the other hand, brings us to the paradoxes of the *analytic discourse*. There we find knowledge, i.e. the body of signifiers, at the position of the truth. Lacan expresses it as follows: "What one expects from an analyst is that he makes his knowledge function in terms of truth". This is impossible, and thus he continues: "That is why he restricts himself to half-speaking".¹⁷

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \uparrow & \frac{a}{S_2} & \Rightarrow & \frac{\mathfrak{S}}{S_1} & \downarrow \\ & // & & & \end{array}$$

This S_2 is the body of signifiers, produced by the patient in analysis, during its logically first stage.¹⁸ Indeed, the beginning of treatment does not consist in an analytic discourse, but makes it possible, because this first stage obliges the patient to produce an ever-increasing body of knowledge. With the analytic discourse, this body of signifiers gives rise to what lies beyond it, object *a*, and turns it into the agent of this discourse, which causes the division of the subject and his/her desire. As a product of this discourse, the subject will be confronted with a master-signifier S_1 of his/her own.

The difference between these two possibilities, regression and progression, is considerable. In the regressive solution, the analyst acts as the incarnation of knowledge; in the progressive one, (s)he is nothing but a support of object *a*. The first solution is an attempt to keep the master discourse going at a lower level, the second one is radically different, in the sense that the relationship as such, between the one-supposed-to-know and the one-producing-

¹⁶ Freud, S. (1940e), *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence*, S.E., XXIII.

¹⁷ "Half-speaking" is an attempt to translate "mi-dire", a neologism in French. See Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire : Livre XVII. L'Envers de la psychanalyse*. Paris, Seuil, p. 58. A further elaboration can be found in *Seminar XX*, chapter 8.

¹⁸ Indeed, logically; as a "stage", it never stops.

knowledge, ends in an exact reversal. Indeed, the analytic discourse is a reversed master discourse. The choice for a psychoanalytic solution requires this reversal of positions, that is, the working-through of the transference relationship at the point where the analyst was installed in the position of guarantor of the truth. The net and always unpredictable result of this working-through resides in the way a subject is able to tolerate the existence of the fundamental lack in the symbolic, without a need either to fill it up, to disavow it or to reject it.

TEACHING VERSUS ANALYSING

This theory on the four discourses makes it possible to discuss the relationship between analysis and teaching in a structural way, by focusing on the elements of transference, knowledge and truth. The crucial difference lies in the different goals, which I would like to delineate as follows: separation for psychoanalysis, alienation for teaching. In terms of discourse, these goals imply that teaching aims at the transmission of knowledge, while analysis focuses on the co-optation of truth as the cause operating beyond knowledge.

First, teaching. Education always amounts to the process of passing signifiers, and thus knowledge, from the teacher to the pupil. This passing is only effective on condition that there is a positive transference: one learns where one loves. This can be perfectly understood in Freudian terms. With a primitive organism, the incorporation of the external world is limited to the pleasurable part of it, the rest is expelled/repressed (cf. "I could not take it in"). With the acquisition of language, incorporation takes place by way of signifiers and becomes an identification. The subject identifies itself with the signifiers of the Other, i.e. the knowledge offered by this Other, still on condition of a positive transference with this Other. From a Lacanian point of view, this identification is always an alienation. Taking in signifiers coming from the Other turns the subject ontologically into a stranger for itself (Cf. Rimbaud: "Je est un autre", "I is another"). This alienation implies both gain and loss. First of all, there is a gain in knowledge, but the process goes much further than that, because the alienation is the very operation by which the relationship between subject and Other is established. Depending on the number of signifiers taken in by the subject, the corresponding external reality grows; even more so: this reality is thus *realised* because it is precisely determined by the symbolic order.¹⁹ On the other hand, we have a loss, which is structurally determined. It concerns firstly the real, more particularly the lack-of-being ("*le manque-à-être*"), and secondly the symbolic, more particularly the loss of choice: one's own desire is always alienated to the desire of the Other.

These effects apply to the pupils for whom teaching necessarily results in an effect of unification (group formation) in which each particular subject is drawn and drowned. For the teacher the act of teaching - producing signifiers - results inevitably in a confrontation with the limits of this knowledge, and thus with that part of the truth that lies beyond verbalization. This is the structural reason why teaching can be considered an impossible profession.

Next, analysis. Here, the process moves in the opposite direction, albeit also under transference: it is the analysant who produces signifiers and thus knowledge for the analyst who is at the receiving end. This time, the latter is the one who has to be taught, with the result that the alienation is situated on his/her side, entailing the risk that the analyst identifies him/herself with the knowledge that is produced for and ascribed to him/her. In contrast, for the analysant, the possibility of bypassing the alienation is created. Indeed, in so far as the subject keeps on producing signifiers for the analyst in the position of the one who knows, the subject is accordingly confronted with the alienating character of these signifiers with respect to 'his/'her' identity as a subject. "For in this labour which he undertakes to reconstruct *for another*, he rediscovers the fundamental alienation that made him construct it *like another*, and which has always destined it to be taken from him *by another*".²⁰ In this sense, the analytic work is closely related to the work of mourning, and results in a disalienation or disidentification. This work confronts the subject with the irreparable lack that lies at the heart of the symbolic. This is the same lack where the infantile search for knowledge came to a standstill for the same reasons: the symbolic sexual identity, the function of the father, the sexual rapport. The symbolic can never embrace these aspects of the real; as a lack in the symbolic, they open the void for the subject, leaving him/her with two possibilities.

In the first place, the analysant may recoil at this confrontation with the lack, and prefer to return to the answer produced and guaranteed by the master. Hence, (s)he remains within the alienation and stays subjected to the desire of the Other and his knowledge: (s)he remains a pupil. Consequently, (s)he enters the group and shares the group's knowledge. To couch it in the linguistic terminology of F. de Saussure: (s)he shares the conventions of the signifiers used by that group to cover the real.

¹⁹ The inspiration for this part of Lacanian theory lies definitely with M. Klein, especially her paper on: "The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego" (in *L.J.Psa.*, 1930, 11). See Lacan, J., *Seminar I. Freud's Papers on Technique*, chapters 6-7, and Seminar XI. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, chapters 16-19.

²⁰ Lacan, J. (1977). *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*. In *Ecrits. A Selection*. Trans. A.Sheridan. London, Tavistock, p. 42.

In the second possibility, the analysant can engage in a confrontation with the truth, that is, with the fundamental lack in the Other. Hence, (s)he will reduce *the* answer of the master to *an* answer, by which the possibility of separation is opened. Beyond the dimension of knowledge, the subject has co-opted the truth: there is no guaranteeing Other. Consequently, the next step can only be indicated, but cannot be filled in. From this point onwards, the subject may come to the act of creativity, albeit a *creatio ex nihilo*, obliging him/her to make choices of his/her own. The determinism of the alienation is replaced by the semi-determinism of the separation. The time in which this takes place is the future anterior, the "I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming": choices made now determine the future.²¹ Compared to the process of teaching, which resulted in the homogenisation of the pupils into a group (and left the teacher divided), analysis ends with the production of the radical difference between the analysants (and risks leaving the analyst in alienation).²² It is no coincidence that Lacan discusses the *creatio ex nihilo* in his seminar VII on ethics. The choices one has to make beyond this point are arbitrary (there is no guarantee), and thus ethical ones.

Due to its structure, separation cannot be taught, but teaching is the necessary precondition for it. A sufficient amount of supporting signifiers has to be produced, before one can reach the point of lack of support. Once that point is reached, every signifier fails. It reminds me of an expression by B. Driessens (personal communication): "Trying to catch the truth with words is just like trying to catch water with a net: the only thing caught is dirt". Historically speaking, only the jester is permitted not to formulate but to evoke the truth; in this sense the analyst is the actual incarnation of the buffoon.

The difference between providing someone with signifiers and making someone produce signifiers, i.e. the difference between teaching as a master or being taught as a supposed master, can be used to make a differentiation between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. Whatever the specific therapeutic approach may be, in one way or another psychotherapeutic treatment comes down to the fact that the therapist takes the position of the guaranteeing Other and provides the patient with the correct signifiers. Historically

²¹ Lacan, J. (1977). The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis. In *Ecrits. A Selection*. Op. cit., p. 86. See also: *The Seminar of J.Lacan: Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by J.Forrester. Cambridge, Cambridge University press, 1988, p. 158.

²² This is expressed in the final paragraph of Lacan's XIth seminar, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

speaking, that is even where psychotherapy started, with the Greek theatre that demonstrated for the public their own drama, thus permitting them to identify with the players and resulting in what Aristotle called catharsis. This kind of therapy permits the subject to elaborate a symbolic framework with which to tackle the real. Psychoanalysis is a possible sequel, on condition the subject has acquired the necessary signifiers in order to question alienation and to come to the separation.

To conclude: transference can be used in a twofold way, either to impose signifiers or to make someone produce them. In both cases, producing signifiers, whether in the position of teacher or of analysant, confronts the subject inevitably with the point of lack, and opens the possibility of an analytic process.

In the first case, teaching is the main goal, it gives rise to alienation and transmission of knowledge, resulting in group formation around shared signifiers, i.e. a "doxa". For the master, however, it provokes a confrontation with the lack in the symbolic order and obliges him to question his own position as a divided subject towards this lack.

In the second case, analysis becomes the aim; it gives rise to separation and co-optation of the truth, confronting the analysant with his/her own subjectivity, his/her other-ness. For the analyst, however, it opens the trap of an identification with the master position, from which (s)he must stay away.

The two processes are closely related. The discourse of the master instils knowledge, but produces the object *a* in such a way that it cannot be related to the divided subject. The analytic discourse starts beyond this knowledge, with this object *a* in the position of the agent in a causal relationship to the divided subject, who produces an S_1 of his/her own.

The internal antinomy between those two processes finds its clearest expression in what are called the psychoanalytic "schools" and their omnipresent difficulty. How is it possible to form a group with people who have either reached the pinnacle of their other-ness, or who have made the choice for an identification with the doxa?

TRAUMA AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN FREUD AND LACAN.

Structural versus Accidental Trauma.

*The worst is not
So long as we can say "This is the worst".
(Shakespeare, King Lear, IV, 1.)*

INTRODUCTION: THE ETHICAL WAGER

We are living a traumatic era - at least, that is one conclusion that could be made, based on the contemporary omnipresence of the posttraumatic stress disorder-diagnosis. It is very difficult to prove or disprove the hypothesis that traumatic experiences are actually more frequent than they used to be. Anyhow, it is obvious that the recent hype concerning the 'recovered memory therapy' has endorsed the whole question. In itself, this discussion is already a retake, albeit in a changed form, of the discussion around Masson, who tried to prove how wrong Freud was in matters of trauma.¹ Such hypes have even received a name on their own, it is called 'Freud bashing'. In my opinion, the question is why a number of people think it necessary to bash daddy Freud, or, at the other end, think it necessary to justify daddy Freud. This would lead us into a discussion of the oedipal complex, which is not the topic of this paper.

One of the remarkable things about these discussions is their extreme character, which is such that even the normal press talks about it, both at the time of Masson and today. One does not need that much clinical experience in order to acknowledge the fact that this extreme character betrays a hidden issue. From a clinical point of view, it is very important to unravel this hidden wager, in order to discuss it openly. The thing at stake is none other than an underlying value judgement or belief, which divides patients in two different groups. This belief or disbelief has everything to do with the genuineness of the traumatic experience.

¹ Masson, J. (1992). *The assault on truth: Freud's suppression of the seduction theory*. London, Fontana.

The first group contains the hysterical patients, meaning the patients who are supposed to have a merely fantasmatic aetiology concerning an imaginary, early-infantile traumatic seduction. This seems to be quite Freudian, as long as one does not acknowledge its implication. Indeed, this belief can be read as follows: imaginary means no real aetiology, *hence they are not real patients either*. One step further, and the patient is considered to be nothing but a simulator who plays false with the laws of science. Historically, the starting-point of this apprehension started with Babinsky, one of the founding fathers of neurology who trained his assistants in such a way that they would be able to sort the real patients from the fake ones, that is, the hysterical ones.² In this line of thought, the conversion symptoms of the hysterical patients did not tally with the neurological data, thus they had to be frauds.

The second group of patients is supposed to contain the real patients, meaning those who have suffered real traumatic situations and whose pathology is a direct consequence of these situations. Thus, besides being a patient, they are also victims and they deserve not only our help, but even our sympathy and our pity as well.

The most remarkable thing about this binary categorisation is that the first category tends to become smaller and smaller, whilst the second one keeps growing. It seems as if nowadays, there are almost no patients left, there are only victims who are in no way whatsoever implied in their situation. Historically speaking, this value judgement was greatly endorsed by the feminist movement. Indeed the patients or victims were almost always women, the sexual offenders were almost always men. From that time onwards, a Newspeak denomination started being widely used: one does not say 'patient', not even 'victim', the correct signifier is: 'survivor'.

Beyond this apparently 'objective' categorisation, it is important to detect and formulate the subjective impact, i.e. the underlying ethical stance. The above-mentioned binary categorisation reduces the patient either to a victim or to a malingerer. This means that in *both* cases, the patient is rejected. Either they are simulators, or they are just poor victims, who have to be treated politically correct. Within a clinical context, on the contrary, it is much more viable and workable to consider the patient as a subject, i.e. as someone with at least a minimal element of freedom and choice. This echoes the original Freudian ideas on the so-called *Neurosenwahl*, the choice of neurosis. This echo is no coincidence, because it is precisely this factor that makes psychotherapy possible. If one sticks to the victimisation, then one has to end with a complete determinism and thus with therapeutic pessimism:

² Bercherie, P. (1980). *Les fondements de la clinique. Histoire et structure du savoir psychiatrique*. Paris, Seuil-Navarin.

the patient has become what he had to become, due to his or her traumatic experiences. If one takes into account the impact of the patient him/herself, then there is a minimal element of choice for the subject, which is precisely the minimal condition for change.³

The above is the underlying ethical wager. Freud's theory is both more subtle and clinical than appears from this recent either/or quarrel. In the rest of this paper, I want to elaborate this part of his theory from a Lacanian point of view. In this respect, it is important to note that it is impossible to study Freud's theory on trauma in an isolated way. One has to take at least three different subjects into account. The first one concerns indeed the discussion on trauma versus fantasy, but this has to be linked to Freud's theory on aetiology. The second subject relates to psychological functioning in general and the relationship between drive and representability in particular. The third subject implies the goal of all this, that is, the question of the treatment and its aims.

If one studies the Freudian theory on trauma from this threefold point of view - aetiology, metapsychology and aim of the treatment - then it soon becomes obvious that his theory evolved almost constantly. There are only three ideas that remain unchanged. First of all, the most obvious clinical characteristic of a trauma resides with the fact that it cannot be put into words, the patient doesn't succeed in representing or verbalising it in a normal associative way. Secondly, the trauma is always of a sexual nature, although the signifier 'sexual' has to be understood as 'related to the drive'. Thirdly, a trauma has always to do with a conflict, and thus with a defence, more particularly, an inner defence within the subject.

Based on this elaboration, I will be able to put forward the following thesis: every one of us experiences a sexual trauma, because of the structural relationship between the drive and our psychological apparatus. Some of us suffer from an accidental trauma as well, on top of the original structural one. Because of the latter, every treatment meets with a structurally defined impossibility.

³ This is the reason why Lacan stressed the 'future anterior' in contrast to the 'past tense': 'I will be what I am now through my choice', instead of: 'I have become what I already was'. Choices made now will determine the future of the subject.

THEORY: TRAUMA AND FANTASY

As I have already said, Freudian theory is a lot more complicated than is usually thought. If one sticks to one isolated sentence from a letter to Fliess, dating from September 1897, then one could assume that Freud stopped believing altogether in the traumatic aetiology. The sentence runs as follows: "Ich glaube an meine Neurotica nicht mehr" (I no longer believe in my neurotica). If one takes the larger theory into account, it becomes obvious that Freud will surpass the initial question whether the traumatic event did really happen or not. Even more so, he will elaborate a theory in which the very idea of trauma receives a structural position in the psychological development of every human being. In the meantime, the meaning of trauma as such will be considerably changed. This becomes all the more clear, if we study it from a Lacanian point of view, with the categories of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

Let us retrace briefly Freud's steps. Before 1900, the question whether a traumatic event did really happen or not does not bother him. His main focus is directed to the different ways in which the psychological apparatus treats this trauma. He defines the traumatic factor as an *Erregungszuwachs*, an increase in excitation that cannot be adequately discharged by the neuronal system. The fact that it cannot be discharged is caused by the typical way in which the trauma is psychologically represented, that is: by a so-called "anti-thetical representation", which is a representation that the patient tries to keep out of his or her consciousness. If the patient succeeds in doing so, then the representation cannot be verbalised nor discharged and becomes pathogenic.⁴ In his *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud concludes that these *bewusstseinsunfähige Vorstellungen*, these representations which are incapable of becoming conscious, form the nucleus of the pathological complex.⁵

The important point in this line of thought is the idea of conflict: a trauma installs a conflictual division within the psyche. It is this division or dissociation that leads Freud to the idea of a division between a conscious and an unconscious system. The therapeutic goal at that time comes down to the so-called catharsis. By making use of the hypno-cathartic method, the patient is induced to reproduce the antithetic unconscious representational complex. If this succeeds, then the assumption is that the accompanying energetic tension or affect will be liberated and discharged, resulting in the reintegration of these unconscious representations into the normal conscious associations. The trouble is that it seems to be impossible to get

⁴ Freud, S. (1892-93). *A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism with Some Remarks on the Origin of Hysterical Symptoms through Counterwill*. S.E. I, pp. 122-123; Freud, S. (1892-94). *Preface and Footnotes to the Translation of Charcot's "Leçons du mardi de la Salpêtrière"*. S.E. I, p. 137.

⁵ Freud, S. (1895d). *Studies on Hysteria*. S.E. II, pp. 286-87 and p. 289.

hold of the ultimate representations of the trauma.

At that time, Freud does not have any doubts about the genuineness of the trauma. His main preoccupation concerns the fact that the memory traces of the trauma cannot be verbalized. He doesn't doubt the possibility of this verbalisation as such; indeed, the experiments with hypnosis convince him of the fact that both a complete remembering and verbalisation must be possible. However, in his clinical practice he just can't get hold of the last words. Instead of producing the ultimate verbalisation, his patients keep producing new associative chains, leading to even earlier traumata.

During his search for the final verbalisation, Freud meets with an unexpected element, which opens a totally new dimension, that is, the fantasies of his patients. Initially, he considers these fantasies as a hindrance, something that stands in the way, because he wants to uncover the real memories of the real thing. Soon enough, he discovers something vital: these fantasies have an important function, they are attempts of the child to represent and hence to understand what it originally could not grasp, they are defensive coping constructions. In a letter to Fliess, dated April 6, 1897, he writes: "Such fantasies regularly, as it seems to me, go back to things heard by children at an early age and only understood later". On the second of May, he adds: "The fantasies are derived from things that have been heard but understood subsequently and all their material is, of course, genuine. They are protective structures (...)".

From these quotes, it becomes clear that at that time, Freud did not think in terms of 'either-or', either real or just imaginary. Even more so: the two of them, the real and the imaginary, stand in a very peculiar relationship. It is the discovery of this relationship that will get lost in the later, rather naive discussion in terms of 'either-or'. From a Lacanian point of view, *the fantasy is a defensive attempt to give meaning to a part of the Real that resists to the Symbolic*. The young Freud interpreted that part of the Real as a genuine seduction scene, and it is precisely this interpretation he will doubt later on. Nevertheless, he will never be in doubt about the said relationship. The only thing he will change his opinion about is the way in which he understands the original real element.

In other words, if one argues that Freud has abandoned his theory on trauma, this is not only wrong, it is also a forgery of the history, which gave the discussion in these matters a completely different direction. Indeed, this false reading neglects Freud's interest in the relationship between fantasy on the one hand and a certain reality on the other. It is much more interesting to ask oneself the question why Freud, from a certain moment onwards, starts to have doubts about the nature of this reality. I use the word 'doubt' explicitly, because he will never abandon the trauma theory as such. On the contrary, he keeps struggling with it through his whole work. At the end and as a result of this struggle, he will reformulate the problem on another level, and this provides a much more challenging theory with serious consequences for the therapeutic practice.

One of the reasons why he starts to have doubts has to do with his changed views on the functioning of the psyche and the associations produced by the patient. To be more specific: he discovers the fact that it is impossible to make a differentiation between reality and fantasy in the story of the patient. This discovery changes his opinion on the memory function as well. For example, as early as 1899, he questions the idea of whether we are ever able to really remember something, because, he says, memories of childhood are always constructed at a later date, when other things have become more important in comparison to the things important at that early age.⁶ A second reason for his doubts has to do with his discovery of the infantile sexuality and the possibility of sexual pleasure for the child itself. There must be some link with the trauma and/or the fantasy, but for the time being, he can't grasp it.

He returns to this question in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. When he elaborates the way in which the drive operates in children, he produces a very interesting definition: "a drive is to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind to work".⁷ His elaborations make it clear that he interprets the effect of the drive as a rise in excitation and pressure, which threatens to overwhelm the ego if the psychological elaboration does not take place.⁸ It is quite interesting to see that this description tallies perfectly with another description, namely the one Freud will formulate in 1916 on the very idea of trauma. "We apply the term 'traumatic' to an experience which within a short period of time presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this must result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates."⁹

If we compare these two definitions, we find a remarkable analogy between the drive and the Freudian concept of trauma! That is, between the effects on the psyche of an *internal* agency, the drive and an *external* one, the trauma. Moreover, in his correspondence with Flies, more particularly in *Draft K*, Freud had already described the onset of hysteria in terms of

⁶ Freud, S. (1899a). *Screen Memories*. S.E. III, p. 303.

⁷ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, S.E. VII, p. 168.

⁸ Even before Freud coined the concept of drive, he is continuously trying to understand the nature of the drive and its impact on the aetiology. In this respect, it is fascinating to study his elaborations on the so-called "quantitative factor", which in my reading is the forerunner of the two somatic components of the drive, i.e. the source (*Quelle*) and the excitation (*Drang*).

⁹ Freud, S. (1917). *General Theory of the Neuroses - Fixation to Traumas - the Unconscious*. S.E. XVI, p. 275. It is very interesting to compare Freud's definition of trauma to his description of primary repression: "It is highly probable that the immediate precipitating causes of primary repressions are quantitative factors such as an excessive degree of excitation and the breaking through of the protective shield against stimuli". (Freud, S., 1926d. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. S.E. XX, p. 94.

overwhelming, albeit that in that case, the source of overwhelming was considered to be only external, that is, again the trauma. In both cases, trauma and drive, there is a so-called *Erregungszuwachs*, an increase in quantitative energetical tension, which has to be discharged. The therapeutic manner of discharge is the verbalisation, being the most apt psychological way of coping. The lack of such a verbalisation gives rise to anxiety in particular and psychopathology in general.¹⁰ In both cases, one finds a situation of conflict.

STRUCTURAL VERSUS ACCIDENTAL TRAUMA

Based on this analogy, I can put forward the following conclusion: everyone meets with a trauma, because of the very nature of the drive, i.e. *our own* drive. This trauma has to be considered as a structural one, meaning that it is inevitable and that it has everything to do with the structure of our subjectivity. On top of that, some of us have to deal with another trauma as well, coming from the outside, i.e. from the drive of the Other.¹¹

The first trauma is general and thus structural, the second one is particular and thus accidental. The accidental concerns the trauma in the normal sense of the word, by which the subject comes into conflict with something or rather, someone, from the external world. This trauma and the ensuing conflict are accidental, because it did not have to happen. The structural one concerns the drive, by which an internal conflict takes place, which is in itself inescapable, because it has everything to do with the essence of human nature and culture.

This brings us to a very important idea: human sexuality contains potentially the same effect for the subject as an external trauma, and this even in the absence of any external element whatsoever. Freud formulated this idea already in one of his drafts addressed to Fliess: "In my opinion there must be an independent source for the release of unpleasure in sexual life:

¹⁰ It is perfectly possible to understand the primal repression from this point of view, i.e. the fixation of the real part of the drive at a preverbal level, thus constituting the kernel of the unconscious. Repression proper or, as Freud said, "after-repression", concerns the substitutive verbal representations, which are always a "false connection". Indeed, false because they cannot render the original real part of the drive.

¹¹ The difference between these two traumas could be understood as the difference between an external and internal traumatic agent. Nevertheless, if we follow Freud, the drive as such is experienced by the subject as something strange, uncanny and external as well.

once that source is present, it can activate sensations of disgust, lend force to morality, and so on."¹²

The effect of this new theory is that the trauma-fantasy controversy has to be reconsidered on a different level. My reading runs as follows. The drive in itself, independent of any externally determined trauma, has a potentially traumatising effect, to which the psyche has to come up with an answer, that is, with a psychological elaboration. This elaboration takes place in and through the imaginary order in general and fantasy life in particular, which receives in this way a very important function. In this sense, there exists a perfect analogy between the night dream and the daydream, not so much because both of them contain a wish-fulfilment, but because both of them try to provide a representational elaboration of something that is very difficult to represent. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud had already concluded that the nucleus of the dream contains something that can never be adequately represented. On top of that, he considers this nucleus as the very core of our being.¹³

In my reading, this nucleus is the drive, more particularly, the energetical real part of the drive, which can never be fully represented and keeps insisting. Let us remember that Freud coined the drive as a concept on the border between the somatic and the psyche. It is a border, which is never fully crossed; something is left behind the lines and operates in an insistent way from behind these lines.¹⁴

The final representation of the drive is not absent for lack of trying, on the contrary. The development of the psychological material as such can be considered as an endless attempt to formulate an adequate answer. The very impossibility of such a final answer is the reason why this process never stops¹⁵, and why psychoanalysis might very well become endless as well, as we will see.

¹² Freud, S. (1887-1902). *Extracts from the Fliess Papers: The Neuroses of Defense - Draft K*. S.E. I, p. 222. Later on, he returns to this idea in his essay on *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930a).

¹³ Freud, S. (1900a). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. IV-V, p. 603; *Repression* (1915d). S.E. XIV, pp. 146-158.

¹⁴ This is what Freud understood as the attraction operated by the primal repression and the kernel of the Unconscious on the (pre-) conscious material.

¹⁵ This is what Lacan refers to in his seminar XX especially concerning the sexual relationship "Ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire", "it does not stop not being written" (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, pp. 85-87; pp.131-132).

This theory can already be read in Freud, although it is only with Lacan that it receives an explicit formulation. For example, in his *Three Essays* Freud writes that every child, driven by its own sexual development, becomes confronted with three inescapable questions: the gender of its mother and thus of women in general, the role of the father and the sexual relationship between his parents. In spite of every sexual enlightenment, the child does not find or accept a definite answer to these questions, on the contrary. Every child constructs answers of his own, which results in very particular constructions, the so-called infantile sexual theories. In these precursors of science, time and again imaginary, pre-genital contents are produced, focusing on the castrated mother, the primal father and the primal scene. Freud considers these so-called 'theories' as the forerunners of something else, something that comes more and more into his focus, both from a conceptual and a therapeutic point of view.¹⁶ They are the forerunners of the primal fantasies, meaning: those necessary constructions for every subject as an answer to those three mysterious aspects of the real. For Freud, these constructions determine the particular form of someone's neurosis.

Summarised from a Lacanian point of view, this new Freudian theory runs as follows: the drive is traumatic-Real at those points where the subject does not dispose of the adequate signifiers to represent the drive impulses, and hence to cope with them. This is the case for every subject because of a structural peculiarity of the symbolic order. Following Lacan's interpretation of Freud, the symbolic order is based on the phallus as the primary symbol or signifier.¹⁷ As a result, everything has to be expressed and represented in phallic terms, meaning that there is no adequate signifier for femininity, except a negative one (castration), nor for fatherhood, except an imaginary one (the primal father). As a consequence, there is no adequate representation for the sexual relationship as well, for lack of a signifier for femininity and paternity.

Thus considered, the symbolic order lacks the adequate representation for three aspects of the Real, namely femininity, fatherhood, and sexuality. Traditionally, these are expressed by a number of winged words, for example, *Das ewig Weibliche*, the eternal feminine; *Pater semper incertus est*, fatherhood is never certain, and *Omne animal post coitum triste*, after mating every animal is depressed. In these matters, the symbolic order does not provide us with adequate answers, which means that every subject has to invent and construct them endlessly in the imaginary order. These imaginary answers determine the way in which the subject copes with the drive. More

¹⁶ Freud, S. (1905d), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. SE VII, pp. 194-197, p. 226 n.1.

¹⁷ In Freudian terminology: the libido is always masculine.

particularly, they determine the way in which he or she copes with the ever-problematic questions concerning sexual identity and the sexual relationship.¹⁸ To put it differently: the basic or primal fantasies of the subject determine how someone constructs his intersubjective world. From a Lacanian point of view, the fantasy is not so much the counterpart of reality; on the contrary, it is precisely what models the Real. The very same mechanism can be found on a large scale as well: every culture can be considered as a collective imaginary form-giving of these impossible elements of the Real. Indeed, every culture has its own way of defining femininity, fatherhood and the sexual rapport, that is exactly the point where they are different from each other. Their starting-point, on the contrary, is identical: they share the same causality.

Besides this structurally determined trauma, which goes for every human being, there might be an accidental real trauma as well, caused by an external agency. This trauma will inevitably come into interaction with the structural trauma caused by the subject's own drive. Here, normal neurosis turns into traumatic neurosis, but the function of the imaginary in general and fantasy in particular remains the same. In case of the accidental trauma, such an imaginary elaboration is not enough; the real aetiology of the traumatic neurosis also causes symptoms in the real, with the psychosomatic phenomena and auto-mutilation being the two most well known.

The intervention of a real accidental trauma on top of the structural trauma caused by the subject's own drive, opens the possibility of a particular line of defence, namely: that the originally internal conflict becomes partly exteriorised. This can be generalised: every subject tries to project its internal conflict, even where there is no external trauma. This is the very reason for the construction of the fantasies on seduction. One of the most common exteriorisations is, of course, the ever-difficult sexual relationship between man and woman. Indeed, following our Freudo-Lacanian line of thought, at least part of these difficulties is nothing but a projection of the inner fight with one's own drive. As Freud already knew, one cannot flee from an internal conflict situation, and that is the reason for its projection.¹⁹

¹⁸ This structural Lacanian theory has conquered the analytic world with a number of slogans. The three aspects of the Real to which the Symbolic Order does not provide an adequate answer, were promoted by catchwords or catchphrases, like *La Femme n'existe pas*, The woman does not exist, *L'Autre de l'Autre n'existe pas*, The Other of the Other does not exist, *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, The sexual rapport does not exist. The ensuing hype or hysteria - there was, for example, an Italian newspaper announcing that women did not exist for Lacan - obliterated both the structural context and the fact that the same reasoning can be studied in Freud's theory.

¹⁹ As a mechanism, it explains our initial ideas about the underlying value judgment in the discussion of trauma and the difficulties of recognising one's own implication in matters of psychopathology. Guilt and anxiety have to be avoided. Freud, S. (1895d). *Studies on Hysteria: The Psychotherapy of Hysteria*. S.E. II, p. 290.

THE THERAPEUTIC CONSEQUENCES: 'BEYOND THE TREATMENT PRINCIPLE'

After his discovery of the defensive function of the fantasy in relationship to the real of the drive, Freud became less and less interested in the externally determined accidental trauma. His interest for the *internal* conflict became more and more important. Why is it so that the drive, i.e. the own drive, can result in the very opposite of pleasure? It is no coincidence that this study leads him back to the idea of trauma and traumatic neurosis. The title of the ensuing paper speaks for itself: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Roughly speaking, until 1915 Freud conceives a pleasure principle which is very one-dimensional. Pleasure comes down to phallic satisfaction, which can be obtained from a drive through a process of discharge. In order to make this psychologically possible, there is a typical condition: the sexual energy has to be linked to representational complexes, that is, to signifiers. This connection to words is very important for Freud, because it provides the pathway along which psychological elaboration within the secondary process becomes possible.²⁰

This theory and the ensuing treatment are quite coherent. There is only one flaw to it: it doesn't work. The final verbalisation, the last word remains lacking with his hysterical patients. It seems as if they have to go on producing signifiers circling around a nucleus that can never be fully expressed in words. Hence, the pleasure principle always fails in the end. Moreover, in his clinical practice, Freud has to acknowledge the fact that a number of patients tend to repeat things that provide them with a lot of displeasure. This clinical fact leads him back to traumatic neurosis, especially war neuroses.

The main question, in the light of the pleasure principle, runs as follows: why is it that victims of traumatic neurosis have to repeat time and again their original trauma, albeit in a fragmentary way? In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud comes up with an explanation by making use of an older idea, the *Wiederholungszwang*, the compulsion to repeat. This compulsion has to be understood as a persistent attempt by the psychological apparatus to bind the traumata to presentations (*Vorstellungen*). This process of binding

²⁰ This idea is present through Freud's entire work. He mentions it for the first time as early as 1895, in *Draft G* (S.E. I, pp. 200 ff). In the case where this connection is lacking and the psychological elaboration fails, the patient develops a so-called 'actual neurosis', with anxiety as the central symptom. Psychopathology in general and hysteria in particular have to do with a wrong connection, what Freud denominates as a *falsche Verknüpfung* - just think of a phobia - caused by the conflict between desire and prohibition. (Freud, S., 1895d. *Studies on Hysteria*. SE II, pp. 67-69, n.1.). Because of this false connection, both the discharge and the experience of satisfaction become impossible, and the patient develops a psychoneurosis on top of the initial actual neurosis. Treatment has to repair the right connection, by making use of the free association and the process of interpretation, through which verbalisation and discharge become possible again, etc.

is necessary for the discharge and the ensuing catharsis. The particular feature of a trauma resides precisely in the absence of this connection to signifiers, which implies at the same time that its psychological elaboration remains impossible. But there is more to it as well: one of its most bizarre characteristics, besides its impossible verbalisation, resides in the fact that it produces a strange form of pleasure, strange because it differs from the phallic pleasure provided by the pleasure principle and the symbolic order. This "beyond the pleasure principle" obliges to a "beyond the therapeutic principle" as well.

In this respect, the essay of 1920 has to be considered as a turning point, both in Freud's theory and clinical practice. Before it, the theory was based on the pleasure principle, and the accompanying therapeutic aim was relatively simple. The patient had to put his traumatic history into words, especially those parts that were forgotten, that is, repressed due to the operation of defensive mechanisms. The process of remembering had to be as complete as possible, the last word being the final goal. Nevertheless, after the discovery of the unrepresentable nucleus of the drive, this conception is no longer tenable. The change in relation to the goal of the treatment had already received its first elaboration in a famous paper of 1914, entitled: *Remembering, Repeating and Working-through*.

This paper undermines the psychoanalytic importance of the process of forgetting almost completely, with the result that the idea of remembering as the important therapeutic goal disappears at the same time. Indeed, it had become clear to Freud that the analytic treatment aims at the consciousness-raising of matters that have always been unconscious, and thus which could never have been forgotten in the first place. In this paper, Freud denominates this factor as the unconscious fantasies which determine obviously the kernel of someone's neurosis. Moreover, he adds that this consciousness-raising is not enough as a therapeutic goal, it has to be followed by a process of so-called *Durcharbeiten*, working-through. And still later, the technique of *construction* will become more prominent than the previous interpretation. At the end of Freud's career, he has to acknowledge the endlessness of these processes. The working-through in the symbolic order is never enough, because of the structural failure of this order in relationship to the real kernel of the drive. It is no coincidence that Freud discovers in the very same paper of 1914 the idea of the compulsion to repeat, the *Wiederholungszwang*, which differs from 'normal' repetition. This compulsion expresses the insistent attempt to symbolise what cannot be symbolised - or, in Freudian terminology: to bind the drive impulses into the secondary process.

This structural failure of the symbolic order implies the structural failure of the pleasure principle. Before Freud's discovery of the region beyond, he considered everything unpleasurable as both exceptional and pathological, meaning: neurotic or masochistic. From the moment that he acknowledged the existence of this factor beyond the pleasure principle, the picture changes considerably. Instead of being exceptional, this factor belongs to the normal development of everyone. At this point, Freud is obliged to

rethink his one-dimensional pleasure principle and the accompanying theory on the drive.²¹ An intuitive flash from twenty-five years ago pops up again: there is a source of unpleasure within sexuality itself, there is an internal antinomy at work. This unpleasure might very well yield a strange kind of pleasure as well, although it is not clear who or what enjoys it.

It is here that we find Freud's difficult and never fully accepted theory on the death drive, *Thanatos*, in opposition to *Eros*, the life drive. One (part of the) drive follows the pleasure principle, because it is connected to signifiers, which means that it can be discharged. The other (part of the) drive is situated in a non-verbal beyond, non-phallic, not dischargeable, literally operating in silence. It contains another form of pleasure - 'pleasure' is probably not the correct word - belonging to the order of the real. In Freud's opinion, normally both drives operate together in what he calls the *Triebmischung*, the fusion of the drives. He considers this double drive to be an ontological fact which cannot be explained in itself, but which can be used as an explanatory axiom for clinical data.²² And apparently, each (part of the) drive aims at a different form of pleasure. The pleasure beyond the pleasure principle is the uncanny one, which will later be elaborated by Lacan in his theory on the jouissance.²³

²¹ Freud, S. (1920g), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, S.E. XVIII, p. 7.

²² This theory on Eros and Thanatos is very important within the actual gender discussion. I have elaborated this in the final part of *Love in a Time of Loneliness, Three Essays on Drive and Desire*, New York, The Other Press; London, Rebus Press, 1999.

²³ Lacan elaborates this theory in his seminar XX (*Encore*, op. cit.) in which he discusses the contradiction between the phallic-symbolic pleasure principle and the accompanying pleasure on the one hand versus the non-phallic, other jouissance that lies beyond the scope of the signifier on the other hand. Just like Freud, he situates the first one on the masculine side. Indeed, for Freud, there is only masculine libido. The other, more mysterious one, is situated on the feminine side. In the meantime, masculinity and femininity can no longer be reduced to their biological interpretation. They must be understood as a position chosen by the subject towards the structurally determined lack.

CONCLUSION

Until this moment, I have stressed the resemblances between Freudian and Lacanian theory in these matters. The major difference lies in the fact that, as long as one sticks to a certain reading of Freud, one can have the idea, the illusion rather, that there exists one correct answer, one correct interpretation or construction of the drive nucleus. The therapeutic goal then would be to analyse the wrong - that is, the pregenital - answers of the patient, and to replace them by the correct answers, which are understood to be genital.

From our point of view, it is not too difficult to read this technique as an attempt to provide the patient with the ever-impossible symbolic answer to the drive. The failure of this approach is illustrated by the Dora case study.²⁴ Its impossibility led Freud to the rather pessimistic conclusion about the interminability of the analytic process. This interminability will be taken seriously by Lacan. According to him, there is no final correct answer to the real of the drive. The confrontation with gender, drive and sexuality is *une rencontre toujours manquée*, an always-missed encounter; hence his famous saying that there is no sexual relationship.²⁵ As a consequence, no treatment whatsoever can end with a correct answer in this respect. The major difference between a "normal" and a "pathological" answer resides in the social endorsement of this answer. A patient is a patient because he or she has produced an idiosyncratic answer to the drive. A normal person is normal because he or she follows the norm, meaning that he or she has accepted the socially endorsed answer to the drive. Besides that, both answers are an interpretation of the Real.

The reaction of the analyst to this interpretation can go in one of two directions. Either he tries to replace the original interpretation of the patient by the socially endorsed interpretation, which means that the therapy aims at a form of social adaptation. In Freudian terms: the analyst replaces the neurotic misery by common unhappiness.²⁶ Or the analyst interprets the interpretation of the patient in such a way that the latter becomes meaningless as such, thus making the root of the drive obvious.²⁷ In Freudian terms: every neurotic symptom contains and hides a fixation of the drive, which in itself cannot be changed. The new aim of the treatment, as elaborated by Lacan, opens the possibility for the subject to take another position towards this drive root or drive fixation.

By way of conclusion, I want to return to my introduction, meaning to the ethical issue. From the above, I hope to have demonstrated that in every analysis, there is a part that can be analysed, just as there is a part, which cannot. The analytical treatment has been elaborated and is operational with respect to the first part. But it is the second part that determines of the durable success of an analysis. In this respect, the normal analytical techniques are not sufficient. After having de-constructed the imaginary answers of the patient, the end of the treatment has to create a possibility for the analysant

to invent something new with respect to the drive. His or her previous solutions were made under transference, meaning that they came from the Other, starting with the parents and continuing with all the others that took their place.

The nature of this invention is quite peculiar, because all the received answers have failed. As a result, the invention of a new answer to the drive is not only based on creativity, but even on a creativity *ex nihilo*. This is the point where ethics enter the game, together with the transference. The end of analysis is necessarily ethic, because it implies a choice in the real concerning such matters as law and gender.

If the analysis has succeeded, it means that the work of transference has been turned into transference of work. At that point, the analyst must leave the picture.

²⁴ See Verhaeghe, P. (1999). *Does the woman exist?* New York, The Other Press, chapter 4.

²⁵ Lacan, J (1973). *Le Séminaire, livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Paris, Seuil, chapter 5.

Even this idea - that there is no sexual relationship - is present in Freud. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, he stated that there is no such a thing as a total or global sexual drive. Later on, he came to the conclusion that masculine and feminine sexuality do not match, because of "a psychological difference in phase" (Freud, S., 1933. *New Introductory Lectures*. S.E. XXII, p. 134.)

²⁶ See in this respect the very last paragraph of Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895d).

²⁷ The basic neurotic activity is interpretation as such, starting at those points where the symbolic order fails and ending with the neurotic fantasies as idiosyncratic interpretations of the Real. In this respect, it is necessary to reconsider the therapeutic goal. It is obvious that the analyst should not help extending this interpretation system, on the contrary, his goal is to deconstruct this system. That is why Lacan defines the ultimate goal of interpretation as the reduction of meaning. ("Interpretation is directed not so much at the meaning as towards reducing the non-meaning of signifiers (...)") and "(...) the effect of interpretation is to isolate in the subject a kernel, a kern, to use Freud's own term, of non-sense, (...)". Lacan, J., 1977. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated by A.Sheridan. Penguin, p. 212 and p. 250). The analytic process brings the subject back to the original point from which he or she has fled, thus opening the possibility of a conscious choice.

SUBJECT AND BODY.

Lacan's Struggle with the Real.

*It is not to his consciousness that the subject is condemned,
it is to his body.¹*

INTRODUCTION

Studies of Lacan's work may start from two different points of view. Either one considers that everything is there, right from the start, and the rest of his work is just one long elaboration of what was contained in the beginning. The standard example of this approach is found in those Freud scholars who include the whole of his theory in the early *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. Or one considers his theory and teaching as a 'work in progress' marked by an evolution consisting of drastic changes. Both approaches can be defended. I have opted for the second one, which does not mean that we will not also be confronted with the first option at times.

From this second point of view, Lacan's theory of the relationship between the body and the subject can be divided into three periods, each one testifying to an evolution in his work.

- Lacan (1) is concerned with the opposition between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The Symbolic determines the body in a predictable way, such that this body is nothing more than an effect, and is understood as a bodily surface.

¹ My translation; original: "Ce n'est pas à sa conscience que le sujet est condamné, c'est à son corps". Lacan, J. (1966). Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie sur l'objet de la psychanalyse. In *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, nr. 3, p. 8.

With special thanks to Lieven Jonckheere and David Van Bunder for their help in tracing lost Lacanian references. French seminars are indicated by roman numerals, English translations by Arabic ones. References to Freud to the Standard Edition (S.E.).

- Lacan (2) focuses on the Real as the cause of the Symbolic and Imaginary combined; the Real of the body is understood as an organism and as the drive.
- Lacan (3) takes these oppositions up again in terms of *jouissance*: that is, there is a phallic *jouissance* versus a *jouissance* of the body.

With respect to the body, each of these three moments in Lacan's evolution can be expressed in a sentence. (1) I have a body for/of the Other. (2) The Other is driven by a body which is not the body. (3) The body is the Other. Borrowing from Žizek, each of these sentences can be rephrased with reference to the creature from the *Alien* movies: there is an outside alien that enters us; there is an alien in us that determines us; there is an alien as such.

The breach between Lacan(2) and Lacan (3) is brought about by his theory of causality, which receives its major elaboration in *Seminar XI*.² In this seminar, the real becomes the Real: its status changes along with the status of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, whose former opposition to each other is replaced by their combined opposition to the Real.

In short, what we have here is a movement from the Symbolic versus the Imaginary to the Real versus the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Finally, an opposition is made between phallic *jouissance* and the *jouissance* of the body. It should be added that this last theory does not replace the previous one, but re-elaborates on it in a retroactive (Freud: *nachträglich*) manner. At the very end of Lacan's evolution, we arrive at an opposition between the ever-divided subject and the Other of the body. This will lead us to Lacan's thoughts on the subject of the body.

² Lacan, J. (1973). *Le Séminaire; Livre XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 1964. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil.

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.

³ Lacan, J. (1966). *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil.

Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits, A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock.

⁴ *Écrits, A Selection*, p. 4; (*Écrits*, p. 96).

1. THE SYMBOLIC VERSUS THE IMAGINARY

“I have a body for/of the Other”

This “to have for/of” expresses the central idea of the mirror stage theory and is to be found in *The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I* and *Remarque sur le rapport de Daniel Lagache*.³ These two papers contain Lacan’s ontology, which changes into a pre-ontology in *Seminar XI*. The idea of a subject of the body, at this point still thought of as the “I” (*le je*), has to be associated from the start with this pre-ontology.

For Lacan, the function of the mirror stage is to set up a relationship between the inner and outer worlds, between an organism and its reality. This enables a child to acquire a first sense of identity.⁴ The pre-verbal child, the infant, does not possess an organised sense of his body. Hence the fact that the child behaves in an auto-erotic way, based on a lack of self.⁵ An organised bodily awareness and its accompanying feeling of identity is only acquired during the mirror stage, in which the infant assumes the mirror image of the Other and identifies with it “even before the social dialectic”.⁶

There are three consequences of this stage. Firstly, the “I-in-the-making” acquires control over the unified body, but this mastery anticipates a real mastery that will never come to be. Secondly, both the I and the body image originate in the outer world: that is, they are constructed in an alienating process. Thirdly, the dual-narcissistic characteristics of this stage give rise to a destructive aggression (it’s me or the Other) within the dual-imaginary.⁷

Thus, my *own* body, essence, or being does not play a role here. My body is the body of another. The starting point of human subjectivity has to be looked for in the gap between what the subject is and what it is forced to be by another. Lacan calls this the *manque-à-être*, the lack of being. The optical model elaborated on by Lacan in *Remarque sur le rapport de D. Lagache*⁸ demonstrates how little access the subject has to the reality of its own body. Instead, the body is a surface to be written upon.

⁵ Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire: Livre X. L’angoisse*, 1962-1963, unpublished. “Un manque de Soi”, session of January 23rd 1963.

⁶ *Écrits. A Selection*, p. 4; (*Écrits*, p. 94).

⁷ Lacan, J. (1975). *Le Séminaire: Livre I. Les Écrits techniques de Freud*, 1953-1954. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, pp. 168-70; pp. 176-77.

Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I. Freud’s Papers on Technique*, 1953-1954. Edited by J.A. Miller, translated with notes by J. Forrester. Cambridge, C.U.P., pp. 191-93; pp. 199-201.

⁸ *Écrits*. Seuil, p. 647ff.

THE SIGNIFIED BODY

The acquisition of the body image and the ensuing development occur as a function of the desire of the (m)Other and her demands. Lacan develops this theory through the course of several seminars, emphasising the determining role the Symbolic plays on the Imaginary: that is, the determining role of the Symbolic on the surface and the orifices of the body. As a consequence, every body is a hysterical body, which means, a signified body in terms of the Other's signifiers. If the Unconscious is structured like a language, then the body functions as the writing-pad. The mother as first Other invests the body of her child by demanding and desiring certain things - along this road, the child acquires a consciousness of his or her own body and of this desire that becomes "his" or "her" desire as well.⁹

Indeed, in this field of the Other, the subject not only meets with its own unified image (and, retroactively, the ever-present possibility of falling apart), but first of all encounters what the Other desires of this body. Her desire invests particular parts of the body¹⁰ and sets a development in motion that cannot be reduced to a mere effect of bodily growth. Lacan states that, for example, the transition from the oral to the anal drive is not based on a process of maturation, but on a change in the Other's demand.¹¹ In *Seminar X* he even applies this idea to Pavlovian experiments:¹² the researcher thinks (s)he is measuring pure bodily reactions, but it is his or her own question - for the animal this question is the Other's demand - which is central and determines the reactions of the animal.

This part of Lacan's theory is clinically easy to understand, in both micro and macro-social terms. On the level of society, the Other (fashion, medicine, gender roll patterns, art...) not only determines the appearance of the body and, in fact, its very form (from Rubens to wasp waists to Twiggy), but also the way in which it enjoys (food, drink, eroticism). Microsocially, the (m)Other specifically names and determines the body of the subject, also in matters of form, appearance and enjoyment. The body is the surface upon which the Other writes.¹³

⁹ *Seminar 1*, pp. 146-47; (*Le Séminaire, livre I*, p. 169).

¹⁰ Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire: Livre VIII. Le Transfert 1960-61*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 255.

¹¹ *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 164.

¹² *Le Séminaire, livre X*, unpublished, session of 12 December 1962.

¹³ This idea persists throughout the whole of Lacan's work, cfr. For example, "(...) notre présence de corps animal qui est le premier lieu où mettre des inscriptions" (Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire: Livre XII. Problèmes cruciaux pour la fantasmé*, 1966-1967, unpublished. Session of May 10th 1967; my translation: "(...) our presence of animal body which is the first place to put inscriptions on").

The hysterical body, then, is unified, but is also fragmented along the cutting lines determined by the signifiers of the Other. The real body shows itself only in exceptional cases: for example, when depersonalisation occurs, which always amounts to some sort of desymbolisation. In such a case, a part of the body becomes unrecognisable because the signifier has been withdrawn from it. As a consequence, the subject is confronted with the real of the flesh, with something anxiety provoking and uncanny. The very same process can be recognised in hysterical revulsion: if the body (my own or another's) loses its erotic investment (Freud), or its signifier (Lacan), then the hysterical subject reacts with disgust to this emergence of the real of the flesh.

THE ONTOLOGICAL LEVEL: "ANYBODY HOME?"

The mother as first Other invests the body of the child by demanding and desiring certain things. In this way, the child becomes aware of its body and of the Other's desire, which becomes "his" or "her" desire. "It is exactly at that moment that the human being's consciousness, in the form of self-consciousness, distinguishes itself".¹⁴ Thus, so-called self-consciousness is deceptive right from the start, because it originates outside the self. As a result, Lacan considers the main function of the ego to be misjudgement (*méconnaissance*), because so-called self-knowledge, knowledge of one's "own" desire, is always inspired by the Other. Both the awareness of one's "own" body and one's "own" desire originate in the outer world. Furthermore, both of them amount to the same thing: "It is insofar as his desire has gone over to the other side that he assimilates himself to the body of the other and recognises himself as body".¹⁵

Thus considered, "self"-awareness is rooted in the body image coming from the Other.¹⁶ The core of human identity comes from outside, and this leads to a strange ontology in which the idea of alienation plays a central role. This ontological theory receives its full elaboration in *Seminar XI*, where the "formation of the I" as an effect of the acquisition of the unified body is rethought in terms of the "advent of the subject". Each divided subject is in this sense originally a subject of the body, albeit the Other's body. To paraphrase Rimbaud: "I is another (body)" (*Je est un autre*).

¹⁴ *Seminar I*, p. 147; (*Le Séminaire, livre I*, p. 169).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Le Séminaire, livre X*, unpublished, session of 12 December 1962.

So, just as our body image and awareness come from the outside, our “self”-awareness comes from the Other. This theory contains an important assumption: it presupposes an inner emptiness, a lack, which can be filled by something coming from outside. This idea of lack is central to Lacan’s theory right from the start, and it is elaborated on in a very important way in his further development. In this elaboration, Lacan’s return to Freud changes into something new.

PSYCHOANALYTIC SPECIFICATIONS: PHALLUS, LACK AND CASTRATION

All the above can more or less be understood from a psychological point of view and is not specifically psychoanalytic, let alone specifically Lacanian. The psychoanalytic aspect comes into play when we combine the above with the Lacanian concept of the phallus, which also involves his theories of castration and separation. The central idea in all of this is the notion of lack.

This notion is first given an extensive treatment in *Seminar IV*.¹⁷ Lacan argues that the development of the relationship between mother and child cannot be reduced to a simple process of maturation focusing on a series of alternating libidinal objects. Instead, Lacan argues that this development takes place on the basis of a lack of a central object. In this seminar, he understands this central lack to be the phallus, the symbolic phallus which lacks by definition and thus causes an ever-shifting exchange among child, mother and father.

This theory remains virtually unchanged until *Seminar XI*. For example, in *Seminar VIII*, Lacan claims that the relationship between the phallus and the body is a central one, because this relationship determines the relation of the subject to the more primitive bodily parts, which are also interpreted as separable objects.¹⁸ This part of *Seminar VIII* has to be read alongside those parts of *Seminar XI* where he corrects F. Dolto’s ideas about the infant’s progressive maturation. According to Lacan, libidinal stages have nothing

¹⁷ Lacan, J. (1994). *Le Séminaire; Livre IV. La relation d’objet, 1956-1957*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil.

¹⁸ *Le Séminaire, livre VIII*, pp. 444-445.

¹⁹ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire*, livre XI, p. 62). Lacan’s ideas about the impact of the mother and retroactivity can already be found in *Seminar IV*: “il s’agit toujours de saisir ce qui, intervenant du dehors à chaque étape, remanie rétroactivement ce qui a été amorcé à l’étape précédente. Ceci, pour la simple raison que l’enfant n’est pas seul” (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 199, see also *Ibid.*, p. 41ff; my translation: “It always comes down to understanding what, intervening from the outside during each stage, reworks in a retroactive way that which had been started at a previous level. This, for the sole reason that the child is not on its own.”). This is probably

whatsoever to do with a natural development; they are retroactively organised starting from the later castration anxiety. This anxiety operates by means of *Nachträglichkeit* (retroactivity).¹⁹

To summarise: the development of the body occurs as a function of the desire of the Other. This desire focuses on the symbolic and thus ever lacking phallus. As a concept, “phallus” denotes nothing other than the lack in the Symbolic as such, which insists between or behind signifiers. In the mother-child relation, attempts to fill in for this lack induce a phallicization: all libidinal stages and erogenous zones get interpreted in a phallic way (in terms of the imaginary phallus) and can become objects of imaginary castration. Freud already took note of this: in hysteria, all body parts behave like genitals.²⁰ Lacan specifies: like the phallus. Hence, for example, Dora’s *tussis nervosa* is seen as a refusal of her desire for the imaginary phallus of the father.

This part of Lacan’s theory is changed in *Seminar XI*, when he describes object *a* as a lack *alongside and logically preceding the lack of the phallus*. Both object *a* and the phallus are lacking, but the first lack is not without an effect on the second. On the contrary, the phallic instance is in itself already an interpretation of the radical lack expressed by object *a*. From this point onwards, Lacan develops a theory of a double lack, which could be understood as a pre-oedipal and a post-oedipal lack. But there is more to it, as we will see. This double lack also leads to a better understanding of the trauma. From a psychoanalytic point of view, a subject meets with a trauma in those instances where the first lack can *not* be interpreted in a phallic way, where the Symbolic and the Imaginary miss their point and the Real keeps insisting.

A large part of *Seminar XI* is concerned with this theme, especially when causality is discussed. With respect to Lacan’s understanding of the body, an important change occurs here: instead of understanding the body as a body image or surface, the body is now understood as an organ.

the most important application of the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*: the phallus as a signifier is so central that it determines retro- and pro-actively the phallic interpretation of all forms of (bodily) loss. This is the core of the discussion Lacan had with Dolto at the time of *Seminar II*, (p. 64, pp. 103-104, p. 180; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62, pp. 95-96, p. 164). The same line of thought can be read in Freud (*A Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*, S.E. X, p. 8, n.2). In contrast to Freud, Lacan redoubles the lack: on the one hand, there is a loss of a real object *a*, which, on the other hand, will be processed in the combined symbolic and imaginary (“phallicized” object *a*) through a second lack. As we will see, the interaction between the two lacks is crucial.

²⁰ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, p. 167, p. 279.

2. THE SYMBOLIC AND THE IMAGINARY VERSUS THE REAL

Object (*a*) as the cause of the Other

Seminar XI marks a very important shift in Lacan's position and theory. In my reading, it functions as a hinge between the Lacan of the signifier and desire and the Lacan of the Real and *jouissance*. With respect to the body, from *Seminar XI* onwards the focus shifts from the signified and/or imaginarised body to the body as a real organism, characterised by its orifices and functioning by means of the drive.

I will select three themes that are important with respect to the subject of this paper. (1) Lacan elaborates a new theory of *causality*, in which he opposes law to cause. This is the most important novelty, and it determines the ones that follow. This part of the theory has to be read alongside his elaboration of the status of the unconscious. (2) The theory of causality and the status of the unconscious are both directly related to the body *as an organism*. This is discussed in terms of what Lacan considers the most difficult of the four fundamental concepts: the drive. (3) As a result, the status of *the subject* in Lacan's theory changes, along with the impact of the body.

After *Seminar XI*, Lacan studies the drive and the Real as other forms of *jouissance*, in direct opposition to the normal form - that is, the phallic one. This gives rise to a new opposition, one between the enjoying organism and the sexual body which defends itself with phallic pleasure against the former.²¹

²¹ This theme is beautifully explored in Romain Gary's *La vie devant soi*. A child is raised by whores in a junkie environment, and has to make a choice (his desire) among these Others. On the whores, he comments: "Elles se défendent avec leur cul" ("They defend themselves with their asses"); on the junkies: "Eux, ils sont pour le bonheur, moi je préfère la vie" ("They vote for happiness, me, for my part, I prefer life"). This last part expresses his choice, and there I find an opposition between the other *jouissance* (in my opinion, central in the primal form of drug addiction) and the ever restricted phallic *jouissance*.

²² This was already set in motion by *Seminar X*, especially in the lesson given on 8th May 1963. Cause is irreducible: "(...) pour autant qu'elle est identique dans sa fonction à (...) cette part de nous-même, cette part de notre chair qui nécessairement reste, si je puis dire, prise dans la machine formelle.(...) c'est cette part de nous-même pris dans la machine, à jamais irrécupérable, cet objet comme perdu aux différents niveaux de l'expérience corporelle où se produit la coupure, c'est lui qui est le support, le substrat authentique de toute fonction comme telle de la cause." (My translation: "(...) insofar as it is identical in its function to (...) this part of our self, this part of our flesh that necessarily remains, if I can put it this way, in the formal machine. (...) it is this part of our self taken by the machine, part that can never be recuperated, this object lost on the different levels of bodily experience where the gap is produced, it is this which provides the base, the authentic substrate

CAUSALITY AND STATUS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

In *Seminar XI*, an old line of reasoning is taken up again and drastically changed.²² In the first chapter, Lacan elaborates on the difference between law and cause, and already here, we find evidence of a shift from Lacan (1) to Lacan (2). In the first Lacan, almost everything was understood in terms of the systematic determination coming from the Symbolic (cf. the juridical meaning of the word: “to signify”). This means that there is a predictability, and the possibility of analysis is opened. He had already demonstrated this aspect of predictability (and thus of scientificity) in his appendix to *The Purloined Letter*.²³ In *Seminar XI*, he reformulates the same ideas in terms of Aristotle’s concept of automaton. According to this line of thought, the body is determined in a systematic way by the laws inherent to the Symbolic.

The notion of cause that Lacan introduces is something completely different. Ultimately, this cause has to be looked for in something *un-determined*, something that is not lawfully, systematically determined. On the contrary: “there is cause only in something that doesn’t work”.²⁴ Later on in the seminar, this un-determined cause is understood as the traumatic Real, that part of the drive that cannot be represented. The body plays a completely different role here. As a cause it obliges and constrains us to “an appointment with a real that eludes us”,²⁵ a real that lies beyond the automaton. This is a real that cannot be assimilated, mediated, or represented.²⁶ Cause, then, implies the idea of failure, of something that does not happen, thus forcing something else to fill the scene.

of every causal function.”). A bit further in the same lesson, this cause is understood as object *a*. Still a bit further, we read: “(...) c’est qu’il y a toujours dans le corps, et du fait même de cet engagement de la dialectique signifiante, quelque chose de séparé, quelque chose de statufié, quelque chose de dès lors inertes, qu’il y a la livre de chair”. (My translation: “(...) it’s because there is always in the body, and due to this engagement of the signifying dialectics, something separated, something petrified, something inert from that moment onwards, that there is the pound of flesh (to deliver!)”). On the next page, this is described as: “La fonction du reste, la fonction irréductible, celle qui survit à toute l’épreuve de la rencontre avec le signifiant pur, (...)”; (my translation: “The function of the remainder, the irreducible function, the one that survives every confronting test with the pure signifier (...)”). The conclusion of this lesson from May 8th is that there is a definite relationship between this radical cause and our flesh; it is something of the flesh that is forever lost, thus causing a basic gap.

²³ *Écrits*. Seuil, pp. 41-61.

²⁴ *Seminar 11*, p. 22; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 25).

²⁵ *Seminar 11*, p. 53; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 53).

²⁶ *Seminar 11*, pp. 53-55; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 53-55).

What we see here is a failure of the Symbolic to cover over something of the Real. This implies that the body, by means of 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".²⁷ This real is the drive in its inability to be represented²⁸ - hence its association with trauma.²⁹ The fact that it has to do with failures is found in Lacan's use of negative phrases for it, like "the not-realised" and "the un-born", which echo the "un" of the un-conscious.³⁰

This theory implies nothing less than an expansion of the previous theory as well as its exact reversal.³¹

²⁷ In the official translation "la béance par où la névrose se raccorde à un réel" is translated by: "the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with a real". The whole point of *Seminar XI* comes down to the demonstration that any harmony with the real is lost forever. (*Seminar 11*, p. 22; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 25-26).

²⁸ *Seminar 11*, p. 60; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 59).

²⁹ Again, this part of Lacanian theory can very well be understood from a Freudian point of view. In Freud's theory, the pleasure principle functions "within the signifier", that is, within representations (*Vorstellungen*) to which a "bound" energy is associated within the so-called secondary process. What lies beyond the pleasure principle cannot be expressed by representations and functions with a "free" energy within the primary process. The latter has a traumatic impact on the ego (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, S.E. XVIII, p. 67ff). The Lacanian Real is Freud's nucleus of the unconscious, the primal repressed which stays behind because of a kind of fixation. "Staying behind" means: not transferred into signifiers, into language (Freud, letters to Fliess, dd, 30th May 96, 2nd Nov.96).

³⁰ *Seminar 11*, pp. 22-23, p. 26, p. 32; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 25-26, pp. 28, 32).

³¹ If one studies Lacan's work in this respect, it becomes obvious that he struggles with this new idea of causality, and that he has great difficulties in abandoning the previous idea of a unidimensional determination by the Symbolic. This struggle is illustrated quite well in one lesson of *Seminar X* (9th January 1963). He starts by repeating the reason why the subject is first of all and originally unconscious: "qu'il nous faut d'abord tenir pour antérieure à cette constitution (du sujet) une certaine incidence qui est celle du signifiant" (my translation: "that we need first of all to consider a certain incidence, the one of the signifier, as anterior to this constitution [of the subject]"). Based on this, one could infer that the signifier is primordial. The next sentence calls this into question: "Le problème est de l'entrée du signifiant dans le réel et de voir comment de ceci naît le sujet." (my translation: "The problem concerns the entry of the signifier into the Real and the way in which the subject is born from this"). In this, the Real is given a different role and the relation with the body is clear from the very beginning. Indeed, the signifiers do not appear out of thin air. On the contrary:

“Ce qui permet justement à ce signifiant de s’incarner, c’est bien entendu ce que nous avons là pour nous présentifier les uns aux autres notre corps”; (my translation: “What precisely permits this signifier to incarnate itself, is of course that which we have to present to each other, that is, our body”). This was already acknowledged in *Seminar II*: “Les premiers symboles, les symboles naturels, sont issus d’un certain nombre d’images prévalentes - l’image du corps humain, l’image d’un certain nombre d’objets évidents comme le soleil, la lune et quelques autres” (Lacan, J., 1978, *Le Séminaire: Livre II. Le moi dans la théorie de Freud dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, 1954-1955, Texte établi par J.A.Miller, Paris, Seuil, p.352; my translation: “The first symbols, the natural symbols have come about from a certain number of prevalent images - the image of the human body, the image of a certain number of obvious objects, such as the sun, the moon and some other”). This introduces us to a second theme, in itself also an expression of Lacan’s difficulties with this second form of determination: namely, the causality arising from the Real of the body. As long as he hadn’t recognised this causality, he could avoid the underlying difficulty implied by an expression like “signifiers furnished by nature”. This is a very strange expression indeed, in the light of his theory concerning the supremacy of the Symbolic. There are a number of analogous expressions, which lay the groundwork for his later theory of the body and the Real as cause. Here are a few of them:

- “Le Es dont il s’agit dans l’analyse, c’est du signifiant qui est là déjà dans le réel, du signifiant incompris.” (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 49; my translation: “The Id which analysis is about, concerns the signifier, the uncomprehended signifier which is already there, in the Real”);
- “Quand nous abordons le sujet, nous savons qu’il y a déjà dans la nature quelque chose qui est son Es, et qui est structuré selon le mode d’une articulation signifiante marquant tout de ce qui s’exerce chez ce sujet de ses empreintes, de ses contradictions, de sa profonde différence d’avec les coaptations naturelles” (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 50; my translation: “When we start with the subject, we know that there is already in nature something which is its Id, and which is structured following the way of a signifying articulation that marks everything of this subject by its imprints, by its contradictions, by its profound difference from natural coaptation”). On the next page, Lacan states that the signifier borrows in matters of the signified a lot from the human body, with the erect phallus as the most prominent feature (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 51; p. 189). I remember having read the expression “le phallus, un signifiant donné par la nature” somewhere, but have never managed to find it again (any suggestions?). In *Seminar VII* we find an analogous expression for the female genitals (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.Porter. New York, Norton, pp. 168-169; *Le Séminaire: Livre VII. L’Ethique de la psychanalyse 1959-60*. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 199). The deepest elaboration of this can be found in the opening chapter of *Seminar XI*: “Nature provides signifiers, and these signifiers organise inaugurally human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them.” (*Seminar XI*, p. 20; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 23). In this quote, the signifiers precede the subject, but nature furnishes them. A few months later in the seminar, this “primary classificatory function” is associated with the biological difference between male and female around which the “combinatory” comes into being and is developed. The conclusion of this line of reasoning is: “that it is through sexual reality that the signifier came into the world” (*Seminar XI*, p. 151; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 138). In the next paragraph, Lacan combines this “combinatory” with the one at work in genetics, including the loss involved in the process of meiosis. Eventually in *Seminar XI*, it becomes clear that, according to Lacan, nature saddles us with an essential loss, that of eternal life itself, and that subjectivity is an effect of this loss.

Previously, Lacan thought in terms of law and an omnipresent determination by the Symbolic.³² Now, a different causality enters into play, arising from the real of the body.

In order to elaborate on this double determination, Lacan refers to the classic Aristotelian opposition between *tuchè* (the Real, the cause) and *automaton* (the Symbolic, systematic determination). *Tuchè* puts the accent on the unconscious as a cause, whilst *automaton* is a way of characterising the productions and the effects of the unconscious, which are determined in a systematic way. Moreover, the two are interwoven and determine each other in a mutual causality, which is circular but not reciprocal.

Lacan's theory on the *automaton* in *Seminar XI* is not new. In his second seminar, he had already demonstrated that the appearance of any arbitrary signifier is determined by a law. That is, there is a system determining which signifiers may appear at a given point in a chain of signifiers, and which may not. This is important, because it provides us with the scientific basis for Freud's notion of free association. Just think of his analysis of Signorelli, where the appearance and disappearance of certain signifiers is indeed very systematic.³³ During analytic treatment, free association is governed by an underlying determination, resulting in a kind of automatic memory. Nevertheless, clinical practice demonstrates that this process of recollection only succeeds up to a given point, after which the chain stalls and stops.

³² "Thus the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, (...)", (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 104; *Écrits*, p. 319). This determination by the Symbolic gave rise to one of the central ideas in the wake of the Bonneval Colloquium (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 829ff): that interpretation can be calculated. Lacan sticks to this idea for a number of years, and *Seminar XI* contains several references to it, amongst others his reference to Leclair's case study on *poordjeli*. From a conceptual point of view, this implies that, at the time of *Seminar XI*, Lacan still believed in the possibility of ending an analysis with a final word, the ultimate signifier, although even then he added that this signifier must be an "irreducible" one, and that interpretation ultimately focuses on the "non-sens" (*Seminar II*, pp. 248-49; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 225-226). After *Seminar XI*, he understands object *a* as the not-understandable, the un-representable; his optimism concerning how far interpretation can go disappears at the same time, and he has to reconsider the end of an analysis. The question then is how to operate on the Real if one has to start from the Imaginary of the body image and the Symbolic of the subject: "Comment, à partir de là, nous nous imaginons toucher à un réel qui soit un troisième cercle (...)" (Lacan, J., 1976, *Conférences et entretiens dans les universités Nord-Américaines*. In *Scilicet*, 6/7, Paris, Seuil, pp. 54-55). Still later he will talk of the "real kernel" of the symptom, which is "le noeud de l'ininterprétable", the knot of what cannot be interpreted ("La méprise du sujet supposé savoir" in *Scilicet*, 1, p. 40).

³³ Freud, S. (1901). *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. S.E. VI, p. 5.

A second line has to start here, at this “full stop” of the Symbolic. This causal point, “where it doesn’t work”, concerns what is not realised, what is un-born in the chain of signifiers: the non-verbal remainder, which is what is left when desire has been expressed in the words of a demand. Here, Freud had already met with the repetition compulsion instead of a process of recollection, and this repetition has everything to do with the Real.³⁴ The point where the chain stalls is the very point where the Real makes its appearance. The encounter with the Real is always a missed encounter, because there is no signifier appropriate for it. Lacan paraphrases Spinoza: *cogitatio adaequata semper vitat eamdem rem*, an adequate thought always avoids the same thing.³⁵

A “fast food” understanding of this might think that *tuchè* and *automaton* are two merely alternating elements. Lacan’s theory is more complex. The two elements have to be understood as a convergence, and this provides us with the ultimate cause. I understand this as follows: the systematically determined chain of signifiers also determines what *cannot* appear in the chain, and thus determines the gaps in the associative chain. Hence, the Symbolic determines the emergence of *tuchè*, of the Real as a negative product of the Symbolic. From another point of view, this associative chain can only contain systematically determined series of signifiers, *on the condition that there is a gap present in the chain itself*. Indeed, within the boundaries of a completely closed system any possibility of displacement is foreclosed.³⁶ Lacan had already elaborated on this function of lack in *Seminar IV* in terms of an object-lack, a forerunner to his theory of object *a*. In *Seminar XI* this lack in the Symbolic is understood as the insisting Real, the cause forcing the chain of signifiers into a never-ending production.

³⁴ *Seminar 11*, pp. 49-50; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 49). In *Seminar XI*, this is connected to transference and love, that is, to the subject’s attempts to process this Real (*Seminar 11*, p. 145ff; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 133ff): “the transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious” (*Seminar 11*, p. 149; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 137). It should be noted that in this sentence “Real” would have been a better word than “reality”. A bit later, Lacan calls this the point where the subject tries to master the irruption of *jouissance* by saddling it with a “*trait unaire*” (Lacan, J., 1991, *Le Séminaire: Livre XVII. L’Envers de la psychanalyse 1969-70*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, pp. 88-89). From a Freudian point of view, this is the repetition compulsion, an ever failing attempt to stick a representation with a bound energy (secondary process) onto something that belongs to the primary process (free energy).

³⁵ *Seminar 11*, pp. 48-51; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 48-50).

³⁶ This can be explained logically in terms of Gödel’s paradox. But there is a far easier way to understand this: just think of a child’s toy like those sliding puzzles. This mini symbolic system works on one condition: that there is a gap. One compartment has to be empty, thus permitting the necessary displacements in the system itself.

Later in his work, Lacan puts this as follows: “C’est ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s’écrire”, “It is that which does not stop not being written”.³⁷ The chain determines the lack, and the lack causes the chain. This convergence was beautifully expressed in the metaphor of the vase in *Seminar VII*. In order to make a vase out of clay, the potter needs clay, but also an emptiness: the clay delineates the Real, but this works the other way around as well.³⁸

This theory of causality permits Lacan to develop a status for the unconscious, which is homologous to what takes place at the level of the subject: “on the level of the unconscious, there is something that is homologous on all points to what happens at the level of the subject”.³⁹ Later on in Lacan’s work we meet up with this homology again. Here, this homology has everything to do with what he calls the pulsating movement of the unconscious, the opening and closing of the gap in which something fails to be realised. A typical example of this is provided by a slip of the tongue, but this can be found in the transference as well.⁴⁰ Ultimately, it can be found in every production of the unconscious, the subject as such included. Hence - and this will be very important for our conclusion - the unconscious as such has a *pre-ontological* status: “it” fails to materialise, and emphasis has to be placed on its opening and closing.⁴¹ This movement is exactly the same as the one described above, in which the automatically produced series of signifiers determines in a systematic way (according to a law) their own failure, that is, the gap, which in its turn causes the necessary progress of the chain.

Thus, the conclusion to be drawn from this is that it is not only the symbolic order which has a determining effect. The Real as such also has a causal function, and the two of them converge.

³⁷ Lacan, J. (1975). Introduction à l’édition allemande d’un premier volume des *Ecrits* (Walter Verlag). In *Scilicet*, 5, Paris, Seuil, p. 17.

Lacan, J. (1975). Conférences et entretiens dans des universités Nord-Américaines. In *Scilicet*, 6/7, Paris, Seuil, pp. 54-55.

³⁸ *Seminar VII*, pp. 115-127; (*Le Séminaire, livre VII*, pp. 139-152).

³⁹ *Seminar XI*, p. 27 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 (...)”; (see also *Seminar 11*, pp. 20-23; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 23-25).

⁴⁰ *Seminar 11*, pp. 130-131; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 119-120).

⁴¹ *Seminar 11*, pp. 29-32; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 32-33).

ORGANISM, ORGANS AND DRIVE

In *Seminar XI* we read the following surprising statement: "The relation of the subject *with the organ* is at the heart of our experience".⁴² As long as Lacan was emphasising the determining influence of the symbolic order, the body was thought of as a mere effect, that is, as a signified body, an imaginised body. Indeed, we *have* a body as an effect of language and the distance created by this language.⁴³ Once Lacan takes the Real seriously, another body enters into play, one for which the signifier "body" isn't even really appropriate. If the Real is our starting-point, it is not the body that is operative, but the organism, or organs. Lacan gives this a psychoanalytic significance by understanding it in terms of the drive and the Freudian division inherent in the drive between the somatic (Real) and the psychic (Symbolic and Imaginary). Again, the same topological border structure can be recognised here, the same movement of opening and closing, and this corroborates the homology Lacan mentioned between the structures of the unconscious and the subject.

At the beginning of *Seminar XI*, we still find a familiar idea: the Symbolic determines the body. Its development is scarcely an effect of maturation, rather, it takes place through the demand of the Other. It is (s)he who demands that the child eats, drinks, pees, defecates, looks, listens, and speaks. The relevant body zones are always bodily borders, orifices (oral, anal, genital, eye, ear) that can open and close, and the (m)Other determines this movement of opening and closing. In this exchange between (m)Other and child, loss and the processing of this loss is central. The subject-to-be tries to answer the Other's desire or lack by presenting something, but this something is never enough. According to both Freud and Lacan, this something has to be understood in terms of castration and the phallus; for example, oral as well as anal loss is interpreted by the child in a phallic way, albeit retroactively.⁴⁴ Lacan goes further than Freud and considers the phallus to be a signifier beyond the penis. Indeed, he considers it to be the basic signifier.⁴⁵

⁴² My italics; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 85).

⁴³ The idea of "having a body" is fairly well-known. In the later Lacan, this idea is reversed, and the body takes the primary position: "If there is something that grounds being, it is assuredly the body" (Lacan, J., 1975. *Le Séminaire: Livre XX. Encore*, 1972-1973. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 100; 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, p. 110); "The being is a body" (*Seminar 20*, p. 140; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 127).

⁴⁴ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62).

⁴⁵ "For the phallus is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 285; *Écrits*, Seuil, p. 690).

No real penis, no object whatsoever, will ever be able to answer the demand and the desire of the Other.

Hence the special role so-called “separable organs” play, parts of the body that contain an element of loss. They are able to function as imaginary substitutes for the phallus. But there is something other at work as well: “In my reference to the unconscious, I am dealing with the relation to the organ. It is not a question of the relation to sexuality, or even to the sex, (...). It is a question rather of the relation to the phallus, in as much as it is lacking in the real that might be attained in the sexual goal.”⁴⁶

Almost unnoticeably, Lacan is here preparing for and introducing a distinction between object *a* and the phallus. On the next page, object *a* is described as the ever-impossible representation of a radical lack. With respect to this, any interpretation of the subject in terms of the phallus is a defensive elaboration: “The object *a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but insofar as it is lacking.”⁴⁷

This defensive elaboration takes place when the subject interprets separable bodily parts in phallic terms, and if this is not possible, then the subject is confronted with some...thing: that is, with a trauma. Here, trauma receives an operational definition: what is traumatic is that “bad encounter” with the Real that cannot be interpreted in terms of the phallus and castration.⁴⁸ Indeed, to be able to understand a lack in phallic terms, a defensive processing is required which is not necessarily present when the subject encounters the other, radical lack. Lacan situates this radical lack at the level of the Real of the body. On this basis, the idea of “organ” receives a whole new meaning.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Seminar 11*, p. 102; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 94).

⁴⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 103; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 95).

⁴⁸ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62).

⁴⁹ Again, this has to be understood in terms of the homology between the subject, the unconscious, and the body. Ten years later, Lacan takes up this idea of lack once again, and gives us a perfect illustration of it: “(...) l'inconscient, c'est le réel. (...) c'est le réel en tant qu'il est troué”. (*Seminar XXII*, RSI, *Ornicar?*, 15th April 75, p. 50; my translation: “... the unconscious is the real, ... it is the real insofar as it is punctured”). In this quote, the terms unconscious, Real, body and subject are interchangeable.

⁵⁰ It is not by accident that this crucial innovation is introduced in the lesson on alienation (*Seminar 11*, pp. 204-205; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 186). The doubling of lack requires all the previous concepts to be doubled as well, into a logical first and second one. The ground had been prepared for this innovation a long time before, and as recently as the previous seminar, in which the same doubling can be recognised in the distinction Lacan makes between privation (real) and castration (symbolic),

When Lacan puts the Real of the body as cause on centre stage, there is a radical innovation in his theory. From this point onwards, we are no longer talking about the body, but about the organ, or the organism. Lacan introduces us to another lack, another loss which is anterior to the lack involved in the signifying chain between mother and child.⁵⁰ The fact that this is something different, new, and important, is demonstrated by a passage cited earlier: “The object (*a*) is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off *as organ*”.⁵¹ Here, we receive a first hint concerning the new relationship between the subject and the body, where the body is now understood as an organism or organ.

The Real of the organism functions as a cause, in the sense that it contains a primordial loss which precedes the loss involved in the chain of signifiers. What kind of loss is this? It is the loss of eternal life, which paradoxically enough is lost at the moment of birth as a sexed being.⁵² 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 a primordial form of the libido.⁵³ 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. Already in Freud’s work, this was the basic characteristic of the drive - 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. It is important to remark that at this stage, we are talking about *the* drive, prior to any form of “genderisation” and the accompanying conversion into partial drives, meaning: phallic drives.

although both of them concern the phallus (*Seminar X*, lesson of 30th January 1963). In *Seminar XI*, the doubling introduces an object beyond and logically preceding the phallus: object *a*, lamella, libido. It is very interesting to note how this is analogous to what happens in Freud’s theory. At a certain point in his evolution, Freud also needed to double all his previous concepts (repression and primal repression, fantasy and primal fantasy, father and primal father), but he missed the final point: moving from castration to a “primal castration” which is not a castration any more, but something different. (For a more elaborate discussion of this, see Verhaeghe, P., 1999, *Does the Woman exist?* The Other Press, pp. 149-205). In this respect, again, Lacan presents us not with a mere “return” to Freud, but with something new.

⁵¹ My italics, *Seminar II*, p. 103; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 95).

⁵² *Seminar II*, p. 205; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 187).

⁵³ From what precedes and follows in *Seminar XI*, we can deduce that this lost “organ”, this mythical lamella, is Lacan’s interpretation of the libido, which is to be understood as a pure life instinct, and not as a drive (*Seminar II*, p. 187; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 171). A bit earlier, he had already

The reaction to this primordial loss - the attempt to return and its defensive elaboration - takes place on the Symbolic and Imaginary levels, which are also where sexualisation and genderisation occur. Again, it should be pointed out that sexualisation is a "phallicization". This means that the first, real lack is "answered" as if it was the second lack, the one in the Symbolic.⁵⁴ Thus, the primordial loss on 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.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ From this point onwards, drive becomes a partial drive, containing an ever-present mixture of the life and death drives.

As a result, we end up with an interaction between elements in a circular but not reciprocal determination.⁵⁷ The loss at the level of the Real is the cause by means of which life is turned into one elongated, elaborate attempt to return to eternal life. 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.

situated this libido at a topologically very important place when he presented his audience with the first version of the "interior eight" (*Seminar 11*, pp. 155-156; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 142-43). In this figure the libido is situated at the intersection between the two circles, between the field in which the unconscious is developed and the field of reality. Between, and thus in an empty space. In other words, the libido is just another name for the lack that causes desire. This tallies perfectly with an earlier definition of object *a*: " - this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, (...)" (*Seminar 11*, p. 180; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 164). Libido, object *a*, and separable bodily parts are all thrown together here. The later version of this interior eight must be studied together with the schematic representation of alienation and separation. Both of them represent the same thing. (*Seminar 11*, p. 211; p. 271; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 192, p. 244). The reasoning behind this is even more difficult to follow when Lacan adds that the libido is not a real but a false organ, to be situated against the background of the Real (*Seminar 11*, p. 196; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 179). In order to explain this, he constructs his myth, which is at the same time a farce. Imagine that, each time the membranes are broken through at the moment of birth, something - the lamella - flies away and gets lost forever. This loss is none other than the loss of pure life in itself, of immortality (*Seminar 11*, pp. 197-98; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 179-180). We meet here with the primordial loss, on which the subject will graft a secondary and thus defensive lack. This primordial lack has everything to do with what a "gendered" organism loses precisely because it has acquired a gender. It is what "the living being" loses by being subjected to the cycle of sexual reproduction: eternal life. Object *a* presents us with an ever impossible representation of that part of the individual that is lost at birth (for instance, the placenta) (*Seminar 11*, pp. 103-104; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 95-96).

In this process, the original lack gets re-interpreted in phallic terms. This attempt to return takes place within the Symbolic and the Imaginary, 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 interaction between the Real of the organism as cause of the Symbolic (determining the body image) which, in turn, determines the (re)appearance of the Real, can be schematically represented as follows:

Tuchè: loss of (a) - Real

organ border topology life/death drive	jouissance of the body
--	------------------------



//

Automaton: elaboration in S & I

body divided subject partial drives	Pleasure Principle
---	--------------------

The downwards arrow and the double bar evoke the two disjunctions in Lacan's discourse theory: the impossibility of realising the pleasure principle, and the incapability of joining the enjoyment of the body. This demonstrates the non-complementary character of the system: the one can never furnish an adequate answer to the other, because they belong to structurally incompatible systems.

⁵⁴ "The first [the lack in the chain of signifiers] emerges from the central defect around which the dialectic of the advent of the subject to his own being in the relation to the Other turns - by the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and that the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other. This lack takes up the other lack, which is the real, earlier lack, to be situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say at sexed reproduction" (*Seminar 11*, pp. 204-205; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 186).

⁵⁵ Lacan maintains this connection until the end of his theory. For instance: "Le facteur commun du (a), c'est d'être lié aux orifices du corps" (*Seminar XVIII, D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, unpublished, lesson of 21st January 1975; my translation: "The common factor in (a), is the fact that it is connected to the orifices of the body").

⁵⁶ *Seminar 11*, p. 64, pp. 103-104, p. 180; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62, pp. 95-96, p. 164).

⁵⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 207; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 188).

The above schema demonstrates the strange interaction between the Symbolic order (governed by laws) and the Real (cause). In the further development of Lacan's theory, this implies that the phallus, castration, and gender acquisition are secondary but necessary elaborations of a preceding primal relationship in which gender differentiation as such is lacking. Moreover, gender differentiation, and especially its ever-changing implementation, may very well be considered a defensive reaction to this primal relationship. I will return to this idea later on. For lack of space, I will not discuss here the relationship Lacan indicates between the causal Real of the organism on the one hand, and a certain form of knowledge and the unconscious on the other hand.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ "(...) qu'un corps a une autre façon de consister que ce que j'ai désigné là sous une forme parlée (...). Ce sont des marques qui sont celles laissées par une certaine façon d'avoir rapport à un savoir, qui constitue la substance fondamentale de ce qu'il est de l'inconscient". (*Conférences et entretiens* etc., p. 50; my translation: "... that a body has a way of consisting other than the one I have indicated there in a spoken form (...). There are marks, leftovers of a certain way of relating to knowledge, which constitutes the fundamental substance of what the unconscious is about"). See also *Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 102, where the idea of a "savoir sans tête", a headless knowledge, is mentioned. This, of course, evokes "le sujet acéphale", the headless subject.

⁵⁹ See: P. Verhaeghe, Causation and Destitution of a Pre-ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject, In Nobus, D. (ed.), 1998, *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psycho-analysis*. London, Rebus Press, pp. 164-189.

⁶⁰ *Seminar 11*, pp. 203-213; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 185-93).

⁶¹ "It is the speaking body insofar as it can only manage to reproduce thanks to a misunderstanding regarding its jouissance." (*Seminar 20*, p. 120; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 109).

⁶² Freud, S. (1925h). *Negation*. S.E. XIX, p. 236, p. 239. See also Verhaeghe, P., *Causation and Destitution*, op. cit., p. 177.

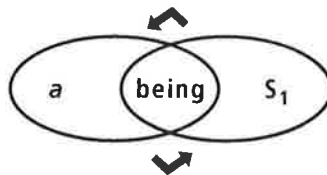
THE PRE-ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE SUBJECT

The becoming of the subject deserves a study of its own. I will only discuss it briefly here, since I have elaborated on this at length elsewhere.⁵⁹ With respect to what we are studying right now, the most important thing is the already mentioned homologous structure shared by the body, the unconscious and the subject. This structure is discussed throughout the whole of *Seminar XI*, in terms of opening and closing, border structure, gap, split, etc. Lacan's pre-ontology involves a rejection of any form of essentialism. Instead, what is stressed is an ever present lack and a continuing loss, with an accompanying attempt to return and recover (indeed, to re-cover). The net result is an ever-insisting split. My attempt to describe and summarise this structure runs as follows.⁶⁰

- The advent of the living (*l'avènement du vivant*): the opening and closing of life at birth.

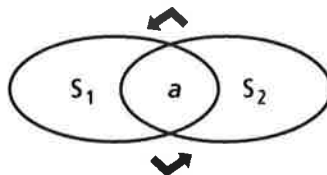
This is difficult to schematise. What is at stake here is an ever-mythical origin, and Lacan repeatedly tells us that the questions concerning such an origin are impossible to answer. The advent of sexually differentiated forms of life is able to occur only by means of a loss of eternal life as such. Any attempt to return to this life can only take place through sexual reproduction, which means that as a return, it has to be a failure.⁶¹

- The advent of the I (*l'avènement du Je*): the opening and closing of the body.



Here we have the primary alienation of the mirror stage. The organism 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. From a Freudian point of view, this is the primal repression and the first affirmation (*Bejahung*).⁶²

- The advent of the subject (*l'avènement du sujet*): 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 Other's desire. From a structural point of view, such a process has to end in failure because the answer can only be formulated in terms of the signifier, whilst object *a* belongs to a different order and is lacking precisely because of the introduction of the signifier. This Lacanian process of alienation can be understood in terms of Freudian repression and identification.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ If we continue with this line of thought, it is reasonable to expect a fourth "advent": the advent of gender, the moment at which (*a*) and the subject are provided with a specific gender. The way in which this happens installs a gender differentiation which is not a genuine one, because it is a differentiation based on the presence or absence of one sex, the phallus. Retroactively, this differentiation determines all the previous "advents", which means that every lack gets interpreted in a phallic way.

In my opinion, this is the complete elaboration of the ontological structure announced by Lacan in 1949 in his *Mirror Stage*. This ontology can be summarised by one sentence from this paper: "In man, however, this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord (...)."⁶⁵ The subject is always divided between something that it neither is nor has and something it will never be or have - *la bourse ou la vie!* (your money or your life). This division insists as a border structure, and corroborates the homology between the structures of the body, the drive, the unconscious, and the subject.⁶⁶ "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".⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "This articulation leads us to make of the manifestation of the drive the mode of a headless subject, for everything is articulated in it in terms of tension, and has no relation to the subject other than one of topological community." (*Seminar 11*, p. 181; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165). The topological community is again the border structure with the movement of opening and closing.

⁶⁵ *Écrits, A Selection*, p. 4; (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 96).

⁶⁶ This idea of an underlying topological structure of gaps, borders, and rims, is without doubt one of the central ideas of *Seminar XI*, and is present from the beginning, when Lacan discusses the unconscious, to the end, when he discusses the drive and the transference. For two other important passages, see *Seminar 11*, p. 200 and pp. 206-207; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 182 and pp. 188-89).

⁶⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 181; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165).

This structure summarises Lacan's new theory of the relationship between the subject and the body, which offers us something different from the classical gap usually put into place between body and soul. The most striking expression of this comes from *Seminar X*: "[The lack] is radical for the constitution itself of subjectivity (...). This is what I would like to express in this formula: "From the moment that it knows itself, from the moment that something from the Real comes to knowledge, there is something lost. And the most certain way to approach this lost something is to consider it as a part of the body".⁶⁸

What follows from this lack - the constitution of subjectivity - has everything to do with the basic characteristic of the drive. Every drive aims at reinstalling a lost original situation, but owing to the internal split there is a failure that is structurally determined beforehand - there is no relationship. Replying with signifiers to (a) has to fail; replying with sexual reproduction to the loss of eternal life also has to fail. Moreover, such answers determine in themselves a renewed cause of a loss and lack, which in turn determines new answers - *tuchè* and *automaton* all over. *Encore, encore!*

Jouissance is the driving force in all these attempts to return to a previous level.

3. THE LACAN OF JOUISSANCE

The body as Other

When Lacan develops his new theory of determinism and causality, his theory of enjoyment also changes. In his previous work, he had already mentioned that there is a *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle. Now, *jouissance* is attributed to the body as an *organism*. After *Seminar XI*, this *jouissance* is given even more attention. A new opposition arises between phallic *jouissance* and the *jouissance* of the body. The first has everything to do with the partial drive. We will interpret the second one in terms of a more fundamental opposition: the one between the life and death drive.

Right from the start of *Seminar XI*, Lacan warns us that the drive is the most difficult concept of all the "four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis", and it can only be studied at the end.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Seminar X*, Lesson of 30th January 1963, my translation; original: "[Le manque] est radical à la constitution même de la subjectivité (...). Ce que (...) j'aimerais énoncer en cette formule: 'Dès que ça se sait, que quelque chose du Réel vient au savoir, il y a quelque chose de perdu; et la façon la plus certaine d'approcher ce quelque chose de perdu, c'est de le concevoir comme un morceau du corps'".

⁶⁹ *Seminar 11*, p. 19; (*Le Séminaire, livre X*, p. 23).

He states that repetition and remembering - the *automaton* conceived of as the systematic determinism of the Symbolic - succeed only up to a certain point, a certain border with the Real.⁷⁰ This Real is the drive as something which cannot be represented or symbolised,⁷¹ as something which is "originally unwelcome".⁷² Hence trauma, drive, and the Real are all associated with each other, and they all operate against the pleasure principle; the Real is "the obstacle to the pleasure principle".⁷³

Beyond the *automaton* and the systematic determination by the Symbolic awaits the Real of the drive as *tuchè*, as a causal factor. According to Lacan, causality has everything to do with the drive. Following Freud, he stresses the partial aspect of the drive, with its accompanying partial object. According to Freud, the object is the least important part of the drive (the other parts being the drive's source, its urge, and its aim). This unimportance is explained by Lacan as follows: every object appears in the place of a definitively lost original object, object *a*: "- this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object".⁷⁴ Elaborating on Freud, Lacan finds that there is a double loss at work here with a particular internal relationship. The way in which the drive operates implies the same topological structure as the one found in the body, the unconscious, and the subject: a structure that involves a movement of opening and closing.⁷⁵ But the very thing that drives the drive has not been touched upon yet: "What is at issue in the drive is finally revealed here - the course of the drive is the only form of transgression that is permitted to the subject in relation to the pleasure principle".⁷⁶

This quote elaborates on something that was already mentioned several times before in Lacan's work: there is a form of enjoyment beyond pleasure, even *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The fact that Lacan calls this "jouissance" takes him beyond Freud. The most important elaboration of this concept is to be found in *Seminar XX*. In the very first lesson, he already distinguishes between pleasure and jouissance. Jouissance is essentially negative, not

⁷⁰ *Seminar 11*, p. 49; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 49).

⁷¹ *Seminar 11*, p. 60; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 59).

⁷² *Seminar 11*, p. 69; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 67).

⁷³ *Seminar 11*, p. 167; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 152).

⁷⁴ *Seminar 11*, p. 180; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 164).

⁷⁵ *Seminar 11*, p. 181; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165).

⁷⁶ *Seminar 11*, p. 183; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 167).

⁷⁷ Lacan, J. (1975), *Le Séminaire: Livre XX. Encore, 1972-73*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 10ff.
Lacan, J. (1998). *The Seminar of J. 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. p. 3ff.

subjected to the pleasure principle, not dependent on auto-conservation, and not dischargeable.⁷⁷ The term originates in the juridical world (*jouissance* means *usufruct*), and this is by no means unimportant: jurisdiction aims at regulating *jouissance*. Later in *Seminar XX*, Lacan attempts to make explicit an opposition that goes back to his early work. On the one hand, there is a *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle; on the other hand, we have a pleasure within the pleasure principle. According to Lacan, the pleasure principle is a phallic principle, and phallic or sexual *jouissance* always stays within the realm of the signifier. The phallic signifier is what introduces the dimension of gender to both sexes, and thus induces a concentration on signified parts of the body. In contrast to this, there is non-phallic *jouissance*, the “other” *jouissance*, the “psychotic *jouissance*”, “*jouissance* of the being” or “*jouissance* of the Other”. This *jouissance* lies outside of language and thus beyond gender differentiation. It belongs to the body as an organism. The different names used by Lacan demonstrate how his thinking evolved in this respect. He ends with the body, although it is a body that is completely different from the body he started out with at the time of his paper on the mirror stage.⁷⁸

Psychotic *jouissance* is the oldest name, and accentuates the fact that the psychotic subject - devoid as it is of oedipal-phallic protection - falls prey to this unlimited, unbridled form of *jouissance*.⁷⁹ Within this framework, Lacan also uses the expression “*jouissance* of the Other”, but here, “Other” still stands for the Other of language. The psychotic subject is enjoyed by the Other, his body is enjoyed in a total and unmediated way by this Other, and he tries desperately to defend himself against this - consider Schreber, who believes himself subjected, as a woman, to God’s total enjoyment. Lacan recognises the same process in mystics: they too testify to a non-limited, totally invasive enjoyment that colonises the whole body, a *jouissance* that comes from God. In *Seminar XX*, Lacan calls this an “other *jouissance*” and finds it in women as well.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ In this respect, Lacan’s evolution runs throughout the whole of his work, but some papers are more important than others: for example, “*The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious*”; *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*; *Seminar XX, Encore*; *Seminar XXII, RSI*. The final paragraph of “Subversion” in fact, demonstrates that Lacan already understood there to be an opposition between the phallic enjoyment and the other enjoyment: “Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire.” (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 324; *Écrits*, Seuil, p. 827).

⁷⁹ See *Écrits. A Selection*, pp. 209-216 (*Écrits*, Seuil, pp. 568-578). Best paper to be read in this respect: S. André, 1985, *Jouissance psychotique, jouissance féminine, jouissance sexuelle*. In *Quarto*, Bulletin de l’Ecole de la Cause freudienne en Belgique, 18, pp. 46-59.

⁸⁰ *Seminar 20*, pp. 72-77; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, pp. 68-71).

Each woman possesses the possibility of this “other” enjoyment because she is not totally subjected to the phallic principle. This is the message of the gender schema given in the *Encore-seminar*.

The last names used by Lacan lead to an expansive generalisation of the concept, freeing it from the specific contexts given to it earlier.⁸¹ He talks about a “jouissance of being” and especially about a “jouissance of the Other”. In these expressions the Other has definitely acquired a new meaning: “The Other is the body”.⁸² The body enters into play now and induces its own causal determination, albeit one that is in an exchange with the determination that is characteristic of the Symbolic. This is Lacan’s theory of causality mentioned above, and it is taken up again explicitly in *Seminar XXII*,⁸³ where the opposition between the two jouissances is given a further elaboration.⁸⁴

This further elaboration deals with the relation between the two forms of enjoyment. This relationship is one of restriction, regulation, and even defence. Sexual, that is, phallic enjoyment regulates enjoyment as such, because the phallic signifier has a restrictive and canalising function. The other enjoyment belongs to the body, to be understood as “the being”, as what ex-sists, that is, what stands outside the Symbolic. In our symbolically determined reality, man and woman relate to each other in a phallic way.

⁸¹ The only application which Lacan doesn’t make for this concept, or makes only in a very limited way, is the one that, from a clinical point of view, is the most obvious: traumatic neurosis, in the Freudian sense of the word. Anyone who has listened to such a patient, speaking about the unpredictable states of increasing pressure in his/her body, knows what I mean. Moreover, such patients very often try to cope with this pressure by installing a pseudo-orgastic endpoint by means of cutting and auto-mutilation: once the blood is flowing, the pressure goes down a bit and “it” becomes manageable. This is completely different from the hysterical variety of auto-mutilation, which uses the body as writing-pad, intended for the desire of the Other of the signifier. In a traumatic neurosis, the auto-mutilation concerns the jouissance of the Other of the body.

⁸² Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire: Livre XIV. La logique du fantasme*, 1966-1967, unpublished. Session of May 10th 1967.

⁸³ Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire XXII, R.S.I.*, 1974-1975. Edité par J.A. Miller. In *Ornicar?*, 1975a, nr. 2, pp. 88-105, nr. 3, pp. 96-110, nr. 4, pp. 92-106, nr. 5, pp. 16-66.

⁸⁴ “Le sujet est causé d’un objet, qui n’est notable d’une écriture (...). L’irréductible de cela, n’est pas effet de langage. L’effet du langage, c’est le pathème, la passion du corps. Mais du langage en tant qu’il n’a pas d’effet, est inscriptible cette abstraction radicale qui est l’objet que j’écris de la figure d’écriture (α), et dont rien n’est pensable - à ceci près que tout se qui est sujet, sujet pensé, qu’on imagine être être, en est déterminé”; (*Seminar XXII*, lesson of 21st January 1975, my italics. My translation: “The subject is caused by an object, which can only be expressed by a writing (...). What is irreducible in this is not an effect of language. The effect of language is the patheme, the passion of the body. But through language, insofar as it has no effect, this radical abstraction can be written down, this

There is no genuine sexual relationship between two different genders. Moreover, phallic enjoyment constitutes an obstacle for the sexual relationship: "Phallic jouissance is the obstacle owing to which man does not come, I would say, to enjoy woman's body, precisely because what he enjoys is the jouissance of the organ".⁸⁵ Even if one were to go beyond phallic pleasure, there still would be no sexual relationship, because there is no gender differentiation beyond phallic pleasure, only "a jouissance of the body beyond the phallus".⁸⁶

I interpret this as follows: the relationship between man and woman beyond the phallus turns out to be the same as the relationship between the subject and the Real of the body, or the relationship between phallic jouissance and the other jouissance. But this "beyond" is not a goal in itself. On the contrary, the subject's first reaction to this would be anxiety, and phallic enjoyment has to be understood as a defence against the enjoyment of the body as an organism.⁸⁷ Indeed, this form of enjoyment implies leaving the Symbolic, and thus entails disappearance, that is, the death of the subject.⁸⁸ Hence, this is associated with the death drive, which permits us to understand better what kind of death we are talking about: the death of the subject as a subject, its disappearance from the Symbolic. It is at this point that a certain relationship arises between the subject and the body, to which I will return in my conclusion.

radical abstraction which is the object that I note as (*a*) and of which nothing is thinkable - except that everything that is subject, a thinking subject that one imagines to be being, is determined by it").

⁸⁵ *Seminar 20*, p. 7; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 13).

⁸⁶ *Seminar 20*, p. 74; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 69). "But being is the jouissance of the body as such that is, as asexual, because what I know as sexual jouissance is marked and dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such anywhere in the enunciable, the sole One that interests us, the One of the relation 'sexual relationship'." (*Seminar 20*, pp. 6-7; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, pp. 12-13).

⁸⁷ Again, this idea goes way back. See the last paragraph of *The Subversion etc.*, quoted above. In *Seminar XIV*, Lacan discusses detumescence as a defence against a further jouissance that is refused by the subject (lesson of 10th May 67). In *Seminar X*, his theory on anxiety is related in a very obvious way to this jouissance of the Other. Anxiety as a reaction to the Real, to be understood as the Real of the body beyond the signified, phallicized body. This particular elaboration of anxiety is to be found in *Seminar XXII*, RSI (lesson of 10th December 1974), which in itself is a revision of a passage from *Le Séminaire, livre IV* (p. 225) where he still associates little Hans' anxiety to the real of his penis. In the new theory, this is changed into the Real of the organ beyond the phallus. A bit further on in the same *Seminar IV*, Lacan did mention the "caractère d'invasion déchirante, d'irruption chavirante" of the first orgasmic experience (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, pp. 259-260; my translation: "the characteristic of devouring invasion, of rolling irruption").

⁸⁸ "le chemin vers la mort n'est rien d'autre que ce qui s'appelle la jouissance" (*Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 18; my translation: "the road to death is none other than what is called jouissance").

Death drive, life drive, indeed: Lacan's theory can be studied from the point of view of Freud's final theory. To be sure, Freud's theory wasn't final at all. Lacan took it up and developed it into something clinically relevant. Freud's discovery of a *Beyond of the Pleasure Principle* ended with an opposition between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, to be understood in terms of *Philia* and *Neikos*.⁸⁹ *Eros* is supposed to pursue coupling, association, and mergers into ever-larger unities - just think of the ego's main function: synthesis. At the other end, *Thanatos* pursues disconnection, disintegration, and destruction. These almost philosophical concepts are made operational by Lacan. Phallic enjoyment, within the pleasure principle, operates by means of the signifier (Freud would have said "bound" energy, or the secondary process) and provides us with an always limited and thus safe enjoyment; safe, that is, for the subject. The other enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle lies beyond the signifier (Freud: "free" energy, primary process) and amounts to an unlimited enjoyment of the body at the subject's expense. The repetition compulsion is the secondary process's attempt to get hold and control of this, in an attempt to install a *trait unaire*.⁹⁰ The first enjoyment is always partial, separating, pressure reducing, operating by means of orgasm, which in itself induces a separation from which the subject emerges reborn. The second one is total, merging, pressure enhancing (see Freud's *Vorlust*), and results in a symbiosis: the subject disappears in the Other.

Life and death are relative terms here, since it is hard to determine whose death is really at stake. In the case of the other enjoyment, the subject disappears into a larger whole with eternal life at the horizon, the *Zoë* of the classical Greeks. The subject itself is, as a subject, dead in this eternal life. In the case of phallic enjoyment, the end product is always separation, and the preceding symbiosis is broken and can be said to die. The subject acquires *Bios*, a reduced existence.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Freud, S. (1937c), *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. S.E. XXIII, p. 246.

⁹⁰ See *Le Séminaire, livre XVII* (pp. 88-89), where Lacan subscribes to Freud's hypothesis that the pleasure principle is directed towards the attainment of the lowest possible level of pressure/jouissance, and that the repetition compulsion is an attempt at bridling the irruption of jouissance.

⁹¹ "Zoë is the thread upon which every individual bios is strung like a bead, and which, in contrast to bios, can be conceived of only as endless - as infinite life." (Kerenyi, C., 1976. *Dionysos: Archetypical Image of Indestructible Life*. Princeton University Press, p. XXXV).

"Zoë is eternal and infinite life; bios is finite and individual life; Zoë is infinite "being"; bios is the living and dying manifestation of this eternal world in time." (Baring, A. and Casford, J., 1993, *The Myth of the Goddess*. London, Penguin books, p. 148).

⁹² Freud, S. (1924c). *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. S.E. XIX, pp. 159-161.

The relativity of these terms can be explained by the arbitrary allotment of the names: the death drive is actually a life drive depending on how one looks at it, and, vice versa, the life drive implies the death of something else. *Eros* belongs to the other jouissance, but kills the individual; *Thanatos* belongs to phallic enjoyment, which ends in *la petite mort* (literally "the little death", a French phrase for orgasm). Freud was also confronted with the relativity of these terms and found himself obliged - much to his surprise - to associate the pleasure principle with the death drive ...⁹²

CONCLUSION

The subject of the body?

Ever since Plato we have been acquainted with the division between *psyche* and *soma*, between body and soul. Time and again, this division has insisted in the West. It formed the basis for the split between religion and science, and later on, within science itself, between science and the social sciences. Not only did every attempt to bridge or neutralise this original gap with a holistic approach turn out to be a failure, but these attempts even confirmed the gap as such. Just think of *psyche - soma - tics*.

A first, widely-accepted reading of Lacan reads the body as a mere effect of the Symbolic. The body is ascribed to us and signified for us by the Other. The body is a signified, which means that it is an imaginised body whose awareness and "self-"consciousness only come about by means of the mirror stage. This consciousness is always a false, alienated, and unoriginal one, because it is one granted by the Other. The relationship between the Ideal Ego and the Ego Ideal through the gaze of the Other is taken up again through the word of the Other, and installs an ever increasing distance between the subject and itself; that is, it installs an ever present inner division.

If we study Lacan's entire work, we find a more complex relationship between the subject and the body, one that differs from the classical opposition between *psyche* and *soma*. The Lacanian opposition is between the I and the body as an organism, and this leads to an opposition between the divided subject and the sexualised, that is, phallicized body.

(divided) subject versus organism

versus

phallic body

This double opposition contains a mutual determination: the one causes the other, which in its turn determines the first one. The ground of this is the drive, and - in view of its double structure - this ground occurs twice. Lacan repeatedly refers to this double structure when he deals with the topological

homology between the unconscious, the drive, and the subject.⁹³ In each case, there is a topological border structure, along with an opening and closing movement in which something gets lost. The fact that it is “double” means that we have to meet with the three main characters twice: the drive, the unconscious, and the subject... twice. Compared to the classical psyche-soma division, what we have here is an epistemo-somatic gap,⁹⁴ since it subverts our thinking about causality and science.⁹⁵

I consider drive (1) to be the primal drive, the life and death drive, at the border between eternal life, *Zoë*, and individual life, *Bios*. The accompanying primal unconscious is Freud's kernel or nucleus of our being that can never be represented, but remains isolated through a process of fixation, a staying behind - what he called primal repression. This Freudian kernel is Lacan's Real of the drive, the object *a*. The first alienating subjectivation takes place within the mirror stage as a response to this. As a result, a sexless, genderless “I” emerges (the phallus is lacking in the mirror stage), and this is the first master-signifier by means of which an attempt is made to *m'être/maître à moi-même* (to be myself, to belong to myself, to be master of myself). This signifier emerges as part of an attempt to bridge the gap between being and speaking being.⁹⁶ But this only serves to confirm the gap. The first symbol, then, is also a sepulchre, a tomb, serving as a reminder that the subject has disappeared.⁹⁷

⁹³ “(...) l'inconscient n'a rien à faire avec le fait qu'on ignore des tas de choses quant à son propre corps et que ce qu'on sait est d'une toute autre nature. On sait des choses qui relèvent du signifiant. (...) Mais l'inconscient de Freud (...) c'est le rapport qu'il y a entre un corps qui nous est étranger et quelque chose qui fait cercle, voire droite infinie - qui de toutes façons sont l'un à l'autre équivalents - quelque chose qui est l'inconscient.” (*Seminar XXIII, Joyce - le sinthome*, lesson of 11th May 1976; my translation: “(...) the unconscious has nothing to do with the fact that one is ignorant about a lot of things concerning one's own body and that what one does know is of a totally different nature. One knows things that arise from the signifier. (...) But Freud's unconscious (...) concerns the relationship between a body that is foreign to us and something that makes a circle, even an infinite straight line - anyhow, those two are in one way or another equivalent - something that is the unconscious.”).

⁹⁴ This idea of “une faille épistémologique-somatique” appears in Lacan's intervention during the panel discussion on psychoanalysis and medicine in 1966 (published in *Cahiers de Collège de Médecine*, 1966, 11, pp. 761-766). In this intervention, he rejects Descartes's theory because it leaves us completely in the dark concerning the real body. And the definition of the body Lacan introduces, leaves no doubt about the new direction his theory is taking: “un corps est quelque chose qui est fait pour jouir de soi-même”, (op. cit., p. 767, my translation: “a body is something made to enjoy by itself”). This is indeed an epistemo-somatic split, because it leaves behind the classical way of looking at the body-mind gap and introduces a new division - one which still has to be developed.

I consider drive (2) to be the secondary drive. This is the partial drive, or, in better terms, the phallic drive, which re-elaborates on drive (1) in a retro-active, *nachträgliche* way, via the Symbolic. Thus, it operates at the border of the phallic and what lies beyond the phallic. The unconscious that accompanies this consists of the productions of the unconscious - *les formations de l'inconscient* - effects of a never tiring after-repression, *Nachdrängung*. As a result, the subject comes to the fore in an alienated way, divided by the signifiers of the Other. This second subjectivation is nothing other than the Oedipal complex - "*où se décide l'assomption du sexe*", through which the subject becomes a subject with a gender, attributed by the Other. The first symbol on this level is the phallus, that is, the indication that object *a* has disappeared.

The original gap between the subject and the organism is repeated in the gap between the subject and the body - a male or female body. At this point, the "body" that we have is a constructed one, and is clothed with a gender identity as a result of the loss due to chromosomal gender. This gender identity originates in the signifiers of the Other and is deceptive. Indeed, the male-female differentiation that one might expect and hope for is only given in terms of phallic identity: the phallus with a plus or minus sign before it. In this sense, there is no sexual relationship between the two genders.

This line of reasoning contains a very important assumption: gender identity is a secondary, and even defensive, construction. An original gap, rift, or *déhiscence* between the subject and the organism gets exteriorised in, and therefore elaborated by, the male-female binary. Male and female here have to be understood as phallic-male and castrated-female: a phallic-plus and a phallic-minus. Assuming that there is a relationship between the two, it will never be a sexual one, but merely a phallic one. However, femininity cannot be reduced to this phallic interpretation. Femininity is both phallic and beyond the phallus, something which can be called "other", the other *jouissance*.

⁹⁵ To put it briefly: scientific laws are systematically determinative, but not causal; causality is unsystematically determinative, but not scientific. It lies beyond science.

⁹⁶ For "M^étre/maître à moi-même", see *Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 178. This results in the loss of the body as a real body: "(...) qu'il y a un usage du signifiant qui peut se définir à partir du clivage d'un signifiant-maître avec ce corps dont nous venons de parler, le corps perdu par l'esclave pour ne devenir rien d'autre que celui où s'inscrivent tous les autres signifiants" (*Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 102; my translation: "(...) that there is a usage of the signifier that can be defined starting from the cleft of a master-signifier away from this body we have been talking about, the body lost by the slave to become none other than the one on which all other signifiers are inscribed").

⁹⁷ *Écrits. A Selection*, p. 104; (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 319)

The gap between “being” and “Other”, between being and sense, is repeated in the gap between woman and man with the very same effect: as much as the subject tries to reach the body from within the Other of language, the subject will never succeed. This gap cannot be bridged since it is structurally installed by language. And as much as man tries to reach woman he will never succeed. The gap can never be bridged since it is installed by the phallus. Achilles will never be able to join the tortoise, let alone Briseis.⁹⁸ Phallic enjoyment implies an end for the subject who has opted for the male side. Opting for the female side promises something beyond this. Man’s impotent outrage at this can be found in a side effect of the so-called sexual revolution: the obligation for woman to come, that is, to enjoy in a phallic way. Moreover, it can be found in the obligation to come *together*, thus forbidding woman from escaping into something beyond this coming, into that nine-tenths of the other enjoyment that Tiresias talked about. If man wants to reach that part as well, then he has to change into a woman. Schreber knew this, and followed Tiresias, the one who revealed the truth and got breasts.

These references to Schreber and Tiresias demonstrate the mythical character of this dimension, which probably says a great deal more about masculine fantasy and especially about masculine anxiety than about the essence of femininity. Nevertheless, woman takes another stance towards phallic enjoyment and has a surplus value which man doesn’t grasp.

The subject of the body? Ultimately, the question has to be related back to the question about self-consciousness, the philosophical question par excellence. The Aristotelian *Omne animal post coitum triste, praeter gillum qui cantat* demonstrates the association with pleasure and jouissance. Orgasm is the only conceivable way in which this gap or *déhiscence* can be closed: a stitching up (*la suture du sujet*)⁹⁹ by which the subject joins his own body for a moment along with the body of another.

⁹⁸ *Seminar 20*, p. 8; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 13).

⁹⁹ The idea of “la suture du sujet” was mentioned by Lacan in *La science et la vérité* (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 861), as the goal of science: a stitching up of the subject’s division, bridging the gap of the inner split. Since orgasm and sleep are the only instances in which this “suture” is actually installed, this puts the goal of science in a rather rosy light - friend scientists, get to work! See also *Seminar XII*, lesson of 16th December 1964 and *Seminar XXIII*, lesson of 13th January 1976.

¹⁰⁰ This is the main theme of *Seminar X*, which reappears in a very condensed form in *Télévision*: affect does not concern the body, on the contrary, the essence of affect concerns its displacement, with anxiety as its base, anxiety being the only affect that does not deceive. This anxiety has to be understood on the basis of the confrontation between subject and object *a* (Lacan, J., 1973. *Télévision*. Paris, Seuil, pp. 38-39. Lacan, J., 1990, *Television, a Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss and A. Michelson. Ed. J. Copjec. New York, Norton, pp. 20-22).

It is not called *la petite mort*, the little death, for nothing. Immediately afterwards, the gap is reinstalled and the subject is sad. What comes before and after this teaches us something about affect. Before, there is desire and anxiety because the subject has to disappear from the scene. Afterwards, there is sadness because the union with the object disappears.¹⁰⁰ Even Freud considered object-loss to be the empty kernel of depression, and Klein turned it into a necessary phase.

Opposed to this is Cicero's *Omne animal se ipsum diligit*. "Diligit": love without doubt, power without guilt. The cock (!) - "gallum" - crows happily, and no animal is sad. Only the subject weeps. Indeed, there is no *se ipsum* for the animal, only a being with which it is identical, a being that enjoys. Enclosed in it(self), as being.

With this in mind, it should be no surprise that Lacan fights Descartes throughout the whole of his work, and especially targets his *Cogito ergo sum*. Whereas the good soul Descartes conceives of the gap between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* in terms of an outside and an inside, according to Lacan this cleft is first and foremost an inner one, one that is in the subject itself.¹⁰¹ For Lacan, being (*sum*) ex-sists outside thinking (*cogito*), precisely because (*ergo*) of this thinking with signifiers; being ex-sists, and from this ex-sistent position it functions as a cause, thus taking over the role of Descartes's God. Moreover, this thinking subject is a divided subject who doesn't want to recognise its inner division. It has a handy solution to this: it assigns one part of this division to the signified body, thus setting the standard for hysteria. But this new division is never able to overlap the original one.

Man is not a divided subject, he is a quartered being.

¹⁰¹ "In fact, the subject of the unconscious is only in touch with the soul via the body, by introducing thought into it. (...) Man does not think with his soul (...). He thinks as a consequence of the fact that a structure, that of language (...) carves up his body, a structure that has nothing to do with anatomy." (*Television*, p. 6; *Television*, p. 16). The following page demonstrates that according to Lacan there is a fundamental disharmony between thought (*pensée*) and soul (*âme*), in contrast to the myth of completeness and thus complacency between them; the gap is not between body and soul, but between mind and subject. That is, there is always a divided subject, and this entails a division between being and sense. Isn't this the original meaning of Freud's cleft between consciousness and the unconscious?

MIND YOUR BODY.

Lacan's Answer to a Classical Deadlock.

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

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 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, 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" (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.

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 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 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).

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 *entfremdet*, 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).

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 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

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).

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. The symbolic order as

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 exists within this phallic jouissance, and this has to do with a-natomy (p. 87).

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 exists 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

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. *Television*. 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

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 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

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).

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 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

⁹ Freud, S. (1892-1899), *Draft K to Fliess*. S.E. 1, p. 222.

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.

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 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

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.

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, 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,

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.

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. 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

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".

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 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 (S₁) 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 llanguage 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 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.

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).

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.

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 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 psychical 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

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 psychical nature, or if "they are physical processes whose psychical 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 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.

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 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,

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).

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

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 unverbilised 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 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

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.

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 in-determinism 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 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:

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 *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil, pp. 160-161. Lacan's critique of the body/mind impasse is already to be found in this paper, dating from 1946.

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 (pp. 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 puts 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-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

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.

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

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

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 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

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.

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 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:

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.

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

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.

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 insisting 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

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.

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-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.

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).

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 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):

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).

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 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 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.

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.

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...

DREAMS BETWEEN DRIVE AND DESIRE.

A Question of Representability.

One of the major conclusions of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* is that every dream comes down to the fulfilment of a secret wish. This message of Freud's book has been kept intact for the last hundred years. The latent dream-thoughts contain a forbidden unconscious desire, which finds its expression in the manifest dream-content, albeit distorted by the dream-work. Every analysis has to follow the opposite road, meaning that the dream-work has to be countered by the analytic work. At the end of the analytic day, the patients will be consciously aware of their unconscious wishes, that is, they will be cured, because the dynamics of repression have been undone. This assumption explains another well-known saying from Freud's dream-book: that the dream provides us with the royal road to the unconscious, in this case the repressed desire and the latent dream-thoughts.

In this paper I want to argue that such a reading of Freud is incomplete, to say the least. The way in which such a reading considers the dream, the unconscious and the ends and goals of the analytic practice is rather naive. First of all, I'd like to discuss this threefold naivety.

REPPRESSED WISHES, ROYAL ROADS AND CONSCIOUS DESIRES

Every dream comes down to the fulfilment of a repressed desire. Based on my clinical practice, I can say that the idea of a hidden wish in the dream is not all that clear. In a number of cases, it is rather difficult to find any wish whatsoever. In an even larger number of cases, there is a wish, but this wish is not hidden, even on the contrary: it appears as such in the manifest dream-content, and the patient is fully aware of this desire during his waking life. Freud mentioned this possibility when he discussed the dreams of small children, i.e. dreams in which the distortion owing to the repression has not taken place. Today, probably because of the huge social changes, the process

of repression seems to fail more and more, and our contemporary patients are confronted in their dreams with something beyond repression. It reminds me of a joke. A patient consults his analyst because of a recurrent dream: "Doctor, doctor, every night of the last week I have dreamt I entered the bedroom of my new neighbour and that I fucked her like hell. I don't understand this, what does it mean?" Answers the analyst: "It means that you want to ride a white horse through your neighbour's front garden, armed with a long black spear".

The idea of a hidden, repressed wish has to be abandoned in a large number of cases. Instead, I would like to stress something else that is quite central in Freud's book: the main goal of every dream is to keep the dreamer asleep, the wish to sleep is the central wish, and dreams are the guardians of sleep.¹ This function is all the more interesting if we study the point where dreams fail to fulfil it, i.e. the nightmare. I will come back to that later on.

My next point of discussion concerns the unconscious. The dream is the royal road to the unconscious, but the question is to which unconscious? At the time of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the unconscious came down to a number of repressed wishes, which are not too difficult to analyse. But when we study Freud's other works from the same period, things get rather more complicated. Even in *The Interpretation of Dreams* we find a remarkable idea that persists through Freud's entire work. Every dream, says Freud, contains a nucleus that cannot be analysed² and this has to do with the kernel of our being.³ This kernel or nucleus is the mycelium from which the dream-wish grows, just like a mushroom.⁴ Obviously, the royal road to the unconscious is not that easy, and must necessarily lead to some kind of deadlock. As we will see, this deadlock has to be studied together with the failure of the dream's main function, that is, the wish to sleep.

My third point of discussion is the most difficult one. The idea that the therapeutic goals of analysis come down to undoing the process of repression and becoming conscious of the formerly repressed desires did not even work at Freud's time; hence his plea for transference analysis and working-through. Today, considering the lack of repression in our patients, we are obliged to redefine the goals of analysis in general and dream-interpretation in particular.

¹ Freud, S. (1900a). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. S.E. IV/V, pp. 233, 234, 678.

² Freud, S. (1900a). *Ibid.*, p. 111, n. 1 and pp. 524-525.

³ Freud, S. (1900a). *Ibid.*, p. 603.

⁴ Freud, S. (1900a). *Ibid.*, p. 525.

We have to leave this threefold naivety behind us. Instead, I would like to put forward three propositions. They are based on my reading of Lacan, but the core of these propositions is already present in Freud. Firstly: every dream contains a double level, where on the one hand we have the level of desire, and on the other hand the level of jouissance. Secondly: these two levels correspond to two different layers in the unconscious, meaning the repressed unconscious and the original or system Ucs. Thirdly: this double level obliges us to reconsider the therapeutic goals of analysis.

DESIRE AND JOUISSANCE IN THE DREAM

Every dream contains a double level, mixing desire and jouissance. In order to understand this, we have to study Freud's theory on the drive. The concept itself is formulated after *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but the idea is very much present right from the start in his writings. Even more so, it is one of his earliest preoccupations. Every time he discusses the so-called Q-factor or quantitative energy, he is discussing the main character of the drive, i.e. its very aspect of energetic drive.⁵ And quite soon, he understands this Q-factor as something central both in matters of sexuality and anxiety, hence his discussion about the transformation of sexual libido into anxiety. From his correspondence with Fliess, it is obvious that this Q-factor is something that needs representation, because without representation, the subject cannot cope with it in a normal psychological way. Once the Q-factor has entered the realm of representation, all kinds of coping mechanisms can be applied to it, summarised by Freud in his idea of "defence". These mechanisms receive their first elaborate description in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, more particularly in the chapter on the dream-work, starting with the mechanisms of condensation and displacement. These mechanisms are fascinating, so fascinating even that we tend to forget the main thing: they go back to an original infantile wish that needs to find a representation in one way or another, hence the first preoccupation of the dream-work, the "considerations for representability".

From my point of view, this infantile wish is nothing but the original drive, although the concept is lacking in Freud's dream-book. Thus considered, the dream is first of all a means of representing and expressing the drive

⁵ Freud, S. (1894a). *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*. S.E. III, p. 60. It has to be noted that Freud uses several denominations (energetic investment, instinctual power, pressure, quantitative factor and, of course, libido). The impossibility to find one denomination and one only, testifies already to the fundamental difficulty, i.e. the impossible relation between drive and representability.

in such a way that the dreamer can stay asleep. Freud's further work on the drive will attest to the difficulty of this job. As the drive is a concept on the border between the psyche and the somatic, it is something that can never be fully represented. Hence the most beautiful Freudian definition: "the drive is to be regarded as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work".⁶ Our dream-life is one of the products of this demand.

Indeed, the dream-work starts from the drive and proceeds in such a way that this drive becomes transformed, i.e. represented in a desire. Freud stressed the forbidden part of this desire, which was quite obvious in the Victorian era. Today, with Lacan, we can emphasise another clinical characteristic, also quite easily recognisable, even in the Freudian examples. Every desire goes back to a desire of or for the Other, be it in the positive or the negative sense. This is a very interesting thesis in itself, being more useful in today's clinical practice than the idea of every dream containing a hidden wishfulfilment. Moreover, this thesis has the advantage of bringing the dream-interpretation right into the interpretation of transference because sooner or later (usually sooner), the analyst will be placed in the position of the Other. In itself, this last statement holds some serious implications for the interpretation, as it is not always clear who is interpreting whom.

Interesting as this might be, it is nevertheless not my main point of interest here. What I would like to underline is that desire and representability are synonymous to a certain extent. My desire is the desire of the Other, yes, but who or what is this Other? Following Lacan, the Other comes down to the representational unit from whom I draw all my identifications (remember that even for Freud, an identification is based on an object choice) or, to put it in Lacanian terms, all my alienations.⁷ So, the upper level of the drive in the dream is the level of phallic desire, meaning the level of the Other, meaning the level of representability. These representational elements of the drive can be repressed, rejected, condensed, displaced... whatever. It is this phallic level that can be fully analysed, because it is the very level upon which the model of free association is based. As said above, such a full analysis implies the analysis of transference as well.

⁶ Freud, S. (1905a). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, p. 168.

⁷ For a further discussion, see Verhaeghe, P., *The Lacanian Subject. Causation and Destitution of a pre-ontological non-entity*, in Nobus, D. (ed.), 1998. *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London, Rebus Press, pp. 164-189.

But what about the other part? As we are dealing with the drive, this other level concerns the not-represented part of the drive, the Q-factor that has not entered the realm of the ever-phallic representation. From my point of view, this is Freud's kernel or nucleus, the mycelium that in itself is impossible to analyse. The reason for this impossibility is easy: as there is no representation available, it cannot enter the associative material. This is the point Freud reaches when he studies the traumatic neurosis, and he will describe it as the *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. It is the same point that every one of us reaches during a nightmare. As a matter of fact, the nightmare is the most common example of a traumatic neurosis: the dreamer encounters something that he cannot put into words and that is impossible to represent, something from the real. The dream fails in its attempt to represent this part of the real, hence it fails in its function to keep us asleep, and we wake up in full anxiety. From a Lacanian point of view, this kernel or nucleus of the real is the object *a* or the jouissance, i.e. the strange mixture of pleasure and anxiety beyond desire. To summarise: the dream is one way of coping with the drive by representing the drive through the desire of the Other. Where the mechanism of the phallic pleasure principle fails, we are confronted with the real of the jouissance.

WHICH UNCONSCIOUS?

This brings me to my second statement. The dream is the royal road to the unconscious, but the question is: to which unconscious? It is fairly well-known that Freud made three distinctions. 1. The unconscious in its descriptive meaning. 2. The unconscious in its dynamic meaning. 3. The unconscious as a permanently unconscious system, i.e. the system Ucs.

The descriptive meaning is the least interesting one, as it merely describes a state of mind. As such, it has been assimilated by most contemporary psychological theories. The core problem resides with the dynamic unconscious and the system Ucs. Freud came into contact with the dynamic unconscious during his clinical work, when he was faced with the split between the energetic investment and the representations. It seemed that the words belonging to certain affects disappeared from the consciousness, and that the original cathexis became displaced to other representations. In one way or another, the "forgotten", i.e. repressed representations are inscribed in another psychical system, from which they operate in a pathogenic way. This is the theory of repression, which explains the existence of the dynamic unconscious.

Based on this part of the theory, one could presume that the unconscious is the sole effect of repression. This would imply that all the repressed contents could be made conscious again, as they originally belonged to the consciousness. This is not the case. In Freud's theory, repression is based

on a primary form of defence, i.e. primal repression.⁸ For Freud, this primal repression has to do with the somatic component of the drive, which is not so much repressed as left behind during the psychological development. The primal repression must be considered as a primal fixation.⁹ This process creates the kernel of the system Ucs., by isolating it from any further development. This kernel attracts the material coming from repression proper, thus operating in a causal, albeit silent way.

After Freud, all emphasis was put on the dynamic unconscious and the repressed thoughts. This is the core of most psychotherapies. The genuinely psychoanalytic question concerning the nature of the "non-repressed unconscious"¹⁰ was brought up by Lacan. In his first theory, the repressed unconscious is explicitly linked to language and to the speaking Other. Up to 1964 he identifies this repressed unconscious with the unconscious as such, hence his saying: "The unconscious is the discourse of the Other". The subject acquires its identity through the process of alienation, i.e. the identification with the signifiers of the (m)Other based on the desire of this Other. Repression proper operates on these signifiers, and is always related to the relationship with this Other. During the treatment, the repetition of this process during the transference implies both the resistance and the possibility of the undoing of the repression, thus arriving at "full speech".¹¹ The latter expression of Lacan - "full speech" - indicates his conviction at that time that everything could be fully analysed.

After 1964, Lacan concentrates his theory on the system Ucs. His controversy at the Bonneval colloquy (1964) with Ricoeur and later with

⁸ Once Freud had formulated the idea of primal repression, the 'normal' form of repression became a secondary one, termed by him as "Nachverdrängung", literally "after repression" or "eigentliche Verdrängung" (repression proper). On the whole, this differentiation has been largely neglected in the postfreudian era. It is all the more interesting because in Freud's early work, he discusses already the difference between a primal form of defence and a secondary one, thus anticipating his later metapsychology.

Freud, S. (1911c). *Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*. S.E. XII, p.67.

⁹ Freud, S. (1911c). *Ibid.* See also Freud, S. (1915d), *Repression*. S.E. XIV, p. 148 and (1915g), *The Unconscious*. S.E. XIV, p. 181.

This idea of fixation does not solve the problem of inscription, on the contrary. Closer study of the concept of "fixation" reveals that it contains both a somatic and a representational element, so the question remains. And in his most explicit discussion, Freud uses a strange word to denominate the psychological component of the drive: "Vorstellungsrepräsentanz", ideational representative (1915d, *Repression*. S.E. XIV, p. 148). Lacan encounters the same difficulty. In the last part of his work, he develops a new theory on the "letter", which is his way of understanding the primal fixation or inscription of the drive on the body.

Laplanche and Leclaire led him to elaborate a more distinct formulation in this respect. Ricoeur had defined primal repression as the process of translation turning the instinctual into the core of what could later become language.¹² In their joint paper presented at Bonneval, Laplanche and Leclaire voiced a different opinion. According to Leclaire, as a result of the analytic cure, the kernel of the system Ucs. can be summarised in phonemes. According to Laplanche, this kernel consists of imagoes, meaning sensory images without signifiers. With this idea, he re-interprets Freud's theory on the thing presentations and the system Ucs.¹³

Such a reading is not without effect on the aim of the psychoanalytic cure. If the kernel of the system Ucs. is in one way or another of a representational nature, then it can be verbalised and interpreted during the treatment. If not, then the final aim of the cure has to be redefined.

As long as Lacan stressed the linguistic aspect of the Ucs., the former position could be considered his. From 1964 onwards, his focus on the drive and the real obliges him to the latter position, and this will entail a new theory on the unconscious. In this respect, we have to fully acknowledge his ideas on determinism and causality.¹⁴

From a Lacanian point of view, the 'Gothic' interpretation of the unconscious is totally wrong. In this romantic conception, the unconscious is viewed as the basement of the psyche, in which all ancient dreads and desires lie buried until the unavoidable day of their resuscitation. Freud's theory, including concepts such as "the return of the repressed", "repetition compulsion", etc., would be nothing more than the scientific elaboration of this unavoidability. Obviously, such a reading implies a complete determinism, insofar as a human

¹⁰ Freud, S. (1923b). *The Ego and the Id*. S.E. XIX.

Freud, S. (1933a). *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. S.E. XX.

¹¹ Lacan, J. (1966). *Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse*. In *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil; (The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis, in *Ecrits. A Selection*. Translated by A.Sheridan. London, Tavistock).

Lacan, J. (1973). *Le Séminaire: Livre XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse, 1964*. ed. J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil; (*The Four fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Penguin Books, 1977).

Lacan, J. (1975). *Le Séminaire de 1974-75, R.S.I. In Ornicar?*, 3, 1975, pp. 106-107 (see lessons of 21 Jan. and 18 Febr. 1975).

¹² Ricoeur, P. (1965). *De l'Interprétation*. Paris, Seuil; (Freud and Philosophy: *An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven, 1975).

¹³ Laplanche, J. and Leclaire, S. (1966). *L'Inconscient: une étude psychanalytique*. In H.Ey (éd.), *L'Inconscient (VIème colloque de Bonneval)*. Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, pp. 95-130; (*The Unconscious: a Psychoanalytic Study*. Yale French Studies, 48, New Haven, Conn. Yale).

¹⁴ Lacan, J. (1973). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Op. cit., pp. 16-64.

being can only become what (s)he already was. This tallies with the mechanistic-deterministic conviction of early twentieth century science, but it does not leave much room for therapeutic hope.

Lacan not only distances himself from this substantiated interpretation of the unconscious, he even subverts it: the unconscious is of the order of the “not-realised”, the “unborn”.¹⁵ As a process, it is always situated at the border; in itself, it is a void, an abyss: “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.”¹⁶ And even when this unconscious is realised, this always happens in a bungled, failed way. The unconscious formations are “impediments” (*achoppements*), “failures” (*défaillances*), whose most typical characteristic is their temporal scansion: the unconscious opens and closes at the same time.¹⁷

With this theory, Lacan rewords the Freudian opposition between the dynamic and the system Ucs. On the one hand, we have the unconscious formations, including the dream. On the other hand, we are facing the drive nucleus, the object *a*. His rewording stresses the peculiar relationship between these two: the unconscious formations are failures, because they fail to grasp and to cover the drive in a complete way. They manage to signify the phallic part of the drive, but fail with the non-phallic other part. That is the point where Lacan introduces his theory on the not-all that must necessarily escape classical analysis. Indeed, only the repressed part of the unconscious is strictly determined, and can be analysed. He explains this idea of determination in his theory on the so-called automaton. The drive kernel is not determined, on the contrary even; it belongs to *tuchè*, to chance, and operates in a causal way. These two levels are in a continuous interaction with each other.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 22-23, p. 128.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 22, my translation. In the official translation, the French “la béance par où la névrose se raccorde à un réel” is translated by “the gap through which neurosis *recreates a harmony* with the real”. The whole point of seminar XI comes down to the demonstration that any harmony with the real is lost forever. With this idea, Lacan associates himself with an almost forgotten part of Freud's theory, i.e. the fixation of the drive, implying the body as a decision-making instance.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 25. It is important to understand that this always failing realisation does not take place against a hidden (because unconscious) background of totality or unity. On the contrary, such a background is never there. Lacan summarises this subversion with a pun on the ‘un’ of unconscious: “Let us say that the limit of the ‘Unbewusste’ is the ‘Unbegriff’ - not the non-concept, but the concept of lack” (ibid., p. 26). I remember having read somewhere in Freud the question whether the latent dream-thoughts do really exist, or if we have to consider them as essentially absent, meaning that

The automaton is the level easiest to understand. It concerns the network or chain of signifiers, in which the “pulsating function of the unconscious” is at work. The divided subject pops up and disappears under these signifiers - “the signifier represents a subject for another signifier”.¹⁸ In this, the subject is indeed determined by the Other, as Lacan had demonstrated time and again with his theory on the unconscious as being structured like a language.¹⁹ The automatic character of this determinism was masterfully demonstrated in his seminar on *The Purloined Letter*, showing how the chain of signifiers is indeed a chain.²⁰ This is the level of the lawful prediction, at which mechanistic science aims and it may convince one of the omnipresence of determinism.²¹ This brings us to the second level. The unwinding of the associative chain succeeds only to a certain point, something that Freud experienced time and again during his therapeutic work from the *Studies on Hysteria* onwards. The process of remembering succeeds only to a certain limit where the chain stalls and shows an abyss or gap.²² This is what Freud termed the “primal repressed”, and what he also called the umbilic of the dream and the core of our being.²³ It is at this point that the real exists outside the phallic order, the real in the sense of that part of the drive that cannot be assimilated by the phallic chain of signifiers. Hence, the always missed encounter, due to the lack of a signifier as meeting point. This radical lack is conceptualised by Lacan with his theory on the object *a*. This is also the level of pure causality, where determinism and predictability fail.

Thus considered, it becomes clear that the unconscious operates on two levels. On the one hand, there is the chain of signifiers with the lack between them (in Freudian terms: the repressed or dynamic unconscious). This is the level of the automaton, concerning the ever-predictable phallic desire.

the dream-analysis is an attempt to construct an originally failed process.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁹ 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. Porter. New York, Norton Company, p. 32, pp. 44-45.

²⁰ Lacan, J. (1972). *Seminar on “The Purloined Letter” (1956)*. Translated by J. Mehlmán. Yale French Studies, 48, pp. 39-72. This translation does not contain Lacan’s three appendices to his original paper (“Presentation of the sequel”; “Introduction”, and “Parenthesis of parentheses”); for these texts, see Lacan, J. (1966). *Le séminaire sur “la lettre volée”*. In *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil, pp. 11-61.

²¹ For “efficient cause”, see Aristotle, *The Physics*, 198a.

²² Freud, S. (1912b). *The Dynamics of Transference*. S.E. XII, pp. 97-108.

Freud, S. (1914g). *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*. S.E. XII, pp. 145-156.

²³ Freud, S. (1900a). *Op. cit.*, p. 603; *Repression* (1915d). S.E. XIV, pp. 146-158.

Underlying this chain, we encounter a more fundamental lack, concerning the real beyond any signifier (in Freudian terms: the primal repressed or system Ucs.).²⁴ This is the level of the tuchè or causality, where we are confronted with the other jouissance.

BEYOND ANALYSIS: THE SINTHOME

It is evident that this theory opens completely different perspectives on the subject of determinism. On the whole, Lacan is far more optimistic than Freud in this respect.²⁵ This brings us to the last question, the aims and goals of the psychoanalytic treatment. My previous arguments have already demonstrated that the core of the unconscious is not fit for analysis, it is only the repressed part of the unconscious that can be analysed. The same reasoning can be applied on the level of the symptom. After Freud, symptoms were explained on the basis of defence, in which repression takes the prominent place. It was forgotten that repression in itself is already a second moment within the dynamics of the pathogenesis. Indeed, repression is nothing but a coping mechanism directed to the representational signifiers of the drive. Freud himself recognised a twofold structure within the symptom, on the one hand the drive, and on the other hand the symbolic.²⁶ The same reasoning goes for the dream as well, which is not a matter of surprise, as the dream is a symptom.

In the light of this twofold structure, every symptom has to be studied and treated in a double way. Following Lacan, dreams, phobic symptoms, even conversion symptoms come down to the formal envelope of the symptom,

²⁴ What is this real all about? Seminar XI is quite clear on this point. The real beyond the signifier, functioning as cause, is drive-ridden, and that is why Lacan took the drive as his starting-point. With this aspect of the real, the meeting is always a failed one, because there is no signifier to it. In the course of his teaching, Lacan enumerated the various imaginary elaborations of the real: The Other of the Other, The Sexual Relationship, The Woman, all of them summarised in the notation of the barred Other (for the Other of the Other, see Lacan, J., The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious, in *Écrits. A Selection*, op. cit., p. 311; for the Sexual Relationship and The Woman, see Lacan, J. (1998), *Encore. The Seminar of J. Lacan. Book XX. On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972-73*. Edited by J.A. Miller, translated with notes by B. Fink, New York, Norton, p. 35, p. 68).

²⁵ See Lacan, J., *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, op. cit., p. 26: "It is always a question of the subject *qua* indeterminate".

²⁶ This is clearly present in Freud's first casestudy, i.e. Dora. In his report, Freud does not add to his theory on defence, which was already elaborated in his two papers on the psychoneuroses of defence

i.e. they are the representational expression of the real of the drive.²⁷ Thus considered, the symptom is a symbolic construction built around a real kernel of jouissance. The real of the jouissance is the ground or the root of the symptom, whilst the symbolic concerns the phallic upper structure.

Both Freud and Lacan discovered that it is precisely this root of the symptom in the real that obstructs the therapeutic effectivity.²⁸ Analysis aims at the repressed part of the unconscious, meaning the representational phallic system, but is powerless when confronted with the other jouissance. The very fact that today, we are confronted with patients in whom repression is barely present, implies a totally new challenge for psychoanalysis.

It is important to understand that these two levels are not separate ones, in the sense of a binary system. On the contrary even, we are facing a kind of fusion here, which obliged Lacan to develop a whole new topology. Freud expressed this beautifully in his metaphor on the impact of the somatic part: "it is like the grain of sand around which an oyster forms its pearl".²⁹ Lacan uses the metaphor of the jar, which illustrates the reasons why one can't save oneself the trouble of an analysis. According to Lacan, the essence of pottery making does not reside in the raising of the sides of the jar, but in the hollow space that is created by these sides. The jar localises the real within the symbolic. The resemblance to both the formation of a dream and the analysis of this dream resides in the fact that it is only through the elaboration and the analysis of the representational constellation that the real of the drive appears. Or, to put it in Lacanian algebra: that the object a appears.

This object cannot be analysed as such, nor can it be changed. Freud was rather pessimistic in this respect; he considered it to be a biological bedrock and talked about an interminable analysis. Lacan presents us with another

(Freud, 1894a, 1896b). He emphasises the real, drive-related element in Dora's hysteria, what he calls the somatic compliance (*Somatisches Entgegenkommen*). Later, in his *Three Essays*, this will be coined as the fixation of the drive. From this point of view, Dora's conversion symptoms can be studied from two sides: a symbolic one, i.e. the signifiers or psychical representations that are repressed; a real one, related to the (fixation/inscription of the) drive, in her case the oral drive.

²⁷ Lacan, J. (1966). De nos antécédents. In *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 66.

²⁸ Thus, it is not a matter of surprise that Lacan considers the drive to be central in what he considers to be Freud's will. Indeed, Freud's conclusion after fifty years of clinical practice can be summarised as follows: it is the drive that decides on the durable success of the treatment, and this is precisely the reason for his pessimism (Freud, S., 1937c, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, S.E. XXIII, p. 224ff). The same evolution can be discovered in Lacan's work: the early Lacan is focused on the symbolic and the imaginary, but from seminar XI onwards, the real and the drive come into the fore of his attention. Nevertheless, Lacan presents us with another solution, beyond Freud's pessimism.

²⁹ Freud, S. (1905e). *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. S.E. VII, p. 83.

solution. His theory on the object *a* acknowledges the impossibility of the final “full speech”. The system Ucs. remains unconscious, and stays operative. Henceforward, the aim of the treatment is not the final interpretation. The object *a* as such cannot be changed, but the position of the subject towards this object *a* can be revised.

In this respect, Lacan presents us with the idea of a certain kind of identification, based on a decision of the subject. Instead of the usual identification, i.e. the identifications with the Other, this time the identification concerns the real part of the drive beyond its phallic signification. Lacan terms this as the identification with the *sinthome*.

The fixations, considered by Freud as primary symptoms, are for Lacan of a general nature. It is the symptom that defines mankind, and as a symptom, it can not be rectified or cured. That is Lacan’s final conclusion: there is no subject without a symptom. In his last seminars, the idea of symptom receives a new meaning in the light of the goal of analysis. It concerns a purified symptom, i.e. stripped from its symbolic component parts. It concerns the other part, the one that ex-sists outside the unconscious structured as a language: object *a* or the drive in its pure form. The real of the symptom or object *a* demonstrates the particular *jouissance* of the real body of this particular subject. At this stage, Lacan prefers the idea of symptom instead of object *a*, because of his thesis that there is no sexual relationship. If there is no normal sexual relationship as such, every relationship between sexual partners is a symptomatic one. As a result, the analytic treatment has to focus in its final phase on this analysed, denuded version of the symptom.³⁰

I have to stress the fact that this identification with the symptom does not come down to surrender. On the contrary, surrender is an expression of impotence and thus qualifies the attitude of belief in a symptom, and hence, a belief in the Other. In this case, the own failure is considered by the subject as isolated and individual, the conviction still exists that other people, that the Other has succeeded to install The Relationship. This is not the case for the subject that has identified with its symptom and who has verified - during his analysis - that the failure of the sexual relationship is not a matter of individual impotence but of a structural impossibility. The analysis has made it clear that the essence of the subject - “*son être du sujet*” - is situated at the place of the lack of the Other, that is, the place where the Other does not provide us with an answer. The analysant has experienced the fact that the subject is “an answer of the real” and not “an answer of the Other”.³¹

The identification of the subject with the object *a* does not only replace the previous imaginary solutions by a more stable, real one, but has on top of that creative effects: the *jouissance* of the own drives creates the “Other gender”. To be sure, this Other is a fiction, but it is a fiction that does not turn the subject into a dupe, because (s)he has created it him/herself, based on his/her particular way of *jouissance*. Lacan calls this self-created fiction a *sinthome*: a particular signifier that knots the three registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary into a particular sexual rapport. “That what

I have defined for the first time as a sinthome, is what permits the keeping together of the Symbolic, the Real and the Imaginary. (...) On the level of the sinthome, there is a relationship. (...) There is only a relationship where there is a sinthome.”³²

Lacan coins the new subject or the finally analysed subject as the subject that has made a choice for the identification with the real kernel of his symptom or the object *a*. “In what consists the sounding that is an analysis? Would it be, or not, to identify with one’s symptom, albeit with taking all the guarantees of a kind of distance?” “To know how to handle, to take care of, to manipulate (...) to know what to do with his symptom, that is the end of the analysis.”³³

³⁰ Lacan, J. (1974-75). R.S.I. In *Ornicar?*, 3, 1975, pp. 106-107.

³¹ Lacan, J. (1973). *L’étourdit*. In *Scilicet*, 4, Paris, Seuil, p. 15.

³² Lacan, J. (1976). Le Séminaire XXIII, Le Sinthome. In *Ornicar?*, 8, p. 20. For an extensive discussion of this part of Lacanian theory, see the excellent study by Declercq, F. (2000). *Het Reële bij Lacan. Over de pulsie en de finaliteit van de analytische kuur*. Gent, Idesça.

³³ “En quoi consiste ce repérage qu’est l’analyse? Est-ce que ce serait, ou non, s’identifier, tout en prenant ses garanties d’une espèce de distance, à son symptôme?” “savoir faire avec, savoir le débrouiller, le manipuler (...) savoir y faire avec son symptôme, c’est là la fin de l’analyse.” Lacan, J. (1977). Le Séminaire XXIV, L’insu que sait de l’une bévée, s’aile a mourre. In *Ornicar?*, 12/13, pp. 6-7.

OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS.

The Quest for Isolation.

Solo e pensoso.
(Petrarca, Sonetti e Canzoni, XXII.)

What is a neurosis? This simple question is hard to answer, mainly because Freud's theory constantly evolved. One of the main reasons for these shifts is precisely the discovery of obsessional neurosis in combination with the ever-present discussion on the drive. I will give you my conclusion at the outset. Neurosis is a way of handling the inner drive by ascribing it to the Other. Hysteria has everything to do with the oral phallus and the Eros drive; obsessional neurosis occupies itself obstinately with the anal phallus and the death drive.

NEUROSIS AND DRIVE THEORY

The evolution of Freud's theory can be read as one prolonged study focussing on the drive and this long before he actually coined the concept as such. The two crucial problems in this respect are the following. First of all, there is an internal contradiction in the drive itself with regard to its goal. Secondly, how to define pleasure or unpleasure, and what is the position of the Other in this respect? Traditionally, these questions are studied from the hysterical point of view, but it is the obsessional neurosis that caused Freud much more trouble. In what follows, I will present you with a Lacanian reading of Freud's theory, both on the drive and on obsessional neurosis.

Let us start with the internal contradiction in the drive itself. Initially, Freud interpreted this opposition as the antagonism between the drive for self-preservation on the one hand and the sexual drive on the other.¹ Later

¹ "The individual does actually carry on a twofold existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other as a link in the chain, which he serves against his will or at least involuntarily (...). The separation of the sexual instincts from the ego-instincts would simply reflect this twofold function of the individual." (Freud, S., 1914c. *On Narcissism: an Introduction*. S.E. XIV, p. 78).

on, in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) he recognised its more fundamental nature, meaning the opposition between life and death drive, Eros versus Thanatos. Both wish to return to an original, prior state of being. The life drive aims at a return to the state of fusion and totality; Eros does this by uniting all the separate elements, which results in an increase of tension. Thanatos, on the contrary, aims at a return to the state of separateness as it existed before the onset of life; the death drive does this by breaking up all the links between united elements, which results in a lowering of all tension, if necessary until degree zero, meaning death in effect.

Lacan's theory allows us to rephrase this question of life and death. The life drive aims at the other *jouissance*, resulting in the disappearance of the subject in the Other, and hence in the death of the subject itself as a separate being. The death drive aims at the phallic *jouissance* through which the subject separates itself from the Other, and hence steps forward as an isolated being, independently of this Other. In this Lacanian reading, the notions of life and death become extremely relative. Freud's life drive implies the death of the subject, meaning its disappearance; Freud's death drive implies the continuation of the life of the subject. In the course of this paper, I will demonstrate that the hysteric sides with Eros, whilst the obsessional has chosen for Thanatos.

The second problem concerns the ever-difficult differentiation between pleasure and unpleasure, and the position of the Other in these matters. Lacan restates this question in terms of the other *jouissance* versus the phallic *jouissance*. The classic refrain is well known: hysteria is caused by too much unpleasure, obsessional neurosis by too much pleasure. This statement is wrong, not least because of the fact that in Freudian theory, it is not altogether clear what pleasure and/or unpleasure really are. In his initial theory, he understood pleasure as a decrease of tension through the process of "Abreaction", and unpleasure as an increase of tension. Soon enough, he had to abandon this behavioural principle. It is at this point that we have to make the connection with the drive theory, and especially with the internal contradiction in the drive itself.

² "I refer to the concept that in mental functions something is to be distinguished - a quota of affect or sum of excitation - which possesses all the characteristics of a quantity (though we have no means of measuring it), which is capable of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge, and which is spread over the memory-traces of ideas somewhat as an electric charge is spread over the surface of a body." (Freud, S., 1894a. *The Neuropsychoses of Defence*. S.E. III, p. 60).

³ Freud, S. (1915c). *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*. S.E. XIV, p. 122.

⁴ Whether something is experienced as pleasure or not, has to do with the interpretation by the experiencing subject. The accompanying somatic phenomena are basically similar: faster heart beat, higher blood pressure, more secretion, etc.

One of the insistent clinical and conceptual questions that haunts Freud right from the start has everything to do with the increase of inner tension, the famous "Q"-factor, that is, the energy flux arising from within the body, thus making normal flight impossible and asking for an answer of another kind.² It is this "Q"-factor that constitutes the essence of the drive, namely the pressure (*Drang, Erregung*).³ In Freud's first reading, such a pressure is only unpleasurable, and it has to get abreacted as soon as possible. Moreover, still in this first Freudian theory, this pressure and the ensuing unpleasure is caused by the Other, it is an external factor which attacks the patient. This is the so-called seduction and trauma-theory in which all emphasis is put on hysteria. The drive comes from the Other.

Freud sticks with this theory until the end of the nineties, but then things change quite rapidly. His discovery of infantile sexuality teaches him that the drive impulses find their origin in the inside, in their own organism. This discovery subverts the previous theory completely. The drive is internal, and - in addition - the drive impulses are experienced as pleasurable. Their unpleasant character is something they acquire at a later stage.⁴ The opposition between pleasure and unpleasure seems to hide another opposition, which will prove to be far more important, namely the opposition between the active or the passive position in relation to the Other. These changes in Freud's theory have everything to do with his study of obsessional neurosis. The case of the Ratman is very instructive in this regard: the whole story is crammed with scenes of seduction - by the mother, the nannies, the sisters, even the brother - but Freud sticks to the Ratman's own drive as the main causal factor.⁵ In his previous theory, the defence mechanisms were directed at the outside.⁶ In his new theory, they address the subject's own drive.

The story does not end here. The opposition between the internal and external world, between external and internal pressure is a lot more complicated. Indeed, the external and the internal are not two separate entities; on the contrary, they present themselves as a strange mixture. With this third shift in the drive theory, we finally encounter the genuine psychoanalytical theory. In order to understand this, I have to go back to the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895). If one studies the *Project*

⁵ These seductions are more obvious in the journal of the treatment, kept daily by Freud, than in the actual publication of the case study. (Freud, S. *Original Record of the Case*. S.E. X.)

⁶ It has to be noted that already at the time of the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895a), Freud used the idea of foreign bodies (*Fremdkörper*), to denote the incompatible part against which defence is directed. It belongs to the inner world, but is considered as something from the outside. Only later on, at the time of his paper on *Negation*, this paradox is solved, because there, he reconsiders completely the relationship between the "inside" and the "outside".

in combination with clinical experience, it becomes quite clear how an internal drive gets indissolubly connected with the external Other. If we want to understand what obsessional neurosis is, we have to study this dialectical exchange between drive, subject and Other.

One of the classic critiques of Freud is that he sexualises “everything”. It has been forgotten that in his *Project* he elaborates a theory on the origin of psychological functioning prior to sexual development as such, meaning a phallic-sexual development. In this theory, he advocates a principle of the psychophysics of his time, namely the pleasure principle, which says that every organism tends to organise itself in such a way that the lowest possible level of tension is maintained. Freud’s reasoning in the *Project* runs as follows.

The starting point of human development is an original experience of unpleasure, i.e. pain (*Schmerz*), resulting from an internal need (*Not* or *Bedürfnis*). Hunger and thirst are the prototypes of this situation.⁷ Freud understands this pain as a quantitative increase of pressure, resulting in the breakthrough of stimuli through the protective shields of perception, just as is the case with a physical injury.⁸ In other words, the original situation of pain can be compared to a trauma. The reaction of the baby to this unpleasurable situation is prototypical, and constitutes the basis for all further intersubjective relationships. The helpless infant turns to the Other by crying, and it is the Other who has to take a “specific action” through which the inner pressure is relieved.⁹ This initial situation forces the infant into a passive-dependent position towards the other, within the primary economy of pleasure and unpleasure.

It must be stressed that this prototypical situation causes a connection between the originally internal tension and the Other. The link between the two, i.e. between the inner drive and the Other, is the crying or shouting. In more general terms: the expression or representation of the drive. In other words, the original bodily drive acquires right from the start an intersubjective

⁷ Originally this goes back to the *Project*. Freud returns to it in *The Ego and the Id*: “In the same way that tensions arise from physical needs can remain unconscious, so also can pain - a thing intermediate between external and internal perception, which behaves like an internal perception even when its source is in the external world.” (Freud, S., 1923b, S.E. XIX, p. 22).

⁸ Later on, Freud makes the analogy between drive and trauma explicitly: “pain occurs in the first instance and as a regular thing whenever a stimulus which impinges on the periphery and breaks through the devices of the protective shield against stimuli and proceeds to act like a continuous instinctual stimulus, against which muscular action, which is as a rule effective because it withdraws the place that is being stimulated from the stimulus, is powerless.” (Freud, S., 1926d. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, S.E. XX, p. 170). See also the paper on *Repression* (Freud, S., 1915d, S.E. XIV, pp. 146-147).

⁹ Freud, S. (1887-92). *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, S.E. I, pp. 317-321.

dimension. For Freud, this situation represents the primal traumatic experience. He coins it as the separation, and understands it as the experience in which the adult does not respond adequately to the inner pressure of the infant. As we will see, this inadequacy is either a too much or a too little, but never just right.

In this respect, an important shift is installed at the outset of development: internal, unpleasurable tension becomes associated with the external Other. Moreover, responsibility for this internal increase in tension is ascribed to the external Other, because the relief of this tension is his or her task. This Other will never be up to the job, there is always too little or not enough. Indeed, the Other has to interpret the crying of the infant, and there will never be a perfect match between the interpretation, the cry and the drive as its cause. Lacan restates this question in the dialectical mismatch between need, demand and desire.

As a result, right from the beginning, the Other is accused of what goes wrong internally. The defence against the inner drive impulse becomes a defence against the Other. This implies that the opposition between subject and Other replaces the original opposition between the ego and the drive impulse. From that mythical moment onwards, these two oppositions will operate in a mixed way. This mixture is expressed by what are probably the most well known Lacanian quotes: "The unconscious is the discourse of the Other", and "The desire of man is the desire of the Other".

This mixture is installed through two processes. The infant experiences its own drive impulse and turns to the Other for a reaction that relieves the inner tension. For Freud, the primal primitive mechanisms at work here are the incorporation and the expulsion. The pleasurable part coming from the Other is taken in and stays inside; the basic model in this respect is oral incorporation. The unpleasurable part is expelled; the basic model in this respect being anal expulsion. These primitive mechanisms become truly human once they are associated with language. Instead of the incorporation of the pleasurable part of the Other, the subject identifies with the good signifiers of the Other; instead of the expulsion of the bad parts, the subject tries to get rid off the bad signifiers of the Other.¹⁰ As a result, the development of one's own identity runs through the Other. At the same time, the development of the "own" language takes place, together with the development of an "own" reality and an "own" position of the subject within this. As I will demonstrate further on, in hysteria all accent lies with the incorporation or identification with the pleasurable part; the hysterical subject can not permit itself to lose the other. With obsessional neurosis, all accent lies with the expulsion and separation of the unpleasurable part; the obsessional subject cannot permit itself to join the Other.

¹⁰ Freud, S. (1920g). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. S.E. XVIII, pp. 26-28.

In the meantime, we must not forget that this development sends out a faulty message. It seems as if the opposition resides between the ego and the Other whose answer is either too much or not enough - that is the way in which the subject experiences it. Still, the primal opposition concerns the opposition between the Real of the own drive impulse and the ever-failing representation of it, through the signifiers of the Other, and hence, through the signifiers of the subject itself. Freud talks about a false connection (*falsche Verknüpfung*); further elaboration of this idea forms the basis for the transference process.¹¹ It is important to be aware of this, because of its effects on the aims and goals of the treatment. Ultimately, the treatment should confront the subject with its own drive and the failure of its symbolisation. Henceforth, the original trauma is not the effect of the drive of the Other (seduction theory), nor the effect of the own drive (medical theory). The original trauma is caused by the gap between the drive impulse on the one hand and the ever-failing representation of it on the other.

In this description of the original development at the level of the infant, it is clear that the basic motive - relief from inner tension - is caused by the will to survive, to stay alive as an organism. There is no question of sexuality, nor of gender differentiation; the unpleasurable tension has to do with hunger and thirst. It is Freud's thesis that this situation, in which the inner tension and the appeal on the Other are combined, leaves its traces in the organism itself, as a result of its repetitive character. He talks about facilitations (*Bahnungen*), operating in such a way that any later development falls back on them.

Such a return to these facilitations happens soon enough. The next crucial step in the development is the oedipal structure.¹² The original situation had to do with needs and instincts, but it does not take long before the drive as such is grafted on to these needs. Freud talks about the *Anlehnung*, the leaning of the drive against the needs (incomprehensibly translated as "anaclitic" in the Standard Edition), which are thereby perverted. The consequences of this leaning-against process are far reaching. It is the oedipal structure that rewrites the original drive impulse in such a way that the interaction is extended to the triangle child, first other and second other, and this within the field of phallic sexuality. As a result, we encounter an oral-phallic and an anal-phallic drive.

¹¹ Freud, S. (1895d), *Studies on Hysteria*, S.E. II, pp. 67-70 n, p. 294, pp. 302-303.

¹² In a certain way, this explains a typical feature of a trauma. It seems as if a trauma is especially traumatic when it is repeated a second time. Freud comments on this point already in his *Project*, where he refers to the deceptive character of the hysterical trauma, meaning that it hides something older. (See his comments on the "proton pseudos", S.E. I, pp. 356-359).

Through the oedipal structure, the original need becomes retroactively sexualised, in the sense of phallicized. The different pregenital sources of the drive and the accompanying pressure, aim and object make their appearance within the exchange between mother, father, phallus and child. The pressure of the drive arises from these pregenital sources and leads to an appeal on the Other, who has to interpret and answer it. This is the transition from need to desire by way of the demand on the first Other. In the case of neurosis, the child has to acknowledge the fact that this first Other has a desire beyond the child itself, directed to the second Other, meaning the father. In this way, the second Other is introduced into this exchange as the one who has what the mother desires. For Freud, this is the penis, for Lacan it is the phallus. This difference demonstrates that Lacan is far more radical than Freud is. The real penis leaves us with the illusion that desire can be satisfied. Hence the omnipresent "Guinness book of records" hysteria in men. The phallus, in contrast, is a signifier, and hence it designates the dreamt-of but unattainable final term of desire. The father is the one who is supposed to have this phallus. The fact that something sexual is used as the signifier for the object of desire is quite important. It puts an end to the original genderless dialectic between mother and child, and introduces the child into the world of sexual difference.

In Freudian terms, this retroactive working-over of the original mother and child situation turns the original separation anxiety (i.e. the anxiety that the Other will not be present to answer the inner need) into castration anxiety for the boy, and an anxiety related to losing the love of the object for the girl. In view of the fact that Freud talks about the real penis, this castration anxiety has to be taken literally. From a Lacanian point of view, another reading is possible. Castration implies the loss of gender differentiation, in the sense of a return to the prior situation of undifferentiated gender identity, as existed in the period before the oedipal structure. This obliges us to rethink the whole question of gender identity, independently of the oedipal constructivistic effect. The main opposition is not the one between boy and girl, but has everything to do with the opposition between either the active or the passive stance towards the first Other. Castration anxiety expresses the fear of falling back into the former position of passive dependence on the Other.

The mother has to interpret the demand of the child, and in doing so, she will inevitably introduce the child to her own desire, that is, to her own stance toward the father and the phallus. This means that she transmits her own interpretations of her own drive impulses to the child. The ways in which the mother reacts toward her own oral, anal and genital drive impulses completely determine the interaction. Initially, the child has to assume a passive stance within this interaction, but, as Freud says and as every parent experiences, the child wants to take up an active position as soon as possible. Obviously, the passive stance is threatening in one way or another.

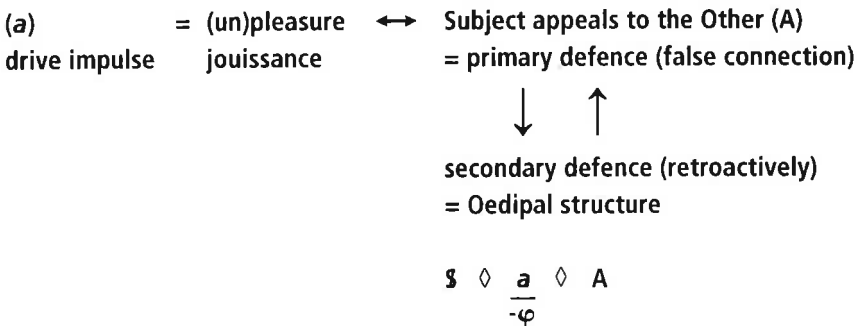
At this point, we encounter the essential difference between hysteria and obsessional neurosis. In the case of an hysterical dialectical exchange, the mother will never be able to give enough to the child, and moreover, she will make it quite clear to the child that the phallus of the father is not enough either. As a result, the child ends up with a craving for more; it will never cease to look for more incorporations and identifications with someone who is supposed to have the phallus. Yet another mechanism is in operation, because of the internal contradiction in the drive itself, namely the tendency towards separation from the Other and towards the active position. In the case of obsessional neurosis, the mother presents the child with a too much, both in giving and in asking, the father is defined as unsatisfactory. As a result, the child tries to free itself from this (s)mothering, it wants first and foremost to take up a separate position, independent of this devouring other. All emphasis is put on the process of expulsion and separation. Yet again, another mechanism is in operation as well, because of the internal contradiction in the drive itself, namely the tendency towards fusion and identification, the tendency towards the passive position. This explains the typical passive-sexual fantasies, secretly harboured by every obsessional.

So, the hysterical mother does not give enough, the obsessional mother gives too much. The hysterical child never receives enough from the Other, and turns out to be an ever-demanding subject who wants to be taken in by the Other. The obsessional child receives far too much, and turns out to be a rejecting and refusing subject, who wants to get rid of the Other as much as possible.

OBSESSIVE NEUROSIS: THE QUESTIONS

In view of the previous theory, neurosis has to be studied on a dual level. On the one hand, there is the neurotic defence against the traumatic Real of the own drive, on the other hand, there is the dialectical working-over of this opposition within the relation subject - Other, and this on a symbolico-imaginary level. The latter is a retake of the former through the oedipal structure. In this way, an original jouissance of the organism is worked over through the phallic pleasure in relation to the Other. So, every neurosis can be studied as a particular relationship towards the Other. Every neurosis and even every neurotic symptom contains these two levels: a real kernel, i.e. the root or fixation of the drive, and its defensive working-over on the symbolico-imaginary level, i.e. the level of the Other.

In my reading, the general schema for neurosis runs as follows:



Through the primary defence, the original internal conflict between the jouissance (*a*) and the subject ($a \rightarrow \S$) gets connected to the relationship between subject and other: $\S \diamond A$. The lozenge (\diamond) indicates the flywheel movement between alienation (incorporation/identification) and separation in the relationship subject - other.

Through these two levels, there is yet another opposition at work, namely, the inner opposition in the drive itself. The problem Freud had concerning pleasure and unpleasure - what is pleasurable, what is unpleasure? - is intimately related to this internal contradiction. The life drive or Eros aims at fusion, which results in an increase of tension. This forms the base of the alienation process, to be understood as a fusion with the Other. The death drive or Thanatos aims at separation, which results in a decrease of tension. In this way, we are left with a paradox in view of the terms used by Freud. The so-called death drive aims at the continuation of life for the ego, albeit isolated from (*a*) and A. The other drive, Eros, implies the death of the ego, because it obliges the ego to disappear in (*a*) and A through fusion. The first defensive elaboration of the relationship between (*a*) and the subject becomes retroactively worked out through the oedipal structure, thus turning

it into a phallic-sexual relationship. Whereas the primary defence is aimed at the jouissance of (*a*) as such, the secondary defence always concerns a phallic (*a/φ*), this time between subject and Other. Instead of having to separate or alienate him/herself, the subject can put forward a partial object.

This general schema holds for neurosis in general. If we want to understand obsessional neurosis, we have to answer the following questions.

First of all, what is typical for obsessional neurosis in matters of drive fixation and the defence against it, and in the retroactive working out of this level within the oedipal dialectic? Second, what are the consequences for treatment? In our reasoning, we focus on the hypothetical case of clear-cut obsessional neurosis, without the mixture with hysteria. It must be said that the latter is more the rule than the former.

FIXATION POINT OF THE DRIVE AND THE DEFENCE THROUGH/AGAINST THE OTHER

If we apply our general schema to hysteria and obsessional neurosis, the difference between the two becomes even clearer. The hysterical point of fixation of the drive concerns the oral object, meaning that hysteria confronts us with a phallic-oral object *a*, together with the mechanisms of incorporation and identification with this pleasurable oral phallus. The unpleasurable part is kept outside through the process of repression, which is the hysterical form of the expulsion. This repression is installed in two steps: the primal repression concerns the original root of the drive, the after or secondary repression concerns the phallic interpretation of this drive root. In hysteria, the drive that takes the upper hand is the Eros or life drive, always aiming at the fusion, hence the omnipresence of identifications in hysteria.

This leads us to the predominant mechanism in hysteria, meaning condensation (*Verdichtung*) or metaphor. This mechanism explains the entire hysterical symptomatology. Every metaphor joins different elements into one whole, thus turning this whole into the container of the different meanings of the separate elements. This can be applied to the typically hysterical mechanism of defence, i.e. repression. Repression and the inevitable return of the repressed can be understood as a metaphorical process. A particular signifier is repressed by putting another signifier on top of it, but this new signifier receives the meaning of the repressed signifier underneath as a supplement. In this way, it opens the possibility of the return of the repressed. All hysterical symptoms are constructed in the same way, and every hysterical symptom combines metaphorically the two sides of the coin. Freud's most instructive example concerns the hysterical attacks of one of his patients, in which the woman tried to undress herself with one hand, and tried to keep her clothes on with the other - both tendencies are present at the same time.¹³

As a result, in hysteria everything is mixed, every symptom provides us with a pathway to the repressed material and to the underlying drive impulse.

There is a direct line between the original “false connection” of the primary defence mechanism, the compulsion to associate (which is considered by Freud as typically hysterical), the secondary elaboration and the fusional character of the Eros drive. In the same line of thought, Lacan’s formula of the hysterical basic fantasy exemplifies the hysterical relationship to the Other:

$$\frac{(a)}{-\phi} \diamond A$$

The hysterical subject identifies itself with the phallic lack of the Other, in order to be able to join a complete Other and to cancel the separation. This explains why Lacan notes A : the Other is completed by the hysterical subject. At the same time, the other tendency is at work as well, the one aiming at separation, thus causing a split in the hysterical subject and the ever-present hysterical conflict.

In the case of obsessional neurosis, things are different. The fixation point concerns the anal drive. Freud considers this kind of fixation as constitutional or dispositional, although he also discusses the effects of developmental factors. This fixation has crucial effects on the ensuing dialectical exchange between subject and Other. It is impossible to decide whether this particular kind of exchange is caused by the anal fixation, or vice versa, whether this fixation is caused by the anal disposition.¹⁴

The oedipal working out presents us with the anal phallus and with a predominance of the expulsion and separation process of the unpleasurable part. *Jouissance* is coped with differently than hysterical repression. The obsessional defence is *isolation*. Just as in hysteria, we can make a differentiation between a primal isolation and a secondary after-isolation. The signifiers that represent the drive are not metaphorically worked out, rather, they become isolated from the rest of the chain of signifiers. As a result, they are excluded from the associative chain through a system of insistent gaps. Freud associates the isolation mechanism with a primitive taboo of touching. These isolated signifiers are not forgotten as is the case in hysteria, but they are associatively inactive.

In Freud’s theory, the defence mechanism of isolation has the same status as hysterical repression.¹⁵ It is just another defence system against

¹³ Freud, S. (1908a). *Hysterical Fantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality*. S.E. IX, p. 166.

¹⁴ Freud, S. (1908a). *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹⁵ As early as 1896, Freud notes that “The specific character of a particular neurosis lies in the fashion in which the repression is accomplished” (*Draft K*. S.E. I, p. 223). We should not forget that at that time, he uses repression and defence as synonyms.

the traumatic real of the own drive impulse. It is first installed in a primal form to which later, secondary forms can return.¹⁶ In the postfreudian clinic, this mechanism was more or less forgotten, it became itself isolated within the theory, which suits its point perfectly. Nevertheless, it is not that difficult to trace it in every clinical experience with obsessional neurosis.

As a mechanism, it has everything to do with the drive that takes the lead in obsessional neurosis, meaning the death drive or Thanatos. Its aim is splitting or separation, through which the discrete elements become isolated, hence the proverbial distance so much cherished by every obsessional neurotic.

The pre-eminent symptom of obsessional neurosis then is of course displacement (*Verschiebung*) or metonymy, being an effect of this isolation mechanism. The obsessional metonymy is a never-ending shift from one isolated element to another, without any apparent connection. I will demonstrate how this metonymy can be recognised in all obsessional phenomena. In contrast to hysterical fusion and identification, which joins conflicting elements, the obsessional separates everything. The most typical example is the so-called undoing, in which a second thought or act annihilates the preceding one. As a result, the associative connections between the conflicting signifiers are cut through, everything becomes scattered all over the place, albeit neatly arranged with an obsessively correct space in-between...

This metonymy is expressed by Lacan's formula of the obsessional basic fantasy.¹⁷

$$\mathbb{A} \diamond \varphi (a, a', a'', a''', \dots),$$

The obsessional subject presents the other with an ever-shifting phallic-anal object, in order to keep him or her at a distance. The lack of the Other is never filled in by the subject as a subject, the fusion with the Other is to be avoided at all costs, hence the notation \mathbb{A} . At the same time, another tendency is at work as well, the Eros drive, which drives the subject to the Other, albeit within this endless shift.

¹⁶ There is only one explicit reference in Freud: "The second of these techniques we are setting out to describe for the first time, that of isolation, is peculiar to obsessional neuroses. (...) We know that in hysteria it is possible to cause a traumatic experience to be overtaken by amnesia. In obsessional neurosis this can often not be achieved: the experience is not forgotten, but instead, it is deprived of its affect, and its associative connections are suppressed or interrupted so that it remains as though isolated and is not reproduced in the ordinary processes of thought. The effect of this isolation is the same as the effect of repression with amnesia. This technique, then, is reproduced in the isolations of obsessional neurosis; (...). Freud, S. (1926d). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. S.E. XX, p. 120.

¹⁷ Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire, livre VIII. Le transfert 1960-61*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 295ff.

OBSESSIONAL SYMPTOMS AND DEFENCES

This reasoning allows us to understand the typical character of the obsessional symptoms and defences. In my experience, obsessional neurosis can be diagnosed over the phone, it is a subjective structure which makes itself literally audible. The obsessional speaks in the chopped straw style, every word, every syllable is pronounced, followed by a pause - the isolation is implemented on the level of speech itself. And on the level of content, the obsessional does not manage to make a point, he or she expands endlessly, the metonymical style excludes every possible conclusion.

The application of metonymy on the classical symptoms presents us with the well-known obsessional spiral movement, demonstrating the ever failing attempts to master the jouissance (*a*) and the Other. This spiral takes off with the primary symptom of self-reproach because of the original jouissance.¹⁸ As such, this self-reproach is already a false connection, because its signifiers are coming from the Other. The obsessional subject appropriates these signifiers to itself, thereby excluding the Other. Moreover, (s)he is right to do so, because the original conflict is indeed an internal one, between the subject itself and the traumatic real aspect of the jouissance.

This primary symptom of self-reproach gives rise to obsessional thoughts, and usually later on, to obsessional acts. These obsessional thoughts are experienced by the subject as intrusive, meaning that they are imposed. They are coming from the Other, and the defence against them is again an attempt to get rid of this Other. From a psychiatric point of view, these thoughts are obsessively categorised as ideative, phobic and impulsive. Ideative obsessions involve the endless rumination over certain thoughts and images. Phobic obsessions are similar, but accompanied by anxiety, frequently a fear of contamination, that is the fear of being touched by the Other in some way. Impulsive thoughts contain streams of abusive and aggressive ideas, mostly against loved ones and always accompanied with a sense of guilt and anxiety for their realisation. This descriptive psychiatric classification masks the real issue: these thoughts aim at the installation of a distance towards the Other, they are a never ending attempt to master the Other, while simultaneously obliging the obsessional to be constantly involved with this Other. The resulting ambivalence obliges the spiral to take yet another turn, namely into obsessional acts. Most of these are defensive measures against obsessional thoughts, and soon enough they take the form of protective rituals, like a certain way of getting out of bed, a certain way of washing, of closing the door, etc. This underlying ambivalence causes the typically obsessional doubting, because (s)he is never sure that the ritual has been carried out in a correct way.

¹⁸ Freud, S. (1896). *Draft K*. S.E. I, p. 224 ff.

All these symptoms operate on the same basic principle of isolation, and they imply a defensive separation from the Other. This is clarified further if we look at the typical obsessional defence mechanisms, such as reaction formation and undoing. Both of them require the same necessary precondition: the representational elements have to be separated and disconnected from the associative chain. In the case of “undoing”, the second act or thought cancels the first one. In the case of reaction formation, the first thought is turned into its reverse in a dual motion. The content is changed from negative to positive (or vice versa) and it no longer comes from the Other, it is the subject’s own thought. In both these mechanisms, the opposition between love and hate is at work. Of course, the same thing holds for hysteria, but in the case of obsessional neurosis, it is much clearer because love and hate take the scene in a separate way.¹⁹ The hatred for the Other is the expression of the death drive, Freud’s successor of the drive for self-preservation, aiming at the continuation of a separate life on one’s own without the Other.

A further development of this infernal spiral brings the two oppositions even closer to each other. Through the “automaton” of the chain of signifiers, the metonymical series returns inevitably towards the “tuchè” of the traumatic Real. An instructive example in this respect is the protective formula developed by the Ratman - his “Glejisamen” - as a summary of all his protective formulas. Closer analysis reveals that this particular formula contaminates his beloved Gisela with his semen, the precise thing he wanted to avoid.²⁰ The final result of such an infernal spiral is usually a complete immobility. The obsessional subject has no space in which to move any more, it has checkmated itself.

THE OBSESSIONAL POSITION TOWARDS THE OTHER

Through the spiral runs the obsessional position towards the Other, which is expressed by the obsessional basic fantasy. The obsessional subject defends itself against the anal drive by taking a certain position towards the desire and the jouissance of the Other. Again, isolation and expulsion are central. The obsessional “gives” everything to the Other, albeit always with the same, hidden aim of keeping the Other at a distance. Take this instead of me, that’s the message. Instead of the hysterical *revindictivity* - the insistent demand for the phallus of the Other - we meet with the obsessional *oblativity* -

¹⁹ Freud, S. (1926d). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. S.E. XX, pp. 119-20. See also Freud, S. (1909d). *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*. S.E. X, p. 192.

²⁰ Freud, S. (1909). *Original Record of the Case*. S.E. X, pp. 280-81.

the burying of the Other, burying in several meanings of the word.²¹ In the case of obsessional neurosis, the underlying anxiety is much greater than in the case of hysteria. Traditionally, Freud ascribes this anxiety to the father figure, thus making his traditional mistake. Just as is the case with little Hans, the Ratman study makes it clear that the anxiety has everything to do with the mother. The fear of the obsessional concerns the first Other, the mother, whose demanding is interpreted as an attempt to incorporate the subject.²² That is the reason why (s)he is so afraid of the passive position.

From this point of view, the identification made by Freud between masculinity and obsessional neurosis is wrong and has to be reinterpreted. The identification he hints at is related to the striving of every obsessional to take the active stance towards the Other; the link with the gender position is secondary.

As a result, the basic obsessional anxiety does not concern castration, but death, in the sense of: dying because of the disappearance of the subject in the Other. The connection between castration anxiety and death anxiety runs as follows. If the phallic elaboration of the original drive impulse disappeared, then the subject would fall back into the originally genderless relationship between mother and child, in which the child has to take the passive position. The first Other is experienced as an almighty creature from which escape is only possible through the phallic escape exit. This aspect of allmightiness returns in another typically obsessional symptom, i.e. his belief in the magical power of words, be it his own or those of the other - words, even thoughts, can kill, so you have to control them.

In this sense, the fear of castration is an outpost, which saves the obsessional from the underlying anxiety of death. This brings us to the basic question of the obsessional: "Am I alive or dead?" As a result of his logic, his being alive implies the death of the Other, and vice versa. The other has to be eliminated, his influences have to be wiped out. No wonder that every

²¹ Revindication (Latin: *rei vindicatio*, the reclamation of a thing; *vindicare*, to claim rightfully): the act of claiming something to which one feels entitled. See Lacan, J. (1966). *A la mémoire d'Ernest Jones: Sur sa théorie du symbolisme*. In *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 716.

Oblativity (Latin: *offere*, to offer, past participle *oblatus*): the act of committing oneself to a (religious) order by giving all one's goods and promising to follow certain regulations, but without giving up completely the layman's status. See Lacan J. (1977), *Direction of the Treatment and Principles of its Power*. In *Écrits. A Selection*. Translated by A.Sheridan, London, Tavistock, p. 253 (Lacan, J. (1966). *La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir*. In *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, p. 615).

²² This is - again - much clearer in Freud's original notes: "Has it ever occurred to you that if your mother died you would be freed of all conflicts, since you would be able to marry?" (Freud, S. *Original Record of the Case*, S.E. X, p. 283).

obsessional cherishes a number of daydreams in which the death of the Other is central. It is interesting to look at his hysterical counterpart. The hysterical subject daydreams about his or her own death and the reaction of the Other to his or her disappearance ("Can the other afford to lose me?"). The obsessional daydreams about the death of the Other, and the resulting freedom in matters of desire and pleasure. In the meantime, both of them remain in the waiting room of life, often enough together as a couple.

In everyday life the obsessional basic fantasy determines a whole range of phenomena. E.g. the obsessional is unable to ask for anything, because that would imply a passive position of dependency. (S)He wants to do everything on his own. His thoughts have to be really his thoughts; his fear of plagiarism expresses his necessary distance from the Other. The accompanying competitiveness and rivalry are of a special nature. The obsessional never competes jealously with the Other, only with him/herself and his mirror image. The strategy of keeping the other at a safe distance is generalised into an ordering of the world in such a way that every thing has its due place, without touching the place of the other.

As we have already mentioned, this keeping at a distance can be done in a paradoxical way, by giving as much as possible to the other, by answering the desire of the Other before he or she even mentions it. Basically, the obsessional buries the other under a pile of shit, in order to get rid both of the shit and the other. Inversely, the obsessional has great difficulties in accepting a gift from this other, because that again puts him/her in a passive stance. The effects on the erotic life of the obsessional are quite predictable: whatever happens, (s)he has to stay outside the game in one way or another. The easiest way is to stay out of it altogether. If that doesn't work, the obsessional stays out of it in a figurative way, by putting him- or herself in the position of the third party, the observer, usually observing how (s)he takes care of the jouissance of the Other in an almost instrumental way. The standard way of avoiding this confrontation is of course the installation of a "third man/woman" between him/her and the beloved.

In all this, the effect of the death drive is manifest. This does not mean that the opposite tendency, the Eros drive, is not present. On the contrary, it works underneath, separately, in contrast to the hysterical mixture. Hence the ever present ambivalence, the constant swaying between love and hate, between separation and fusion. Hence also the secret sexual fantasies in which (s)he takes the passive position. Freud interpreted these fantasies as an expression of the homosexual position towards the father, but as a matter of fact, they go much further back, to the passive, genderless position towards the mother. These fantasies are always present, although they are in complete opposition to the dominant picture. Freud uses the term "drive for mastery", and it is not too difficult to see that the attempt to master the Other hides the attempt to master the own drive.²³

THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

It is by no means a coincidence that Freud expresses his doubts concerning the effectiveness of the analytic treatment for the obsessional and that he advocates a necessary change in technique. Indeed, a pure obsessional is hard to treat by a pure analysis, and the fact that Lacan introduced his sessions of variable length with an obsessional is again no coincidence.

First of all, the normal free association does not work as it does in hysteria. Because of hysterical metaphorisation, free association leads automatically to repressed material. The neutral and even silent position of the analyst is quite operational in this respect. This is not the case with an obsessional patient, on the contrary. In view of obsessional isolation, all the necessary word bridges have disappeared. The material is present in the conscious thoughts, but the connections are absent. It is the task of the analyst to reconnect this material, often to the surprise of the patient. In addition, the obsessional patient does not take in the interpretations of the analyst. Indeed, (s)he does not take in anything from the Other, why would (s)he make an exception for the analyst? (S)He pays the analyst to keep silent, and that's all.

Sometimes, it appears we encounter the opposite, the patient accepts everything and praises the analyst for his deep insights and intelligence. But do not be mistaken: this acceptance is not operational, the obsessional puts the interpretations beside him/herself, they do not concern him/her, and they do not touch him/her. And if they do, there is a certain risk to it, namely that the interpretations join the obsessional thoughts, which turns the analysis itself into the obsessional spiral. The patient appropriates to him/herself the interpretations of the analyst, and uses them as a rationalised defence form. The desire for mastery has been turned into a desire for knowledge, albeit with the same aim: to keep the other at a distance.

In view of the obsessional strategy, the main thing is the analysis of the transference, and this the sooner the better. To put it extremely, we could say that the analysis of the hysterical transference concludes the treatment, whilst the analysis of the obsessional transfer opens the treatment. Basically, the obsessional aims at the neutralisation of the Other. In this respect, the classically silent analytical position suits the obsessional subject all too well. Hence the assertion that the analyst has to take the active stance, the position of the living other with a desire of his own. A ritualised analysis endorses the obsessional fantasy, so the more unorthodox the analysis, the better the chance it will work.

²³ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, pp. 192-93. See also Freud, S. (1913i). *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis*. S.E. XII, p. 322.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Riddle of Castration Anxiety. Lacan beyond Freud (1986).

Lecture presented at the ECF-congress (Brussels, May 1986): "L'angoisse de la castration ou la castration de l'angoisse"; English version presented at the APPI-congress (Dublin, November 1995). Published in *The Letter. Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*. Spring 1996, Nr.6, pp.44-54.

From Impossibility to Inability. Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses (1987).

Originally, this is a chapter of the book "Does the woman exist?" (original dutch version in 1987). As a lecture, it was presented at the APPI-congress (Dublin, November 1994). Published in *The Letter. Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*. Spring 1995, nr. 3, pp. 76-100.

Teaching and Psychoanalysis. A Necessary Impossibility (1996).

A first version was presented at the UAPS-conference (Dublin, May 1996). A more elaborated version was published in M.Stanton & D.Reason (eds.). *Teaching Transference. On the Foundation of Psychoanalytic Studies*. London, Rebus Press, 1996, pp. 27-43.

Trauma and Psychopathology in Freud and Lacan. Structural versus Accidental Trauma (1997).

A first version was presented at the CFAR seminar (London, 1997) and published in *The Letter. Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*. Autumn 1998, pp. 87-106. A more elaborated version was presented at the fall meeting of the APA (New York, December 2000).

Subject and Body. Lacan's Struggle with the Real (1999).

Paper originally presented at the American Lacanian Link conference: *The subject - encore*, (UCLA, Los Angeles, March 1999). Published in *The Letter. Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*. Autumn 1999, nr.17, pp. 79 - 119.

Mind your Body. Lacan's Answer to a Classical Deadlock(2000).

First version published in the collection on *Reading Seminar XX*, edited by S.Barnard and B.Fink (SUNY Press, 2001).

Dreams between Drive and Desire. A Question of Representability (2000).

Paper presented at the *Interpretation of Dreams/Dreams of Interpretation* conference (University of Minnesota, October 2000). Unpublished.

Obsessional Neurosis. The Quest for Isolation (2001).

Paper presented at the APW-conference (Albany University, May 2001). Unpublished.

Also by Paul Verhaeghe

DOES THE WOMAN EXIST?

From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine.

New York, The Other Press.

London, Rebus Press.

LOVE IN A TIME OF LONELINESS.

Three Essays on Drive and Desire.

New York, The Other Press.

London, Rebus Press.