

Jacques Lacan

Seminar IV (1956 - 1957)

The Object Relation & Freudian Structures

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Note on the translation

This English translation has been produced from a transcription of the original stenographs of the fourth year of Lacan's public seminars. The translation proceeds from this unedited text and, as such, aims to represent Lacan's spoken French without abridgement. For reference, page numbers have been given in the left margin that correspond to the French version of the seminar, published by *Éditions du Seuil* in 1994 and edited by Jacques-Alain Miller.

It should also be noted that this will be an evolving work, not a definitive translation, and that sessions will be added to the collection as and when they are completed.

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Dates of the seminar

21st November 1956

28th November 1956

5th December 1956

12th December 1956

19th December 1956

9th January 1957

16th January 1957

23rd January 1957

30th January 1957

6th February 1957

27th February 1957

6th March 1957

13th March 1957

20th March 1957

27th March 1957

3rd April 1957

10th April 1957

8th May 1957

15th May 1957

22nd May 1957

5th June 1957

19th June 1957

26th June 1957

3rd July 1957

Session of 21st November 1956
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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This year we will be talking about a subject, that is not within what is called the historical development of psychoanalysis, without taking on an articulated or unarticulated way, a completely central position within theory and practice. This subject is the object relation [*relation d'objet*]¹.

Why did I not choose it, this subject that was already current, already primary, already central, already critical, – when we started these seminars? Precisely for the reason which prompts the second part of my title, that is to say because it can only be treated by way of a certain idea, from a certain distance, taken from the question of what Freud showed us as constituting the structures within which analysis moves, within which it operates, and especially the complex structure of the relation [*relation*] between the two subjects present in analysis – the analysand² and the analyst. This is what these three years of commentaries on Freud's text, of critiques, focusing in the first year³ on what might be called the very elements of technique in practice, that is to say, the notion of transference⁴ and the notion of resistance⁵;

and the second year⁶ on what must be said to be at the base [*fond*] of the experiment and Freudian discovery, namely that which is, properly speaking the notion of the unconscious, which I believe I've shown you enough in this second year, that this notion of the unconscious is the same one that necessitated for Freud, the introduction of the literally paradoxical principles over [*sur*] the purely dialectical framework [*plan*] which Freud was led to introduce into the beyond [*l'au-delà*] of the pleasure principle⁷;

12 finally, throughout the third year⁸, I gave you a clear example of the absolute necessity of isolating this essential articulation of the symbolic, which is called the signifier, in order to understand, analytically speaking, something which is none other than the properly paranoid field of the psychoses.

We are therefore armed with a certain number of terms which have led us to certain schemas, the

¹ *la relation d'objet* has been translated as 'object relation' throughout, as is usual. Alternative, possibly more accurate, translations are 'The relation from object' or 'The relation of object' or 'Object's relation'. It is also attempted to distinguish '*relation* (relation)' from '*rapport* (relationship)' throughout.

² As is conventional in English translations of Lacan's work, *l'analysé* (one who is being analysed) has been translated here as 'analysand'. In his later seminars, however, Lacan will use a different term - *analysant* (one who is analysing) - to emphasise the active role that the subject must take in his or her analysis.

³ See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique (1953-1954)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991) or <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1139>

⁴ This may refer to the seminar on Dora which Jacques Lacan gave prior to Seminar I. The only surviving section of this is 'Intervention on the Transference (Paris): Seminar on 'Dora' – 1950-1951': 16th October 1951: Jacques Lacan : See *Écrits* (1966) - <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1206> or <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=285>

⁵ 'Resistance' may refer to the seminar on the 'Rat Man' which Lacan gave prior to Seminar I which informed his 1953 text 'The Neurotic's Individual Myth'. (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=10224>) Resistance is also examined in 'Seminar I: Freud's papers on technique: 1953-1954': begins on 18th November 1953 : Jacques Lacan : See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1139>

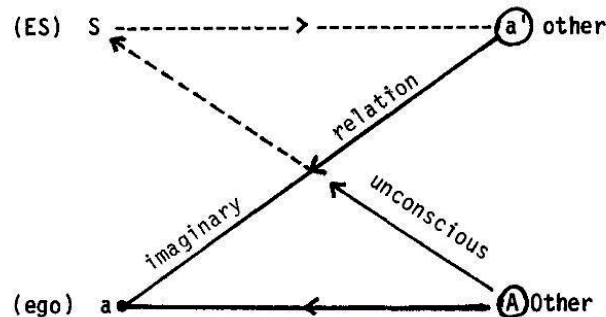
⁶ See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis (1954-1955)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge University Press, 1988) at <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1141>. The unconscious is examined throughout this seminar.

⁷ See Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," [1920] in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVIII*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 7-64. Subsequent references to the *Standard Edition* will be abbreviated SE followed by the Roman numeral of the volume number. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

⁸ See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III, The Psychoses (1955-1956)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993). See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=657>

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spatiality of which is absolutely not to be taken in the intuitive sense of the term 'schema,' but which do not involve localisation, but which do involve in an entirely legitimate way a spatialisation, in the sense that spatialisation implies a relationship [*rapport*]⁹ of place, a topological relationship [*rapport*] - an interposition, for example, or succession, sequence.



One of these schemas, where culminates everything we have arrived at after these years of critique, is the schema¹⁰ that we can call 'definition by opposition' – the one in which we find inscribed the relationship [*rapport*] of the subject to the Other insofar as it is at the start of the analysis, a virtual relationship [*rapport*], a relationship [*rapport*] of virtual speech, by which it is from the Other that the subject receives, under [*sous*] the form of an unconscious speech, his own message. This own message, which is forbidden to him, is for him distorted, arrested, captured, profoundly misrecognised by this interposition of the imaginary relation between the α and the α' , that is to say of this relationship [*rapport*] which exists precisely between this ego and this Other which is the typical object of the ego, that is to say that the imaginary relation [*relation*] interrupts, slows down, inhibits, inverts the most often, and profoundly misrecognises by an essentially alienated relation [*relation*], the relationship [*rapport*] of speech between the subject and the Other, the big Other insofar as it is another subject, insofar as par excellence it is the subject capable of luring [*tromper*]. So here's the schema at which we've arrived, and you will well see that it is not something that is not, at the moment, where we put it back in the analytical inside [*à l'intérieur analytique*] such that, more and more, a great number of analysts are formulating it. While we're going to question this prevalence of the object relation [*relation d'objet*] in analytic theory (if we might say, not commented on) of the relation of primary object [*relation d'objet primaire*], the object relation [*relation d'objet*] as coming to take the central place in analytic theory, as coming to re-centre the entire dialectic of the pleasure principle, of the reality principle, as coming to ground the whole of analytic progress around what we can call a rectification of the relationship of the subject [*rapport du sujet*] to the object, considered as a dual relation [*relation*] – a relation [*relation*], we are still told when we speak of the analytic situation, exceedingly simple: this relation of the subject [*relation du sujet*] to the object, which tends more and more to occupy the centre of analytic theory.

- 13 This is the very thing that we are going to put to the test. We are going to see if it is possible, starting from something, which within our schema relates [*se rapporte*] precisely to the line α - α' , to construct

⁹ It is very likely that Jacques Lacan is distinguishing 'relation – relation' from 'rapport – relationship' throughout this text. Where possible, which term is being used is indicated.

¹⁰ Lacan refers here to what is known as 'Schema L' (inset), first seen in his 1955 commentary on Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Purloined Letter*. See "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" (<http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6224>) in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink, Russell Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 6-48.

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in a satisfactory way the set of phenomena available for our observation, to our analytical experience, whether this instrument alone, by itself, can make it possible to answer the facts; whether in other words the more complex schema that we've proposed must be set aside, even thrown out [*écarté*], that the object relation [*relation d'objet*] has become, at least in appearance, the primary theoretical element in the explication of analysis. I believe I will give you a consistent [*suivi*] testimony – not precisely by indicating it, for you to get inside what can be called a kind of collective work, recently published¹¹, to which, indeed, the term 'collective' is applied particularly well. Throughout this work, you will see the valorisation, perhaps not always very satisfactory in its mode of expression – surely it will be strikingly monotonous and repetitive – you will see promoted that object relation which is expressly posited in the article titled “Evolution de la psychanalyse”,¹² and as this last term of this development you will find in the article “Clinique psychanalytique”¹³ a way of presenting clinical practice which is entirely centred on this object relation [*relation d'objet*]. Perhaps I will even give some of the ideas at which this presentation may arrive.

The whole picture is, certainly, quite striking: it is around the object relation [*relation d'objet*] that those who practice analysis are trying to order their thoughts, the understanding they might have of their own experience – shouldn't it also give them a full and complete satisfaction? On the other hand, understanding their own experience in this register will not deeply inform and guide their practice unless it has real consequences for the very modes of their intervention, for the orientation given to the analysis, and at the same time for its outcomes. This is what one can miss [*méconnaître*] in simply reading and commenting. Yet, it has always been said that analytic theory and practice cannot be separated, that they cannot be dissociated from one another. From the moment that one conceives it in a certain sense, one inevitably directs it in a certain sense as well, if the theoretical sense and the practical results can only be glimpsed. To introduce the question of the object relation, of the legitimacy, of the not-anchored [*non fondé*] of its situation, as central within analytic theory, I must remind you, at least briefly, of what that concept owes or does not owe to Freud himself. I will do so not just because this is, indeed, a sort of guide, almost of a technical limitation that we have imposed on ourselves here, starting from the Freudian commentary – and in the same way I have felt some questioning, if not concerns, of knowing if I would start, or not, from Freudian texts – but it is very difficult to start from Freud's own texts about the object relation [*relation d'objet*] because it isn't there. I am speaking, of course, of something which is widely stated here as a deviation from analytic theory. I really must begin with recent texts and, by the same token, start with a certain critique of these positions but, on the other hand, there can be no doubt that we must ultimately refer to the Freudian positions. We cannot fail to mention, however briefly, what revolves around this same notion of object in the fundamental themes of Freud's work. At the beginning, we cannot do so in a well-developed manner; I will try to do so as briefly as possible. To be clear, this means that this is precisely what we must increasingly revisit, develop, retrieve, and articulate.

¹¹ Lacan refers to the collection of papers in the 1956 edition of *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui* published by the *Presses Universitaires de France* under the direction of Sacha Nacht, with contributions from Maurice Bouvet, Ernest Jones, Marie Bonaparte, Maurice Bénéassy *et al.* For further commentary on this collection, see Lacan's 1958 paper “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power,” (10th July 1958), <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=138>.

¹² See Maurice Bénéassy, “Evolution de la psychanalyse,” in Maurice Bouvet *et al.*, *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*, ed. Sacha Nacht (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956). (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12362>).

¹³ See Maurice Bouvet, “La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d'objet,” in *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*, ed. Sacha Nacht (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), pp. 41-121. Published in English as “Clinical Analysis, The Object Relationship,” in *Psychoanalysis of Today*, ed. Ruth Emma, trans. R. J. Hilton (London and New York: Grune & Stratton, 1959), pp. 19-77. (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11985>).

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- 14 I would, therefore, simply like to briefly remind you, as would not be possible without these three years of collaboration in the analysis of texts behind us, if you had not already encountered with me, in so many different forms, the theme of the object. In Freud we speak, of course, of the object. The final part of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* is called the search for or more precisely “The Finding of an Object,” *Die Objektfindung*.¹⁴ We speak of the object in an implicit way whenever the notion of reality comes into play. We still talk about it in a third way each time the ambivalence of certain fundamental relations [*relations*] is implied, namely, the fact that the subject makes himself an object for the other, and that there is a certain type of relation [*relation*] within which the reciprocity of an object for the subject is obvious and even constitutive. I would like to put the accent in a more pronounced way over [*sur*] the three modes under [*sous*] which we see for ourselves these notions relative [*relatives*] to the object. This is why I allude to one of these points in Freud to which we can refer in order to prove, to articulate the notion of object. If you refer to this chapter of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, you will find something which was already there from the period when this had been published by a kind of historical accident. In short, not only had Freud resisted publishing it, but it had been published against his will. Nonetheless, we find the same statement about the object in the first sketch of his psychology.¹⁵
- 15 Freud insists on this: that every way for man to find the object is only ever the following of a drive [*tendance*]¹⁶ concerning a lost object, an object that is to be refound. The object is not considered, as in the modern theory, as being completely satisfying, the typical object, the object par excellence, the harmonious object, the object which anchors man within an adequate reality, within the reality which proves maturity, the famous genital object. It is very striking to see that at the moment when a theory of the development of instincts emerges from Freud’s first experiments in analysis, he indicates that this takes place by way of a search for the lost object. This object corresponds to a certain advanced stage in the development of instincts; it is the refound object of first weaning, precisely the object which formed the first point of attachment for the infant’s first satisfactions – it is an object to refind. It is clear that the discrepancy established by the mere fact that this element of repetition – this element of a nostalgia binding the subject to the lost object, through which all the effort of seeking it takes place, and which marks the reunion with the sign of a repetition which is impossible precisely because it is not the same object, it cannot be such – the primacy of this dialectic which places at the centre of the relation of the subject-object [*la relation du sujet-objet*] a fundamental tension in which that which is sought is not sought in the same way as that which is found, in which it is through the search for a satisfaction that is both past and surpassed that the new object is sought and found and grasped elsewhere than the point at which it is sought – the fundamental distance which is introduced by the essentially conflictual element in any search for the object: this is the first form in which this idea of the relation of object [*relation d’objet*] appears in Freud. I would say that this would be a poor way to articulate it in philosophical terms, that we must resolve to give what I am stressing here its full accent – I do not do so intentionally; I will reserve it for our return to this term, for those for whom these terms already have a meaning in terms of certain philosophical conceptions – all the distance of

¹⁴ See “The Finding of an Object,” part III, section V of “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,” in Sigmund Freud, *SE VII*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953).

¹⁵ See Sigmund Freud, “Project for a Scientific Psychology,” [1895] in *SE I*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966), pp. 295-392. Lacan comments on this text in Seminar II (see, for instance, the sessions of 26th January 1955, 2nd February 1955, and 9th February 1955) and extensively in Seminar VII.

¹⁶ The term ‘*tendance*’ has been translated throughout as ‘drive’.

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the relation of the subject [*relation du sujet*] to the object within Freud by relationship [*par rapport*] to what precedes it in a certain conception of the object as the adequate object as the object expected in advance, adjusted to the subject's development.

16 All this distance is already implied within what opposes a Platonic perspective – the one that anchors [*fonde*] all understanding, all recognition over [*sur*] the reminiscence [*reminiscence*] of a kind of pre-formed type, to a profoundly different notion of all the distance that there is between modern experience and ancient experience, that which is given in Kierkegaard under the register of repetition¹⁷, this repetition always sought, essentially never satisfied so much so that it is by its very nature never reminiscent [*jamais reminiscence*], but always a repetition as such, therefore impossible to satisfy. It is within this register that the notion of re-finding the lost object is situated within Freud. We will hold onto this text [the *Project*], it is essential that it suffices [*suffise*] in the first relationship [*rapport*] that Freud makes of the notion of object.

Of course, it's essentially through a notion of a deeply conflictual relationship [*rapport*] of the subject with his world that things present themselves and become clear. How can it be otherwise since, in this period, it is essentially a question of the opposition between the reality principle and the pleasure principle? If the reality principle and the pleasure principle cannot be detached from one another – I would go further: if they intertwine and include one another in a dialectical relationship [*rapport*] so much so that, as Freud has always established, the reality principle is only constituted by that which is imposed, for its satisfaction, on the pleasure principle, and is in some way only the prolongation [of the pleasure principle].¹⁸ And if, inversely, the reality principle implies, in its dynamic and in its fundamental search, the fundamental tension of the pleasure principle, then the fact remains that between the two – and this is the essential contribution of Freudian theory – there is a gap [*béance*]¹⁹ that would not be discernible if the one was simply the result of the other. As such, the pleasure principle tends to fulfill itself in a profoundly unrealistic formation, and the reality principle implies the existence of an organisation, a different autonomous structuration which entails that what it grasps may be precisely something fundamentally different from what is desired. It is within this relationship [*rapport*], that itself introduces within its very dialectic of the subject and of the object another term, a term that is here posited as irreducible, just as the object earlier was something that was anchored [*fondé*] in its primordial demands [*exigences*] as something that is always doomed to a return, and thereby doomed to an impossible return, just too in the opposition between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, we have the notion of a fundamental opposition between reality and what is sought by the drive [*tendance*]. In other words, the notion that the satisfaction of the pleasure principle, insofar as it is always latent, underlying any exercise of world creation, is something that still more or less tends to be realised in a more or less hallucinatory form, that the fundamental possibility of this organisation which underlies the ego, that of the subject's drive as such, is to satisfy itself in an unreal fulfilment, in a hallucinatory fulfilment – here is another term powerfully emphasised by

¹⁷ See Søren Kierkegaard, *Gentagelsen* [1843], translated as “Repetition” in *Kierkegaard's Writings, XI: Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, ed. & trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 177-232.

¹⁸ See Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”.

¹⁹ Lacan's term *béance* may also be rendered as an ‘opening’ and includes the sense of a gaping ‘wound’ or even a ‘chasm’.

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Freud, and this from the Interpretation of Dreams,²⁰ from the Traumdeutung, from the first full and articulate formulation of the opposition of the reality principle and the pleasure principle.

17 These two positions are not, as such, articulated the one with the Other. It is precisely because they appear within Freud as distinct, that they are well marked, that it is not around the relation of the subject [*relation du sujet*] to the object that development is centred. Each of these terms has its place at a different point of the Freudian dialectic, for the simple reason that in no case is the subject-object relation [*relation sujet-objet*] central; it only appears in a way that makes it seem as if it were sustained directly, without a gap. It is in this relation [*relation*] of ambivalence, or in the type of relations [*relations*] that are called pregenital, which are relations [*relations*] of seeing/being seen, attacking/being attacked, passive/active, that the subject lives these relations [*relations*] which always more or less implicitly, to a greater or lesser extent, implies his identification to the partner of this relation [*relation*], namely, that these relations [*relations*] are lived within a reciprocity – the term is valid here, of ambivalence of the position of the subject and of the partner. This relation [*relation*] is introduced here between the subject and the object, that it is, not only direct, without gap, but which is literally equivalent from the one to the Other, and that's the one which may have provided the pretext for the bet in the foreground [*au premier plan*] of the relation of object [*relation d'objet*], as such. But what are we going to see? This relation [*relation*], which in itself already announces, specifies, deserves the term, relation in mirror [*relation en miroir*], that of the reciprocity between the subject and the object, this 'something' which already raises so many questions that it was in order to resolve them that I myself introduced into analytic theory the concept of the mirror stage²¹ – which is far from being purely and simply this connotation of a phenomenon in the development of the child, that is, from the moment when the child recognises his²² own image; namely, it is all that which he learns within this captivation

²⁰See Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV-V (1900 [1899]). See also www.Freud2Lacan.com & <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=655>. Freud speaks of this opposition between Reality Principle and Pleasure Principle, extensively in Chapter VII, where the pleasure principle is still referred to as the 'unpleasure principle'. Reality principle is first mentioned in 'The Interpretation of Dreams'.

i) Section XI A dream of Bismarck's, in Chapter VI The Dream-Work.

a) SE V p379, The only peculiarity of the case was that the dreamer with whom we are here concerned was not content with the fulfilment of his wish in a dream but knew how to achieve it in reality.

b) SE V p380, Between this deepest infantile stratum and the most superficial one which was concerned with the statesman's immediate plans, it is possible to detect an intermediate layer which was related to both the others.

ii) Chapter VII Psychology of the Dream-Processes, (C) Wish-Fulfilment

a) SE V p567, Footnote 2 added 1914, I have elsewhere carried this train of thought further in a paper on the two principles of mental functioning (Freud 1911b) - the pleasure principle and the reality principle, as I have proposed calling them.

iii) Chapter VII Psychology of the Dream-Processes : (E) The Primary and Secondary Processes - Repression

SE V p599-600, I presume, therefore, that under the dominion of the second system the discharge of excitation is governed by quite different mechanical conditions from those in force under the dominion of the first system. When once the second system has concluded its exploratory thought-activity, it releases the inhibition and damming-up of the excitations and allows them to discharge themselves in movement. Some interesting reflections follow if we consider the relations between this inhibition upon discharge exercised by the second system and the regulation effected by the unpleasure principle.

²¹See Lacan's paper "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," translated as "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=303> & www.Freud2Lacan.com. Lacan presented the paper at the 14th International Psychoanalytic Congress, held at Marienbad in August 1936 under the chairmanship of Ernest Jones, but it was not published until 1938. The outline of its argument can also be found in Lacan's article in the *Encyclopedie Française*, "Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual," which he presented in July 1949 at the 16th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Zurich, <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=224> & www.Freud2Lacan.com.

²²'sa' has been translated as 'he' though it could equally be 'she'.

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by his own image is all exactly of the distance that there is from his internal tensions to those, of his own, which are evoked within this relationship [*rapport*] to realisation, to the identification with this image –however, it is there something which was used as theme, as central point to the bet, at the foreground [*premier plan*] of this subject-object relation [*relation*] as being, if one can say so, the phenomenal ladder [*échelle*] to which the following could be related [*pouvait être rapporté*] in a satisfactory and meaningful way, that which until then had presented itself within terms, not only in pluralistic but, strictly speaking, conflictual, as introducing an essentially dialectical relationship [*rapport*] between the different terms.

18 To this end, it was thought possible – and one of the first to emphasise this, but not as soon as one might think, was [Karl] Abraham – to try to refocus everything that is introduced so far within the evolution of the subject in a way which is always seen by reconstructing in a retroactive way from a central experience: that of the conflicting tension between conscious and unconscious, of the conflicting tension created by this fundamental fact that what is sought by the drive [*tendance*] is obscure, that what consciousness recognises in it, first and foremost, is misrecognition, that it is not in the domain of consciousness that the subject recognises itself. There is something else beyond, and at the same time and for the same reason, this beyond poses the question of its structure, its principle and its meaning, which is fundamentally misunderstood by the subject, beyond the reach of its knowledge. This is set aside, even willingly, by some, especially celebrities, along with significant currents within analysis based on an object the end point of which is not our point of departure. We go backwards to understand how this endpoint is attained, an end point which incidentally is never observed, this ideal object which is literally unthinkable. Instead, it is conceived as a sort of focal point, a point of culmination for a whole series of experiments, elements, partial concepts of the object dating from a certain era, especially from the moment in 1924 when Abraham formulated it in his theory of the development of the libido²³ and which for many anchors the very law of the analysis, of everything that happens therein.

The coordinate system within which the entire analytic experience is situated is that of the point of completion of this fabled ideal object, final, perfect, adequate, of that which is proposed in the analysis as being what in itself marks the goal attained, the normalisation, so to speak – a term which itself already introduces a world of categories which are quite alien to this starting point of the analysis, the normalisation of the subject. To illustrate this, I think I can do no better than to point out to you that the very formulation, and at the same time, by the admission of those who have set out on this path – certainly something there has been formulated in very precise terms – what is considered to be progress in the analytic experience is to have placed in the foreground [*au premier plan*] the relationships of the subject [*rappports du sujet*] to its environment. This emphasis placed over [*sur*] the environment, this reduction which all analytic experience gives, has something which is a kind of return to the well and truly objectifying position which sets at the foreground [*au premier plan*] the existence of a certain individual and of a more or less adequate relation [*relation*], more or less adapted to his (individual's) environment; this is something that is articulated in these terms, from page 761 to page 773 of the

²³ See Karl Abraham, “Esquisse d’une histoire du développement de la libido basée sur la psychanalyse des troubles mentaux”. Published in English as Abraham, K. (1924) “A Short Study of the Development of the Libido Viewed in the Light of Mental Disorders,” p418-501 of *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*, trans. Douglas Bryan & Alix Strachey (1927). See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11974>

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collection we were just talking about.²⁴ After having carefully noted that it is the emphasis on the relationships of the subject [*rappports du sujet*] to his environment, with which he acts by himself [*don't il s'agit*] within the progress of the analysis, we learn in passing that this is especially significant [*significatif*] within the observation of Little Hans.

19 Within the observation of Little Hans, we are told, the parents appear without their own personality. We are not forced to subscribe to this view, but the important thing is what follows: this has to do with the fact that this was “before the 1914 war, in a period when Western society, sure of itself, did not question its own survival. If, since 1926,²⁵ on the contrary, the focus is of anguish²⁶ [*d'angoisse*] and the interaction of the organism and the environment, this is also because the foundations of society have been shaken, and the anguish [*l'angoisse*] of a changing world is experienced daily, so that individuals see themselves differently. In this period, even physics struggles to find its footing, and relativism, uncertainty, probabilism seem to deprive objective thought of its self-confidence”.²⁷ This reference to modern physics as the anchoring of a new rationalism seems to speak for itself. What is important is simply that there is something that is curiously confessed in an indirect way: psychoanalysis is seen as a kind of social remedy, since that is what they foreground as the
20 characteristic driver of its progress. There is no need to know if this is anchored or not; these are things that seem to carry little weight. It is simply the context of the things that are so casually admitted here that may itself be of some use to us. This is not unique, because the distinction of this book lies in communicating within itself, so it seems, in a manner characterised far more by a strange sort of homogenisation than by a real articulation; it is also one that the article to which I referred earlier deliberately marks by an express concept which in the end – this will give us the overall conception necessary to the current understanding of the structure of a personality – is the perspective said to be the most practical and prosaic one possible: that of *the patient's social relations*. I will pass over other terms which, regarding the nature of the admission, we will say that they conceive of analysis in a manner that we might see as unstable, artificial. But doesn't this depend on the fact that, as none will dare dispute, the very object of such a discipline is marked by changes

²⁴ Maurice Bénassy : Evolution de la psychanalyse : 1956 Information <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12362> : From the beginning of Bénassy's text to the end of Third Period (p773). Published in *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*, Work published under the direction of Sacha Nacht in collaboration with others ; P.U.F (1956)

²⁵ A reference to Inhibitions, Symptoms & Anguish – Angst [Anxiety] : 1926d : Sigmund Freud, SE XX p75-175: www.Freud2Lacan.com : In German ‘Hemmung, Symptom und Angst’ ‘angoisse’ is translated as ‘anguish’ to distinguish it from ‘anxiété’ translated as ‘anxiety’ Note on Translation, July 2022: Sigmund Freud uses the term ‘angst’ as in ‘Hemmung, Symptom und Angst : 1926’ (See www.Freud2Lacan.com). This has been translated by James Strachey as ‘anxiety’. This is a widely-used mistranslation and ‘anguish’ or ‘angst’ are nearer. Jacques Lacan, who read Sigmund Freud in the original German, translates ‘angst’ from German into French as ‘l'angoisse’. Therefore ‘anguish’ has been adopted in this text for ‘angoisse’.

²⁶ ‘angoisse’ is translated as ‘anguish’ to distinguish it from ‘anxiété’ translated as ‘anxiety’. A reflection on this distinction from Lecture XXV – Anxiety (1917) : in Part III – General Theory of the Neuroses of Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: 1915-1917 (Published 1916-1917) : Sigmund Freud : SE XVI : I shall avoid going more closely into the question of whether our linguistic usage means the same thing or something clearly different by ‘Angst – Anguish translated by James Strachey as Anxiety], ‘Furcht [fear’ and ‘Schreck [fright]. I will only say that I think ‘Angst’ relates to the state and disregards the object, while ‘Furcht’ draws attention precisely to the object. It seems that ‘Schreck’, on the other hand, does have a special sense; it lays emphasis, that is, on the effect produced by a danger which is not met by any preparedness for anxiety. We might say, therefore, that a person protects himself from fright by anxiety. A certain ambiguity and indefiniteness in the use of the word ‘angst’ will not have escaped you. By ‘anxiety’ we usually understand the subjective state into which we are put by perceiving the ‘generation of anxiety’ and we call this an affect, ... See www.LacanianWorksExchange.net/freud

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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over time? Such is indeed one explanation for the rather ineffectual character of the various modes of approach given in this line, but this is perhaps not an explanation which should fully satisfy us; I cannot imagine the objects of any other discipline which are not also subject to variation over time. On the relation of the subject [*relation du sujet*] to the world, we see affirmed and accentuated a kind of parallelism between the more or less assured state of maturation of the instinctual activities and the structure of the ego in a subject at a given time. In short, from a given moment this ego structure is considered to be the substitute for, and ultimately as the representative, of the state of maturation of the instinctual activities. There is no longer any difference, neither on the dynamic nor the genetic level, between the different stages of development of the ego and the different stages of development of the instincts. These are terms that some of you may not find very susceptible to criticism in themselves - no matter, this is not the issue; we shall see to what extent we may or may not retain them. What does matter is their being established at the centre of the analysis in a very precise manner which presents itself as a topology: there are the “pregenitals” and the “genitals”. The “pregenitals” are weak individuals, and the consistency of their ego depends closely on the persistence of certain objectal relations [*relations objectales*] with a significant object [*objet significatif*].²⁸ This is what is written and articulated. Here we may begin to ask questions. Perhaps we will soon see, in passing, by reading the same texts, where this notion of the unexplained significant [*significatif*] may lead. Namely, the absolute lack of differentiation, of distinction, within this significant [*significatif*]. The technical concept which this implies is the bringing into play, and thereby the development, within the analytic relation [*relation*], of pregenital relations [*relations*], those which characterise the relationship [*rapport*] of this pregenital with his world, of which we are told that these relations [*relations*] to their object are characterised by a deficit: “the loss of these relations [*relations*], or of their object, which is synonymous here since the object only exists in its relationships [*ses rapports*] with the subject, some suffering from serious disorders of the activity of the Ego such as phenomena of depersonalisation or psychotic disorders”.²⁹ Here we find the point in which is sought the test of the evidence of that profound fragility of the relations³⁰ [*des relations du moi*] of the Ego to its object: “the subject strives to maintain his relations of object [*ses relations d’objet*] at all costs, using all kinds of means to this end – a change of objects with the use of displacement or symbolisation which, by choosing a symbolic object arbitrarily charged with the same emotional value as the original object, allows him not to be deprived of objectal relation [*de relation objectale*].”³¹

For this object to which the emotional value of the original object has been displaced, the term *auxiliary* ego is fully warranted, and this explains that:

On the contrary, the genitals possess an ego that does not see that its strength and the exercise of its functions depend in the possession of a significant object. While for the former, to take the simplest example, the loss of a significant person, subjectively speaking, risks [*met en jeu*] their individuality, that loss, as painful for them as it may be, in no way disturbs the solidity of their personality. They are not dependent on an objectal relation [*relation objectale*]. This does not mean that they can easily do without any objectal relation [*relation objectale*], which is impracticable besides, as the relations of object [*les*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Where possible, it is indicated where ‘relation’ has been translated as ‘relation’ & ‘rapport’ as relationship, to distinguish Jacques Lacan’s different use of the two terms.

³¹ *Ibid.*

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relations d'objet] are many and varied, but that their unity is simply not endangered by the loss of contact with a significant object. This is what, from the standpoint of the relationship [*rapport*] between the Ego and relation of object [*relation d'objet*], radically distinguishes them from the former. [...] If, as in every neurosis, normal development seems to have been arrested by the subject's inability to resolve the last of the structural conflicts of childhood, the perfect liquidation of which, so to speak, results in this felicitous adaptation to the world which is called the relation of genital object [*relation d'objet génitale*], which gives any observer the sense of a harmonious personality and the analyst the immediate perception of a kind of crystalline clarity of the mind, which is, I repeat, more a limit than a reality, the difficulty of resolving Oedipus is often not the only obstacle to it.³²

21 Crystalline clarity! ... and we can see where this author, with the perfection of the objectal relation [*relation objectale*], can take us: regarding the drives, while the pregenital forms

mark this unbridled need for unlimited, unconditional possession with a destructive aspect, (in the genital forms), they are genuinely loving, and if the subject does not behave in an oblativ³³ manner, this does not signal disinterest, and if his objects are also fundamentally narcissistic objects as in the previous case, here he is capable of understanding, adapting to the situation of the other. Moreover, the intimate structure of his objectal relations [*relations objectales*] shows that the participation of the object in his own pleasure in it is essential to the subject's happiness. The comforts, the desires, and needs of the object are given the highest consideration.

This is enough to raise a very serious problem for us which is to discern the crucial thing in the process of maturation, which is neither a path, nor a perspective, nor a plane on which we could not in fact ask the question: what is meant by the outcome of a normal childhood, a normal adolescence, and a normal maturity? But the essential distinction between the establishment of reality with all the problems it raises of how to adapt to something that resists, something that refuses, something complex, something that involves in any case that the notion of objectivity – as the most elementary experience demonstrates to us – is something different from what is described in these same texts, under the somewhat implicit and tacit concept by the different term, 'objectality,' as the fullness of the object. This confusion is also articulated because the term 'objectivity' appears in the text as being characteristic of this form of completed relation [*relation achevée*].

There is certainly a distance between what is involved in a certain construction of the world regarded as more or less satisfactory in such a period – indeed certainly determined beyond all historical relativity – and, on the other hand, this same relation [*relation*] to the other as being here its affective or even its sentimental register, as in the consideration of the needs, the happiness, the pleasure of the other. Surely this takes us much further, since it is a matter of the constitution of the other as such, that is to say, as in so far as it speaks, i.e., in so far as it is a subject. We shall return to this. This is something that it is not enough to cite, even while making humorous remarks (which they suggest by themselves), without thereby having made the necessary progress. This extraordinarily primary conception of the notion of instinctual development in analysis is something that is far from universally accepted. Certainly the

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Lacan may refer here to the ancient distinction between captative love and oblativ love. Captative love (from the Latin *captare*: to seize, to grab) destroys the other for our own pleasure. Its opposite, oblativ love (from the Latin *oblativus*: who offers himself), is that we are willing to give, to sacrifice ourselves for the other.

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22 notion of texts like those of Glover³⁴, for example, refer us to a very different notion of the exploration of the relations of object [*des relations d'objet*], even named and defined as such. We see Glover's texts approach essentially what seems to me to characterise the stages, the phases of the object at different periods of individual development, that is, the object conceived as having a completely different function. Analysis insists on introducing a functional concept of the object with a very different nature from that of a pure and simple correspondent, a pure and simple mutual adaptation of the object with a certain application of the subject. The object has an entirely different role: it is, so to speak, to re-place [*remplacer sur*] over the base [*fond*] of anguish [*d'angoisse*]. It is as much as the object is an instrument to mask, to adorn over [*à parer sur*] the fundamental base [*fond*] of anguish [*d'angoisse*], that characterises in the different stages of the subject's development, the relationship [*rapport*] of the subject to the world, which the subject must be characterised at each stage.

Here I cannot, at the end of this lecture today, fail to punctuate, to illustrate with any example that throws into relief what I have to say about this conception, to point out to you that Freud's classic and fundamental conception of phobia is nothing other than this. Freud and all those who have studied phobia, with him and after him, cannot fail to show that there is no direct relationship [*rapport*] to the "alleged fear" [*prétendue peur*]³⁵ which would stain this object with its fundamental mark, constituting it as such, as a primitive object. On the contrary, there is a considerable distance from the fear, on which it (object) acts [*dont il s'agit*] by itself, and which within certain cases may well be, and which in other cases may well also not be, quite a primitive fear [*peur*], on which it, itself, (the object) acts [*dont il s'agit*] and the object which, by relationship [*rapport*] to it (fear), is very essentially constituted in order to keep it (fear) at a distance, to enclose the subject within a certain circle, within a certain stronghold in the interior of which he shelters himself³⁶ from these fears. The object is essentially the here and now of an alarm signal³⁷. The object is above all an outpost against an instituted fear which gives it its role, its function at a certain moment, at a set point of a certain crisis of the subject, which

³⁴ There are many texts by Edward Glover published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis (I. J. P.) before 1957, such as 'Grades of Ego-Differentiation' (27th July 1929 [1930]) (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11973>), 'On the Aetiology of Drug-addiction' [July 1932] (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1171>), and 'The relation of perversion-formation to the development of reality-sense' (7th September 1932 [1933]). (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1158>)

³⁵ "alleged fear" may refer to the following from Sigmund Freud : Proceeding now to neurotic fear, what are its manifestations and conditions? There is much to be described. In the first place we find a general condition of anxiety [*angst*], a condition of free-floating fear as it were, which is ready to attach itself to any appropriate idea, to influence judgment, to give rise to expectations, in fact to seize any opportunity to make itself felt. We call this condition "expectant fear" or "anxious expectation." Persons who suffer from this sort of fear always prophesy the most terrible of all possibilities, interpret every coincidence as an evil omen, and ascribe a dreadful meaning to all uncertainty. Many persons who cannot be termed ill show this tendency to anticipate disaster. We blame them for being over-anxious or pessimistic. A striking amount of expectant fear is characteristic of a nervous condition which I have named "anxiety [*angst??*] neurosis," and which I group with the true neuroses. From Lecture XXV Anxiety (1917) SE XVI Sigmund Freud, See

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³⁶ We might say, therefore, that a person protects himself from fright by anxiety. Lecture XXV Anxiety (1917) SE XVI Sigmund Freud.

³⁷ From it there then proceeds on the one hand motor action - flight in the first instance and at a higher level, active defence - and on the other hand what we feel as a state of anxiety. The more the generation of anxiety is limited to a mere abortive beginning - to a signal - the more will the preparedness for anxiety transform itself without disturbance into action and the more expedient will be the shape taken by the whole course of events. Accordingly, the preparedness for anxiety seems to me to be the expedient element in what we call anxiety, and the generation of anxiety the inexpedient one. From Lecture XXV Anxiety (1917) SE XVI.

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is not for all that fundamentally neither a typical crisis nor an evolving crisis. This modern concept, if you will, of phobia is something that can be more or less legitimately asserted. We will also have to criticise from the outset the concept of the object as promoted in the works and in the mode of conducting analysis characteristic of Glover's thought and technique. That it is a matter of an anguish [*l'angoisse*] which is castration anguish [*l'angoisse*], we are told, is something that has been somewhat in dispute until recently. It is nevertheless remarkable that things have come to the point that the desire for reconstruction in the genetic sense went so far as to attempt to deduce the very construction of the paternal object from something that would come as the result, the culmination, the flowering of primitive objectal phobic constructions.

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There is a report published on phobia which goes exactly in this direction, by a sort of curious reversal of the path which, within the analysis, had indeed allowed us to go back from phobia to the concept of a certain relationship [*rapport*] with anguish [*l'angoisse*], of a function of protection that the object of phobia enjoys [*jouit from joue*] by relationship [*par rapport*] to this anguish [*angoisse*]. It is no less remarkable in another register, to look at the notions of the fetish and of fetishism. I will also introduce it to you today to show you that the fetish is found, if we take the thing in the perspective of the relation of object [*relation d'objet*], to fill out [*remplir*] a function that is well and truly within analytic theory articulated as being also a certain protection against anguish [*l'angoisse*] and against, curiously enough, the same anguish [*angoisse*], that is to say the anguish [*l'angoisse*] of castration. It does not seem that it is by the same means that the fetish would be more particularly linked to castration anguish [*l'angoisse*] insofar as it is linked to the perception of the absence of the phallic organ in the female subject, and to the negation of this absence.

What does it matter! You cannot fail to see that here too, the object has a certain function of supplementation [*complémentation*] by relationship [*par rapport*] to something that here presents as a hole, or even an abyss in reality, and that the question of knowing, if there is a relationship [*rapport*] between the two, if there is something in common between this phobic object and this fetish, arises. But to ask the questions in these terms, perhaps it is necessary, without refusing to approach the problems starting from the relation of object [*relation d'objet*], to find in these same phenomena the occasion, the beginning of a critique which, even if we submit to the query posed to us concerning the typical object, the ideal object, the functional object, all the kinds of object one might imagine in the human being, indeed leads us to raise this question in this light. But then, let us not content ourselves with uniform explanations for diverse phenomena, and to centre for example our question from the beginning, on what makes the essentially different function of a phobia and of a fetish, as far as they are both centred, the one and the other, over [*sur*] the same base [*fond*] of fundamental anguish [*d'angoisse*], on which, the one and the other, would appear as a measure of protection, as a measure of guarantee for the subject.

This is just what I have decided to take as my starting point in order to show you how we have started from our own experience to end up at the same problems. For it is indeed a matter of asking, not in a mythical manner, nor in an abstract manner, but in a manner as direct as the objects that have been presented to us. We realise it will not do to speak of the object in general, nor of an object which, by some indescribable virtue of magical communication, has the ability to regulate its relations [*relations*] with all the other objects. As if the fact of having happened to be a genital sufficed for us to pose and resolve all questions, for example, if what might be an object for a "genital," which seems no less enigmatic from the essentially biological standpoint foregrounded here, one of the objects of present human experience, namely a coin, does not of its own accord pose the question of its own objectal value. The fact that, in a certain register, we would lose it as a means of exchange or any other kind of

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consideration for the exchange of any element of human life transposed in its commodity value – does it not introduce, in a thousand ways, the question of what has actually been resolved in Marxist theory by means of a term very similar to but not synonymous with the one we have just introduced in the notion of fetish, in short, the notion of the object – also, if you like, the concept of the screen object – and thereby the function of the constitution of this singular reality to which Freud from the very beginning has brought this truly striking light, and to which we ask ourselves why we do not continue to attribute its value, the concept of the screen memory as being most especially constituent of the past of each subject as such? All these questions deserve to be taken by themselves, and for themselves, analysed in their reciprocal relationships [*rappports*], since it is from these relationships [*rappports*] that the necessary distinctions of groundwork [*plan*] can emerge, which will allow us to define in an articulated way why a phobia and a fetish are two different things, and if there is there, in effect, some relationship [*rapport*] within the general use of the word 'fetish', within the particular use that can be made about [*à propos de*] the precise form, and the precise use, that this term has, in order to designate a sexual perversion.

So this is how we will introduce the subject of our next conversation [*entretien*], which will be on phobia and the fetish, and I believe that this return to what effectively is the experience, is the way in which we will be able to restore and give back to the term “relation of object [*relation d'objet*]” its true value.

Session of 28th November 1956
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

28th November 1956

For your sakes, I have done some reading this week on what psychoanalysts have written on our subject for this year, namely, the object, and more specifically, this object of which we spoke last time: the genital object. The genital object, to call it by its name, is woman [*la femme*], so why not call her by her name? So, I have granted myself a number of readings on female sexuality. It is more important for you to do this reading rather than me; that would make it easier for you to understand what I will come round to telling you on the subject and, after all, these readings are quite illuminating from other perspectives, especially in relation to Renan's well-known saying: "human stupidity gives us an idea of infinity". If he were alive today, he would have added that the theoretical ramblings of psychoanalysts – not to reduce these to stupidity – are just the sort that can give us an idea of infinity, because in fact it is extremely striking to see what extraordinary difficulties the minds of various analysts encounter after these statements, themselves so abrupt and surprising, on Freud's part.

26 Yet Freud, always on his own, contributed to this subject – for such is probably all that will fall within the scope of what I tell you today – that surely if there is anything that ought to contradict to the utmost the idea of the object that we previously called an harmonic object, an object which by its nature finishes [*achevant*] the relation of subject to object... if there is anything which ought to contradict this, it is – I would not even say analytic experience since, after all, in everyday experience, the relationships [*les rapports*] of man and of woman is not an unproblematic thing if they were not a problematic thing there would be no analysis at all – that Freud's precise formulations are what go the furthest in providing the notion of a certain 'not' [*pas*], a gap, something that doesn't quite go [*qui ne va pas*]. This does not mean that this is sufficient to define it, but the positive affirmation that it doesn't quite go is in Freud – it is in *Civilisation and its Discontents*; it is in the lesson of the *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. This then leads us to ask ourselves about the object. I remind you that the omission of the notion of the object, so commonly made, is not so pronounced in the landscape within which the experience and the statement of the Freudian doctrine situate and define this object which is, to start with, always presented in a quest for the lost object, and for the object as always being the refound object. Both are opposed in the most categorical fashion to the notion of the object as completing, in order to oppose the situation within which, the subject by relationship [*par rapport*] to the object, the subject himself is very precisely the object itself, taken as another object in a quest,¹ whereas the idea of the completing object leads to the notion of an autonomous subject.

I also already underlined last time, this notion of the hallucinated object, of the hallucinated object, the hallucinated object over a base [*sur un fond*] of anguishing [*angoissante*] reality, which is a notion

¹ There has been some debate over this sentence. 'Quête' has been rendered here as 'quest' but it has been noted that 'quête' can also mean 'collection', or 'offertory'. In the French, the full phrase is 'le sujet par rapport à l'objet est très précisément l'objet pris lui-même dans une quête'.

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of the object such as emerges from the operation of what Freud called the primary system of desire² and, completely opposed to this in analytic practice, the notion of the object which ultimately reduces to the real. It is a matter of refinding the real. The object stands out [*se détache*], no longer over [*sur*] a base [*fond*] of anguish [*angoisse*], but over a base [*fond*] of common reality so to speak; the goal of analytic investigation being to realise that there is no reason to be afraid³ [*avoir peur*] of it, another term that is not the same as that of anguish [*d'angoisse*] has been added. And, finally, the third term in which it appears to us, we can see it and trace it in Freud, is that of imaginary reciprocity⁴, namely that with any relation [*toute relation*] with the object, the place of terms in relationship [*en rapport*] is occupied simultaneously by the subject, that the identification to the object is at the base [*au fond*] of any relation [*toute relation*] to the object.

In truth, this last point has not been forgotten, but it is obviously the one which the practice of object relations in modern analytic technique attaches itself to the most, resulting in what I will call this imperialism of signification. Since you can identify with me and I can identify with you, of the two of us it is surely the ego better adapted to reality that provides the best model. Ultimately, it is the identification with the analyst's ego, in an ideal outlining, that the progress of the analysis will come down to. In truth, I would like to illustrate this in order to show the extreme deviation that such bias in the handling of the object relation may condition, and I remind you of this because, for example, it has been specifically illustrated by the practice of obsessional neurosis.

² Freud's distinction between primary and secondary processes is the first expression of his discovery of unconscious processes. It first appeared in The Project for a Scientific Psychology: 23rd & 25th September & 5th October 1895: Sigmund Freud, SE I pp. 283-387, see <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=401> or www.Freud@Lacan.com, Chapter 15 - The Primary and Secondary Processes in Ψ , SE I p386. Freud developed it in Chapter VII, SE V pp. 509-601 of The Interpretation of Dreams: 6th November 1899 (published as 1900): Sigmund Freud, SE IV & V, (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=655> & www.Freud2Lacan.com) and it always remained an unchanging co-ordinate of his thought, for example, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle : 1920g : Sigmund Freud, SE XVIII pp. 1-64, www.Freud2Lacan.com, the opposition between the primary process and the secondary process corresponds to that between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. For example, SE XVIII p. 44 (note instincts should be translated as drives), or SE XVIII p. 46, SE XVIII p. 50, SE XVIII . p. 51, SE XVIII p. 54 and so on.

³ '*avoir peur*' in French translates literally as 'to have fear'. Lacan points to a distinction made between fear [*peur*] and anxiety [*angoisse*].

⁴ The following are possibilities from Sigmund Freud for 'imaginary reciprocity'.

a) Beyond the Pleasure Principle : 1920 : Sigmund Freud, SE XVIII p1-64, www.Freud2Lacan.com, Section VI : p332pfl or SE XVIII p58

Shall we follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher, and venture upon the hypothesis that living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual drive? and finally transferred the drive for reuniting, in the most highly concentrated form, [drive has replaced instinct given in the Strachey's translation]

b) Section II LE BON'S DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP MIND,: Group (Mass) Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego : 1921 : Sigmund Freud, SE XVIII p69-143, www.Freud2Lacan.com,

SE XVIII p76 Such also is approximately the state of the individual forming part of a psychological group. He is no longer conscious of his acts. In his case, as in the case of the hypnotised subject, at the same time that certain faculties are destroyed, others may be brought to a high degree of exaltation. Under the influence of a suggestion, he will undertake the accomplishment of certain acts with irresistible impetuosity. This impetuosity is the more irresistible in the case of groups than in that of the hypnotised subject, from the fact that, the suggestion being the same for all the individuals in the group, it gains in strength by reciprocity.' (Ibid., 34.)

'We see, then, that the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; these, we see, are the principal characteristics of the individual forming part of a group. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.' (Ibid., 35.)

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27 If obsessional neurosis is, as most of those here believe, this structuring notion with regard to the obsessional, which can be expressed more or less as follows – what is an obsessional? He is, in short, an actor who enjoys [*joue*] his part, who ensures a certain number of acts, as if he were dead. It is a means of taking refuge from death, this game in which he indulges in a particular way, a lively game which consists in demonstrating that he is invulnerable. To this end, he engages in a kind of taming which conditions all his relations to others. We see in it a kind of exhibition for showing the lengths he can go in this exercise. It has all the traits of a game, including the illusory traits – how far can this little other go, who is but his alter ego, his double, before an Other who attends the spectacle in which he himself is a spectator? For therein lies all his enjoyment of the game and its possibilities, but in spite of this, he does not know what place he occupies, and it is this that is unconscious in him. He does what he does for the sake of an alibi, that he can glimpse it; he realises that the game is not enjoyed by himself [*se joue*]⁵ there where it is, and that is why almost nothing that happens has real importance for him, but he does not know from where he sees all this and ultimately what is regulating the game; we know, for sure, that it is he himself, but we may also commit a thousand errors if we do not know where this game is being conducted, if we do not know where the notion of object is, the significant object for the subject. It would be quite wrong to believe that this object can be designated in terms of any dual relationship, given the notion of the object relation as developed by the author.⁶

You will see where this leads, but it is probably clear that in this very complex situation, the notion of the object is not immediately given, since it is precisely insofar as he participates in an illusory game that what is, strictly speaking, the object... that is, a game of aggressive retaliation, a rich man's game, a game which takes one as close as possible to death, but which at the same time means placing oneself out of the range of any blows by somehow killing within himself in advance – mortifying, so to speak – his desire.

Here, the notion of object is infinitely complex and deserves to be emphasised at every moment so that we know, at least, what object we are talking about. We will try to give this notion of the object a uniform usage that allows us to locate it within our own vocabulary. It is not an obscure notion, but one that presents itself as remarkably difficult to pin down. To strengthen our comparison: it is a matter of demonstrating something which he [the obsessional] has unknowingly articulated for this

28 Other spectator at this place he puts us [the analyst] in, that the transference brings forward. What will the analyst do with this notion of object relations? I would ask you to resume the interpretation of these observations as representing the progress of the analysis of an obsessive in the case I am talking about, in the work of the author I am talking about.⁷ You will see that the way of handling the object relation in this case consists, very precisely, in doing something similar to what would happen if one were watching a circus act in which a pair are delivering a series of alternating blows to one another; this would involve going down into the [circus] ring and making an effort to be afraid of receiving the slaps. On the contrary, it is by virtue of his aggressivity that he delivers them and that the relation of talking with him is an aggressive relation. At this point, the ringmaster comes in and says, "Look, this

⁵ The verb 'jouer' (to play) has been translated as if the stenographer has made a mistake & Jacques Lacan actually used 'jouir' which is to enjoy (sexually). 'se jouer' thus becomes 'se jouir' which may be translated as 'to come (sexually)'.

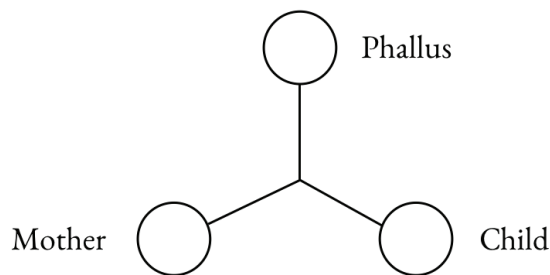
⁶ Lacan is referring to the section entitled 'Obsessional Neurosis' in Bouvet's paper in '*La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*'. In this leçon there are several direct quotations from the paper. See Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d'objet*. Published in English as Bouvet, M. (1956). *Clinical Analysis, The Object Relationship*. in *Psychoanalysis of Today*, pp. 19-77, trans. by R. J. Hilton.

⁷ See *ibid.* – Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d'objet*.

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is unreasonable; leave off quarrelling, swallow your stick, each of you; then you will have it in the right place, you will have internalised it.” This is indeed one means of resolving the situation and bringing a way out to it. It can be accompanied by a little song, that truly imperishable tune by someone named ... who was a kind of genius.⁸

[But, by such means] we will never understand anything at all – neither of what I call on this occasion the sort of sacred character, this sort of religious pageantry [*exhibition d’office*], which we would attend on this occasion, bleak as it might appear, nor what, strictly speaking, the object relation means. The character and the background [*l’arrière-fond*], profoundly oral, imaginary object relation [*relation d’objet*] appears in filigree, which in a way also allows us to see what can be so closely [*peut avoir d’étroitement*], so imaginary rigorously a practice which of course cannot escape the laws of the imaginary, of this dual relation [*cette relation duelle*] which is taken for real. For in the end, that which is the final term [*l’aboutissement*] of this object relation [*relation d’objet*] is the fantasm of phallic incorporation. Why phallic? Experience does not agree with the ideal notion we may have of its accomplishment; it inevitably presents itself with even greater emphasis on its paradoxes and, as you will see, today I am introducing it with the step that I am trying to make you take; the whole accomplishment of the dual relation as such, as we get closer to it, makes something emerge in the foreground as a privileged object, which is this imaginary object, which is called the phallus. The entire notion of object is impossible to take forward, impossible to understand, and just as impossible even to apply, if we don’t introduce a kind of element – I won’t say a mediator because that would be taking a step that we haven’t yet made together – but a third party which is an element, the phallus to call it by its name, which I bring back into the foreground today in this schema which I gave you at the end of last year both as a conclusion to this element of the analysis of the signifier which the exploration of psychosis lead us to, but which was also a sort of introduction; the inaugural schema of what I will propose to you this year concerning the object relation.⁹



- 29 The imaginary relation [*relation*], whichever it may be, is modulated by a certain relationship [*rapport*] which is indeed fundamental to it, which is the mother-child relationship [*rapport*] - of course with all that is problematic in it -, and assuredly well designed to give us the idea that it concerns a real relation [*relation*]. In fact, this is the point towards which is currently directed any analysis of the analytic situation, which attempts to reduce itself in its final terms into something which can be conceived as the development of ‘mother-child’ relation [*relation*] and what is inscribed in it, which consequently bears the traces and reflections of this initial position. It is impossible, through the examination of

⁸ The name of this genius appears not to have been captured by the stenographer.

⁹ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J. A. Miller, where it is labelled as *La triade imaginaire*.

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a certain number of points of the analytic experience, to supply, to provide its development – even among the authors who have made it [the mother–child relation] the foundation of the entire genesis of analysis, in fact – to bring in this imaginary element, without, at the centre of the notion of the object relation, something that we can call the phallicism of the analytic experience appearing as a key point. This is demonstrated by experience, by the evolution of analytic theory, and in particular by what I will try to show you over the course of this session, that is, the deadlock [*les impasses*] which results from any attempt to reduce this imaginary phallicism to any real information, in the absence of the trinity of terms: symbolic, imaginary and real. In the end, we can but attempt to recover the origin of all that happens, of the whole analytic dialectic... we can but attempt to refer to the real.

To offer a final stroke towards this goal, this way in which the dual relation is conducted in a certain orientation, a theorisation of the analytic experience, I will go back to a point in the text – because this is worth noting – which is precisely that of the heading of the collective publication¹⁰ I mentioned to you. When the analyst, entering the imaginary game of the obsessional, insists on making him recognise his aggressivity – that is, makes him situate the analyst in a dual relation, the imaginary relation, the one I referred to earlier as one of reciprocity – we have something which gives a kind of testimony of refusal, of the misrecognition the subject has of the situation, [in] the fact that, for example, the subject never wants to express his aggressivity, and does so only in the form of a slight irritation provoked by the technical rigidity.¹¹

30 The author [Bouvet] admits that he insists on this topic and perpetually brings the subject back to it as if it were the central, significant topic, and adds, significantly, that “since everyone knows very well that irritation and irony are in the category of manifestations of aggressivity”, as if it were obvious that irritation was typical and characteristic of the aggressive relation as such. [But] we know that aggression can be provoked by any number of other sentiments, and that, for example, a sentiment of love cannot at all be ruled out from being the basis of an aggressive reaction. As for representing a reaction like irony as aggressive by nature, this doesn’t seem to me to be compatible with what everyone knows, that is to say, that irony is not an aggressive reaction, irony is above all a way of questioning, a mode of question; if there is an aggressive element, it is secondary in the structure of irony to the element of question. This shows you what a flattening of the map we end up with in an object relation which, after all, I am resolving to never speak to you about from now on, in this form or in any other.

Nevertheless, we are now brought to the question: who, or what, are these relationships [*rappports*] between? And that’s the question, at once primary and fundamental, which we must start from because we will have to come back to it; it is the one we will end with. All the ambiguity of the question raised around the object can be resumed thus: is the object the real, or not?

The notion of the object, its handling within analysis, should it, or not... but we will come to it both through our developed vocabulary which we employ here – symbolic, imaginary, and real – as well as through the most immediate intuition of what this may in the end represent for you spontaneously, upon interpretation of what the thing clearly represents for you right away when someone speaks to you about it... the object – is it the real, yes or no? When we speak of the object relation, are we speaking purely and simply of access to the real, this access which must be the end [*terminaison*] of an analysis? That which is found in the real, is it the object?

¹⁰ See *ibid.* – ‘*La psychanalyse d’aujourd’hui*’.

¹¹ Lacan repeats Bouvet’s words verbatim here. See *ibid.* – Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d’objet*.

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31 This is worth asking ourselves since, after all, without even going to the heart of the problem of phallicism, which I am introducing today – that is, without us noticing a truly prominent feature of analytic experience by which a major object, around which turns the dialectic of the individual's development, as well as the whole dialectic of an analysis, an object which is taken as such, for we will see in more detail that we must not confuse phallus and penis – if it became necessary to make the distinction, if around the 1920s–30s the notion of phallicism and the phallic stage was organised around a great shock which occupied the whole analytic community, it was to distinguish the penis as a real organ with functions that we could describe through certain real coordinates, and the phallus within its imaginary function.

Even if that were all, it is worth asking ourselves what the notion of object means. Because we cannot say that this object is not, within the analytic dialectic, a prevalent object, and an object which the individual has an idea of as such, whose isolation, for never having been formulated as strictly and solely conceivable on the imaginary level, represents no less – since what Freud brought at a certain time and to which so and so, particularly Jones, replied – how the notion of phallicism implies an extrication from this category of the imaginary. This is what you will see coming through in every line. But before even getting into this, let us ask ourselves about the meaning of the relation, the reciprocal position, of the object and the real. There is more than one way to approach this question, for as soon as we approach it we realise that there is more than one sense to the real. I expect some of you won't hesitate to let out a little sigh of relief: "finally he is going to tell us about this notorious real which has until now remained in the shadows". In fact, it shouldn't surprise us that the real is something which is at the limits of our experience. That's to say [*C'est bien que*] that these conditions, so artificial... contrary to what we are told – that it's such a simple situation... [these conditions] are a position in relationship [*par rapport*] to the real. This is sufficiently explained by our experience, yet we can only refer to it when we theorise. It would be apt, then, to grasp what we mean when in theorising we invoke the real. It is not very likely that we all have the same notion of it to start with, but what is likely is that we can all access a certain distinction, a certain dissociation, which is essential to bring in as to the treatment of the term 'real' or 'reality', if we look closely at the way in which it is used.

32 When we speak of the real we can target several things. First of all, there is everything that *effectively* happens. This is the notion of reality implied in the German term *Wirklichkeit*, which has the advantage of distinguishing in [the notion of] reality a function which the French language makes it hard to isolate. This [term] implies, in itself, all the possibilities of the effects, of the *Wirkung*, of the whole mechanism. Here I will only make a few points in passing to show to what extent psychoanalysts remain prisoners of this category so extremely foreign to everything that their practice should in fact be able to introduce them to, I would say, regarding this very notion of reality. If it is conceivable that a thinker of the mechanical–dynamist tradition, a tradition which goes back to the 18th–century scientific attempt at the development of the 'mechanised man'... if it is conceivable that from a certain perspective everything that happens on the level of mental life requires that we refer it to something which presents itself like material... then in what sense can this have any interest for an analyst, when the very principle of the exercise of his technique, of his function, enjoys [*joue dans*] within a succession of effects which, if he is an analyst, he accepts, by hypothesis, as having their own order?

And that is exactly the perspective he must adopt if he follows Freud, if he conceives things in terms of what governs the whole life [*esprit*] of the system, that is, from an energetic perspective. Allow me to illustrate this through a comparison, in order to make you understand this fascination for what can be found in matter, this primitive *Stoff*, to understand what is brought into play by something that is

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so fascinating for the medical mind that we believe we are really saying something when we affirm, in a gratuitous way that, like all other doctors, we place at the foundation, we designate as the basis [*principe*] of everything that is at work in psychoanalysis, an organic reality, something that ultimately must be found in reality. Freud put it as simply as this. One must refer to where he said it, and see what function it has. But this remains, at base [*au fond*], a kind of need for reassurance, when we see analysts, throughout their writings, coming back to it over and over, like knocking on wood. In the end, it is perfectly clear that we are putting into play nothing but mechanisms which are superficial and which must all refer to this latter term [reality], to something which we might know someday, which is this primary matter at the origin of all that happens.

33 Allow me to make a simple comparison to show you quite how absurd all of this is for an analyst who admits the order in which he maneuvers [*il se déplace*], the order of effectivity, which is itself the primary notion of reality. It's a little like if someone who managed a hydroelectric plant in the middle of a large river, the Rhine for example, were to demonstrate – in order to understand, to speak of what happens in this machine – that in the machine accumulates¹² that which is the basis for the accumulation of any kind of energy – in this case, this electrical force which can then be distributed and made available to consumers – and that this is, above all, precisely something which has the closest relationship [*rapproch*] to the machine, and that we will say not only nothing more but literally nothing at all in dreaming of the moment when the landscape was still virgin, when the Rhine was flowing abundantly. But to say that there is something that, in some way, compels us to say the energy was in some sense already there in a virtual state in the current of the river, is to say something that, strictly speaking, means nothing. For the energy only begins to interest us, on this occasion, from the moment when it has accumulated, and it is only accumulated from the moment when the machines are made to work in a certain way, no doubt animated by a thing which is a kind of definitive propulsion which comes from the current of the river. But the reference to the current of the river as being the primitive order of this energy can precisely only come to the mind of someone totally mad, and lead to a notion which is, strictly speaking, of the order of *mana* – which concerns something of a very different order than this 'energy', or even 'force' – and who would like to rediscover, in all forces, the permanence of what is eventually accumulated as the element of *Wirkung*, a *Wirklichkeit* made possible by something that would somehow be there for all eternity. In other words, this sort of need of ours to think of, to confuse the *Stoff* – or the primitive matter or the impulse or the flow or the inclination – with what is really at stake in the operation of analytic reality, is something which represents nothing less than a misrecognition of the symbolic *Wirklichkeit* [reality]. That is to say, it is precisely in the conflict, in the dialectic, in the organisation and the structuration of elements which compose themselves, construct themselves, that this composition and this construction give to what is in question a wholly different energetic scope. We misrecognise the very reality in which we move by holding on to this need to speak of an ultimate reality as if it were elsewhere than in this very operation.

There is another use of the notion of reality which is made in analysis. This one, much more important, has nothing to do with this reference which I could truly qualify as superstitious, in this case, which is a kind of consequence, a so-called organicist postulate which can literally have no meaning in the analytic perspective. I will show you that it has no more meaning in the order where Freud apparently

¹² It has been pointed out that there may be an indirect reference to Wilhelm Reich in these passages, whose distribution of so-called orgone accumulators would lead to his sentencing in 1956 to two years imprisonment on charges of contempt.

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34 reports on it. The other question, in the object relation, of reality, is one that comes into play in the double principle – pleasure principle and reality principle. This concerns something completely different, for it is quite clear that the pleasure principle is not something that operates in a way that is less real. In fact, I think that analysis stands to demonstrate the opposite. Here the use of the term ‘reality’ is wholly different. There is something which is striking enough, which is that this use [of ‘reality’], which at the beginning showed itself to be so fruitful, which allowed for the terms ‘primary system’ and ‘secondary system’ in the order of the psyche, has revealed itself, as analysis progressed, to be more problematic, but in a way which is somehow very elusive. To take account of the distance travelled, with a certain slippage [of meaning], between the first use of the opposition of these two principles and the point we come to now, we must almost refer to something that happens from time to time... the child who says that the emperor is naked – is he a halfwit, is he a genius, is he a joker, is he a savage? Nobody will ever know. He is surely something of a liberating figure in any case, and things like this do happen: analysts return to a kind of primitive intuition that everything we were saying up to that point had explained nothing.

That’s what happened to D. W. Winnicott. He wrote a little article to talk about what he calls the “transitional object”¹³ [English in the original]. Thinking about the transitional object or transitional phenomenon, he simply remarks that the more we become interested in the function of the mother as absolutely primordial, decisive in the child’s apprehension of reality, that is to say, the more we substitute the dialectical, impersonal opposition of the two principles, the pleasure principle and the reality principle, with something to which we have given actors, subjects... no doubt rather ideal subjects, no doubt actors who are a lot more like a kind of imaginary figuration or puppet, but this is where we have come to... the more we identify this pleasure principle with a certain object relation – that is, the maternal breast – we identify this reality principle with the fact that the child must learn to do without it. Quite specifically, Mr. Winnicott points out that in the end, if everything goes well... for it is important that everything goes well, for we are at the point of allowing everything that goes badly to drift towards a primordial anomaly, into frustration, the term ‘frustration’ becoming the key term in our dialectic... Winnicott points out that, all in all, everything will happen as if, in the beginning, for things to go well, that is, for the child not to be traumatised, the mother has to have acted in always being there at the moment she was needed, that is to say, precisely, in coming to position herself, at the moment of hallucination, as the real object which satisfies the child. Thus, in the beginning, there isn’t any kind of distinction in the ideal mother–child relation between the hallucination which emerges through the principle of the notion we have of the primary system, the hallucination which emerges from the maternal breast, and the real achievement, the meeting with the real object in question. Thus, in the beginning, if all goes well, there isn’t any means for the child to distinguish what is of the order of satisfaction anchored over [*fondée sur*] an hallucination, which is related to the operation and the functioning of the primary process, and the apprehension of the real which fulfils and effectively satisfies the child. All that it will be about is the mother progressively teaching the child to bear these frustrations and, at the same time, to perceive in the form of a certain inaugural tension the difference there is between reality and illusion, and the difference can only be practised by means of a disillusionment, that is to say that from time to time reality does not coincide with the hallucination which has emerged through desire.

¹³ See Winnicott, D. W. (1953). *Transitional objects and transitional phenomena*.

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35 Winnicott simply remarks that the primary fact is that what is strictly inconceivable within such a dialectic is this: how could anything be elaborated which goes further than the notion of an object strictly corresponding to primary desire? ...and that the extreme diversity of objects, instrumental as well as fantasmatic, which intervene in the development of the field of human desire are strictly unthinkable in such a dialectic from the moment that we incarnate it in two real actors, the mother and the child. The second thing is strictly a fact of experience. It's that even for the smallest child, we can see appearing these objects he [Winnicott] calls transitional, and we cannot say of these objects on which side they are situated in this dialectic, this reduced dialectic, this dialectic incarnated by the hallucination and the real object. That is, what he calls the transitional objects-- namely, to illustrate them, all these objects of the game of the child, the playthings [*jouets*], properly speaking – the child doesn't need us to give him any; he will make them out of anything he can get his hands on. These are the transitional objects about which there is no question of whether they are more subjective or more objective; they are of another nature, the threshold of which Winnicott does not cross.

To name them, we will simply call them imaginary. We will, straight away, be far enough into the imaginary that we see through these works – certainly very hesitant works, full of digressions, full of their authors' confusion – we see that the authors are nonetheless always brought back to these objects and, for example, seek to explain the origin of a fact such as the existence of the fetish, the sexual fetish. We see how they are led to do as much as they can to see which points are in common with the fetish, which comes to the fore of the [subject's] objectal demands¹⁴ by virtue of the great satisfaction which it can have for a subject, namely, sexual satisfaction. They are led to seek out, to watch for in the child, a hint of the privileged handling of some little object, a handkerchief taken off the mother, a corner of a bedsheet, some accidental part of reality put within reach of the child's grasp, which appears in this period which, to be called here 'transitional', does not constitute an intermediate period but a permanent period of the child's development. They are led to almost confuse them, without asking about the distance there may be between the eroticisation of this object and the first appearance of the object as imaginary.

36 What we see here is what is forgotten in such a dialectic, a forgetting which, of course, demands these forms of supplementation on which I place the accent with regard to Winnicott's article; what is forgotten is that one of the most essential sources of all analytic experience, since the beginning, is the notion of the lack [*manque*] of the object, which is not quite the same thing. And I remind you that things have gone in a certain direction, that never in our concrete practise of analytic theory can we do without the notion of the lack of the object as central, not as a negative, but as the very mainspring of the subject's relation to the world. Analysis sets out from where it left off.¹⁵ The analysis of neurosis starts with the notion, so paradoxical that we can say it is not yet completely developed, of castration. We believe that we are still speaking of it as we spoke of it during Freud's time. This is a complete mistake. We are speaking of it less and less. And we are wrong, in any case, because what we are speaking of much more is the notion of frustration. There is another term, a third term, which we are starting to speak of... or, more precisely, we will see how, necessarily, its notion has been introduced,

¹⁴ As in other English translations of Lacan's work, the term '*exigence*' has been translated throughout as 'demand'. A 'demand' stands apart from a 'requirement' or a 'necessity' by way of its sense of both urgency and agency.

¹⁵ '*L'analyse commence dès son départ*' could be translated more literally as 'analysis starts from the beginning'. Here, it has been taken as a play on the two senses of 'analysis', to suggest that an individual's analysis always begins with what psychoanalysis historically began with – castration.

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both in what vein and by what necessity: the notion of privation. These are not at all three equivalent things. To distinguish them I would like to point out a few things to you, simply to try, first of all, to make you understand what this is.

Of course, we must start with what is most familiar according to its use, that is to say the notion of frustration. What is the difference between a frustration and a privation? We must start from here because we are at the point of introducing the notion of privation and saying that in the psyche these two notions are experienced in the same way. This is to say something quite bold, but it is clear that as for privation, we will have to refer to it for now as if phallicism – that is, the demand of the phallus – is, as Freud says, the major point of all imaginary play in the conflictual progression described by the analysis of the subject. We can only speak – as regards everything other than the imaginary, that is, the real – we can only speak, in this case, of privation. This isn't how the phallic demand exerts itself, for one of the most problematic things that appears is how a being presented as a totality can feel deprived of something which by definition they do not have. We can say that privation is essentially something that, in its nature as lack, is a real lack, it is a hole [*trou*]. The notion we have of frustration, simply in referring to the use which is effectively made of these notions when we speak of them, is the notion of a detriment. It's an injury, a damage. This damage, such as we are used to seeing it at work, the way we make it come into play in our dialectic, it is never a question of anything more than an imaginary detriment. Frustration is essentially the domain of the claim [to something], the dimension of something which is desired and not held, but which is desired without any reference to any possibility, nor of satisfaction, nor acquisition. Frustration is in itself the domain of unbridled demands, the domain of lawless demands. The centre of the notion of frustration, insofar as it is one of the categories of lack, is an imaginary detriment. It is on the imaginary level that frustration is situated. It is perhaps easier for us, starting from these two remarks, to observe that castration, whose nature – I repeat – that is, the essential dramatic nature of castration, has been much more abandoned, neglected, than it has been deepened.

To introduce it here, and in the most lively fashion, it will suffice to say that castration was introduced by Freud in a way that was absolutely tied to the notion of the primordial law, to what is there as fundamental law in the prohibition of incest and in the Oedipal structure, and introduced, without a doubt, by way of something which, in the end, if we think about it today, represents the meaning of what was first enunciated by him. This was done through a sort of mortal leap into experience. That he placed something as paradoxical as castration at the centre of the decisive crisis, the formative crisis, the major crisis which is Oedipus, is something we can only marvel at after the fact because, certainly, it is extraordinary that our only wish is to not speak about it. Castration is something that can only be classed in the category of symbolic debt. The distance that there is between symbolic debt, imaginary debt, and hole, real absence, is something which allows us to situate these three elements, these three elements that we call the three terms of reference in the lack of the object. This, of course, might appear to some to be inadmissible without some reserve. They would be right because, in reality, we must hold fast to the central notion that it is a question of categories of the lack of the object, for this to be valid.

I am saying lack 'of *the* object' but not 'of object', because if we place ourselves at the level 'of the object' we will be able to ask the question: what is the object which lacks in these three cases?

It is at the level of castration that the answer is immediately the most clear; that which is lacking at the level of castration insofar as it is constituted by symbolic debt, the thing which sanctions the law, this 'something' which gives it its support and its inverse, which is punishment – it is completely clear

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38 that in our psychoanalytic experience this is not a real object. It is only in the Laws of Manu¹⁶ that we say that he who sleeps with his mother cuts off his genitals and, holding them in his hand, heads straight towards the West until death follows; we have, up to this moment, only observed these things in excessively rare cases which have nothing to do with our experience and which seem to us to call for explanations of a very different kind than that of structural and normalising mechanisms usually invoked in our experience. The object is imaginary, the castration in question is always an imaginary object. What facilitated our belief that frustration was something that should have allowed us to go much more easily to the heart of the problems was this commonality that exists between the imaginary character of the object of castration and the fact that frustration is an imaginary lack of the object. Now, it is not at all required that the lack and the object and even a third term that we will call the agent, be at the same level in these categories. In fact the object of castration is an imaginary object, this is what must make us ask the question of what the phallus is, which it took so long for us to identify as such. However, as imaginary as frustration itself may be, the object of frustration is well and truly, in its nature, a real object; it's always something real which, for the child, for example, for the chosen subject of our dialectic of frustration... it is well and truly a real object which is lacking. This will help us realise perfectly well that this is something obvious, for which we need a slightly more metaphysical handling of the terms than how we usually refer precisely to those criteria of reality we were speaking about earlier. It's very clear that the object of privation is only ever a symbolic object – this is completely clear. That which is of the order of privation, that which is not in its place or, to be exact, that which is not in its place from the point of view of the real, this means absolutely nothing. All that is real is always and necessarily in its place, even when we disturb it. The real has the foremost property of wearing its place on the soles of its shoes – you can disturb the real as much as you like but, regardless, our bodies will still be in their place after they explode, their place of pieces. The absence of something in the real is something purely symbolic; that is, as long as we define by means of the law that it should be there, an object is missing at its place. Think as a reference of what happens when you ask for a book at the library. They tell you that it's missing from its place, it could be just beside it; nevertheless, in principle it is missing from its place, it is in principle invisible, but this doesn't mean that the librarian lives in an entirely symbolic world. When we speak of privation, it is a question of symbolic objects and nothing else.

39 This may seem a bit abstract, but you will see how far this will serve us, in what follows, towards detecting these kinds of sleights of hand by means of which we give solutions which aren't solutions to problems which are false problems. In other words, the means by which, in what follows, in the dialectic of what is discussed, in order to break with what seems intolerable – that is, the completely different evolution of what in psychoanalytic terms we call sexuality for the man and for the woman – desperate efforts are made to refer the two terms to a single principle, while perhaps there is from the beginning something which allows us to explain and conceive in a very clear and simple way why their development will be so different. I simply want to add something which will also reveal its impact: the notion of an agent. I know that here I am making a jump which would necessitate me returning to the imaginary triad of the mother, the child and the phallus, but I don't have the time to do it, I simply want to complete the picture. The agent will also enjoy [*va jouer*] his role within this lack of the object,

¹⁶ According to Encyclopædia Britannica, Manu-smriti, (Sanskrit: “Laws of Manu” or “The Remembered Tradition of Manu”) also called Manava-dharma-shastra (“The Dharma Text of Manu”), traditionally the most authoritative of the books of the Hindu code (Dharma-shastra) in India.

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because for frustration we have the presupposed idea that it is the mother who enjoys [*joue*] the role. What is the agent of frustration? Is it imaginary, symbolic, or real? That is, is it ultimately something with no kind of real existence, as I pointed out earlier?

These are questions which at least deserve our asking them. I will leave this question open at the end of this session, because even if it is quite clear that the answer could be initiated here, or even be deduced in a totally formal way, it cannot – at least at the point we've reached – be satisfactory, precisely because the notion of the agent is something which goes totally outside the framework of what we limited ourselves to today, that is, a first question implicating the relationships [*les rapports*] of the object and of the real. The agent is here clearly something of another order. Nevertheless, you see that the question of the qualification of the agent at these three levels is a question which is clearly suggested by the commencing of the construction of the phallus.

Session of 5th December 1956
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

5th December 1956

Ladies and gentlemen, last night, you heard a talk concerning the topic of the image of the body.¹ In the circumstances, I said nothing beyond a general affirmation of what I thought was good about it and if I had been forced to speak, it would have been to situate this in relation to what we are doing here, educationally speaking. This is something I dislike doing in the context of scientific work that is really of a different order, and I am not sorry for not having spoken. At any rate, if we begin with that image of the body as it was presented to us last night, I think that to situate it in relation to what we are doing, you know one obvious thing very well: in the first place, it is not an object. They spoke of the object in trying to define stages and the notion of object really is important, but not only is this image of the body that you saw presented last night *not* an object, but I would say that what would allow us to best situate it in conjunction with other imaginary formations is that it *cannot* itself become an object. This is a very simple remark that no one made directly nor in some indirect way. For if, in analytic experience, we are dealing with objects whose imaginary character is in question – I didn't say they *are* imaginary, I'm saying that this is precisely the question we are asking here – if this is the central point upon which we situate ourselves in order to introduce what interests us in the concept of the object at the clinical level, that doesn't mean that we actually sustain this point – that is, that we proceed from the hypothesis of the imaginary object. Not only do we not proceed from this point but
42 it is precisely this question that we pose. But this possibly imaginary object, as it is indeed given to us in analytic experience, is already known to you.

In order to clarify these ideas, I have already taken up two examples that I said I would focus on: the phobia and the fetish. These are objects that are far from having revealed their secret – you would be wrong to believe that – whatever the exercises, acrobatics, contortions, or phantasmatic geneses to which one might give oneself over. It remains quite mysterious that, at certain periods in the lives of children, male or female, they feel obliged to be afraid of lions, which are not objects very commonly encountered in their experience. It is difficult to make their form emerge from any sort of primitive datum, inscribed in the image of the body, for instance. Whatever we do, a residue remains. It is always the residues in scientific explanations that are the most fruitful to consider. In any case, it is certainly not by sidestepping them that we make progress. Likewise you might have noticed that it is still quite clear in all of this that the number of sexual fetishes is quite limited. Why? Setting aside shoes, which here take on such a striking role in this regard, such that one wonders how it is that we do not pay more attention to them², we hardly find anything but garters, stockings, bras and others. All of these are worn close enough to the skin but shoes are the most common. Here, once again, is a residue. Here are objects about which we wonder whether they are imaginary objects, and whether we can deduce their kinetic value in the economy of the libido on the sole basis of what may happen to emerge from a genesis – once again, in short, the notion of an ectopia in a certain typical relation with something that has emerged from another typical relation said to belong to stages following previous stages. Nonetheless, no matter what the objects are, whether or not they are the objects you were dealing with yesterday evening, it is perfectly clear that they represent something which causes us great embarrassment, which is certainly extremely fascinating – one only has to see the interest raised in the gathering and the extent of the discussion. But these objects are, in the first place, if we wanted to

¹ Presentation by Françoise Dolto, 4th December 1956.

² On the topic of foot and shoe fetishes, see, for example, Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 155.

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approach them, we would say that they are constructions which order, organise, articulate, as we said, a certain experience, but what is completely striking is the use made of them by the practitioner, Ms. [Françoise] Dolto, as it happens.

43 This quite certainly concerns something that necessarily and in a perfectly comprehensible way can be situated solely through the notion of the signifier. Ms. Dolto uses it as a signifier; it is as a signifier that it comes into play in her dialogue; it is as a signifier that it represents something, and this is particularly evident in the fact that none of them can hold up on their own, it is always in relation to another of these images that each one takes on a solidifying, orienting value, penetrating in any case the subject she is dealing with, namely, the young child. This brings us back to the notion of the signifier once again, and for this I would like – because this is a question of teaching, and there is nothing more important than misunderstandings – to tell you that I noted in a direct and indirect manner that certain things I said last time were not understood. When I spoke of the notion of reality, when I said that psychoanalysts had a scientific notion of reality, which is in accordance with the one which has held back the progress of psychiatry for decades, and this is precisely the constraint from which we might have thought psychoanalysis would deliver it – that is, [the constraint of] seeking reality in something that would have the character of being more material. And to make myself understood I gave the example of a hydroelectric plant, and I spoke as if someone who deals with the various things that can happen at the hydroelectric plant – including its depletion, its being shut down, its extensions, its repairs – as though someone thought they could always rationalise what needs to be done at this plant through reference to the primary material which comes into play to make it work – that is the waterfall. Concerning which, someone came to me to say: “What are you getting at there? Just think that for the engineer this waterfall is everything, and since you are talking about the energy accumulated in the plant, this energy is nothing other than the transformation of potential energy which is given in advance at the site where the plant has been built, and when the engineer measures the height of the water flow – for example, in relation to the level at which it will spill over, – he can make a calculation. All of the potential energy which will come into play is already given, and the power of the plant is given precisely by the anterior conditions.”

44 In truth, there are several remarks to make here. The first one is in having to speak to you about reality, and having started by defining it as *Wirklichkeit*, as the efficacy of the whole system, in this case the psychical system. Then, secondly, in also having wanted to specify the mythical character of a certain way of conceiving this reality and having located it through this example. I didn't get to the third point which is the one under which the topic of the real can be presented – namely, precisely what was there before [*avant*]. We are constantly dealing with it.

Of course, it is precisely another way of considering reality, what was there before a certain symbolic operation has taken place. And, of course, this is the most substantial part of the mirage which is implicit in the objection that was made. For, in truth, I am not at all denying here that something was there before. For example, before ‘I’ comes out of ‘self’ or ‘it’ [*ça*], there was something that the ‘it’ was, of course. It is simply a question of knowing what this ‘it’ is.³

I am told in the case of the power plant that what comes first is effectively the energy. I have actually never said otherwise, but energy and natural reality are worlds apart, for energy only starts to enter

³ There is an echo here of Freud's phrase “Wo es war, soll Ich werden”, which Strachey translates as “Where id was, there ego shall be.” The phrase appears in the last but one sentence of ‘Lecture XXXI: Dissection of the personality’ in *Freud, S. (1933 [1932]). New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (SE XXII)*.

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the equation from the moment you measure it, and you only think of measuring it from the moment when power plants are up and running, and then you have to do numerous calculations where the amount of available energy comes into effect. But this notion of energy is very effectively constructed to suit the necessity of a productive civilisation which wants to turn [this energy] to account, with regard to the work that it is necessary to expend in order to obtain the gain in efficiency that's available. You always measure this energy – for example, between two reference points.

There is no absolute energy of the natural reservoir. There is an energy of this reservoir in relation to the lower level to which the flowing liquid will be drawn when you have joined an overflow to this reservoir, but an overflow alone will not suffice to allow for a calculation of energy – it is in relation to the lower level of water that this energy will be calculable. The issue is, in fact, not here. The issue is that certain natural conditions must be realised for this calculation to have the slightest interest, since it is still true that any variation in the level of the water flow, whether it be small streams or even water droplets, will always potentially have a certain value of energy in reserve, ...but this will simply not interest anyone at all. To put it frankly, there must already be something in nature which presents the materials which will come into play in the use of the machine in a certain privileged way, a significant way, which presents itself as usable, as significant, as measurable, in this case to permit the building of a power plant. At the level of a system taken as signifying, this is something which is, of course, not to be contested. The important part, the analogy with the psyche... we will now see how it can be outlined. It can be outlined in two points. Freud, led precisely by the energetic notion, designated something as being a notion which we must use in analysis in a way comparable to that of energy. This is a notion which, just like energy, is entirely abstract and consists solely in our being able to lay down in analysis – and still, in a virtual way – a simple piece of circular reasoning destined to allow for a certain game of thought... this energy introduced strictly by the notion of equivalence – that is, the notion of a common measure among manifestations which present themselves as qualitatively very different⁴. This notion of energy is precisely the notion of libido. There is nothing that is less fixed to a material support than the notion of libido in analysis.

45

It is astonishing that in the “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” Freud only had to slightly modify a passage in which he had spoken of the physical support of the libido for the first time in 1905 in terms such that the discovery and the subsequent propagation of the notion of sex hormones led him to hardly need to modify this passage⁵. This is no surprise. This means that in all cases this reference to a strictly chemical support has no importance whatsoever. He says it... that there is one, that there are several, that there is one for femininity and one for masculinity, or two or three for each, or that they are interchangeable, or that there is only one, as it is in fact very possible – this, he says, has no importance whatsoever because, in any case, analytic experience makes it necessary for us to think that there is one libido and one libido only. He then immediately situates the libido in terms which I might

⁴ Lacan refers here to what is commonly known as system equivalence, a way of modelling complex systems in which variable components are understood as having the same functional form across different systems. For example, force and voltage in mechanical and electrical systems, respectively, have identical mathematical models.

⁵ Lacan refers to the section entitled ‘Chemical Theory’ in Chapter III of the ‘Three Essays’. In the original 1905 version of the text, Freud proffers a “provisional hypothesis” on the chemical factors at play in sexual excitation, but adds that he attaches “no importance to this particular hypothesis” and that he “should be ready to abandon it at once in favour of another, provided that its fundamental nature remained unchanged – that is, the emphasis which it lays upon sexual chemistry”. In a footnote to this paragraph, the editors of the Standard Edition write that “[i]t is worth remarking how small a modification was made necessary in Freud’s hypothesis by the discovery of the sex hormones”. See *Freud, S. (1905). Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (SE VII), pp. 215-216.*

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call 'neutralised'. As paradoxical as the term might sound, the libido is this something that connects the behaviour of beings – for example, in a way that will give them an active or passive position – but he tells us that in all cases we only take this libido insofar as it has effects which are, in any case, active effects even in the passive position, since in fact an activity is necessary for the adoption of the passive position. He even comes to remark that the libido thus takes on a quality such that we can only see it in this effective, active form, and therefore always more closely related to the masculine position⁶. He goes as far as to say that only the masculine form of libido is available to us.

What does that mean? And how paradoxical all this would be if it were not simply in reference to a notion which is only there to allow for the embodiment and the support of a particular kind of connection which happens at a certain level which, strictly speaking, is actually the imaginary level, the one which connects the behaviour of living beings in the presence of another living being through what we call the bonds of desire, all the longing which is one of the essential mainsprings of Freudian thought for the organisation of what is at stake in all sexual behaviours.

46 The *Es*, then, which we are also in the habit of considering to have, in its own way, the greatest relation to inclinations, instincts, and in a sense, precisely to the libido... what is the *Es*? And to what, precisely, does this comparison allow us to compare it? We are allowed to compare the *Es* to something which is, quite precisely, the power plant, to the power plant for someone who sees it and knows absolutely nothing about how it works, to the power plant as seen by an uneducated person, who in fact thinks that it is maybe the genie of the current inside who is pulling pranks and transforming water into light or power. But the *Es*, what does it mean [*que veut-il dire*] ? The *Es*. .. that is, that which in the subject is liable to become 'I', for that is still the best definition that we can have of the *Es*. What analysis has brought to us is that it is not a brute reality, nor simply what comes first. It is something which is already organised like the signifier is organised, which is already articulated like the signifier is articulated. It is true, just as with what the machine produces, that all the power could already be transformed, with the difference being that, even so, it is not only transformed but can be accumulated. This, here, is exactly the essential point of interest in the fact that the power plant is a hydroelectric power plant and not simply, for example, a hydromechanical plant. It is true, of course, that there is all this energy. Nevertheless, nobody can deny that there is a perceptible difference not only in the landscape but in the real, when the power plant is built. The power plant was not constructed by an act of the Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit – if you have doubts you are wrong. It is precisely in order to remind you of the presence of the Holy Spirit, absolutely essential for the progression of our understanding of analysis, that I am giving you this theory of the signifier and the signified.

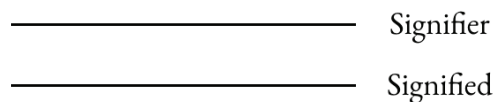
Let's take this up again on another level, as we said. The reality principle and the pleasure principle... if you oppose the two systems which represent each of them, respectively – that is, the primary and secondary systems – and you stick to only what defines them from the outside – that is to say that, on the one hand, what happens at the level of the primary system is governed by the pleasure principle, by the inclination to return to rest, and then, on the other hand, what happens at the level of the reality system is defined purely and simply as that which forces the subject into the reality we call 'external', into the taking of detours... Well, none of this, on its own, can give you the feeling of what in practice

⁶ See Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 219.

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47 will come out of the conflictual, dialectical character of the use of these two terms. Simply, in its concrete usage, such as we make of it day-to-day, you will never fail to use each of these two systems, providing you are guided by a particular indication which is, in a sense, the paradox of each [system] – often avoided but all the same never forgotten in practice – which is the following: what happens on the level of the pleasure principle is something which in fact presents itself as it is indicated to you, as tied to the law of return to rest and the inclination to return to rest, yet it remains striking... and this is why Freud – and he says it formally in his text – introduced the notion of libido that, paradoxically, pleasure... in the concrete sense, *Lust* with its ambiguous meaning in German, as he emphasises, pleasure and desire, that is, in fact, two things which might appear contradictory but which are no less efficiently related in experience... that pleasure is not related to rest, but to longing, or to the erection of desire.⁷

Inversely, no less of a paradox can be found at the level of reality, which is that there is not only the reality that we're always bumping into; there is something in this reality... just as there is the principle of, in short, returning to rest, and yet also this longing... at this level, on the other side as well, there is the principle of the curve, the detour of reality. This appears clearer, then, if correlatively to the existence of these two principles – of reality and of pleasure – we interpose the correlative existence of two levels which are precisely the two terms which link them in such a way as to allow for their dialectical operation: these are the two levels of speech such as they are expressed in the notion of signifier and signified. I have already put into a sort of parallel superposition the path of the signifier or of concrete discourse, for example, and the path of the signified insofar as it is that in which and as which the continuity of experience presents itself, the flux of inclinations for a subject and between subjects.⁸



48 Here, then, is the signifier and there the signified, a representation which is all the more valid since nothing can be conceived – not only in speech and language but in the very functioning of everything that presents itself as a phenomenon in analysis – if we do not essentially admit as possible the perpetual slippages of the signified under the signifier and of the signifier over the signified, that nothing of analytic experience can be explained except by this fundamental schema in which what is signifier of something can at any moment become signifier of something else and in which everything that presents itself in the longing, the inclination, the libido of the subject, is always marked by the trace of a signifier.

As far as we're concerned, there is nothing other than this. There is perhaps something else in the drive and in longing that is not at all marked by the trace of the signifier, but we have no access to this. Nothing is accessible to us except marked by this trace of the signifier. The signifier, in short, introduces nothing into natural movement, into desire, or – in the particularly expressive English term

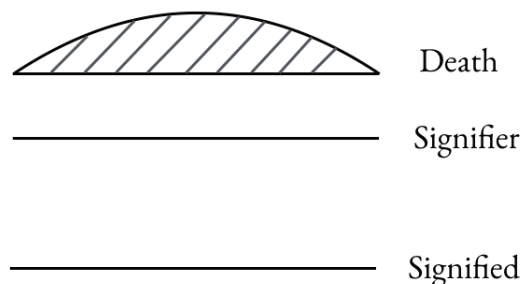
⁷ See Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 135, note 2 and *ibid.*, p. 212, note 2.

⁸ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma des parallèles*.

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which refers to this primitive expression of appetite – into demand [*exigence*] which is not marked by the specific laws of the signifier. This is why longing comes from the signifier and, as such, there is something in the existence and in this intervention of the signifier, something which effectively presents the same problem which was presented earlier in reminding you what the Holy Spirit ultimately is. We saw the year before last what it was for us and what it is, precisely, in the thought and the teaching of Freud. This Holy Spirit is the coming into the world, the entry into the world, of signifiers. What is this? It is very clearly what Freud brings us with the term ‘death instinct’. It is this limit of the signified which is never attained by any living being, which is never attained at all, except in some probably mythical exceptional cases, since we only encounter it in the last writings of a certain philosophical experience which is nonetheless something found virtually at the limits of man’s reflection on life itself, which allows him to glimpse death as its limit, as the absolute condition – unsurpassable, as Heidegger puts it – of his existence.

In any case, the existence in the world of man’s possible overall relations with the signifier, at any rate, is very precisely tied to this possibility of the elimination, the bracketing, of all that is experienced. What is at the bottom of the existence of the signifier, of its presence in the world, is something that we will put in this place, and which is this effective surface of the signifier as something whereby the signifier reflects, in some sense, what we could call the last word of the signified – that is, of life, of experience, of the flux of emotions, of libidinal flux. It is death which is the foundation, the base, the operation of the Holy Spirit, through which the signifier exists.⁹



49 That this signifier... which has its own laws, which are recognisable or not in a given phenomenon... whether this signifier is there, or not, whether it is designated in the *Es*, this is the question we ask ourselves and which we resolve by positing that to understand anything about what we are doing in analysis, we must respond ‘Yes’. That is to say, that the *Es* which is at stake in analysis is something of the signifier which is already there in the real.

Something of the signifier, incomprehensible, is already there. It is not some primitive or vague property falling under some – I don’t know what – pre-established harmony. This is always more or less the hypothesis turned to by those – who I will not hesitate to call ‘weak minds’ on this occasion and of whom first prize goes to Mr. Jones¹⁰ – I will tell you later on how he approaches the problem, for example, of the early development of the woman and of the famous castration complexes of women which pose an insoluble problem to all analysts from the moment when this comes to light and which sets out from the idea that since there is, as we say, the thread and the needle, there is also the girl and

⁹ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma des parallèles (2)*.

¹⁰ See Jones, E. (1927). *The Early Development of Female Sexuality*.

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the boy, and that there can be the same pre-established harmony between them, and that we cannot fail to say that if some difficulty manifests itself, this can only be due to some secondary disorder, through some process of defense, through something that is purely accidental and contingent. The notion of primitive harmony is presupposed, in some sense, and this follows from the notion that the unconscious is something according to which what is in the subject is designed to figure out what must correspond to him in an other. And thus, [this notion] runs contrary to this very simple thing Freud speaks of in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* concerning this very important theme of the child's development vis-à-vis its sexual images. Namely, it is a shame that things do not work like this, that the child does not develop in such a way that, as it were, already indicates the railroad built of man's free access to woman, and an encounter of which there is no other obstacle than accidents that can happen along the way.

On the contrary, Freud posits that the sexual theories of children, those that will make their mark on all the development and all the history of the relation between the sexes, are linked to this: that the first maturity of the stage which is called, strictly speaking, the genital stage, which happens before the complete development of Oedipus is the phase called the 'phallic' phase in which there is, this time – neither in the name of a union of a sort of fundamental energetic equality, merely there for the convenience of thought, nor because of the fact that there is only one libido – but this time, on the imaginary level, that there is only one primitive imaginary representation of the genital state and phase: the phallus as such, the phallus which is not in itself simply the male genital apparatus as a whole, it is the phallus with the exception, he [Freud] says, in relation to the male genital apparatus, of its complement, the testicles for example.¹¹ The erected image of the phallus is what is fundamental here. There is no other choice than a virile image or castration.

50

I am not here validating Freud's term. I am saying that it is the point of departure that Freud gives us when he makes this reconstruction, which does not seem to me – though, of course, in relation to all that precedes the *Three Essays* – to consist in going in search of natural references to this idea [castration] discovered in analysis but what it emphasises is precisely that there are countless accidents in what we discover in the analytic experience which are far from being as natural as all that. In addition, if we accept what I am saying here as a principle – namely, that any analytic experience starts from the notion that there is something of the signifier already instated, already structured, there is already a finished and functional power plant. It is not you who has built it, it is language which has functioned there for as long as you can remember – literally, you cannot remember any further back. I mean in the entire history of humanity, ever since there are signifiers which function, subjects are organised in their psyche by the play of this signifier, and this is precisely what makes it that the *Es* of this given, this something that you will search for in the depths, is itself, even less so than images, something so natural that it is precisely the very opposite of the notion of nature that is the existence in nature of the hydroelectric plant – it is precisely this scandal of the existence in nature of the hydroelectric plant, as soon as it has been built by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and it is in this that the analytic position resides. When we approach the subject, we know that there is already something in nature which is the *Es* of the subject, and what happens is structured according to the mode of a

¹¹ See, for instance, Freud, S. (1923). *The Infantile Genital Organization (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)* (*SE XIX*), p. 142, note 1 – “It is, incidentally, remarkable what a small degree of attention the other part of the male genitals, the little sac with its contents, attracts in children. From all one hears in analyses, one would not guess that the male genitals consisted of anything more than the penis.”

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signifying articulation that marks, with its traces, with its contradictions, with its profound difference from natural assimilations, all that is at work in this subject.

I felt the need to recall these positions which appear to me to be fundamental. I am pointing out that if I place this ultimate reality behind the signifier – this reality which is completely hidden from the signified – then, besides the function of the signifier, which is the possibility that nothing of the signified exists, it is none other than the death drive which makes us notice that life is completely null and void, improbable, all kinds of notions that have nothing to do with any kind of living process, the living process that consists precisely in making our little appearance in existence exactly like all those who have preceded us in the same typical fashion. The existence of the signifier is not linked to anything except the fact – for it is a fact – that something exists, which is [to say] precisely that this discourse is introduced into the world against this more or less known or unknown background. But it is still curious that Freud was led by analytic experience to be able to do none other than articulate something else, to say that if the signifier functions, this is against the background of a certain experience of death, an experience that has nothing at all to do with the word ‘experience’ in the sense of lived experience, because if there is something that our commentary on Freud’s text on this two years ago has been able to show, it is that it is not a question of anything other than a reconstruction of the fact of certain paradoxes, in other words, what is ‘inexplicable by experience’, that is, from the fact that the subject is led to behave in an essentially signifying way, indefinitely repeating something which is, strictly speaking, mortal.

Inversely, in the same way that this death, which here defies [death], is reflected back to us in the background of the signified, there is a whole series of things in the signified which are there but which are borrowed by the signifier, and it is precisely these things which are in question, that is, certain elements which are related to something so profoundly engaged in the signified, that is, the body. There are a certain number of elements, accidents of the body, which are given in experience. Just as in nature there are already certain natural reservoirs, in the signified there are certain elements which are caught in the signifier, giving it what we might call its first weapons, that is, things that are extremely evasive and yet very irreducible, of which precisely the phallic term, the pure and simple erection, the pure and simple raised stone is an example, and of which the notion of the human body as inheritor is another; of which in this way a certain number of elements all related more or less to bodily structure and not purely and simply to the lived experience of the body, form the first elements which are effectively borrowed, taken from experience, but completely transformed by the fact that they are symbolised, that is, always something which is articulated according to logical laws.

If I brought you back to the first of these logical laws, making you play at least the game of ‘odds and evens’,¹² the evens and the odds regarding the death drive, it is to remind you that the last reduction of these logical laws – that is to say the ‘more’ and the ‘less’ and the grouping by twos or by threes in a temporal sequence – it is [to remind you] that there are ultimate laws which are laws of the signifier, which are implicit, of course, in any process of differentiation, but impossible not to encounter. Let us return now to where we left things last time, that is, at the level of the analytic experience. The central object relation, that which is dynamically creative, is that of lack – *Befindung* of the object, which is a *Wiederbefindung*, as Freud tells us at the beginning of the *Three Essays*, as if this were a

¹² See the session dated 23rd March 1955 of the second year of Lacan’s seminar.

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work written in one go. There is not a single one of Freud's works which was not subject to revision, for all of Freud's works have notes added but very few modifications of the text. The *Traumdeutung*¹³ has been enriched without anything being changed of its initial balance. However the first thing you should get into your heads is that if you read the first edition of *Three Essays*, you won't believe your eyes, if I may express myself in this way, because you won't at all recognise what, for you, seem to be the familiar themes of the *Three Essays* such as you usually read them, that is, with the additions which were made principally in 1915, several years afterwards. That is to say, everything that concerns the pregenital development of the libido is only conceivable after the appearance of the theory of narcissism, but in any case had never been introduced into the *Three Essays* until everything concerning the sexual theories of children – with its major misunderstandings, which consist largely, Freud says, in the fact that the child has no notion of coitus or reproduction and that this is their main deficiency – had been modified.

That this be also given after 1915 is essentially related to the promotion of this notion which comes to its conclusion only after this last edition in 1920 of the article on *Die infantile Genital-organization*¹⁴, a crucial element of genitality in its development which remains outside the limits of the "Three Essays" which do not quite get there, but whose progression, that is, this research on the pregenital relation as such, can be explained only by the importance of sexual theories and by the libido theory itself.

[In] the chapter on libido theory¹⁵ – the one which, in this respect, is precisely a chapter concerning the narcissistic notion as such, the discovery and the origin of the very idea of the theory of the libido – Freud tells us, we can only [explain] it from the moment that we have a proposed notion of an *Ich Libido* as a reservoir, constituting the libido of objects, and he adds: we can only, he says, glance furtively at this reservoir. It is, in short, in the notion of narcissistic tension as such, that is, in man's relation to the image, that we can have an idea of the common measure and at the same time of the storehouse from which any object relation is established inasmuch as it is fundamentally imaginary. In other words, one of these essential articulations is the subject's fascination by the image; it is an image which is ultimately only ever an image which he carries in himself. This is the last word on the theory of narcissism as such.

53 Everything which is then subsequently oriented in the direction of an authority [*valeur*] which could organise fantasies is something which supposes behind itself, not at all the idea of a pre-established harmony, of a natural adaptation of the object to the subject, but on the contrary something which supposes first and foremost an experience – such as the *Three Essays* give us in their simple, first, original version – that turns entirely around a two-phase development, a stratifying of the development of child sexuality in two moments, which means that the refinding of the object will always be marked by the fact that... because of the latency period, the latent memory which traverses this period, [as] Freud articulates it, and what makes it that the first object, precisely that of the mother, is remembered in a way that has not been able to change, which is, he says, *verbunden war*, 'irreversible'... the *Wiedergefunden* object, the object which will only ever be a re-found object will be

¹³ Freud, S. (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE IV & V).

¹⁴ Freud, S. (1923). *The Infantile Genital Organization (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)* (SE XIX). The editors of the Standard Edition note in their introduction to the text that the paper "is essentially, as its sub-title implies, an addition to Freud's *Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d); and in fact a new footnote giving the gist of what is put forward here was added to the edition of that work which appeared in the following year (1924)..."

¹⁵ See Chapter III of 'The Libido Theory' in Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 217.

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marked by the primary character of this [first] object which will introduce an essential, fundamentally conflictual division in this re-found object, and the very fact of the re-finding of it.

And so it is around a first notion of discordance, of the re-found object's discordance in relation to the object that is sought, that the first dialectic in Freud's theory of sexuality is introduced. It is within this fundamental experience... and through the introduction of the notion of libido which establishes the specific functioning within this experience, this experience which supposes, essentially, the preservation in the subject's memory, unbeknownst to the subject – that is, the signifying transmission within the subject – during the latency period, of an object which then comes to divide itself, to enter into discordance, to play a disruptive role in any subsequent object relation of the subject... It is within this that we discover specifically imaginary functions in certain moments, in certain select articulations, in certain moments of this evolution, and everything of the pre-genital relation is caught inside this parenthesis, caught in the introduction of the imaginary layer of this dialectic which is at first, essentially, in our vocabulary, a dialectic of the symbolic and the real.

This introduction of the imaginary, which has become so prevalent since, is something which only appeared starting with the article on narcissism¹⁶, which is only articulated in the theory of sexuality in 1915, which is only formulated with regard to the phallic phase in 1920, but which is only formulated in a categorical way, which seemed disturbing at that time, sending the whole analytic audience into perplexity, and which can be expressed very precisely: the situation was such that it was in relation to ethics that this dialectic – called pre-genital at the time and, please note, not 'pre-Oedipal' – was situated. The term 'pre-Oedipal' was introduced in relation to feminine sexuality, ten years later. At this moment, what is at stake is the pre-genital relation, which is something to be situated in the memory of preparatory experiences, but which is only articulated in the Oedipal experience. It is on the basis of the signifying articulation of Oedipus that we see in the signifying material these images, these fantasies which themselves effectively come from something, from a certain experience at the contact between signifier and signified in which the signifier has taken its material from somewhere in 54 the signified, in a certain number of living, lived relations which have allowed us to structure, to organise in this past, grasped retroactively, this imaginary organisation which we encounter above all, with its characteristic of being paradoxical. It is paradoxical, it opposes itself far more than it is in agreement with any idea of a harmonious regular development, it is on the contrary a critical development in which, even at the origin, the objects – as we call them – of the different oral and anal phases [*périodes*], are already taken to be something other than what they are, they are already shaped. These objects, on which we operate in such a way that it is possible to extract the signifying structure, are precisely those which we call... all the notions of incorporation which are those that organise them, dominate them and allow them to be articulated.

We find, following what I told you last time, that the whole experience must be organised around the notion of the lack of the object. I showed you three different levels which are essential for understanding everything that happens every time there is a crisis, encounter, effective action in this search for the object which is essentially, in itself, a critical notion of search: castration, frustration, privation. Their central structures – what is lacking in each of them – are three essentially different things. In the lessons which will follow, we will very precisely put ourselves at exactly the same point

¹⁶ Freud, S. (1914). *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (SE XIV).

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where we put ourselves in practice. In our way of conceiving of our experience, modern theory, current practice, analysts like these re-organise analytic experience no longer on the basis of castration, which was Freud's original experience and discovery, along with that of Oedipus, but on the level of frustration. Next time I will start with an example that I took at random from the 'psycho-analytiques', the volumes which came out in 1949, a conference by Madame Schnurmann, student of Anna Freud's, who witnessed, over a short period, the occurrence of a phobia in one of the children who was entrusted to Anna Freud. We will read this observation – one amongst a thousand others – and see what we understand of it; we will also attempt to see what is understood of it by the woman who reports it with every appearance of an exemplary fidelity, that is, something which doesn't exclude a certain number of pre-established categories, but which collects them for this purpose to give us the notion of a temporal succession.

55 We will see how, around a certain number of points and references, phobia will appear and then disappear. We will see in this subject a phobia, a privileged imaginary creation, prevalent for a certain length of time, which has a whole series of effects on the subject's behaviour. We will see if it is possible for the author to articulate what is essential in this observation, simply starting from the notion of frustration such as it is currently given, as something which simply comes down to the privation of the privileged object, which is of that period of the age when the subject finds himself at the moment of privation, it is a more or less regressive effect which can even be progressive in some cases – why not? We will see if it is in this register that a phenomenon can be understood in any way by its mere appearance, by its mere situation within a certain chronological order. We will see, conversely, if through reference to these three terms – I simply want to emphasise what they mean – which mean that in castration there is fundamentally a lack which is situated in the symbolic chain, that in frustration there is something which can only be understood on the imaginary level, as an imaginary detriment, and that in privation there is purely and simply something which is in the real, a real limit, a real gap, but which surely has interest only in that we see it, that it is not at all something that is in the subject. For the subject to access privation he must already symbolise the real, he must conceive of the real as being possibly other than what he is. The reference to privation, such as it is given here, consists in asking – before we can say anything sensible – that in experience everything does not happen as in an idealistic dream which the subject is in some way indebted to. In the genesis which is given to us of the psyche, in our current psychogenesis of analysis, the subject is like a spider which must pull the whole web out of itself – that is, each subject is enveloped with silk in his cocoon, his entire conception of the world must be pulled out of himself and his images.

56 This is where everything I am explaining to you with this preparation is going, which will sustain the question for a while, which is the following: is it conceivable or not, to produce this psychogenesis that we currently hear of? That is, the subject secreting his successive relations out of himself, in the name of some – I don't know what – pre-established maturation, with the objects which will come to be those of this human world which is an other, and this in spite of all the appearances analysis gives us of the impossibility of engaging in such an exercise, because we only notice the clarifying aspects, and every time we get mixed up, this simply appears as a difficulty of language. This is simply a manifestation of the error where we are – that is to say that we can correctly situate the problem of object relations only by positing a certain framework which must be fundamental to the comprehension

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of this object relation, and that the first of these frames is that in the human world, the structure, the beginning of the organisation of the object is the lack of the object, and that this lack of the object must be conceived of at its different stages. That is, not simply in the subject at the level of the symbolic chain which escapes him at its beginning and its end, and at the level of frustration in which he is effectively established in an experience which is in itself thinkable, but that this lack must also be considered in the real. That is, to think that when we speak of privation here, it is not a question of a privation felt in the sense of a reference to that which we need... everyone makes such great use of this. Simply, the trick is – and this is what Mr. Jones does – to make this privation the equivalent of frustration. Privation is not equivalent to frustration, it is something which is in the real but which is in the real entirely outside the subject, for him to apprehend it he must first symbolise it.

How is the subject led to symbolise? How does frustration introduce the symbolic order? This is the question we will ask and it is this question which will allow us to see that the subject is not isolated in this matter, is not independent, it is not he who introduces the symbolic order. Something very striking is that yesterday evening nobody talked about an important passage in what Madame [Françoise] Dolto provided which is that, according to her, the only children who become phobic are those, of either sex, whose mother, it turns out, happens to have suffered a problem in the object relation with her own parent of the opposite sex. Here we are introduced to a notion which surely involves the intervention of something completely different from the relations between the child and the mother, and indeed if I set before you the trio of the mother, the child and the phallus, it is assuredly to remind you that aside from the child, there is more or less always for this mother the demand [*exigence*] of the phallus, which the child more or less symbolises or realises; that the child itself, who has its own relation to the mother, knows nothing of it because, in truth, there is something that must have appeared to you yesterday evening when we spoke of the image of the body regarding the child; this image of the body, if it is accessible to the child, is this how the mother sees her child? This is a question which was not asked.

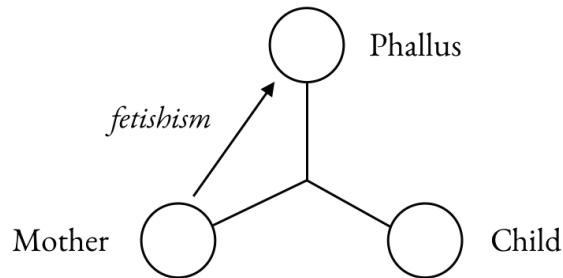
Likewise, at what moment is the child in a position to notice that what the mother desires, saturates, and satisfies in the child, is the mother's own phallic image; and what is the possibility for the child to access this relational element? Is it something of the order of a direct spilling [*effusion*], even of a projection, which seems to suppose that any relation between subjects is of the same order as her own relation with her child? I am surprised that nobody asked her [Dolto]: if she sees all these body images, is there anyone apart from an analyst, and again outside her school, who finds themselves seeing these elements and these images in the child?

This is the important point. The way in which the male or female child is induced, introduced to this imaginary discordance, which means that for the mother the child is far from merely being the child because it is also the phallus... how can we conceive of this? It is something which is available to experience, because from experience certain elements may emerge which show us, for example, that there must already be a period of symbolisation for the child to access it, or in certain cases it is in a kind of direct way that the child has taken on the imaginary detriment – not his own, but the one which the mother is in, in relation to this privation of the phallus. If she is really essential to development, it is around these crucial points – that is, whether an imaginary is here reflected in the symbolic, or on the contrary if a symbolic element appears in the imaginary – that we are asking ourselves the question of phobia.

So as not to leave you completely wanting, and to enlighten you, I will tell you that in this triple

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schema of the mother, the child and the phallus, what is at stake is [the reason] why in fetishism the child comes to more or less occupy the mother's position in relation to the phallus, or on the contrary in certain very particular forms of dependency, certain anomalies can present themselves with all appearance of normality, the child can also come to occupy the position of the phallus in relation to the mother.¹⁷



Why is the child brought to this? That is another question, but surely it is a question which will take us very far, because it seems not to be in a spontaneous and direct way that this mother-phallus relation is given to the child – everything happens simply because the child looks at his mother and realises that it is a phallus she desires. However, phobia, when it develops, is not at all of the order of the bond that the child establishes between the phallus and the mother, supplying [something of] the child's own, and to what end? We will attempt to see this.

58 Phobia is something different, it is another mode of solution to this difficult problem introduced by the relations between the child and the mother. I already showed it to you last year to show you that for there to be three terms – it was an enclosed space – there needed to be an organisation of the symbolic world which is called 'the father.' Phobia is rather something of that order, of this enclosing bond, that is, of the call for backup at a particularly critical moment that has offered no other type of approach to the solution of the problem; of the call for a symbolic element whose singularity is to always appear as extremely symbolic – that is, extremely far removed from all imaginary apprehensions – where the truly mythical character of what intervenes in phobia is something which at a certain moment is called to the rescue of a solidarity, which is essential to maintain in the gap introduced by the apparition of the phallus between the mother and the child, in this orientation between the mother and the child.

¹⁷ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma du fétichisme*.

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Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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Agent	Lack	Object
<i>Real</i> father	Castration: <i>symbolic</i> debt	<i>Imaginary</i> : phallus
<i>Symbolic</i> mother	Frustration: <i>imaginary</i> detriment	<i>Real</i> : breast, penis
<i>Imaginary</i> father	Privation: <i>real</i> hole	<i>Symbolic</i> : child

This, here, is the chart we came up with in order to articulate the problem of the object as it comes up in analysis. Today I will attempt to make apparent the kind of confusion and lack of rigour in this matter which result in this curious slippage which, all things considered, makes analysis contribute to a kind of notion of man's affective relations that I would call scandalous. In truth, I believe I have emphasised several times already a notion in analysis that, in the beginning, provoked such a scandal. It highlighted the role of sexuality... not always, of course, though analysis helped contribute to the fact of it being a commonplace, and of nobody thinking to be offended by it. I have emphasised precisely that analysis introduced, at the same time as this notion, and even much more than it, the notion of paradox, the essential inherent difficulty, we could say, of approaching the sexual object.

60 It is strange that, from there, we have slipped towards this harmonious notion of the object. To measure its difference from what Freud himself articulated with the greatest rigour, I have chosen a quote for you from the 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'. Even those people who are the worst informed when it comes to the object relation will notice that we can see very well that in Freud many things are considered which concern the object – the choice of object, for example – but the notion of object relation on its own is not at all taken into account or developed, nor even placed in the foreground of the issue. Here is the quote which can be found in Freud's article on drives and their vicissitudes: "The object of a drive [*pulsion*] is the thing in regard to which or through which the drive [*instinct*] is able to achieve its aim. It is what is most variable about a drive [*instinct*] and is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible."¹ The notion is articulated, then, that there is no pre-established harmony between the object and the drive [*tendance*], and that the object is, literally, only related to it by way of the conditions attached to the object.

We make of this what we will. It is not a doctrine, but a quotation, but it is a quotation among others and one of the most significant. It is a question of seeing what this conception of the object is, through what detour does it lead us so that we come to conceive of its effectual mechanism? We have come to emphasise this foreground on account of several points otherwise articulated in Freud – namely, the notion that the object is never but an object refound through a primitive *Findung*, and therefore ultimately a *Wiederfindung*, which is never satisfying – this is where the accent is placed on the notion of refinding – and, what's more, we have seen in [its] other characteristics that, on the one hand, this object is inadequate, and on the other hand, to some extent it even evades being grasped conceptually. And this leads us to try to firm up the fundamental notions, and in particular to dismantle the notion

¹ This passage can be found in Freud, S. (1915). *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (SE XI), p.118.

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placed at the centre of contemporary analytic theory, this notion of frustration, once it has entered our own dialectics... although I have emphasised to you many times how marginal it is in comparison to Freud's thought itself... to attempt to get a better grasp of it, to revisit it, and to see in what sense it was necessary, and also in what sense it is appropriate to rectify it, to criticise it, to make it usable and, frankly, coherent with regard to what constitutes the foundation of analytic doctrine, that is to say, what remains fundamentally Freud's teaching and thought.

61 I have reminded you of what presented itself as immediately given: castration, frustration and privation – three terms of whose differences it is productive to take note. Castration is essentially tied to a symbolic order *qua* instituted, as concerning an enduring consistency from which the subject, under no circumstances, can be given. This is made sufficiently evident as much in our previous reflections as it is in the simple remark that, from the start, castration was tied to the central position given to the Oedipus complex as the essential articulating element in the entire evolution of sexuality the Oedipus complex as already fundamentally including in itself the notion of the law as absolutely ineradicable. I think that the fact that castration is at the level of symbolic debt will appear sufficiently affirmed and even sufficiently demonstrated by this remark, strengthened and supported by all our previous points. Last time, I indicated to you that surely what is concerned, what is at stake in this symbolic debt which is instituted by castration is an imaginary object – it is the phallus as such. This is what Freud affirms here, in any case, and this is the point from which I will proceed and from which we will attempt to push the dialectic of frustration a little further today.

Frustration, in itself, even when very well taken as the central position in the chart, is no more capable of throwing things into disorder or misalignment. If the notion of desire was placed by Freud at the centre of analytic conflictuality, it is surely something which adequately allows us to grasp that in placing the accent on the notion of frustration, we do not deviate very much from the central notion of the Freudian dialectic. What is important to grasp is what this frustration means, how it was introduced, and that to which it relates. It is clear that the notion of frustration, insofar as it is placed at the forefront of analytic theory, is related to the investigation of traumas, fixations, impressions of experiences which are in themselves pre-oedipal, which does not imply that they are external to the oedipal stage but that, in a sense, they provide its preparatory ground, its basis and foundation, that they sculpt [it] in such a way that certain inflections are already prepared within it, which will provide the axis on which the Oedipal conflict will be led to bend itself, to a greater or lesser degree, in a certain more or less atypical or heterotypical direction.

62 This notion of frustration is thus related to the first stage of life and to a mode of relation which in itself manifestly introduces the question of the real into the progress of analytic experience. Placed in the foreground, in the conditioning and the development of the subject, we see the introduction, along with the notion of frustration, of these notions which we call – roughly translated into terms of quantitative metaphor – satisfactions, gratifications of a certain number of adapted benefits, sufficient for the stages of the young subject's development, and for which, in a sense, a greater or lesser [degree of] satiation [*saturation*]² or, on the contrary, deficit, is considered to be an essential element. I believe that this remark suffices to alert us to proofs, to make us refer to the texts, to see what step has been taken in this investigation, guided by analysis of the fact of the simple shift [*déplacement*] of interest in analytic literature. It can already be seen easily enough, at least for those who are familiar with these

² The term *saturation* carries a combined sense of satisfaction and of something having been filled fully. It may also be understood as a kind of satisfaction in being made full, as in the satiation of hunger.

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three notions to be able to easily recognise them. You will see that in an example of analytic literature in which this element of conceptual articulation of the thing can be easily recognised, the accent will be placed on certain real conditions which we detect – which we are supposed to detect – in the [analytic] experience, in a subject's history. The foregrounding of this point of interest is something which, from the very first analytic observations, will appear to us to be largely absent, in the sense that it is articulated differently. This puts us back at the level of frustration considered as a sort of element of real impressions, experienced in a period for the subject in which his relation to this real object, whichever it may be, is usually centred on the so-called primordial image of the maternal breast. And it is essentially in relation to this primordial object, that what I earlier called the subject's first leanings [*versants*] and fixations will form, in the presence of which different types of instinctual stages have been described, and whose characteristic is to give us the imaginary anatomy of the development of the subject. This is where these relations of oral and anal stages with their various subdivisions – phallic, sadistic, etc. – have found expression. And all are marked by this element of ambivalence in which the subject participates, in his very position, in the position of the other, where he is two, wherein he always participates in an essentially dual situation, without which no general assumption of the position is possible.

63 Let us see where all this brings us, simply limiting ourselves to this. We are, then, in the presence of an object which we take [as being] in this position, which is the position of desire. Let us take it – as it is given to us – to be the breast, as real object. We are thus brought to the heart of the question: what is this most primitive relationship which the subject has to the real object? You know very well the extent to which theoretician analysts have ended up in a sort of discussion that, at the very least, seems to indicate all kinds of misunderstandings. Freud has told us about the auto-erotic stage of experience. This auto-erotism has been maintained as being a primitive relation between the child and this primordial maternal object. At least, it has been maintained by some. Others have remarked that it is difficult to refer to a notion which seems to be founded on the fact that the subject it involves only knows himself, something which many features of direct observation... features that we think of as necessary to explain the development of the relations of mother and child... many features seem to contradict the fact that, in this case, there are no effectual relations with an object... and what can be more manifestly external to the subject than this 'something' for which he effectively has the most pressing need, and which is his first nourishment par excellence? In truth, it seems that there is a misunderstanding here, born of a sort of confusion, and it is by way of this confusion that the whole discussion ends up going nowhere, and results in such diverse statements – diverse enough, as it happens, that it would take us quite a while to enumerate them, and I cannot do it straight away, since we must make a certain progress in the conceptualisation of the matter in hand today. But observe simply that something which we have already discussed, the theory of Alice Balint, who is looking to reconcile the notion of auto-erotism such as it is presented in Freud with what seems to be necessitated by the reality of the object with which the child is confronted at this completely primitive stage of his development³, leads to this thoroughly articulated, and quite striking conception which she

³ See Balint, A. (1949). 'Love for the Mother and Mother Love' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 30, p. 251. Parts of the paper were first published under the title 'Reality Sense and the Development of the Ability to Love' in the 1933 Sandor Ferenczi memorial volume '*Lélekelemzési tanulmányok*'. The final paper appeared in German in 1939 - see Balint, A. (1939). '*Liebe zur Mutter und Mutterliebe*' in *Int. Z. f. Psa. u. Imago*, vol. 24, 33-48.

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64 calls 'primary love', [which is] the only form of love according to Mr and Mrs Balint⁴, in which egotism and gift are perfectly reconcilable – that is, [they] accept as fundamental a perfect reciprocity in the position of what the child requires of the mother and, on the other hand, of what the mother requires of the child, a perfect complementarity of the two types, the two poles of need... which is something so contrary to all clinical experience, precisely insofar as we are perpetually having to deal with the evocation, in the subject, of the mark of all that might have been, of discords – and truly fundamental discords at that – which I will have to recall for you later, by telling you that it is an excessively simple element in the couple, which is not a couple... [there is] something so discordant in the signature with which the very terms of this theory of so-called primitive, perfect and complementary love are written. [It is] simply in the remark that this... Alice Balint tells us... that these things are done as they have always been done. There, where the relationship is natural – that is, in the wild – where the child's contact with the mother is maintained, that is, always somewhere else, in dreamland, where, as everyone knows, the mother always has the child on her back. This is obviously a sort of evasion, quite incompatible with an entirely proper [*correcte*] theorisation which must ultimately admit that this is an entirely ideal, if not idealistic, arrangement, admit that the notion of such a strictly complementary love can be articulated, a love that is, in some way, destined to find, by itself, its own reciprocity. In truth, I am only taking this example because it introduces us to what we will point out presently, and what will be the driving element of the critique we are engaged in, regarding the notion of frustration. It is clear that this notion is not quite the fundamental image of representation which a theory such as Kleinian theory, for example, gives us. It is amusing here as well to see from which angle this theoretical reconstruction, that of Kleinian theory, is criticised, and particularly since it concerns the object relation. It happens that I fell upon a certain activity bulletin, that of the *Association des Psychanalystes de Belgique*. These are authors who we find in the volume which I referred to in the notes of my first session, a volume which I told you is truly centred on a shamelessly optimistic and altogether questionable viewpoint on the object relation which gives it its meaning. Here, in a slightly more confidential bulletin, it appears that things are criticised with more nuance, as if, in truth, there is a lack of sureness, a lack that one is a little ashamed to broadcast in these places, even though it assuredly appears, when one becomes aware of it, that it is this lack which is more commendable. We can see that an article by Mr. Pasche and Mr. Renard reproduces a criticism which they brought to the Geneva conference⁵ concerning the Kleinian positions. It is extremely striking to see Melanie Klein reproached in this article for having a theory of development which in a sense, according to critics and authors, places everything inside the subject, in short, places the whole oedipal stage in a preformed state, the possible development already included in an instinctual given, which would be the output – according to these authors – of different elements, and already, in some sense, potentially articulated in the

⁴ A reference to Michael Balint and his first wife, Alice. In the preface to his collected papers – see *Balint, M. (1952). Primary Love and Psycho-analytic Technique*. – he writes of their “intertwined” development: “Quite often it was just chance that decided which of us should publish a particular idea... We published only one paper jointly, although almost all of them could have been printed under our joint names.”

⁵ Lacan refers to an article only very recently published at the time of this session – see *Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'Réalité de l'objet et point de vue économique' in Revue française de Psychanalyse, XX, Octobre–Décembre 1956, no. 4, pp. 517–24*. In English, see *Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'The Reality of the Object and Economic Point of View' in International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, vol. 37, pp. 282–285*. The paper was originally delivered at the 23rd Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Geneva, July 1955.

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manner in which the authors ask us to make the comparison... and so it is, for some, that in the theory of biological development, the whole oak is already contained within the acorn, that nothing would come to a given subject in some way from the outside, and that it would be through his primitive drives, namely, aggressive drives, at the start... and the prevalence of aggressivity is manifest when we understand it in this – Melanie Klein's – perspective... and then through the intermediary of the aftershocks of these aggressive drives, felt by the subject from the outside, namely the maternal field, the progressive construction – something which, we are told, can only be taken as a sort of preformed oak – of the notion of the totality of the mother from which this so-called 'depressive position' is established, which can present itself in any experience.

65 All these criticisms must be taken in turn, to allow us to appreciate their exact value, and here I would simply like to point out to you what, paradoxically, these critiques as a whole result in. They result in a formulation which is this one, and it constitutes the heart and the centre of the article. It is surely that the authors here appear to be fascinated by the question of how, in effect, this fact of experience, that which in [the subject's] development is taken in from the outside, that which they believe they see in Melanie Klein... this is already given in an internal constellation from the start, and it would not be surprising to see the notion of the internal object foregrounded in such a prevalent way thereafter. And the authors come to the conclusion that they think they can throw out the Kleinian contribution by foregrounding the notion of the pre-formed oak, the hereditarily pre-formed oak, which they say is very difficult to represent. So, they say that the child is born with inherited instincts, facing a world which he does not perceive, but which he remembers, and which he will then have to neither take up from himself, nor from anything else, nor discover through a series of strange discoveries, but recognise. I think that most of you recognise the inescapably Platonic character of this formulation. This world which we have but to remember, this world which is to establish itself according to a certain imaginary preparation, for which the subject already finds himself to be prepared [*adéquat*], is something which surely represents a contradictory critique, but we will have to see whether, when put to the test, it is not only against everything which Freud has written, but whether we cannot already sense that the authors are themselves much closer than they think to the position for which they reproach Melanie Klein, namely that it is they who indicate the existence, in the subject, in the state of a preformed oak tree, and ready to emerge at any given point, all the elements which will allow the subject to count himself in a series of [developmental] stages which cannot be called ideal except insofar as it is precisely the memories of the subject – and very precisely the phylogenetic memories – which will provide the model and standard of these stages. Is that what Melanie Klein intended to say? It is strictly unthinkable to maintain this, for if there is precisely one thing of which Ms Melanie Klein gives us an idea – and this is incidentally the sense of the authors' critique – it is surely that the initial situation is much more chaotic, truly anarchic at the beginning, that the sound and fury of the drives is characteristic of the origin. It is precisely a question of seeing how something like an order can establish itself from there. That there is something mythical in the Kleinian conception is beyond doubt. It is quite certain that the contradiction – if it provides a myth which they cannot get back to, and even if it resembles the Kleinian fantasy – is absolutely perfect. These fantasies of course only have a retroactive character. It is in the construction of the subject that we will see reprojected onto the past, from points which may be very premature and which must be defined... and why these points can be so premature, why from the age of two and a half we already see Ms Melanie Klein reading in the manner of someone reading a

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- 66 scrying or divinatorial mirror... she reads retroactively into the past of a very advanced subject, and she finds a way to read retroactively something which is none other than the oedipal structure. This is partially correct since, of course, there is an element of mirage, [but] naturally, it is not a matter of following her when she tells us that the oedipal structure was in a sense already there within the fragmented forms of the penis, moving around among different types, brothers, sisters, within the whole of this sort of defined field of the inside of the maternal body. But for this articulation to be detectable, articulable in a certain relation to the child – and very prematurely at that – is something which surely presents us with a fertile question... that all theoretical articulation is in some way purely hypothetical when it allows us to posit, from the start, something which might better satisfy our ideas of natural harmonies, but which does not conform with what is shown by experience. And I believe that this is starting to show you the angle from which we can introduce something new into this confusion which remains at the level of the primordial mother-child relationship. I believe that this is in keeping with the fact that, not starting from a central notion, namely, frustration, which is [supposed to be] the true centre... it is not frustration from which we start, it is not about what [this relationship] should not be, it is a question of how the primitive relations of the child are put into place and situated.
- Much can be clarified if we approach things in the following way. In this ‘frustration’ there are originally two axes which we find to be interlaced all the way through. There is the real object... and as we are told, it is certain that an object can begin to exert its influence in the subject’s relations well before it has been perceived as an object... there is the real object, the direct relation, and it is solely according to this periodicity, where holes and deficiencies may appear, which would go to establish a certain mode of the subject’s relation in which we may introduce something which, at this point, certainly would not make it necessary for us to grant that for the subject there is a distinction between a ‘me’ and a ‘not-me’ – for example, the auto-erotic position in the sense that it is understood in Freud, namely, that there is, strictly speaking, no constitution of the other, nor, to begin with, any conceivable relation whatsoever. The notion... in this fundamental relation which is a relation of lack to something which is effectively the object, but the object only insofar as it has insistence [*instance*] in relation to
- 67 lack... the notion of the agent [*agent*] is something which should allow us to introduce a formulation of the general position, and one that is completely essential from the start. The agent, in this case, is the mother... and what have we seen in our experience these past years, notably in what Freud has articulated, concerning the principal position of the child vis-à-vis repetition games?⁶ The mother is something other than this primitive object and, indeed, in accordance with observation does not, from the start, appear as such, as Freud clearly emphasised to us.
- She [only] appears from this first game onward, which is taken up and tackled in such a swift fashion in the child’s behaviour, that is, this game of the taking of an object, itself perfectly indifferent, an object without any kind of biological value whatsoever, which is the ball in this case, but which might also be anything at all which a small child of six months can put over the edge of his bed in order to catch it again. This ‘presence-absence’ coupling, articulated extremely prematurely by the child, is something which characterises, which connotes the first constitution of the agent of frustration, originally the mother, the mother as she is spoken of as introducing this new element of totality at a

⁶ See Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (SE XVIII), pp. 14–17.

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certain stage of development, which is that of the 'depressive position', and which is, in fact, characterised less by the opposition of a totality in relation to a sort of chaos of scattered objects – which would be the preceding stage – than by this aspect of 'presence-absence', not only placed there objectively, as such, but articulated by the subject, centred by the subject around something which is... we already articulated it in our studies of the previous year⁷ ... around something which means that 'presence-absence' is something which for the subject is articulated, that the maternal object is called here when it is absent and rejected in a similar register when it is present – that is, [the register of] the call – namely, by a vocalisation.

This essential scansion of the call is, of course, not something which gives us the whole symbolic order from the start – far from it – but which allows us to draw out, as an element distinct from the real object relation, something other, which is quite precisely what will offer the possibility of relation in the future, from this relation of the child to a real object with its scansion, the marks and traces it leaves behind, which offer us the possibility of connecting this real relation with a symbolic relation as such. Before demonstrating this more directly, I would like to highlight this one fact, which is that the relations of the child are introduced by this relation to the person constituted by the opposing couple

68 'presence-absence', this relation which is thus introduced into the experience of the child and which, at the moment of frustration, naturally tends to fall dormant. So we find the child between the notion of an agent who already participates in the order of symbolicity, as we have seen.

This is what we articulated last year. It is the opposing couple 'presence-absence', the connotation 'plus-minus', which gives us the first element. It is not enough by itself to constitute a symbolic order, since that would require a sequence, and a grouped sequence at that, but already in the opposition 'more and less', 'presence and absence', we find, in virtual form, the origin, the birth, the possibility, the fundamental condition of a symbolic order. How should we conceive of the turning point in which this primordial relation to the real object may open onto something else? What is, in fact, the true shift, the turning point in which the mother-child dialectic opens onto a more complex relation, opens onto other elements that will introduce what we have called dialectic, properly speaking? I believe that we may formulate it schematically by asking the question: if what constitutes the symbolic agent, the mother as such, essential for the child's relation to this real object, then what happens if she no longer responds, if she does not answer to this call? Let us introduce the answer ourselves. What happens if she no longer responds, if she refuses [*déchoit*] this symbolic structuration which makes her a 'present-absent object' according to the call? She becomes real starting from this moment.

Why does she become real? What does this notion mean... breaking from this structure, which is the very same structure as that within which she has existed as agent up until this point? We have detached her from the real object which is the object of the child's satisfaction. She becomes real, that is, she no longer responds. She only responds, in a sense, of her own free will. She becomes something which initiates the structuration of all reality. In what follows, she becomes a power. Through a reversal of positions, this object... let us take the breast as an example – we can make it as enticing as ever, it does not matter, since here it is a question of a real relation... but from the moment that the mother becomes a power and as such becomes real, the child will depend on her, most manifestly, for access to these objects which had been, until now, purely and simply objects of satisfaction. They will become, on behalf of this power, gift objects, and thus in the same way – but no more so than the mother had been

⁷ See the session of 18th January 1956 in *Lacan, J. (1954-1955). The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis (Book II)*.

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before now – become liable to enter into a connotation of ‘presence-absence’, but as dependent on this real object, on this power which is the maternal power... in short, objects as objects in the sense we understand them – not metaphorically, but objects as graspable, as obtainable. The notion of the ‘not me’⁸ is a question of observation, of knowing whether it first comes in through the image of the 8 other or through what is possessable, what the child wants to keep close at hand – objects which, from that point on, no longer need to be objects of satisfaction in themselves, but objects which mark the value of this power which might not respond, which is the power of the mother.

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In other words, the position is reversed – the mother has become real and the object becomes symbolic. The object becomes, above all, a testament to the gift that comes from the maternal power. From that point on, the object has two kinds of satisfying properties. It is both a possible object of satisfaction insofar as it satisfies a need, as surely as it did before, but also, and no less surely, insofar as it symbolises a benevolent power. This is very important because one of the most cumbersome notions in all of analytic theory – such as it is formulated since it has become, according to a slogan, a [theory of] ‘genetic psychoanalysis’⁹ – is the notion of this so-called omnipotence of thought, an omnipotence which we impute to all that is most removed from us, as it is conceivable that the child has a notion of omnipotence – perhaps he has the essentials – but it is absolutely absurd – and it leads to dead ends – to think that the omnipotence in question is his own. The omnipotence in question is the moment of this realisation¹⁰ of the mother which I am describing to you. It is the mother who is all-powerful, not the child. The decisive moment – the passage of the mother into reality, proceeding from a completely archaic symbolisation... it is this moment, it is the moment when the mother can give anything at all. But it is absolutely erroneous and completely inconceivable to think that the child has any idea of his omnipotence. Not only does nothing in his development indicate that he does, but most everything which interests us and every accident serves to show us that this omnipotence and its failures have nothing to do with him, but as you will see, everything to do with deficiencies and disappointments concerning maternal omnipotence. This investigation may seem a little theoretical to you, but at the very least it has the advantage of introducing essential distinctions, openings, which are not being put to effective use. You will now see where this brings us, and what we will already be able to indicate of [these distinctions]. Here, then, is the child, who is in the presence of something which he has realised as a power, something which has suddenly gone from the level of the first ‘presence-absence’ connotation to something which can be refused, which holds anything the subject may need, even if he does not need it, and which becomes symbolic from the moment when it depends on this power.

70

Let us ask the question from an entirely different starting point. Freud tells us there is something in this world of objects which has an absolutely decisive function, paradoxically decisive. It is the phallus, this object, which is itself defined as imaginary, which is in no way possible to confuse with the penis in its reality, which is strictly speaking the form of the penis, its erected image. This phallus has such a decisive importance that the nostalgia for it, its presence, its insistence [*instance*] in the imaginary is found to be more important, it would seem, for the members of humanity who are missing it – that is, the woman – than for he – that is, the man – who can assure it to be a reality, and for whom, indeed,

⁸ English in the original.

⁹ A likely reference to *Hartmann, H. (1945). ‘The genetic approach in psychoanalysis’ in Psychoanal Study Child, vol. 1, pp. 11–30.*

¹⁰ This could also be heard as *réalisation*, given that Lacan tells us “*la mère est devenue réelle*” – the mother has become real.

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all of sexual life is nonetheless subordinated to the fact of assuming it imaginarily, and ultimately assuming it legitimately, as use would permit. This is a given.

Now, let us take a look at our mother and child in question, let us confront them as I confront, to begin with, what Michel and Alice Balint [have said]... according to them, as with the Mortimer couple in the days of Jean Cocteau who have only a single heart, the mother and the child for Michel and Alice Balint have only a single totality of needs. Nevertheless, I will retain them as two external circles. What Freud tells us is that the woman has the phallus in her essential missing objects, that not only does this have the most intimate relationship to her relation to the child for the simple reason that if the woman finds a satisfaction in the child, it is precisely insofar as she fills up at her own level, that she finds this something or other in him which more or less calms her – this penis, this need for the phallus. If we do not incorporate this, we misrecognise not only Freud's teaching, but something which is manifest in every moment of the experience.

71 Here, then, we have the mother and the child who have a certain relation between them. The child expects something from the mother, and he also receives something in this dialectic in which we cannot fail to introduce what I am introducing now, that the child can, in a sense – let us approximate by putting it as Mr. and Ms. Balint formulate it – believe to be loved for himself. The question is the following one. Inasmuch as this image of the phallus, for the mother, is not completely reduced to the image of the child, inasmuch as this double vision, this division of the so-called primordial desired object, which would be that of the mother in the child's presence, is in reality doubled by, on the one hand, the need for a certain imaginary fullness [*saturation*], and on the other hand, by what there may be in terms of real, efficient, instinctual relations with the child, at a primordial level, which always remains mythical, inasmuch as for the mother there is something which remains irreducible in what is at stake – ultimately, if we follow Freud, this is to say that the child as real symbolises the image. If it is important that the child, as real for the mother, takes on for her the symbolic function of her imaginary need, the three terms are there, and all sorts of varieties will be able to introduce themselves. The child, put in the presence of the mother, all sorts of already structured situations existing between him and the mother, namely, starting from the moment when the mother has introduced herself into the real in a state of power, something opens the possibility for the child of an intermediary as such, as a gift object.

It is a question of knowing at which moment, and how, by which mode of access, might the child be directly introduced into the symbolic-imaginary-real structure such as it is produced for the mother. In other words, at which moment can the child enter, assume, in a more or less symbolised way, as we will see, the imaginary situation, real as to what the phallus is for the mother? At which moment can the child feel himself dispossessed, to a certain extent, of something he demands [*exige*] from the mother when he notices that it is not he who is loved, but something else, a certain image. There is something which goes further. It is that this phallic image is realised by the child on himself. This is where the narcissistic relation, properly speaking, intervenes. To what extent, at the moment when the child apprehends, for example, the difference between the sexes, does this experience come to be articulated with what is offered to him in the very presence and action of the mother, with the recognition of this imaginary third term, which is the phallus for the mother? Furthermore, to what extent is the notion that the mother is missing this phallus, that the mother is herself desiring, not only of something other than him, but desiring full stop – that is, affected in her power – desiring something which, for the subject, can and will be more decisive than anything?

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I announced to you last time the observation of a phobia.¹¹ I will indicate straight away what its interest will be. It is a little girl, and we have – thanks to the fact that it is wartime and that it is a student of Anna Freud's – all sorts of good conditions. The child will be observed from head to toe, and as it is a student of Ms Anna Freud's, in this sense she will be a good observer because she understands nothing. She understands nothing because Ms Anna Freud's theory is false, and consequently this will put her before the facts in a state of astonishment which will make for all the fruitfulness of the observation.

72 And in this case everything is taken note of, one day at a time. The little girl notices that the boys have a pee-pee-maker, as it is called in the observation of little Hans. For quite a while she puts herself in the position of rivalry – she is two and five months – that is, she does everything she can to do as the little boys do. This child is separated from her mother, not only because of the war, but because at the beginning of the war her mother lost her husband. She comes to see her, their relations are excellent, the 'presence-absence' is regular, and the games of love, of contact with the child, are games of getting up close. She comes in on tiptoe, and she draws out her arrival – we see her function of symbolic mother. Everything is going very well. She has real objects which she wants when the mother is not there. When the mother is there she plays her role of symbolic mother.

This little girl then makes the discovery that boys have a pee-pee-maker. This surely results in something, namely, that she wants to imitate them and that she wants to manipulate their pee-pee-maker. There is a drama, but one that brings absolutely no consequences. Yet this observation is presented to us as one of a phobia, and, in fact, one fine night the little girl will awake, struck with a wild fright, and the cause will be the presence of a dog, which is there, which wants to bite her, which makes her want to leave her bed and makes it necessary to put her in another. This observation of phobia develops for a while. Does this phobia follow from the discovery of the absence of a penis? Why do we ask this question?

We are asking this question because this dog... we will know insofar as we analyse the child, that is to say, as we follow and understand what she tells us... this dog is clearly a dog that bites, that bites the genitals. The first truly long sentence... for this is a child who is a bit behind... which she pronounces in her development is to say that dogs bite the legs of bad boys, and this is right at the origin of her phobia. You can also see the relation which exists between the symbolisation of the object and the phobia. Why the dog? We will discuss that later. But what I would like to point out now is that this dog is there as an agent which removes what, initially, was more or less admitted as absent. Will we make a short-circuit of this and say that it is simply a matter, in this phobia, of a passage to the level of the law – that is to say, as I was telling you earlier, that something endowed with power is there to intervene and to justify what is absent, what is absent by way of its being taken off, bitten?

It is in this sense that I showed you, that I have tried to articulate today, a schema which allows us to take the next step, to see this thing which remains quite summary. We are doing it at every moment. Mr. Jones¹² tells us clearly. After all, for the child, the superego is perhaps nothing but an alibi. Anxieties are primordial, primitive, imaginary. In a sense, he returns here to a kind of artifice. It is the compensation or the moral price – in other words, culture and all its prohibitions. It is something

¹¹ See Schnurmann, A. (1946). 'Observation of a Phobia' in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol 4, pp. 253–270.

¹² A possible reference to Jones, E. (1916). *The Theory of Symbolism*. See, in particular, Chapter IV, *The Genesis of the Super-ego*, p. 145.

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73 obsolete – shielded from anything fundamental which might be there, namely, anxieties in their unconstrained state – which is, in a sense, put to rest. There is something accurate in all this, which is the mechanism of phobia. And to stretch it out as Mr. Pasche does at the end of this article I told you about,¹³ to the point of saying that this mechanism of phobia is something which explains the death instinct, for example, or even that dream images are a way of dressing up the subject's anxieties – personalising them, one might say – that is, always returning to the same idea that this is not a misrecognition of the symbolic order... but the idea that it is a kind of dressing up, a disguise for something more fundamental... is this what I mean to tell you in bringing in this observation of phobia? No! The point of this is to notice that the phobia took more than a month to break out. It took much longer – a period marked by the discovery of this child's aphallus or aphallicism and the outbreak of the phobia.

Something had to happen in the interval, which is that, firstly, the mother stopped coming because she had fallen ill and needed an operation. The mother is no longer the symbolic mother – the mother is missing. She returns, she plays with the child again. Still, nothing happens. She returns, leaning on a cane. She returns weakened. She no longer has the same presence or the same joyfulness, nor even the same relations of coming close and moving away which had founded a coupling [a ccrochage] with the child that was sufficient, which took place every eight days. And it is this moment, then, in a very distant third period, which gives birth to the discovery that thanks to these observers we may say that Oedipus does not come from the phallus, from the second rupture of the alternating rhythm of 'coming – having come' of the mother as such. The mother also needs to have appeared as someone who could lack. And her lack is inscribed in the reaction, the behaviour of the child – that is, the child is very sad, she needs to be reassured. There was no phobia. It is only when she sees her mother again in a debilitated state, leaning on a stick, sick, tired, that the dream of the dog breaks out the next day, and then the development of the phobia.

74 There is only one thing in the observation which is more significant and paradoxical than this. We will talk about this phobia again, about the way these therapists tackled it and what they believed they understood. I would simply like to point out in the history of the phobia, that all this at least raises the question of knowing from which moment it is, in which the mother lacks a phallus, that this something or other, which is determined and regulated through the phobia, made the phobia necessary. Why is it sufficient? This is another question which we will approach next time. There is another point, no less striking, which is that after the phobia, the war ends, the mother takes back her child, and remarries. She finds herself with a new father, and a new brother – the son of the gentleman whom the mother remarries – and at that point the brother she has suddenly acquired, and who is plainly older than her, about five years older, starts to engage in all sorts of games with her, both adorational and violent. Among these, there is the request to expose their nudity, and obviously the brother does something to her which, precisely, is wholly related to the interest he bears towards this little girl insofar as she is 'apenile'. And this is where the psychotherapist is surprised – this would have been a good opportunity for her phobia to relapse, for in the environmental theory on which Anna Freud's whole therapy is founded, it is insofar as the ego is more or less well informed about reality that discordances establish themselves.

¹³ A further reference to Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'The Reality of the Object and Economic Point of View' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 37, pp. 282–285.

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Is it at that point, faced [*représentifié*] with her lack once again, with the presence of the man-brother, of this figure who is not only phallic, but bearer of a penis... wouldn't there be opportunity for a relapse here? Far from it. She has never been better. There is no trace, at that point, of mental troubles. She develops perfectly well. Furthermore, we know exactly why. It is that her mother obviously prefers her to this boy, but nevertheless the father is someone present enough to introduce, precisely, a new element – the element of which we have not yet spoken but which, all the same, is essentially related to the function of phobia, a symbolic element beyond the relation of power or powerlessness with the mother. This element is the father, strictly speaking, who in his relations with the mother frees [from her] the notion of power. In short, it is that which, on the contrary, appears to have been filled [*saturé*] by the phobia – namely, what she fears in the castrating animal as such – which turned out to be absolutely necessary, turned out to have been the essential element of articulation which allowed this child to traverse the serious crisis in which she was standing in the face of maternal impotence. She rediscovers, there, her need, filled by maternal presence and, moreover, by the fact that something... of which, it is a matter of knowing whether the therapist sees as clearly as all that... that is, that there are perhaps all sorts of pathological possibilities in this relation in which she is already a father's daughter, for we might notice, in a different light, that she alone has become something which is worth more than the brother.

In any case, she will surely become the phallus-sister, of which we so often speak, of which it is a matter of knowing, in what follows, the extent to which she will not be implicated in this imaginary function. But for the moment, there is no essential need to fill in through the articulation of phallic fantasy. The father is there. He is sufficient. He suffices to maintain, among the three terms of the mother-child-phallus relation, a sufficient gap for the subject to not have to go out of her way – she does not in any way have to do her bit in maintaining this gap. How is this gap maintained? By which path, which identification, which artifice? This is what we will start to try to tackle next time, by taking up this observation again a little more – that is to say, introducing you, in this way, to what is most distinctive in the pre-oedipal object relation, that is, the birth of the fetish object.

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Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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The analytic conception of the object relation has already taken on a certain form in history. What I am trying to show you takes up the issue again in a way that is partly different and partly the same but, of course, only insofar as it is introduced into a different system which gives it a different meaning. It is appropriate, at the point we have reached, to correctly and emphatically punctuate how this object relation is placed by the group that places it more and more – and I have noticed this recently in re-reading certain articles – at the centre of their conception of analysis. We must indicate in what sense this formulation – precipitated, affirmed, and even, up to a point, affirmed simultaneously, over the years – has led to something which is now very firmly articulated. In certain articles, I sometimes wished, ironically, that someone would successfully defend the object relation such as it is conceived in a certain orientation. My wish has since been granted abundantly. More than one has given us this formulation – and more specifically, a formulation which had been going rather soft on the part of he who introduced it with regard to obsessional neurosis. But for some others, we could say that there has been an effort of clarification in the prevailing conception. And in the article on motricity¹ in the object relation in the January–June 1955 issue of the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, Mr Michel Fain gives us a lively example which, I think, responds to the summary of it which I will give you. When you read the article, it will surely seem to you that things go much farther than the idea which I am only able to give you in an inevitably shortened fashion with these few words. At any rate, I hope that you will see to what extent it is true that the relation between the analysed [*analysé*] and the analyser [*analysant*] is conceived from the start like the one which is established between a subject – the patient – and an external object – the analyst. And, to express it in our vocabulary, the analyst is here conceived as real.

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All the tension of the analytic situation is conceived on the basis of this ‘couple’ which, all by itself, is an organising element of the analytic development, which is to say that between a subject who is reclined – or not – on a sofa, and the external object, which is the analyst, all that can, in principle, be established or manifested is what is called the primitive drive relation, which should normally – as is presupposed in the development of the analytic relation – manifest itself through motor activity. It is in terms of the faint traces, carefully observed, of the stages of the subject’s motor reactions, that we find the last word on what happens at the level of the drive, which will somehow be there, localised, felt by the analyst as alive. It is insofar as the subject contains his movements that he is forced to contain them within the relation such as it is established by analytic convention. It is here, at this level, that this manifestation is concerned, that it is located in the mind of the analyst – that is to say, it is here that the drive emerges. In the end, the situation is, at base, conceived as being only possible [for the subject] to externalise through an erotic aggression, which does not manifest itself because it is agreed that it will not manifest – but somehow it is desirable that the erection pops up, so to speak, at any moment. It is precisely insofar as the motor manifestation of the drive cannot produce itself within the analytic convention – that is, the [reclining] position given by the rule – that we will be allowed to see that what interferes with this situation, considered as constitutive, is quite precisely formulated for us as follows: that superimposed on the relation with the external object there is a relation with an internal object. This is how it is expressed in the article I just mentioned to you.

¹ See Marty, P. & Fain, M. 1955. *Importance du rôle de la motricité*. in *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, vol. 19, pp. 205-322. The paper was presented at the 17th Congress of Romance-Language Psychoanalysts held in November, 1954.

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79 It is inasmuch as the subject has a certain relation with an internal object, which is always considered to be the person present but caught somehow in the imaginary mechanisms already established in the subject... it is [inasmuch] as a certain discord is introduced between this imaginary object and the real object, that the analyst will be evaluated, gauged, at every moment, and will tailor his interventions according to the discord between this internal object of this fantasmatic relation to someone who is, in principle, the person present, since no one comes into play in the analytic situation besides those who are there. And the notion that is emphasised by one of these authors, who is followed, in this case, by all the others... [the notion] of the neurotic distance that the subject imposes on the object refers quite precisely to this analytic situation. It is entirely insofar as, at some point, the fantasmatic object, the internal object, will finally be – at least, suspended in this position and experienced this way by the subject – reduced to the real distance which is that between the subject and the analyst. It is insofar as the subject gets hold of his analyst as a real presence. Here the authors go very far. I have already alluded several times to the fact that one of these authors – it's true – at a postulant stage of his career, spoke of a crucial turning point of an analysis at the moment when... and it was not a metaphor, his analysand was able to smell him. It was not a matter of smelling him psychologically... when he had perceived his smell. This sort of foregrounding or bringing to the surface of the relation of 'scenting' is, I must say, one of the mathematical consequences of such a conception of the analytic relation. It is quite certain that in a restricted position within which, little by little, a distance must be attained, a distance which is conceived as active, present, real, vis-à-vis the analyst... it is quite certain that one of the most direct modes of relations in this position, which is a real and simply restricted position, must be this mode of distant apprehension given by scenting. I am not just using this as an example. This has been repeated several times and it seems that in the current environment one tends more and more to give pivotal importance to such modes of apprehension. This, then, is how the analytic position is thought within this situation which is that of a real relation of two figures in a closed space, within which they are separated by a sort of barrier, which is a barrier of convention [*barrière conventionnelle*], and something must be realised...

80 I am speaking of the theoretical formulation of things. We will see afterwards where this leads in terms of practical consequences. It is quite clear that such an exorbitant conception cannot be pushed to its ultimate consequences. On the other hand, it is quite clear that if what I am teaching you is true then this is not actually the situation. Of course, it is not enough to conceive it as such for it to be as we conceive of it. We will handle it crookedly due to the way we conceive of it, all the same, but what it really is remains. It is something which I tried to express to you through this schema² which interposes and interlaces the symbolic relation and the imaginary relation, the one serving as a sort of filter of the other. And, insofar as we misrecognise it, it is quite clear that this situation is not real. It is therefore something which ends up manifesting the inadequacy of this conception. But, inversely, the inadequacy of this conception may have some consequences for how to bring the whole situation to a successful conclusion. This is an example of a kind that I will emphasise for you today to show you in what this can, in fact, result. But here, already, there is a situation conceived as a real situation, as a situation that reduces the imaginary to the real, an operation of reduction within which a certain number of phenomena occur which will allow us to situate the different stages where the subject has remained

² Lacan is referring to 'Schema L', reproduced in our translation of the session of 21st November 1956.

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more or less adherent or fixed to this imaginary relation and to, we might say, exhaust the various positions – essentially imaginary positions, as we have shown, at the forefront of the pregenital relation – that are becoming increasingly essential in what is explored in analysis.

The characteristic of such a conception, to be sure, is that the only thing... and it isn't nothing, since everything is there... the only thing which is not elucidated at all can be expressed as follows. It is simply that we do not know why we speak, in this situation. We really do not know. This does not mean that we could do without it. Nothing is said regarding the function, strictly speaking, of language and of speech in this position.

Equally, by the way, what we will see coming to light is the very special value given... this, again, you will find in the cited authors and texts, punctuated in the most precise manner... that only the impulsive verbalisations, the sort of cries addressed to the analyst, in the style of "Why are you not answering me?", ultimately represent something which is valuable only insofar as the words are impulsive. And to signal a verbalisation only has importance insofar as it is impulsive, only insofar as it is a motor manifestation. In this operation of adjusting, we might say, to the distance of the internal object [*objet interne*]³, to which all the technique will submit, in a sense... what will the result be? Of what does our schema allow us to conceive in what might happen? This relation [$a' \rightarrow a$] concerns the imaginary relation, that is, the subject's relation – more or less discordant, broken down, exposed to splitting – to a unifying image which is that of the small other, which is a narcissistic image. It is fundamentally along this line that the imaginary relation [$a' \rightarrow a$] is established. Likewise, it is on this line [$A \rightarrow S$] – which is not a line since it is necessary to establish it – that this relation to the Other occurs, not simply the Other which is there, which is literally the place of speech. So long as there is, already structured in the speaking relation, this beyond, this Other that is beyond even this other which you apprehend imaginarily, this supposed Other, which is the subject as such, the subject in which your speech is constituted... because it can, as speech, not only receive and perceive speech, but respond to it... It is along this line that all that is of the order of transference, strictly speaking, is established, with the imaginary playing precisely the role of filter, even of obstacle.

Of course, in every neurosis, the subject already has his own adjustments [*réglage*], so to speak.

It's something that serves a purpose for him, in effect, this adjustment in relation to the image. It's something which helps him to hear and, at the same time, to not hear what is there to be heard in the place of speech. Let us say no more than this: if our entire effort, our entire interest bears solely on what is here, [$a' \rightarrow a$], in this transverse position in relation to the advent of speech [$A \rightarrow S$] ... if we misrecognise everything of the relation between the imaginary tension [$a' \rightarrow a$] and that which must be realised and come to light in the unconscious symbolic relation [$A \rightarrow S$]... because

81 this [relation between them] is precisely the entire analytic doctrine which is there in a potential state, and there is something which must allow it to be completed, allow it to be realised as history just as much as avowal... if we abandon the notion of the function of the imaginary relation in relation to this impossibility of symbolic accession which constitutes neurosis... if we do not constantly think each one in terms of the other... what we can expect there to be said, in principle, is precisely what these authors, the advocates of this conception, call the object relation. And this distance towards the object is precisely regulated in view of a certain end...

³ Unless otherwise specified, the phrase 'internal object' translates '*objet intérieur*'. Here, Lacan adopts the variation '*objet interne*' from Marty and Fain, which has a stronger association to Melanie Klein's work in object relations theory.

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If we are only interested in [this distance] to destroy it, in a sense, supposing that this were possible in focusing solely on it – to arrive somewhere, at a certain result, then let it be enough to see that we already do have results. Subjects who have been through this style of apprehension, of trial, have already been handed to us in person. There is something absolutely certain: that at least in a certain number of cases – and, precisely, cases of obsessional neurosis – this way of situating the development of the analytic situation wholly within the pursuit of the reduction of this famous distance, which would be considered characteristic of the obsessional neurotic's object relation, we end up with what could be called paradoxical perverse reactions. For example, the explosion, the precipitation... which is most unusual and which hardly existed in the analytic literature before the foregrounding of this technical method... of a homosexual attachment for an object which is, as it were, absolutely paradoxical, which in the subject's relation remains there in the manner of a sort of artifact, a kind of jellification of an image, a thing which has crystallised, precipitated around objects which find themselves within the subject's reach, and which can present, for a while, quite a lasting persistence. This is not so surprising if we take up the relation of the imaginary mother-child-phallus triad. I pushed things far enough last time for you to have seen a line of research take shape. To be sure, this is to hold us at the prelude of putting the symbolic relation into play, which will only arrive with the function of the fourth, which is that of the father, introduced by the dimension of Oedipus. We are here in a triangle which is in itself pre-oedipal. I am emphasising this. It is only isolated here in an abstract manner. Its development only interests us insofar as it is subsequently taken up in the set of four when this paternal function comes into play with this, let us say, fundamental disappointment of the child's, not only in his recognising that he is not the mother's sole object... we left as an open question how he recognises it... but also his noticing that the possible object... and this is accentuated to a greater or lesser degree from case to case... the mother's interest is the phallus. The first question concerning the recognition of the mother-child relation is this perception, in the second place, that the mother is, in fact, deprived, [that she] lacks this object herself. This is the point we reached last time. I showed you this by evoking the transitory case of a phobia in a very young child⁴, which allowed us to study it in a very favourable manner because it is the limit of the the oedipal relation which we could observe following a certain double disappointment – that is, an imaginary disappointment, the child locating the phallus she is missing herself and then, in a second stage of the perception, that the mother – this mother who is at the border of the symbolic and the real – is also missing the phallus. And the emergence [*éclosion*] ... the child's call to sustain this somehow unsustainable relation, and the intervention of this fantasmatic being – the dog – which intervenes here as the one who is in some sense, strictly speaking in charge of the whole situation, the one who bites, the one who punishes, the one thanks to whom this whole situation is thinkable, symbolically livable, at least temporarily... what happens, then? What position is possible when this harnessing of the three imaginary objects happens to be undone? There is more than one possible solution, and the solution is always called for, in a normal or abnormal situation. What happens in the normal oedipal situation? It is through the intermediary of a certain rivalry punctuated by identification, in an alternation of the subject's relations with the father, that something may be established, which will make the subject... in a sense, in a number of different ways, according to his or her own position as a girl or as a boy... come to bestow [*conférer*], one might say... for the boy, it is absolutely clear... bestow, within certain

⁴ See Schurmann, A. (1946) *Observation of a Phobia. in Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, vol. 4, pp. 253-270.*

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boundaries, precisely those boundaries which introduce him to the symbolic relation... bestow this phallic power. And in a certain way, when I told you the other day that for the mother, the child as a real being was taken to be a symbol of her lack of object, of her imaginary appetite for the phallus... the normal way out of this situation can be conceived as being this, precisely realised at the level of the child – namely, that the child symbolically receives the phallus which he needs, but which, for him to need it, he must previously have been threatened by the castrating agent, which is originally and essentially the paternal agent. It is by a constitution at the symbolic level, the level of a sort of pact, of the right to the phallus, that this virile identification, which forms the basis of a normative oedipal relation, is established for the child. But, even here, I am making a somewhat sideways remark. What does this result in? There is something quite strange, almost paradoxical, in the original formulations written in Freud's name on the distinction between the anaclitic relation and the narcissistic relation.

83 In the Oedipus, this libidinal relation... In adolescents, Freud tells us that there are two types of love object: the anaclitic love object which bears the mark of a primitive dependence on the mother; and the narcissistic love object, modelled on an image which is the image of the subject himself, which is the narcissistic image. It is this image which we have tried to elaborate here by showing its roots in the specular relation to the other. The word 'anaclitic', even though we owe it to Freud, is really quite badly chosen, for in Greek it really does not have the meaning Freud gives it, which is indicated by the German word *Anlehnung* ... relation... a relation of supporting against. This, by the way, lends itself to all sorts of misunderstandings, some readers having pushed this 'supporting against' right up to being something which is ultimately a sort of defense reaction. But, let us leave this aside. In fact, if we read Freud we really do see that it is a question of this need for a support and for this something which is effectively just asking to be opened towards a relation of dependency. If we push further, we see that there are strange contradictions in the way Freud formulates the opposition between these two modes of relation, anaclitic and narcissistic. Very curiously, he is led to speak of a need to be loved, much more than the need to love, in the anaclitic relation. Inversely, and quite paradoxically, the narcissist suddenly appears in a light which surprises us. For, in truth, [Freud] is attracted by an element of activity inherent in the narcissist's very specific behaviour – he appears active precisely inasmuch as he still, to a certain extent, misrecognises the other. Freud decorates [*revêt*] him with the attribute of the need to love, which creates, suddenly and paradoxically, a kind of natural place for what, in another vocabulary, we would call oblation [love], which can be nothing if not disconcerting.

I think there's something to come back to here but once again it is in the misrecognition of the positioning of intersubjective elements that these paradoxical perspectives take up their origin and, at the same time, their justification. What is called the anaclitic relation in the sense that it interests us – that is, at the level of its persistence in adults – is always conceived as a sort of pure and simple throwback, a prolongation of what we call an infantile position. If, effectively, the subject who holds this position... which, in the article on libidinal types⁵, Freud calls nothing more and nothing less than the erotic position, which goes to show that it is actually the most open position... what makes us misrecognise its essence is precisely not realising that inasmuch as the subject acquires the phallus as such in the symbolic relation, and becomes invested in it as belonging to him and as being for him legitimately wielded [*d'un exercice légitime*], so to speak, he becomes, in relation to the successor of the maternal object, to this refound object, marked by the relation to the primitive mother who will

⁵ See Freud, S. (1932). *Libidinal types*. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. 1, pp. 3-6.

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84 always in principle be, in the normal position of the Oedipus, from the very origin of the Freudian account, the object for the male subject – that is to say, he becomes the bearer of this object of desire for the woman. The position becomes anaclitic inasmuch as it is on *him*, on the phallus of which he is henceforth the master, the representative, the custodian – it is insofar as the woman depends on him that the position is anaclitic. The relation of dependence is established insofar as, identifying himself with the other, with the objectal partner, he is indispensable to this partner, that it is he who satisfies her, and he alone, because he is in principle the only custodian of this object, which is the object of desire for the mother. It is in accordance with the completion of the oedipal position that the subject finds himself in the position which we could call optimal, in a certain perspective, in relation to the re-found object which will be the successor of the primitive maternal object, and in relation to which he himself will become the indispensable object and, knowing himself to be indispensable, a part of the erotic life of precisely those subjects participating in this libidinal category is entirely conditioned by the need, once experienced and assumed by the other, of the maternal woman as needing to find his object in him, which is the phallic object. This is what essentially constitutes the anaclitic relation as opposed to the narcissistic relation.

This is but a parenthesis intended to show the usefulness of always putting into play this dialectic of the relation – here [between] the three primary objects, around which there remains, for the moment, apart from in the general notion, something which contains them all and binds them in the symbolic relation... around which, for the moment, the fourth term is localised: the father insofar as he introduces the symbolic relation here, the possibility of transcending the relation of frustration, or lack of the object, through the relation of castration – which is something else entirely – that is, who introduces this lack of object into a dialectic, into something which gives and takes, who establishes, invests, bestows the dimension of a pact of prohibition, a law – the prohibition of incest, in particular – into this whole dialectic. The outcome will be precisely this: at the moment when things enter into discord, disconnection, into the destruction of connections, for one reason or another, in the progression of historical incidents in the child's relation to the mother, relative to a third object, a phallic object, which is at the same time what the woman is missing and what the child discovers to be missing from the mother... there are other modes of re-establishing this consistency. These modes are imaginary modes, atypical imaginary modes which consist in the child's identification with the mother, for example, proceeding from an imaginary shift of the child in relation to his or her maternal partner, from the choice of her place, the assumption of this lack for her around the phallic object as such.

85 The schema I am giving you is none other than the schema of fetishist perversion. This is an example of a solution, if you will, but there is a more direct way. In other words, other solutions exist to access this lack of object, which is already, at the imaginary level, the human way of realising man's relation to his existence, that is, to something that can be put in the place of cause, which gives us something different from the animal and from all the possible animal relations at the imaginary level – that is to say, within certain conditions, punctuated, extra-historical, such as the paroxysm of perversion always presents itself. Perversion has this property of realising a certain mode of access to this beyond of the image of the other which characterises the human realm, but it is realised, simply, in a moment like those always produced by the paroxysms of perversions, which are, in a sense, syncopated moments within the subject's history. There are a number of convergences or ascents [*montée*] towards the moment, which is

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perhaps very significantly qualified as a passage to the act⁶, and during this passage to the act, something is realised, which is a fusion, an access to this beyond which is, strictly speaking, this trans-individual dimension which the Freudian anaclitic theory, formulated as such, tells us to call Eros, this union of two individuals, each torn off from himself and, for a moment, more or less fragile, transitory, even virtual, constituting this unity. This unity is realised at certain moments of perversion, and what constitutes perversion is precisely that it can only ever be realised in these moments, which are not arranged symbolically. The subject eventually finds his object, his exclusive object which is – he says it himself – all the more exclusive and perfectly satisfying for its being inanimate. At least this way he will have the peace of mind that it will not show any disappointment. When the subject loves a slipper, we have a subject who, so to speak, truly has the object of his desires within reach – an object devoid of any subjective, intersubjective, even trans-subjective, properties, is a safer bet. The fetishist solution is, in terms of realising the condition of lack as such, indisputably one of the most conceivable conditions within this perspective, and it *is* realised. We also know that, given the trademark of the imaginary relation is to be always perfectly reciprocal since it is a mirror relation, we must expect to see in the fetishist, from time to time, the appearance of the position, not of identification with the mother, but identification with the object. This is effectively what we will see happen over the course of an analysis of a fetishist, for this position as such is always the most unsatisfying one there is. It is not enough that for a brief moment the fascinating illumination of the object which had been the maternal object is something that satisfies the subject. It is not enough for an erotic balance to be established around this. And indeed, for now, if it is with the object that he identifies, he will lose what we might call his primitive object, namely, the mother. He will consider himself a destructive object for the mother. It is this perpetual game, this sort of profound double vision which marks all the apprehension of the fetishist manifestation, which we shall go into later.

But it is so visible and patent that someone such as Phyllis Greenacre⁷, who seriously attempted to deal with the foundations of the fetishist relation in depth, tells us that we seem to be in the presence of a subject who could show us his own image in two opposed mirrors with excessive swiftness. She says it like this without, at that point, knowing why – for this comes at an awkward moment – but she had, all of a sudden, the feeling that it was this: he is never where he is for the very good reason that he has left his place – he has gone, in a specular relation, from the mother to the phallus. He alternates between being one and the other, a position which only stabilises provided that he seizes this sort of simultaneously unique, privileged and impermanent symbol, which is the precise object of fetishism – that is, something which symbolises the phallus. It is therefore at the level of analogous relations – at least, those which we are able to conceive as essentially being of a perverse nature – that the results manifest themselves as only fleeting, at least when faced with a certain way of handling the anaclitic relation if it is focused entirely on the object relation as something involving only the imaginary and the real, and if it adjusts the whole adaptation of the imaginary relation according to the supposed real

⁶ This appears to be Lacan's first use of the phrase "*passage à l'acte*".

⁷ See, for instance, Greenacre, P. (1953). *Certain Relationships Between Fetishism and Faulty Development of the Body Image. in Psychoanalytic Studies of the Child, vol. 8, pp. 79-98.*

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87 of the presence of the analyst. In my Rome Report I alluded somewhere⁸ to the mode of object relation by comparing it to what I called a sort of bundling⁹, pushed to its very limits due to a psychological ordeal. This short passage might have gone unnoticed, but in a note I enlighten the reader and specify that bundling is something very precise concerning certain customs which still exist in these sorts of cultural islands where ancient customs persist. But we already find in Stendhal, who recounts this as a kind of specificity of Swiss fantasists or those from the south of Germany, in different places, which are not without interest from a geographical point of view. This bundling consists quite precisely in the conception of amorous relations, in a technique, a pattern of relations between male and female which consists in permitting, under certain conditions, that another partner who, for example, approaches the group in a special way... that someone in the house, generally the daughter, may, for the duration of a relation essentially established as one of hospitality, offer to share her bed, all this being tied to the condition that contact will not occur, and this is where bundling comes from. The girl is frequently wrapped in a sheet, in this type of custom, so that all of the criteria of seduction are there, aside from the last. While this may pass as simply being a pleasing whimsical custom which we may regret not participating in – it could be amusing! – it deserves a certain amount of attention, for ultimately we wouldn't have to force anything to say that the analytic situation, seventeen or eighteen years after Freud's death, is paradoxical, and it ends up being conceived, formalised like this. Here there is the report from a session written in 1933 or 1934, with all of the patient's movements during the session, oriented insofar as she manifests something – this urge – which is made manifest to a greater or lesser degree, at more or less of a distance from the analyst, who is there behind her back. There is nonetheless something rather striking here, and all the more because this text¹⁰ was published since I wrote my report¹¹, which proves that I did not force anything in saying that the practice of analysis, in a certain conception, was being reduced to this aim and to these psychological consequences. I am pointing out to you that we find these paradoxes in the habits and customs of certain cultural islands. There is a Protestant sect on which someone has done some rather advanced studies. It is a sect of Dutch origin which has conserved in its relations, in a very precise way, the local customs related to a religious unity – it is the Amish sect. It is quite clear that all this brings out
88 misunderstood residues, certainly, but we find their symbolic formulation to be perfectly coordinated, deliberate, organised into an entire tradition which one could call religious, even symbolic. It is clear that all that we know about the practice of courtly love, and the entire sphere in which it was localised in the Middle Ages, involves this sort of very rigorous technical elaboration of seduction, which included long, restrained rehearsals in the presence of the love object and which, in fact, targeted

⁸ See Lacan, J. (1953). 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'. From note 40 in Bruce Fink's translation: "This term refers to the custom, of Celtic origin and still practiced by certain Bible sects in America, of allowing a couple engaged to be married, or even a passing guest and the family's daughter, to spend the night together in the same bed, provided that they keep their clothes on. The word derives its meaning from the fact that the girl is usually wrapped up in sheets. (Quincey speaks of it. See also the book by Aurand le Jeune on this practice among the Amish.) Thus the myth of Tristan and Isolde, and even the complex that it represents, now underwrites the analyst in his quest for the soul destined for mystifying nuptials via the extenuation of its instinctual fantasies."

⁹ English in the original.

¹⁰ See Lebovici, R. (1956). *Perversion sexuelle transitoire au cours d'un traitement psychanalytique*. in *Bulletin d'activités de l'association des psychanalystes de Belgique*, vol. 25, pp. 1-17. The paper appears to have been presented at the 19th Psycho-Analytical Congress in Geneva, July 1955.

¹¹ A reference to Lacan's 'Rome Report', presented at the Rome Congress held at the *Istituto di Psicologia della Università di Roma*, 26th - 27th September 1953 – see Lacan, J. (1953). *The Function and Field of Speech and Language*. in *Écrits*.

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the realisation of this beyond which is searched for in love – this properly erotic beyond. As soon as we hold the key to these techniques, to all these traditions, we find signs of their emergence perfectly well formulated in other areas of culture. This is a class of research in amorous achievement which has been laid out, again and again, in human history in a completely conscious manner. As for what is organised, what is effectively obtained, we do not have to pose the question here – if it aimed at something attempting to go beyond the physiological short-circuit, if one can say it this way, there is no doubt that it has a certain interest. This is not something which is introduced here without a certain reference which allows us to exactly situate both this metaphor and, at the same time, the possibility of incorporating at different levels – that is, more or less consciously – what we are doing with the standard use of the imaginary relation as such, perhaps itself employed deliberately... the standard use of, we might say, practices which may appear perverse to naïve eyes, and which are actually not, no more than any regulation of seduction in a defined realm of ‘customs and patterns’¹², as we call them. This is something which deserves to be signalled as a point of reference, to let us know where we situate ourselves.

Now let us take a case which is developed in the journal cited last time, which brings in honest¹³ questions from members of a certain group about the object relation. We have, here, under the pen of a person who has climbed the ladder in the analytic community, the observation of what she rightly calls a phobic subject. This phobic subject appears as someone whose activity has been reduced to the point of a kind of almost complete inactivity. The subject’s most manifest symptom is the fear of being too tall; he always displays an extremely hunched posture. Almost everything has become impossible in his relations with the professional milieu. He leads a reduced life sheltered from family, but nevertheless not without having a mistress, who is older than him, provided to him by his mother. And it is in this constellation that the female analyst in question seizes him and starts to broach the issue. The subject’s diagnosis is made astutely, and the diagnosis of phobia does not suffer from the paradox of the fact that the phobogenic object, at first blush, does not appear to be external.

89 However, at one point we see a recurring dream appear which is the model of an externalised anxiety. In this particular case the object is only discovered on the second try. It is precisely the phobic object itself, which we know to be perfectly recognisable. It is the substitute for the paternal image, which is completely lacking in this case. It is the image of a man in armour, and equipped with a particularly aggressive instrument, which is none other than a tube of Fly-tox¹⁴ to destroy all the little phobic objects – insects – which is marvellously illustrated here. And it turns out that being chased and suffocated in the dark by this armoured man is what the subject is afraid of, and this fear is not negligible in the general balance of this phobic structure. We obtain, after a while, the emergence of this image. The female analyst in charge of the subject here gives us an observation entitled: “Of a perverse reaction or of the appearance of a perversion during an analytic treatment”. It would not be forcing anything... transitory sexual perversion... on my part to introduce this question of perverse reaction, since the author puts the accent on this as being the interest of the observation. This is the interest and the author is not at ease... Not only is the author not at ease, but she has noticed very well

¹² English in the original.

¹³ See Lebovici, R. (1956). *Perversion sexuelle transitoire au cours d'un traitement psychanalytique*. in *Bulletin d'activités de l'association des psychanalyses de Belgique*, vol. 25, pp. 1-17.

¹⁴ Common insecticide in the 1950s–60s.

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that the reaction she calls perverse – it is, of course, a label – appeared in precise circumstances. In any case, the fact that the author poses the question around this moment proves she is aware that this is where the question is, starting from the moment when, having finally seen the phobogenic object come to light – the armoured man – she interprets it as being the phallic mother.

Why the phallic mother when it is really a man in armour with all its heraldic character? Why the phallic mother? Over the course of this entire observation, the questions the author is asking herself are reported with, I believe, a fidelity which is undeniable, and quite well emphasised, at any rate.

The author asks herself the following question: did I not make an interpretation just now which was incorrect? since it was after the interpretation that this perverse reaction appeared, and we then became engaged in no less than a three-year period, in which the subject developed, in stages, firstly, a perverse fantasy which consisted in his imagining himself being seen urinating by a woman who, very aroused, solicits him for sexual relations, and then a reversal of this position, that is, he, the subject, observing, whilst masturbating or not masturbating, a urinating woman, then, in a third stage, the effective realisation of this position, namely, the discovery of a small space in a cinema, happily equipped with skylights thanks to which he could effectively observe women in the adjacent toilets, while he stayed in his own cubby hole.

90 We have something here which the author herself is questioning, the determining value of a certain mode of interpretation in relation to the precipitation of a thing which first of all took the shape of a fantasmatic crystallisation of something which is evidently part of the subject's constitution – that is, not the phallic mother, but the mother in her relation to the phallus. But the author herself gives us the key to the idea that there is a phallic mother involved. The author interrogates herself at one point on the general progress of the treatment, and she observes that she herself had ultimately been much more prohibiting or prohibitive than the mother ever was. Everything goes to show that the entity of the phallic mother is produced here due to what the author herself calls her own counter-transferential positions. If we follow the analysis closely we will have no doubt whatsoever [about this], for during the development of this imaginary relation – of course, insofar as it was developed by these analytic stumbles – we can see, firstly, the analyst intervening in regards to a dream where the subject, finding himself in the presence of someone from his past, towards whom he claims he has amorous urges, says he is impeded by the presence of another female subject who has also played a role in his history – a woman whom he saw in his childhood urinate before him at a much more advanced stage of his childhood, namely, when he was past the age of thirteen. The analyst intervenes in the following manner: “No doubt you prefer to interest yourself in a woman by watching her urinate than to make the effort of approaching another woman who you may like but who happens to be married.” In making this intervention, the analyst thinks she is reintroducing the truth in a way which is slightly forced, for the male figure is only indicated in the dream through associations, that is, the supposed husband of the mother. The husband, who comes in to reintroduce the Oedipus complex, intervenes in a way which has all the marks of a provocation, especially if we know that it was the analyst's husband who sent the subject to her.

There is precisely something of a turning point at this moment. It is this moment that produces the progressive reversal of the fantasy of observation, from being observed to being the one observing. Secondly, as if this were not enough, the analyst responds to a request from the subject to slow down the pace of the sessions: “Here you are showing your passive positions because you know very well that in any case you will not get it”. At this moment the fantasy crystallises completely, which proves that there is something more here. The subject, who understands quite a lot in his relations of the

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91 impossibility of attaining the feminine object, ends up developing these fantasies inside of the treatment itself – fear of urinating on the sofa, etc. He begins to have these reactions which manifest a certain reduction of the distance to the real object. He begins to spy on the analyst’s legs – which the analyst notes, by the way, with a certain satisfaction. There is, in effect, at the edge of the real situation, something of the constitution of the – not phallic but – *aphallic* mother.

If there is anything which is effectively the principle of the establishment of the fetishist position, it is quite precisely that the subject stops at a certain level in his investigation and his observation of the woman insofar as she has or doesn’t have the organ here in question. We find ourselves, therefore, in a position which, little by little, ends up making the subject say “My God, the only solution would be to sleep with my analyst”. He says this. At that point the analyst starts to find that this is getting on her nerves a little, and makes this remark towards him – after which she anxiously asks herself “Was I right to say that?” She tells him “You are amusing yourself for now, making yourself afraid of something which you know very well will never happen”. Anybody can question the degree of mastery involved in an interpretation such as this, which is a slightly brutal reminder of the conventions of the analytic situation. It is completely in accord with the notion we may have of the analytic position as being a real position. This brings things back into focus. It is quite precisely after this intervention that the subject definitively passes to the act and finds the perfect place, the elected place in the real – namely, the way the loos are set up on the Champs Elysées – where he finds himself, this time, really at the correct distance in reality, separated by a wall from the object of his observation, which he can observe this time, clearly not as a phallic mother, but very precisely as *aphallic* mother, and suspend there, for a while, all the erotic activity which is so satisfying that he declares that until the moment of this discovery he has lived as an automaton but that now everything has changed. This is where things stand.

I simply wanted you to get a sense that assuredly the notion of the distance to the analyst–object *qua* real object, and the so–called notion of reference, can be something which is not without effect. These are, ultimately, perhaps not the most desirable effects. I am not telling you how this treatment terminates. Every detail is so rich in pedagogical value that one would have to examine it meticulously. The last session is avoided. The subject gets an operation on some varicose vein as well– it’s all there... the timid attempt to access castration, and a certain freedom which can spring from it, is even indicated there – after which it is judged that this is sufficient. The subject goes back to his mistress, the same one he had at the beginning, the one who is fifteen years older than him. And since he no longer speaks of her large size, his phobia is considered to be healed. Unfortunately, starting then, he
92 is occupied by one thing only – the size of his shoes. Sometimes they are too large and he loses his balance, or they are too small and squeeze his feet – in such a way that the shift, the transformation, of the phobia is accomplished. After all, why not consider this to be the end of the analytic work? In any event, from the experimental point of view there is something which is certainly not devoid of interest. The peak, of course, of access to supposed comfort, to the real object, is given as if there were almost a sign of recognition. I am speaking, to those in the know, of the moment when the subject perceives, in the presence of the analyst, a smell of urine – this being considered as the moment when the distance to the real object... throughout the observations it is pointed out that it is here, the point on which the entire neurotic relation fails... when the distance is finally right. This, of course, coincides

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with the peak, the culmination, of the perversion. When I say perversion, let me tell you... it is less of a perversion and more that the author conceals something from herself. We should not consider this a perversion, strictly speaking, but rather an artefact. These things, though they can be permanent and very durable, are nonetheless artefacts that are susceptible to rupture or dissolution, sometimes quite suddenly. After a certain time, an usher walks in on the subject. The mere fact of being caught by the usher makes the visits to this particularly appropriate location, which the real happened to offer him at just the right moment, drop off overnight. The real always offers us everything we need at just the right moment, when we have finally been adjusted, by the correct means, to the correct distance.

Session of 9th January 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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Today we will dive into a problem which, if we had proceeded step by step, we would usually have encountered much sooner in our discourse. It is that of the most problematic perversion which exists in the analytic perspective, namely, female homosexuality. Why would I proceed in this way? I would say that there is an element of contingency in this. It is certain that we won't be able to proceed with an examination of the object relation this year without encountering the female object and you know that the problem is not knowing exactly how we encounter the female object in analysis. Analysis tells us enough about it to enlighten us when the subject of this encounter is not natural.

I sufficiently demonstrated that in the first half of these seminars last trimester by showing you that the female subject, in her encounters, is always destined for a sort of reunion which necessarily positions her, in relation to the man, in this ambiguity of natural and symbolic relations which is exactly that with which I am trying to demonstrate the whole of the analytic dimension. The problem is surely to know what the female object thinks about this, and what the female object thinks about it is even less natural than the way in which the male subject approaches her. What the female object thinks about this... that is, starting from her first contacts with the natural and primordial object of desire, the maternal breast, what is her path? How does the female object become involved in this dialectic? I am not calling her an object today for nothing – it is clear that this object must come into effect at some point. Only, it takes this very unnatural position of an object, since it is a figurative position which is only worth qualifying as such because it is a position which is taken by a subject.

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Female homosexuality has taken on in all analysis a particularly exemplary value, in what it has been able to reveal of the stages, the progression and halts in this progression, which might mark the woman's fate in this natural relationship, biological at the outset, but which does not cease to bear on the symbolic level, on the level of the subject's assumption, insofar as it is itself caught in the symbolic chain. Indeed, it is here that the woman is concerned. And it is precisely insofar as she has to make a choice – a choice that must be, in some way, as analytic experience teaches us, a compromise between what is to be attained and what could not be attained – that female homosexuality is encountered every time the discussion establishes itself on the topic of the stages the woman must go through in her symbolic progression. This, meanwhile, must lead to exhausting a certain number of texts, specifically those of Freud's that range from 1923, which you might note as the date of his article on the infantile genital organisation¹ in which he posits, as a principle, the primacy of phallic assumption as the end of the infantile stage of sexuality, a typical phase for the boy as for the girl². The genital organisation is attained for one as for the other, but on a model that makes the possession or the non-possession of the phallus into the primordial differential element with which, at this level, the genital organisation of the sexes are opposed to each other. According to Freud, there is not a realisation of the male and the female at this moment, but of what is endowed with the phallic attribute, and that what is not endowed with it is considered to be the equivalent of castrated³. And I will add, to specify his thought, that this organisation is the formula of an essential and terminal step of the first phase of infantile

¹ See Freud, S. (1923). *The infantile genital organization* (SE XIX), pp. 139-145.

² See *ibid.*, p. 140 – “At the same time, the main characteristic of this ‘infantile genital organization’ is its difference from the final genital organization of the adult. This consists in the fact that, for both sexes, only one genital, namely the male one, comes into account. What is present, therefore, is not a primacy of the genitals, but a primacy of the phallus.”

³ See *ibid.*, p. 144 – “The lack of a penis is regarded as a result of castration, and so now the child is faced with the task of coming to terms with castration in relation to himself.”

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sexuality, that which is completed at the start of the latency period. Let me specify the thought. This is founded, for one sex as for the other, on a misdeal [*maldonne*]. And this misdeal is founded on the ignorance – it is not a matter of misrecognition but of ignorance – of the fertilising role of the man's semen and, on the other hand, of the existence of the female organ as such.

97 These are truly enormous claims which require an exegesis to be understood, for here there is no possibility of finding ourselves in the presence of something that can be taken at the level of real experience. I mean that, as has often been pointed out – with great confusion, for that matter – by those authors who have gone into action following this affirmation of Freud's, a great number of facts show that, in several registers of experience, all kinds of things admit the unveiling of the presence if not of the male role in the act of procreation then of the existence of the female organ, at least in the woman herself. It can hardly be contested, I believe, at least as having been realised in a certain number of cases, that there is something corresponding to vaginal localisation in the premature experience of the little girl, and that there are sensations, even a premature vaginal masturbation. And it is asked whether, in fact, this predominance of the phallic phase must be attributed to the existence of the clitoris, and whether this is a result of the libido – let us make this term synonymous with all erotogenic experience – being initially, originally and exclusively concentrated on the clitoris, and whether it perhaps only comes about after a displacement which must be long and laborious, and which necessitates quite a long detour.

I believe it is quite certain that Freud's affirmation cannot be understood in these terms. Too many altogether muddled facts allow all kinds of objections to be made against this. I will only allude to one of them, reminding you that we must admit... if we wish to conceive in a way which seems to require, by way of a certain number of premisses, and precisely those realistic premisses that hold that every type of misrecognition supposes a certain recognition in the unconscious of the coaptation of the sexes... [we must admit] that for the girl, it is only against the background of a certain denial of the existence of the vagina that there can be, precisely, this prevalence of the organ that does not belong to her as such, [that is not] her own, and it is a matter of registering this. It is on the basis of these hypotheses, taken as a *priori*, that the girl strives to trace a genesis of this phallic term. In the case of the girl, we will go into details and we will see this sort of necessity borrowed from a certain number of premisses, expressed in part by Freud himself for that matter, and he clearly shows that by the very uncertainty of the last occurrence she refers to – for the facts on which she bases herself, this primordial experience of the vaginal organ, are very prudent, reserved, even – that for her, it is indeed a question of a sort of reconstruction, required by premisses which are theoretical premisses stemming from a dead end, [which is] the way that Freud's affirmation should be understood, founded on his experience, and which he advances, moreover, with prudence, with that portion of uncertainty, even, which is so characteristic of his presentation of this discovery, but which is no less affirmed as being primordial, and even as necessary to take as a fixed point, a pivot around which the theoretical interpretation itself must be developed. This is what we will try to do, on the basis of this paradoxical affirmation of the term 'phallicism', between these affirmations of Freud's at the point in his work at which they occur, and the prolongations which he gives them when, in 1931, he writes something⁴ even more unbelievable about feminine sexuality. At the same time, an extremely active debate starts up, a harvest of speculations,

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⁴ See Freud, S. (1931). *Female sexuality* (SE XXI), pp. 221-243.

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such that this fact is recorded by [inaudible]⁵ and also by Jones⁶. And here, there is a real progression of approximations, which is exactly what I had to devote myself to during this vacation, and I would say of it that it appeared to me to be extremely difficult to summarise without distortion, because what characterises it is surely its unmastered character.

We will have to exhaust this profoundly unmastered character of the categories at stake, and in order to summarise it and to make ourselves understood, there is no way forward other than mastering it, and to master it is already to completely change its axis and its nature, and this is something that at a certain point, cannot truly give an accurate perspective on the matter at hand, for this character is truly essential to the entire problem. It is truly correlative to the second objective of our theoretical examination this year – to show how, in a parallel and quite unshakable way, analytic practice itself is engaged in an unmasterable deviation. And once again I would say that, returning to this precise incidence which constitutes the object of what I am exposing to you in the middle of this heap of facts, it came to me this morning that it could be retained as a sort of exemplary image, this little fact simply noted during one of these articles. It is a matter of something admitted by everyone – namely, that around this development for the little girl, and at the moment when she goes into Oedipus, it is exactly as substitute for this missing phallus that she starts to desire a child from the father. And one of these authors cited, as an example, the analysis of a child⁷.

There is something here that can come into play with regular occurrence in the rush of the Oedipal movement... that is to say, that the disappointment of not having a child by the father is something which will play an essential role in making the little girl come back from what she had entered into in Oedipus, namely, by way of this paradoxical route that begins with identification with the father, such that she takes up the feminine position again – all the authors admit it in principle – via this privation of the child desired from the father. And exemplifying this movement, which is given to us as being always essentially unconscious, in a case where, to sum it up, an analysis had allowed a child to bring to light this image of the little girl who, having been in the process of analysis and regarding herself as seeing what happened in her unconscious more clearly than anyone else, woke up every morning following some insight or other, asking if the father's little child had come and if it was to come today or tomorrow, and she asked this every morning with anger and tears. This example seems to me, once again, exemplary of what is at stake in this deviation of analytic practice which always accompanies our theoretical exploration this year, concerning the object relation. For in truth, we are here touching with the tips of our fingers the way in which a certain mode of understanding, of tackling frustrations, is something which, in reality, leads analysis to a mode of intervention whose effects might appear not only dubious, but manifestly opposed to what is at stake in what we could call the process of analytic interpretation. It is perfectly clear that the notion we might have that, at a given moment in the little girl's development, the child appears as an imaginary object, as a substitute for the missing phallus, and

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⁵ This is given as Karen Horney in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller. See, for example – Horney, K. (1925). 'On the genesis of the castration complex in women' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 5, p. 50.

⁶ See, for example – Jones, E. (1927). *The Early Development of Female Sexuality*.

⁷ See Deutsch, H. (1930). 'The Significance of Masochism in the Mental Life of Women' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 11, p. 51. Lacan refers to the following passage: "I heard of the little daughter of an analyst mother who, at the time when she was experiencing penis-envy, was consoled with the prospect of having a child. Every morning she woke up to ask in a fury: 'Hasn't the child come yet?' and no more accepted the consolation of the future than we are consoled by the promise of Paradise."

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which plays an essential role in her development, is [an idea] which only has any value, and which can only legitimately be put into play as such, later on, or even at a contemporary stage.

The child, whom the subject is dealing with, enters into the game of a series of symbolic resonances that will reach into the past, that will put into play what she experienced in the phallic stage, namely, all of those possessive or destructive reactions which can be tied for her to the moment of the phallic crisis – with all its implications, truly problematic implications – in the stage of childhood to which it corresponds. It is, in short, only after the fact that everything that comes back to this prevalence or predominance of the phallus at a stage of the girl's development will have repercussions, and repercussions insofar as it becomes necessary for the girl at some moment or another to symbolise some event which happens – either the late arrival of a child for someone in immediate relation to her, or that the question of the possession of the child for the subject will effectively arise, the question of her own maternity.

But what to invoke, if it is only at this moment, the moment when it happens, that something intervenes, not in the symbolic structuration of the subject, but in a certain relationship of imaginary substitution precipitated at that moment by speech, at the symbolic level, which is experienced by the child in a completely different way? This is already to give the child, in some sense, the sanction of an organisation, an introduction to a sort of legitimacy which literally consecrates frustration as such, establishes it at the centre of experience, whereas it is only legitimately introduced as frustration if it has effectively happened at the level of the unconscious, as the correct theory tells us. This frustration is but a passing moment, as well as a moment which only has an importance and a role, for us analysts, at the purely theoretical level of the articulation of what occurred. The subject's realisation of this frustration is out of the question [exclue] by definition, because it is extraordinarily unstable. It has importance and interest only insofar as it leads to something else, which is one of these two registers I distinguished for you, privation and castration, where castration is none other than that which establishes the necessity of this frustration in its true dimension, that which transcends it and establishes it within something, within a law that gives it another value, and which, for that matter, consecrates the existence of privation, because at the level of the real, privation is not conceivable, except for a being who articulates something at the symbolic level. It is solely on this basis that a privation can, in fact, be conceived at all. We get a sense of it in interventions which are, in a way, supporting interventions, psychotherapeutic interventions such as, for example, the one I briefly mentioned to you regarding the little girl⁸ who was in the care of a student of Anna Freud's, and who had the beginnings of a phobia concerning the experience she had of being deprived of something in different conditions from those which the child found herself up against. I showed you that the mainspring of the displacement necessary for phobia lies not at all in this experience, not in the fact of not having this phallus, but in the fact of her mother being unable to give it to her, and on top of that, that she could not give it to her because she did not have it herself. The intervention made by the psychotherapist, which consists in telling her – and she is quite correct – that all women are like that, may allow us to think that it is a matter of reduction to the real. It is not a reduction to the real because the child knows very well that she doesn't have a phallus – she [the psychotherapist] only teaches her the rule. It is insofar as she brings it to the symbolic level of the law that the efficacy of her intervention is brought into question. For in truth, she does nothing but

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⁸ See Schnurmann, A. (1946). 'Observation of a Phobia' in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol 4, pp. 253–270.

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ask herself about her intervention being effective or not, in a certain reduction of the phobia. In that instant, it is clear that it is only effective in an extremely momentary way and that the phobia then resumes with greater intensity. It will only subside when the child has been reintegrated into a complete family – that is, at the moment when, in principle, her frustration should seem to her to be even greater than before, since here she is confronted with a stepfather, in other words, with a male who enters into the family dynamic – her mother being a widow up until then – and with an older brother. Only at this moment does the phobia diminish, because she literally no longer needs it to make up for this absence, in the symbolic circuit, of any properly phallus-bearing element – that is, of males. The essential point in these critical remarks on the usage we make of the term frustration which, of course, is in a certain way legitimised by the fact that what is essential in this dialectic is the lack of object more than the object itself... in a certain way, frustration appears to match up to this conceptual notion [that] bears on the instability of the very dialectic of frustration. Frustration is not privation. Why? Frustration concerns something you are deprived of by someone else, from whom you expected
 101 to get what you asked for. What is at stake in frustration is something which is not so much the object but the love of whoever can give you this gift, if it is given to you. The object of frustration is not so much the object but the gift.

Here we find ourselves at the origin of a dialectic, the symbolic gap, which is itself vanishing at every moment, for this gift is a gift which is not yet given except with a certain gratuity. The gift comes from the Other. What is behind the Other – that is to say, the entire chain on account of which this gift comes to you – is still unperceived, and it is from the moment it is perceived that the subject will see that the gift is much more total than it first appears, namely, that it concerns the entire human chain. But at the beginning of the dialectic of frustration there is nothing but this confrontation with the Other, this gift which appears but which, if it is given as a gift, makes the object itself vanish as an object. If, in other words, the demand were fulfilled, the object would be pushed into the background. However, in the case that the demand is not fulfilled then the object also fades away and changes its signification. If you want to uphold the word frustration... for there is frustration if the subject puts forward the claim that this term implies... it is in bringing the object into play as something which was due by right, which was already among the subject's belongings [*appartenances*]. The object, at this moment, falls under what we could call the narcissistic era [*ère*] of the subject's belongings. In both cases, whatever happens, the moment of frustration is a vanishing moment which gives way to something that takes us to another level than that of pure and simple desire. Demand brings with it, in a sense, something which human experience knows well, which is that it has, in itself, something which makes it impossible to truly fulfil. Fulfilled or not, it is annihilated, crushed, in the next stage, and is immediately projected onto something else – either onto the articulation of the chain of gifts, or onto this closed and absolutely inextinguishable thing called narcissism, thanks to which the object, for the subject, is at the same time something which is him and which is not him, and something by which he can never be satisfied precisely in this sense that it is him and it is not him at the same time.

It is only insofar as frustration enters a dialectic which, by legalising it, also gives it this dimension of gratuity, situating it somewhere, such that this symbolised order of the real can also be established, where the subject can instate, for example, certain permanent privations as existing and accepted [*admises*]. This is something which, being misunderstood, brings in all kinds of ways of reconstructing everything that is given to us in experience, as an effect related to the fundamental lack of object,

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102 brings in a whole series of impasses, always related to the idea of wanting to destroy... on the basis of desire considered as a pure element of the individual, desire with the backlash it involves in its satisfaction just as in its dissatisfaction, of wanting to hold on to, to reconstruct the entire chain of experience which can literally only be elaborated, conceived, if we first posit, in principle, that nothing is articulated, that nothing can be held up in experience, unless we posit, as precedent, the fact that nothing is established, or constituted as a properly analysable conflict, until the moment when the subject enters the legal order, the symbolic order, enters an order which is an order of the symbol, the symbolic chain, the order of symbolic debt. It is only on the basis of this entry into something which pre-exists everything that happens to the subject, every kind of event or disillusionment... it is on this basis that everything through which he approaches it – namely, his history, his experience – this disordered thing which is there before it is ordered, articulated, takes on meaning, and only then can be analysed.

There is no better place for us to naïvely go into these references to make you see how well-founded this reminder is – and it should be merely a reminder – than in some of Freud's texts themselves. Yesterday evening a few of you spoke of a certain uncertain aspect, sometimes paradoxically wild aspect, of some texts. You even spoke of risky, or even diplomatic, elements – we cannot see why, for that matter – which is why I have chosen one of the most brilliant [texts], I would even say the most disturbing, but it is conceivable that it could seem truly archaic, even outdated.

103 It is “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman”⁹. I would simply like to remind you of its essential articulations. It concerns a girl from a good Viennese family, and for a good family it was quite a big step to send someone to see Freud, since this happened in 1920. Something very strange had happened. The daughter of this household, age eighteen, beautiful, intelligent, of very high social standing, is a cause of worry to her parents because she is running after someone who we would call a ‘society lady’, ten years her senior. It is specified, by all sorts of details given to us by the family, that this society lady is perhaps of a society which we could qualify as ‘half-society’ in the class rankings of what is considered to be respectable at that moment in Vienna. The kind of attachment that, as will be revealed as things move along, is truly passionate, it ties her to this lady, it is something which places her in rather difficult relations with her family. We subsequently learn that these rather difficult relations do not prevent the establishment of the entire situation. Truth be told, the fact that this absolutely enrages the father is certainly a motive for which the girl, in a way, not only maintains this passion but conducts it. I mean the sort of calm defiance with which she pursues her assiduities with the lady in question – her waiting in the street, the way in which she partially advertises her activity without showing it off – all this is enough for her parents to become aware of it, especially her father. We also learn that the mother is not exactly easy-going. She had been neurotic, and does not take it quite so badly or, in any case, does not take it completely seriously. They come and ask Freud to fix this and he points out, very pertinently, the difficulties of establishing a treatment when it is a matter of satisfying the demands of relatives. Freud very rightfully points out that one cannot get an analysis ‘to order’. In fact, this only introduces something even more extraordinary and points in a direction that will reveal Freud's considerations regarding analysis itself, which will seem quite dated to some. That is, what Freud tells us in order to explain that this analysis had not reached its end, that it allowed him to see very, very far – and this is why he is telling us about it – but that it certainly did

⁹ See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), pp. 145-172.

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not allow him to change much about this girl's fate. And to explain it, he introduces an idea that is not without basis, even though it might seem obsolete. It is a schematic idea which should incite us to revisit certain primary data, rather than to consider ourselves more agreeable. This is the fact that there are two elements in an analysis. The first is, in some sense, the gathering together of all that we can know. Then, we will weaken the resistances which are still standing, in which the subject already knows a lot of things. And the comparison he introduces here is no less astounding. He compares this to packing baggage before a trip, which is always something rather complicated, and then it is a matter of getting on board and making the journey. This reference, coming from someone who has a travel and rail phobia, is all a bit rich! But what is even more incredible is that, all this time, he has the feeling that nothing actually happens.

104 However, he sees very clearly what has happened and he emphasises a certain number of stages. He clearly sees that in childhood there was something which seems not to have gone smoothly, at the moment when she understood, by way of her two brothers – the older one, precisely – the difference which made her into someone who did not have the fundamentally desirable object, the phallic object, and this did not go smoothly. One of these two brothers is younger than her. Nonetheless, until then, Freud tells us that the girl has never been neurotic. No hysterical symptoms have been brought to analysis. Nothing in her childhood history is worth noting in terms of its pathological consequences. And this is indeed why it is striking, in this case – at least clinically – to see such a late emergence of an attitude which appears frankly abnormal to everyone, which is that of this singular position she occupies vis-à-vis this somewhat castigated woman, and towards whom she shows this passionate attachment that brings her to the outbreak that led her to consult Freud. For if it became necessary to entrust herself to Freud, it was because something remarkable happened – that is, the girl's gentle flirting with danger. She went walking with the woman almost directly in front of her own house. One day the father comes out and sees this and, being surrounded by other people, casts them a fiery glance and goes away. However, the lady asks the girl, "Who is that person?" – "It's papa." – "He doesn't look happy!" The lady then takes the matter rather badly. It is pointed out to us that until then she has had a very reserved attitude towards the girl, a cold attitude, or even more than that, and she certainly did not encourage these assiduities at all, that she did not especially desire complications, and she tells her "under these circumstances, we shall no longer see each other."

In Vienna there are these sorts of little railway rings, and being not so very far from one of these little bridges, the girl then jumps off one of them. She drops down, *niederkommt*. She breaks a few bones but survives. So, as Freud tells us, until the moment when this attachment appeared, the girl had had a development that was not only normal but, in all appearances, very well-oriented. But was there not something, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, which caused her to hope for that most pleasing development of the female vocation, that of maternity? She was playing mother to her parents' friends' little boy and all of a sudden this sort of maternal love, which seemed to make of her a model mother early on, suddenly stops, and it is at that moment, Freud says, that she starts to go out with women – for the affair in question is not her first – who he qualifies as "already mature". That is to say, women who are already some sort of maternal substitute, it would seem.

105 All the same, this schema doesn't hold up so well for the last person, the one who had truly embodied the dramatic affair over the course of which the initiation of the analysis would revolve, as well as the problematic of a declared homosexuality, for the subject declares to Freud that there is no question for her of abandoning any of her ambitions or her object choice. She will do all that is necessary to deceive

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her family, but she will continue to ensure her ties with the person for whom she is far from having lost her taste, and who turns out to be moved enough by this extraordinary sign of devotion that she thereafter becomes much more accommodating to her. This declared relation, then, maintained by the subject, is something regarding which Freud offers very striking comments. He gives the value of a sanction to some of these comments, either illustrating what happened before the treatment – for example, the suicide attempt – or illustrating his own failings. The former seem very pertinent, and the latter as well, though perhaps not exactly in the way he himself intends.

However, Freud's observations have the feature of giving us an extraordinary clarity, even on matters which, in a sense, escaped Freud himself. I am alluding to the observation of Dora¹⁰, where Freud saw things clearly later on. He had intervened with Dora while being unaware of her question with regard to her own sex – that is, Dora's homosexuality. Here [in the present case] we note a lack of awareness which is analogous [to Dora's case] but much more instructive, since it goes much deeper. And then there are also the things he tells us, of which he only makes incomplete use and which are certainly no less interesting for it, on the topic of what is at stake in this suicide attempt, which in a sense crowns itself as a meaningful act, an episode regarding which we certainly cannot say that the subject is not intimately linked to the mounting of tension, up until the moment when conflict breaks out and in catastrophe.

He explains this to us in the following manner. It is within the register of an orientation – normal, in some sense – towards a desire to have a child by the father, that we must conceive of the original crisis which made this subject engage in something strictly opposite to it, for it is pointed out that there was a true reversal of positions, and Freud attempts to articulate this. It is a matter of one of these cases where the disappointment from the object of desire continues through a complete reversal of position, which is the identification with this object and which, due to this – Freud articulates it precisely in a note¹¹ – is equivalent to a regression to narcissism. When I make this dialectic of narcissism into, essentially, this 'me – small other' relation, I am doing absolutely nothing other than making evident what is implicit in all of Freud's ways of expressing himself.

106 What, then, is this disappointment, this moment around the fifteenth year when, engaged in a process of taking possession of this imaginary object, of this imaginary child – she is so aware of it that the date is noted in the patient's history – the subject effects this reversal? At this moment her mother *really* has a child by the father. In other words, the patient acquires a third brother. Here is the crucial point, as well as the apparently exceptional character of this observation, following something that happened. It is now a matter of seeing in which light this is best interpreted because, well, it is no triviality that the intervention of a little one, a latecomer like this one, results in a profound switch in the sexual orientation of a subject. It is, then, at this moment that the girl changes position, and we must find out what happened here. Freud tells us this – it is something which must surely be considered as reactive [*réactionnel*] – although the term is not in the text, but it is implied, since he continues to suppose that her resentment towards the father carries on playing a role. It is the main role, the lynchpin of the situation, which explains everything about the way the affair is carried out.

¹⁰ See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), pp. 7-114.

¹¹ See the first footnote in Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), p. 158 – “It is by no means rare for a love-relation to be broken off through a process of identification on the part of the lover with the loved object, a process equivalent to a kind of regression to narcissism. After this has been accomplished, it is easy in making a fresh choice of object to direct the libido to a member of the sex opposite to that of the earlier choice.”

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She is clearly aggressive towards the father and the suicide attempt – following the disappointment produced by the fact that the counterpart object of her attachment, as it were, foils her – would only be a matter of the counter-aggressivity of the father, of a switching of this aggression onto the subject herself, combined with something which, Freud tells us, symbolically satisfies what is at stake. Namely, that through a sort of precipitation, a concentration at the level of the objects which are truly at stake, a sort of collapse of the situation into its primitive components when the girl *niederkommt*, drops off the bridge, she accomplishes a symbolic act which is none other than the *niederkommen* of being delivered of a child in childbirth – it is the term used in German to say one is giving birth. Here there is something which brings us back to the ultimate and original sense of a structure of the situation.

107 In the second group of remarks made by Freud, we must explain why the situation met with a dead end during the treatment, and he tells us. It is inasmuch as the resistance was not conquered, that everything he could say to her merely interested her a great deal, but without causing her to abandon her ultimate positions – that is, she maintained all of it, as we would say today, at the level of an intellectual interest. Freud more or less compares her and her reactions to a lady to whom one shows various objects and who, through her lorgnette, says, “how pretty!” This is a metaphor. He says that nevertheless we cannot say that there was a total absence of transference and he indicates this presence of transference with great perspicacity in the patient’s dreams, dreams which in themselves... and in parallel to her declarations – quite unambiguous – that the patient makes to him about her determination not to change anything about her behaviour towards the lady... [these dreams] announce a stunning blossoming again of this most pleasing orientation – that is, the arrival of some handsome and satisfying husband, not to mention the expectation of an object, the fruit of this love. In short, something is announced in the dream, in the idyllic character of this husband, that is so forced, almost, that anyone other than Freud would have been fooled, would have taken this as a sign of great hope.

Freud is not fooled. He sees in this a transference, in the sense that it is the flipside of this kind of counter-ploy she conducted, the play [j eu] she makes in response to the disappointment, for she was, certainly, not only aggressive and provocative with the father, but she also made concessions. It was only a matter of showing the father that she was deceiving him. And Freud recognises that something analogous is at stake, and that this is the transference significance of these dreams. She is reproducing with him, Freud, the fundamental position of the cruel game [jeu] which she carried out with the father. Here we cannot help going back to this kind of basic relativity that is essential in what we call symbolic formation – I mean to say, inasmuch as this is the fundamental line of what constitutes, for us, the field of the unconscious. This is what Freud expresses in a very exact way, of which the only flaw is its being a little too accentuated. He tells us: “I believe that the intention to mislead me was one of the formative elements of this dream. It was also an attempt to win my interest and my good opinion, probably in order to disappoint me all the more profoundly later on.”¹² Here we can see the first signs of the intention, imputed to the subject, of getting into this position of captivating him, of capturing him, Freud says, of making him fall from a greater height, making him drop from even higher, where he, himself, is something that is, in a sense, caught in the situation, we might say, for there appears to be no doubt about the accent we can hear in this sentence, that there is what we

¹² See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), p. 165.

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call a counter-transference action. It is accurate that the dream is deceptive, and he only retains this much. Immediately afterwards he goes into the discussion, strictly speaking, of what, in his words, is so fascinating to find. That is, that the typical manifestation of the unconscious can be a deceptive one, for it is certainly true that he hears the objections which will be made against him ahead of time: "If the unconscious also lies to us, then what can we rely on?"¹³

108 What will his disciples say? He provides a long explanation, so tendentious, for that matter, to explain to them that, ultimately, this is in no way a contradiction, and to show them how it might come about. The fact remains that the groundwork laid down by Freud in 1920 is exactly the most essential of what is in the unconscious, this relation of the subject to the Other as such, which quite precisely involves, at base, the possibility of being carried out at this level – we are in the order of lies and the truth. But, even though Freud sees this very clearly, it seems that what escapes him is that it is an authentic [*vrai*] transference – that is, that the way forward is in the interpretation of the desire to deceive, instead of taking the transference for something that is – to put it in a rather coarse way – directed against him. For it was enough for him to add this sentence: "It is also an attempt to trip me up, to captivate me, to make me find her very pretty."¹⁴ And she must be ravishing, this girl, for him to be, as with Dora, not completely free in this matter, where what he wants to avoid is precisely to affirm that the worst is in store for him, something in which he himself will feel disillusioned – that is to say, he is quite ready to make these illusions himself. In protecting himself from these illusions, he is already going along with the game. He realises the imaginary game. From that moment on, he makes it become real, since he is inside it. And, as it happens, it hits the target, for in his way of interpreting the matter, he tells the girl that her intention is indeed to deceive him, as she habitually deceives her father. That is to say, he immediately cuts short what he has made real as the imaginary relation, and in a certain sense his counter-transference could have been useful, provided that it were not a counter-transference, provided that he himself did not believe it – that is, that he not be involved in it. To the extent that he is involved in it, and that he interprets too prematurely, he brings back to the real this desire of the girl – which is but a desire, not an intention – to deceive. He gives it an incarnation [*il lui donne corps*], he operates with her exactly like the person who intervened with the little girl, like a statue, and like the symbolic thing which is at the heart of what I explain to you when I speak to you of this slippage into the imaginary which becomes, much more than a trap, a wound [*plaie*].

109 From the moment that he sets himself up in a kind of doctrine... here we see an extreme example, transparent, we cannot miss it, it is in the text... it is insofar as, with his interpretation at this moment, Freud makes the conflict break out, gives body to it... well, just as he himself senses, this is what was at stake, to reveal this lying discourse which is there in the unconscious. In fact there is no question of anything else. Instead of this, in wanting to reunite, Freud separates. He tells her that all this is directed against him and, in fact, the treatment does not go much further – that is to say, it is interrupted. But there is something much more interesting which is emphasised by Freud, but which he does not interpret, which is absolutely huge and which did not escape him. It is the nature of the girl's passion for the person in question – it is not a homosexual relationship like the others. What is particular to homosexual relationships is, precisely, to present all its variations, and perhaps even some others, as heterosexual variations. Yet what Freud emphasises, in a way which is truly admirable, is what he calls this object choice of a properly masculine type, and he explains what he means by this. He articulates

¹³ See *ibid*, p. 165.

¹⁴ See *ibid*, p. 165.

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it in a manner which has extraordinary depth. It is literally Platonic love in its most exalted form. It is something which demands no other satisfaction than the service of the lady. It is truly a sacred love, one might say, or courtly love in its most devoted form. He adds a few words such as 'exalt' which has a very particular meaning in the cultural history of Germany¹⁵. His exaltation is the basis of the relation proper. In short, he lays something out which situates this amorous relationship at the highest degree of the symbolised amorous relation, laid out as a service, an institution, a reference, and not simply as something submitted to, not as something like a force of attraction or a need. It is something which, in itself, not only gets by without satisfaction, but aims precisely for this non-satisfaction. It is the institution of lack in the relation to the object, as being the very order in which an ideal love can flourish. Do you not see that there is something here which conjoins in a kind of knot the three levels that I am trying to get you to recognise, that conjoins them in the knot of this whole process? This knot which will be found, say, from frustration to symptom, and one could take the word 'symptom' as its equivalent, since we are in the process of interrogating it, this enigma. This is how the problem of this situation will come to articulate itself, this situation which is exceptional but which is only worth being grasped in its own register – that is to say, it is exceptional because it is particular. We have the reference, experienced in an innocent way, to the imaginary object, this child, which interpretation allows us to conceive as a child received from the father. We have already been told this – that homosexual women, contrary to what one may think, are those who have a very strong paternal fixation.

110 What happens? Why is there truly a crisis? It is because at that moment the real object intervenes, a child given by the father, it is true, but precisely given to someone else, and to the person who is closest to her. At this moment a true reversal occurs: the mechanism is explained. I believe that it is of great importance to see that in this case, something had already been established at the symbolic level, for it is at the symbolic level that she satisfies herself with this child as if with a child which was given to her by the father so that, for an instant, she is brought back to the level of frustration by the presence of this real object. It is no longer a matter of something which satisfies her in the imaginary, that is, of something which already sustained her in the relation between women, with all that is established of the paternal presence as such, as being the father *par excellence*, the fundamental father, the father who will be for her every type of man who will give her a child – this is something which for the moment brings her back to the level of frustration because here the object, for a moment, is real and it is materialised by the fact that it is her mother who has it instead of her. What is most important at this moment? Is it solely this sort of turnaround which makes her identify with the father at that moment? It is clear that this has played its part.

Does she herself become this sort of latent child that will effectively be able to *niederkommen* when the crisis has arrived at its end? And I think that we would know after how many months this happened, if we had the dates like we do for Dora. What is even more important is that what is desired is something that is beyond this woman. This love she devotes to her is for someone who is other than her, this love which lives purely and simply in the register of this devotion, which carries the highest degree of attachment, the voiding [*anéantissement*] of the subject in the relation. This is something which – and not for nothing – Freud seems to reserve for the register of masculine experience. For in fact, it is in

¹⁵ Lacan is most likely referring here to Freud's use of *Verehrung* in *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman*, which Strachey translates as 'worship' and its verb form *verehrten* as 'adored'. Note that *Verehrung* is also the term used for the veneration of Mary in the Catholic Church.

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a sort of institutionalised fulfilment of a highly elaborated cultural relation where these things are observed and maintained. The crossing over, the reflection at this level of fundamental disappointment, the way out that the subject finds, poses the question of what, in the register of love in the woman, is loved above herself. This implicates precisely everything which is truly fundamental in the questions relating to love in its consummation. What, for her, is properly desired is precisely what she is lacking, and what she is lacking in this case is the return to the primordial object – the equivalent, the imaginary substitute that the subject would find in the child. It is precisely the phallus. What is, at its extreme, searched for in the woman, in the most idealised love is what she lacks – what is searched for beyond her is the phallus *qua* central object in the whole libidinal economy.

Session of 16th January 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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111 Last time, we finished our meeting trying to summarise the case that Freud presented of female homosexuality. I sketched out for you, along the way, amidst the twists and turns, something which we might call the structure, for if we were not examining it against the background of a structural analysis, it would have little more importance than a picturesque case. We should return to this structural analysis, for it is only by making it progress, and as far as possible, that it is worth it for analysis to commit to this path.

There is something missing in analytic theory – that is what seems to me to crop up at every moment. It might not be a bad idea, then, to remind ourselves that, in fact, it is in order to effectively respond to this lack that we are keeping up this effort. To be sure, this lack can be felt everywhere. I recently saw it reviving itself in my mind while watching Anna Freud's ideas confront Melanie Klein's.¹

No doubt Anna Freud has since watered down her approach considerably, but she founded the principles of her analysis of children on such remarks as the following. That, for example, no transference can occur – at least, no transference neurosis – because, as children are still involved in the situation which generates neurotic tension, there can be no transference, properly speaking, for something which is in the process of playing itself out.² Then, on the other hand, the fact that they can still have a relation to the objects of their inaugural attachment – another remark ultimately of the same kind, but different – [this fact] should change the position of the analyst, who would here intervene, in such a manner that is entirely at the level of the present, which should profoundly modify their technique. So, her technique was in a sense profoundly modified, and Anna Freud pays tribute

112 here to something like a premonition of the importance of the essential function of speech in the analytic relationship. Surely, she says, the child can have a different relationship to speech than the adult, such that he must be approached with the help of those playful tactics which are the techniques of child analysis. The child is also in a position that does not allow for the analyst to offer themselves to him in a neutral or receptive position which aims above all to receive him, to allow his speech to flourish and, occasionally, to echo it.

I would say, therefore, that the analyst's engagement through some other means than the relation of speech, whilst it is not developed, nor even conceived, is indicated nonetheless. Melanie Klein points out in her arguments that, on the contrary, nothing is more like this than the analysis of a child, for even at an extremely premature age, what is already at stake in the unconscious of the child has nothing to do with the real parents, contrary to what Anna Freud says. Already between the ages of two and a half and three, the situation is greatly modified in relation to what can be observed in the real relations. It is already very much a question of an extensive dramatisation which is deeply foreign to the child's actual family relations, that we can observe in the case of a child who had been raised as an only child by a figure who lived very far away from the child's parents, an old aunt, which placed him in a completely isolated and dual relationship with a single person. It could be observed that this child nonetheless re-constituted an entire family drama with a father, a mother, and even brother and sister rivals – I cite.³ So, it is a matter of already revealing something in analysis that is, at base, not purely

¹ Lacan refers to a collection of papers contemporary to this seminar, published under the direction of Sacha Nacht. See Lebovici, S., Diatkine, R., Favreau, J. A., Luquet, P. & Luquet-Parat, J. (1956). 'La psychanalyse des enfants' in *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui* : Presses Universitaires de France. The discussion of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein's ideas can be found on pages 193–201.

² A possible reference to *ibid.*, p. 194.

³ It has not been possible to locate this case.

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and simply in an immediate relation to the real but is something already inscribed in a symbolisation which, from that moment onwards... I mean to say, if we accept Melanie Klein's assertions, and these rest on her experience, and this experience is communicated to us in observations which border on the bizarre, for in truth we cannot fail to be struck by this sort of witch's cauldron at the bottom of which bubbles an entire imaginary world – the idea of the maternal body as a container.⁴ There, all the primordial fantasies, in some sense from the very beginning, tend to be structured into a drama that appears pre-constituted, and for which the most aggressive primordial instincts must be stirred up at every moment in order to turn the machine. We cannot fail to be struck at once by the evidence of how all this fantasmagoria matches up with the specific data that Melanie Klein is handling here, and at the same time ask ourselves what is actually at hand. What could be the meaning of this dramatic symbolisation which seems to be all the more satisfied the further back we go in time, as if we could assume that ultimately the closer we get to the origin, the more the Oedipus complex is satisfied, articulated, ready to activate itself?

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This at least merits that we ask ourselves a question, and this question resurges everywhere on this very path along which I am trying to lead you, for the moment, which is that of perversion. What is perversion? Within a single group, we hear quite conflicting views on this. Some, believing that they are following Freud, will say that we must purely and simply return to the notion of the persistence of a fixation supporting a partial drive, one that would survive the entire progression, the entire dialectic, but that tends to establish itself with the Oedipus, somehow unscathed, and would not be exposed to the transformations which tend to reduce the other partial drives, in a movement which ultimately unifies them and makes them result in the genital drive. This is the ideal drive, essentially unifying. Perversion, then, involves something which is a sort of accident in the development of the drives. But in translating Freud's claim that perversion is the negative of neurosis⁵ in a classical way, they want to make perversion purely and simply into something wherein the drive has not developed. Others, however – who are, incidentally, not the most prominent or insightful but are informed by experience and by something which is truly essential in analytic practice – will try to show that perversion is quite far from being something pure and persistent, and that, when all is said and done, perversion is, in fact, a part of what has been produced through all the crises, dramatic fusions and 'de-fusions' [*dé-fusions*], which present the same rich dimensions, the same abundance, rhythms and stages as a neurosis. They will then attempt to explain that it is the negative of neurosis, by coming up with such formulations as saying perversion is 'an eroticisation of defense', just like all these games by which an analysis of the reduction of defenses is pursued. This sounds nice, it gives a certain image, but why in fact can it be eroticised? This is the question. Where does this eroticisation come from? Where is it situated, this invisible power that would be able to project this colouration which seems to bring in something superfluous, a change in quality, taking as defence something which is, strictly speaking, to be considered a libidinal satisfaction? This is not, in fact, unthinkable, but the least we can say is that it hasn't been thought.

⁴ See, for example – Klein, M. (1930). 'The importance of symbol-formation in the development of the ego' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 11, pp. 24–39.

⁵ Lacan misquotes Freud here. In his study, Freud writes "Psychoneuroses are, so to speak, the negative of perversions." See Freud, S. (1905 [1901]). *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (SE VII), pp. 7–114. Further references to this statement are given in Strachey's introduction in the same volume.

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114 Ultimately, we should not be under the impression that, within the development of analytic theory, Freud decided to try to give us a notion of this which he elaborated on. I would go further. In Freud himself, we have an example which proves that, surely, when he says that ‘perversion is the negative of neurosis’, this is not a formulation to be taken in the way we have always taken it – that is, as simply meaning that whatever is hidden in the unconscious when we are in the presence of a neurotic case is there for all to see in perversion, and in some sense, is free. He is actually proposing something else to us. Perhaps, after all, it should be taken as having been proffered as one of these dense formulas in which our analysis might find its true meaning. And it is in trying to follow it, and seeing for example how he conceives the mechanism of a phenomenon we could call perverse – categorically perverse, even – that we may ultimately realise what he means when he says that perversion is the negative of neurosis. If we examine things a little more closely, if we took this study, which should be famous, “A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions”,⁶ we would notice that Freud’s attentiveness here is characteristic, and it is no less characteristic that he chooses this as the title. He insists on it in the text – it is something which is not merely a label, but a phrase taken directly from the testimonies of patients, when they start talking about their fantasies, which are basically sadomasochistic fantasies, regardless of what role or function they may take on in any particular case. Freud tells us that he is centering his study specifically on six cases which are all more or less obsessional neuroses, four women and two men⁷, and in the background there is all his experience of those cases that he himself does not understand very well. Additionally, it seems, there is here a sort of summing up, an attempt to organise a considerable number of experiences.

When the subject claims to bring something called fantasy into play in the treatment, he expresses it in this remarkable form, as an imprecision which leaves these questions unresolved and very difficult for him to answer, and in truth he cannot offer satisfying answers directly. He can hardly say anything more to characterise them, not without this sort of aversion, or even shame or embarrassment, which is present not in the practice of the fantasies, which are more or less associated, oratorical, and which are generally carried out by subjects as activities that do not produce any kind of guilt. But... and this is something quite remarkable... not only does their formulation present great difficulties, but their articulation provokes a great deal of aversion, revulsion and guilt in the subject⁸. And already, we can sense something here which should cause us to prick up our ears, between the fantasmatic or imaginary usage of these images and their formulation in speech. Already this signal in the subject’s behaviour is something which marks a limit. It is not the same thing to play with it mentally and to speak about it. Concerning this fantasy, ‘a child is being beaten’, Freud tells us what his experience has shown him, what this meant for the subjects in question.⁹

115 We will not get to the end of this article today. I would simply like to emphasise certain elements that are completely clear because they directly concern the path I led you along last time, approaching the problem through the case of the psychogenesis of female homosexuality.¹⁰ Freud tells us that the progress of the analysis shows that in this fantasy it is a matter of something that has, through a series

⁶ See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions* (SE XVII).

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 189–191.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 191–195.

¹⁰ See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (S E XVIII), pp. 145–172.

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of transformations, been substituted for other fantasies which played a completely understandable role at the time of the subject's development. It is the structure of these states that I wish to expose for you, to allow you to recognise in them something that seems completely clear as long as we keep our eyes open, at least in the dimension in which we are trying to progress, and which can be taken up again under the heading of subjective structure. In other words, we will always try to support ourselves with this as we try to give a true position to what, in the theory, often presents itself as an ambiguity, even a dead end, or a case of myopia. This means seeing at which level of subjective structure a phenomenon occurs.

We can observe that Freud tells us that the [subject's] history divides itself into three stages, to the extent that it opens up under analytic pressure, and allows us to locate the origin of these fantasies. He also says, in this first typical formulation of the fantasy, for reasons that he will specify later, but which we will leave aside for today, in the first part of his account that we will not emphasise this time, that he will limit himself to what happens specifically for women¹¹. The form assumed by the first fantasy – the one we can, he tells us, locate through the analysis of facts, is this one: "My father is beating a child, who is the child that I hate."¹² This is a fantasy that is more or less connected, in the history, to the introduction of a brother or a sister, a rival who at some point ends up, in being present, by way of the care they receive, frustrating the child of the parents' affection.

Here, especially, it is a question of the father. We will not insist on this point for now, but we will not omit to point out that this is a girl, taken [into analysis] at a certain moment, when the Oedipus complex has already been constituted, when the relation to the father has been established.

116 We will leave for another date, then, the explanation of the preeminence, in a totally primitive fantasy, of the father's person, it being understood that this is not unrelated to the fact that she is a girl. But, let us leave this problem aside. What is important is this – here, we touch upon the beginning of a historical perspective which is retroactive. It is from the present point where we are in the analysis that the subject formulates for the past, organises a primal dramatic situation, in such a way that is nonetheless inscribed in their present speech, in their present powers of symbolisation, and we locate, through the progress of analysis, something like the primal thing,¹³ the deepest primordial organisation. This is something that has the obvious complexity of having three players. There is the agent of the punishment. There is the one who suffers it, who is other than the subject, namely, a child whom the subject hates and whom she thereby sees as deprived of this parental preference that is at stake. She feels herself to be privileged by the fact that the other [child] loses this preference. There is something which, we might say, implies a triple dimension and a triple tension that implies the relation of a subject to two others whose own relations are motivated by something that is centred by the subject. To accentuate a certain sense of things, one might put it like this – "My father is beating my brother or my sister, out of a fear that I will think he prefers them to me".

A causality or a tension, a reference to a subject taken as a third party, in favour of whom this thing happens, is something which animates and drives the action on the second player, the one who suffers it. And this third party, the subject, is herself called upon here, presented in the situation as the one for whose eyes this must take place, with the intention of letting her know that something belonging

¹¹ See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions (SE XVII)*, pp. 195–196.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹³ See Lacan, J. (1955). *The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis*.

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to her is given to her, which is the privilege of this preference, this precedence, this structure which, in a sense, reintroduces... just as earlier there was the notion of fear... a sort of anticipation, a temporal dimension, forward tension, which is introduced as a motor within this triple situation. There is a reference to the third party as a subject, as she must believe it or infer something of a certain behaviour which bears on the second object, which in this case is taken as the instrument of this communication between the two subjects, which is ultimately a communication of love. For it is at the expense of the second player that the central subject receives something which is announced at this moment – the expression of her wish, of her desire to be preferred, to be loved. It is a formation which is, of course, already dramatised, already a reaction insofar as it has emerged from a complex situation. But this complex situation supposes this triple ‘inter-subjective’¹⁴ reference, with all that it requires, and introduces it by way of temporal reference, of time, of scansion. It supposes the introduction of the second subject to be necessary. Why?

117 What crosses from one subject to the other is the instrument, the mainspring, the medium, the means. Ultimately, we find ourselves before a fully inter-subjective structure, in the sense in which it is established in the effective crossing of speech. It is not a matter of the thing having been spoken. It is a matter of the inter-subjective structure in this ternary situation that is established in the primal fantasy itself bearing the mark of the very same inter-subjective structure which constitutes all effective speech. The second step represents a reduced situation in relation to the first. Freud tells us that here we find, in a very peculiar way, a situation reduced to two players. I am following Freud’s text here¹⁵. We are explaining it as best we can. Freud indicates the explanation, without weighing it up much further, explaining it as a necessary and reconstructive stage indispensable for understanding all the motivation behind what is produced in the subject’s history. This second stage produces: “I am being beaten by my father.” Here it is a question of a situation reduced to two, a situation which, we might say, excludes every dimension except that of the relation to the agent of the beating. There is something here that might lend itself to all sorts of interpretations, but these interpretations will themselves remain marked by a character of the greatest ambiguity. If, in the first fantasy, there is an organisation and a structure which gives it a meaning that we could indicate with a series of arrows, in the other [fantasy] the situation is so ambiguous that we might wonder for a moment to what extent the subject participates with the one who attacks and hits her.

This is the classic sado-masochistic ambiguity. And if we resolve it then we will conclude, as Freud puts it, that there is something here that is linked to this essence of masochism, but that the ego, in this case, figures strongly in the situation. The subject finds herself in a situation which is reciprocal, but exclusive at the same time. It’s either her or the other who is being beaten, and here [in the second stage] it is her, and in the fact that it’s her there is something that is indicated but not resolved. One can see – and the next part of the discussion shows it – in this very act of being beaten, also a transposition,¹⁶ or a displacement of something which, perhaps, is already marked with eroticism. The very fact that we may speak, at this point, of the essence of masochism, is entirely indicative, whereas in the previous stage, Freud says, we were in a situation that, in a way, as structured as it may have been, was pregnant

¹⁴ English in the original.

¹⁵ See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions (SE XVII)*, p. 185.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 185. Freud uses the term “transformation” in the paper: “Profound transformations have taken place between this first phase and the next.”

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with every virtuality. It was neither sexual, nor especially sadistic. It potentially contained them, and this something that rushes in one direction or another, albeit ambiguously, distinguishes itself in the second stage, this stage of the dual relation, with all the problems it raises at the libidinal level. This second stage, which is dual, and where the subject finds her/himself included in a relationship which is dual, and therefore ambiguous, with the other as such, in this sort of ‘either–or’ which is
 118 fundamental in the dual relation... Freud tells us that it is so fleeting that we are almost always forced to reconstruct it.¹⁷ This fleetingness is its characteristic, and very soon the situation advances to the third stage where, we might say, the subject is reduced to her most extreme point,¹⁸ and apparently refinds her ternary position in the form of this pure and simple observer, who in a sense reduces this inter-subjective situation with the temporal situation, after having moved from the second situation, dual and reciprocal, to the completely desubjectivised situation, that of the ultimate fantasy, namely, “one beats a child.”¹⁹ Of course, this “one” is something in which we can vaguely locate the paternal function, but in general the father is not recognisable and this is but a substitute.²⁰ Moreover, when we say “one beats a child”, this is the subject’s formula, which Freud wanted to maintain, but it is often a matter of several children. Fantasmatic production makes it shatter by multiplying it into thousands of copies. And this clearly shows the essential character of desubjectivation, which takes place in the primordial relation, and what remains is this objectivisation – this radical desubjectivation, at least – of the structure, at which level the subject is only there as a kind of spectator, reduced to the state of a spectator, or simply of an eye, that is to say, that which always characterises any kind of object at the limit and the final point of its reduction. There must be, if not always a subject, an eye to see the subject... an eye, a screen on which the subject is instituted.

What do we see here? At the precise point we have reached in our process, how can we translate this into our language? It is clear that in terms of the schema of the subject, the Other, and the imaginary relation of the subject’s ego, more or less fantasmaticised, the imaginary relation is inscribed in this direction, and in this relation that is more or less marked by a specularity and reciprocity between the ego and the other. We find ourselves in the presence of something that is an unconscious speech, that we had to refind via all the artifices of the analysis of the transference, which is as follows. “My father, in beating a child which is the child that I hate, shows me that he loves me,”²¹ or, “My father is beating a child out of fear that I’ll think that I am not the favourite,” or any other formulation which, in one way or another, places value on one of the accents of this dramatic relation. What is excluded, what is not present in neurosis, what we must locate, and what will go through developments which manifest themselves in all the symptoms constitutive of neurosis can be refound in an element of the clinical table which is fantasy.

119 How does it present itself? It presents itself in a way that still bears witness, quite visibly, to signifying elements of speech articulated at the level of this ‘trans-object’, we might say. It is the big Other, the place where unconscious speech is articulated, the *Es* insofar as it is speech, history, memory, articulated structure. Perversion – or, let us say perverse fantasy, in order to limit ourselves to this – has

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186.

¹⁹ This is an English translation of the French phrase Lacan uses here “On bat un enfant”. The agent – “one [on]” – is not explicit in the original German phrase “Ein Kind wird geschlagen”, which Strachey can translate more directly as “A child is being beaten”.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

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a property which we can now see emerging. What is this sort of residue, symbolic reduction, which has progressively eliminated all the subjective structure from the situation, leaving only something entirely objectivised and ultimately enigmatic to emerge that retains to the end all its force – but a force unrevealed, unconstituted, unassumed by the subject, something that is, at the level of the Other, an articulated structure where the subject is engaged? We find ourselves here at the level of the perverse fantasy, something which has all its elements, but which at the same time has lost all signification, namely, the inter-subjective relation. This is, in a sense, the retention of what we might call signifiers in their pure state, signifiers without [*sans*] the inter-subjective relation, signifiers emptied of their subject, a sort of objectivation of the signifiers of the situation as such. This something that is indicated as a kind of fundamental structuring relation of the subject's history at the level of perversion, is in the end maintained and contained, but in the form of a pure sign. And what else do we discover at the level of perversion?

Now recall what you know about the fetish, for example, this fetish concerning which you have been told that it can be explained by this never-before-seen 'beyond'. And rightly so! It's the penis of the phallic mother, which is linked for the subject – most often after a brief analytic effort, at least regarding those memories which are still accessible to the subject – to a situation in which, we could say, the child halts in his observations, at least in his memory, at the hem of his mother's dress, where we find a sort of remarkable contest in amongst the structure of what we could call the screen memory, that is, the moment where the chain of memories stops, and it effectively stops at the hem of the dress, no higher than the ankle. This is indeed the reason why it is here that we have the shoe and this is also why the shoe can, at least in particular cases – but this is an exemplary case – take on the function of a substitute for what is not seen but is articulated, formulated, as being here truly for the subject of the mother who possesses this phallus – imaginary, undoubtedly – but essential to her symbolic foundation as phallic mother. Here we find ourselves facing something of the same order, facing this thing which fixes, reduces to the status of a snapshot, the course of memories by arresting it at this point which is called a screen memory, in the manner of something which would unfold rather quickly and that would stop at a single point all at once, freezing all the characters, as in a cinematographic movement,

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this sort of snapshot that characterises this reduction of the full, meaningful scene, articulated from subject to subject, [a reduction] to something that immobilises itself in this fantasy, which remains charged with all the erotic values that are included in what [the scene] expressed, and of which it is, in a sense, the witness, the support, the last remaining support. Here, we are touching upon how what we might call the mould of perversion, namely, this valorisation of the image, insofar as it remains the privileged witness of something which must be articulated in the unconscious, must be put into play again in the dialectics of transference, that is, in something which must re-expand within the analytic dialogue. The value, then, of the imaginary dimension appears to be prevalent whenever it is a matter of perversion, and it is insofar as this imaginary relation is on the road between what passes from the subject to the Other, or, more precisely of what remains of the subject within [*situé*] the Other, insofar as it is, precisely, repressed. That is to say that speech – which is indeed the subject's and yet, by its very nature qua speech, is a message which he must receive from the Other in its inverted form – can just as well remain in the Other, that is, it can just as well constitute the repressed of the unconscious, instating a possible relation albeit one that is unrealised.

"Possible"... in fact, that's not all – there also has to be some impossibility in there. Otherwise it would not be repressed. And it is indeed repressed because this impossibility is there in ordinary situations

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that we need all the artifices of transference to render the communication from this Other, the big Other, to the subject, acceptable, articulable once again, insofar as the 'I' of the subject comes to be. Within this indication that Freudian analysis gives us in the clearest fashion – and everything is said and articulated much further still than what I'm saying here – Freud marks clearly at this point that it is by way of the avatars and the adventure of Oedipus, the progress and resolution of Oedipus, that we should consider the question, the problem, of the constitution of any perversion. It is astonishing that we could even have dreamed of maintaining the idea, this somehow popular translation, of perversion as being the 'negative of neurosis', simply for the reason that [it would make] perversion a drive that is not elaborated by the oedipal and neurotic mechanism, but instead the pure and simple survival, persistence, of an irreducible partial drive.

121 Well, Freud, by way of this primordial article and many more points as well, sufficiently indicates that, as primitive as we may suppose it to be, no perverse structuration, which we analysts become aware of at any rate, is only articulable as a means, a lynchpin, an element of something which is ultimately conceived, understood and articulated in, by, and for – and *solely* in, by, and for – the process, the organisation, the articulation of the Oedipus complex. Let us attempt to inscribe our case from the other day²² into this relation that crosses from subject to Other, insofar as this [A → S]²³ is where symbolic signification must turn out to be, where the subject's entire present genesis must be established... and the imaginary imposition [a' → a] is, on the other hand, where he finds his status, his objectal structure that he recognises to be instated as such in a certain capture vis à vis those objects that are for him, so to speak, immediately attractive, that correspond to this desire, insofar as he engages himself in the paths, the imaginary tracks, which form what we call libidinal fixations. Let us simply try to take this up again, even if today we will not push this to its conclusion. What do we see? We can put down five moments to describe the major phenomena of this inauguration, not only of perversion. Whether we consider it fundamental or acquired is of little importance. In this case we know when this perversion was first indicated, then established, then precipitated. We have its mechanisms and its beginnings. It is a perversion that was late to emerge. This does not mean that it did not have its underlying causes in entirely primordial phenomena, but let us attempt to understand what we see concerning the pathways cleared by Freud himself. There is a state which is primordial, at the point when this woman installed herself at the time of puberty, around thirteen to fourteen years. This girl cherishes an object, to which she is tied by its affective bonds, a child she cares for. She appears to everyone to be particularly well disposed in this regard, precisely along the path they all expect to be the typical female calling – maternity. And it is on this basis that something happens that will create a sort of reversal in her, one that will become established when she becomes interested in love objects that will first be marked by the sign of femininity – women who are in a roughly maternal situation, neo-maternalising, and who will finally lead her to this passion which we hear called, literally, 'devouring', for this person who is also called the Lady.

122 And it is not for nothing – she treats this Lady in a knightly and literally masculine fashion, a highly sophisticated style in a masculine register and from the masculine perspective. This passion for the Lady is a service performed, in a sense, without any demands, nor any desire, nor even with any hope of something in return, but with this character of gift, of projection of the lover above any kind of

²² That is, the previous session of the 9th January 1957, during which Lacan comments on Freud's case – *Freud, S. (1920). The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman (SE XVIII), pp. 145–172.*

²³ Lacan refers to Schema L.

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manifestation of the loved, which is one of the most elaborate and characteristic forms of the romantic relation in its most highly developed form. How are we to conceive of this transformation? I provided you with the first moment, and between the two something happens, and we are told what it is. We are going to implicate this transformation in the same terms which served to analyse the position.

We know, thanks to Freud, that the element through which the masculine or feminine subject arrives – this is the meaning of what Freud tells us when he speaks of the phallic stage of infantile genital organisation – just before the latency period is this phallic stage which indicates the point of the realisation of the genital. Everything is there, up to and including the choice of object²⁴. However, there is something that isn't, which is a full realisation of the genital function insofar as it is structured and effectively organised. Something remains which is fantasmatic, essentially imaginary, which is the prevalence of the phallus, according to which there are two types of beings in the world. There are those who have the phallus and those who do not, that is, those who are castrated. This is how Freud formulates it. It is very clear that there is something here which strongly suggests a problematic that, in truth, the authors cannot resolve, insofar as [for them] it is a matter of justifying this one way or another on grounds that are determined for the subject in the real. I already told you that I would put into parentheses the extraordinary modes of explanation to which this has constrained the authors. Their general mode of operation can be summarised like so – as everyone knows, everything must already be inferred and inscribed in unconscious drives, the subject must already have, preformed and by its nature, something that renders the cooperation of the sexes adequate.

This must, then, already be a kind of formation in which the subject finds some advantage, and that already with this he must have a process of defense. This is not, in fact, inconceivable in a certain perspective, but this evades the problem, and it effectively commits the authors to making a series of constructions which only push back all symbolic dialectics to their origin, and which become more and more unthinkable the further back we go towards this origin. Let us simply admit this for the moment, and let us also admit something else, which will be easier for us to admit than the authors. It is simply that, here, the phallus ends up being this imaginary element – it is a fact that must be taken qua fact – through which the subject is introduced, at the genital level, to the symbolic of the gift. The symbolic of the gift and genital maturation are two different things. They are connected through something that is included in the real human situation by the fact that it is at the level of rules established through the law in the exercise of the genital functions, insofar as they effectively come into play in inter-human exchange. It is because things take place at this level, that there is effectively an extremely close link between genital maturation and the symbolic of the gift. But this is not something which has any kind of individual inter-biological coherence for the subject. However, we find that the fantasy of the phallus, within this symbolic of the gift at the genital level takes on its value, and this is what Freud insists on. It does not – and for good reason – have the same value for the one who really possesses the phallus, namely, the male child, and for the child who does not possess it, namely, the female child. For the female child it is very precisely insofar as she does not possess it that she will be introduced into the symbolic of the gift, that is, it is insofar as she phallicises the situation, insofar as it

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24 See Freud, S. (1923). *The Infantile Genital Organization – An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality* (SE XIX), p. 140. where Freud writes “...the choice of an object, such as we have shown to be characteristic of the pubertal phase of development, has already frequently or habitually been effected during the years of childhood: that is to say, the whole of the sexual currents have become directed towards a single person in relation to whom they seek to achieve their aims.”

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is a question of having or not having the phallus, that she enters the Oedipus complex, while what Freud emphasises to us is that for the boy this is not how he enters it but how he gets out of it. This is to say that at the end of the Oedipus complex, that is, at the moment when he will have realised the symbolic of the gift at a certain level, he must effectively make a gift of what he has. Whereas if the girl enters the Oedipus complex, it is insofar as she finds what she does not have in the Oedipus complex, but what she does not have... because we are already at the level and in the register where something imaginary enters a symbolic dialectic, what one does not have is simply something that exists just as much as anything else, and it is marked by the minus sign – the girl simply enters into it with this minus.

124 Entering into it with the minus or with the plus doesn't affect what is at stake. Something must be there for us to be able to put down plus or minus, presence or absence. What is at stake here [still] comes into play, and it is this coming into play of the phallus which, Freud says, is the mainspring of girl's entry into the Oedipus complex. Within this symbolic of the gift, all kinds of things can be given in exchange, so many things that this is ultimately why we have so many equivalents of the phallus in what effectively takes place in symptoms. And Freud goes further. You will find in "a child is being beaten" the indication, formulated in very raw terms, that if so many elements of pre-genital relations come into play in this oedipal dialectic,²⁵ that is, if so many frustrations at the oral and anal level tend to occur, which are, at the same time, things which come in to realise frustrations, accidents, and dramatic aspects [at the level] of the oedipal relation, that is, something which according to the assumptions [of these authors] should only be satisfied in the genital development, Freud says the following, which is that, in relation to something obscure which happens at the level of the ego – obscure, of course, because the child has no experience of it – the elements and the objects which are part of other pre-genital relations are more accessible to verbal representation.²⁶ He goes as far as to say that if pregenital objects come into play in the oedipal dialectic it is insofar as they lend themselves more easily to verbal representation, that is that the child can more easily say that what the father occasionally gives the mother is his urine²⁷, because urine is something whose use, function and existence he is quite familiar with, as an object that is easier to symbolise – that is, an object that has more or less the power of a sign – than an object which has attained a certain realisation in the child's imagination, than something which remains extremely difficult to refer to [*saisir*], and, for the girl, difficult to access.

This puts the girl in a position in which the first introduction, we are told, into the dialectic of the Oedipus, hinges on the fact that she will receive the penis she desires from the father in the guise of a substitute, the child.²⁸ But in the example which concerns us, there is a real child, for in this game she is playing mother to an actual child. On the other hand, concerning this child to whom she plays mother, since it may satisfy something in her as an imaginary phallic substitution, it is by making this substitution and constituting herself as a subject, an imaginary mother, without being aware of it,

²⁵ See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions* (SE XVII), p. 193.

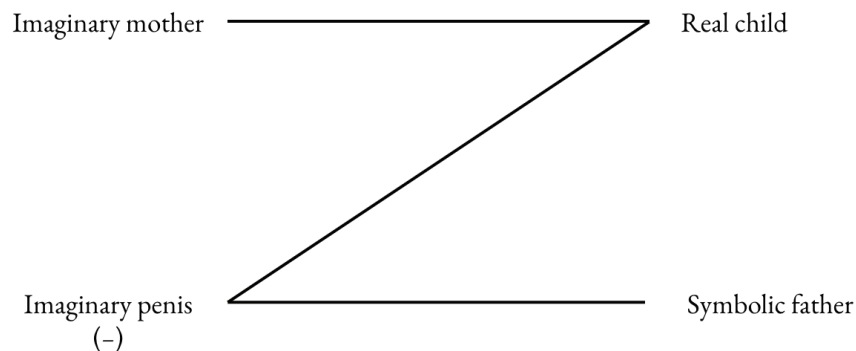
²⁶ *Ibid.*, p188.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p188.

²⁸ See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII) p.157, where Freud writes: "It was just when the girl was experiencing the revival of her infantile Oedipus complex at puberty that she suffered her great disappointment. She became keenly conscious of the wish to have a child, and a male one; that what she desired was her father's child and an image of him, her consciousness was not allowed to know."

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that she is satisfied by having this child. Indeed, it is to acquire this imaginary penis of which she is fundamentally frustrated, then by putting in place this imaginary penis at the level of the ego.²⁹



I am doing nothing other than emphasising the following, which is the characteristic of original frustration. Any object that is introduced under the sign of frustration, I mean, that is introduced by a realised frustration, is and can only be an object which the subject takes up in this ambiguous position, that of belonging to her own body.

125 I am emphasising this because as soon as we speak of the primordial relations of the child and the mother, we place all of the accent, taken in a passive way, on the notion of frustration. We are told that the child passes the first test of the relation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle in the frustrations felt on the mother's part, following which you can see the term 'frustration of the object', or 'loss of the love object' indiscriminately employed. However, if there is one thing I insisted upon in the previous lessons, it was surely on the bipolarity or the clearly marked opposition between the real object – insofar as the child can be frustrated [*frustré*] of it, namely, the mother's breast – and, on the other hand, the mother insofar as she is in a position to grant or to deny this real object. This supposes that there is a distinction between the breast and the mother as a total object, and that this is what Melanie Klein is referring to when she speaks first of partial objects and then of the mother insofar as she establishes herself as a total object and can then create the notorious depressive position in the child. This is, indeed, a way of seeing things, but what is eluded in this position is that the two objects are not of the same nature. But whether they are distinguished or not, it still remains that the mother is established as an agent through the function of the call, that she is already, in a rudimentary way, taken as an object marked and signified [*connoté*] with a possibility of more or of less as presence or absence, that the frustration realised by anything which connects to the mother as such is a frustration of love, that everything which comes from the mother as responding to this call is something which is a gift, that is, something other than the object.

In other words, there is a radical difference between the gift as a sign of love – what essentially aims at something radically beyond, at something other, the love of the mother – and the object, whatever it may be, which comes in here to satisfy the child's needs. Frustration of love and frustration of enjoyment [*jouissance*] are two separate things, because frustration of love is in itself pregnant with all the intersubjective relations such as they might later be constituted. But frustration of enjoyment is

²⁹ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La jeune homosexuelle*.

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not in itself pregnant with anything. Contrary to what we are told, it is not the frustration of enjoyment which engenders reality, as can be seen in the standard confusion that we read in the analytic literature, but Mr Winnicott knows this very well all the same.³⁰ We cannot find the slightest genesis of reality according to the fact that the child has or does not have the breast. If he doesn't have the breast, he is hungry and he will continue to scream. In other words, what does the frustration of enjoyment produce? At most, it produces the renewal of desire but it does not constitute any kind of object whatsoever. And this is ultimately why Winnicott is led to remark that what is truly tangible in the child's behaviour, what allows us to bring to light that there is effectively a progression, a progression which is constituted and which requires an original explanation... it is not simply because the child is deprived of the mother's breast that he conjures up a fundamental image of it, nor any other kind of image. This image itself must be taken as an original dimension, the tip of the breast being absolutely essential. This is where the phallus will substitute itself and superimpose itself. They themselves, at this time, show that they share this character of requiring us to stop, insofar as they are constituted as images, namely that what subsists, what follows, is an original dimension. What follows the frustration of the object of enjoyment for the child is something that is maintained in the subject in a state of an imaginary relation, not simply something that focuses the stirring [*lancée*] of desire in the same way that, for animals, it is, in the end, always a certain lure which is oriented... since these behaviours always have some meaning or other... oriented towards the opponent's feathers or fins, those which make it an opponent. And we can always find something to individualise the image in the biological. It is present there, without doubt, but with this something that accentuates it in Man, and which can be observed in the child's behaviour. These images are referred to this fundamental image that grants him his status as complete [*statut global*], like a kind of set by which he clings to the other as such, which means that here, as well, there is this image by which subjects can be grouped and de-grouped, as belonging or not belonging. In short, the problem is not of knowing whether narcissism, first conceived as a kind of imagined and ideal auto-eroticism, is developed to a lesser or greater degree. It is, on the contrary, to know the function of an original narcissism in the constitution of an objectal world as such. This is why Winnicott dwells upon those objects which he calls transitional and without which we wouldn't have any kind of account of the way in which the child would be able to build [*constituer*] a world out of his frustrations in the first place. For he certainly does build a world, but it cannot be said that it is the object of his desires that originally frustrates him. The child builds a world insofar as in directing himself towards something he desires, he runs the risk of an encounter with something he might bump into or burn himself against. But this object is not in any way engendered by the object of desire. It is not something that can be modelled by the stages of the

³⁰ See, for example, Winnicott, D. (1953). 'Transitional objects and transitional phenomena – a study of the first not-me possession' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 34, p. 89, where Winnicott writes: "It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related. It is usual to refer to 'reality-testing', and to make a clear distinction between apperception and perception. I am here staking a claim for an intermediate state between a baby's inability and growing ability to recognise and accept reality. I am therefore studying the substance of illusion, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes the hallmark of madness when an adult puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own. We can share a respect for illusory experience, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences. This is a natural root of grouping among human beings."

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development of desire as it establishes and organises itself in infantile development – it is something else.

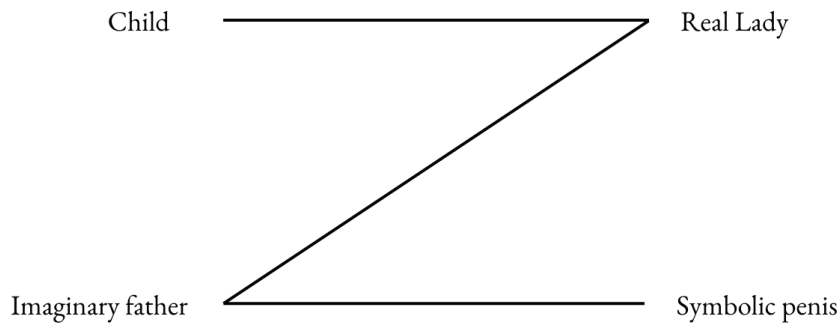
127 The object, insofar as it is engendered by frustration itself, is something in which we must admit the autonomy of this imaginary production in its relation to the image of the body – that is, as this ambiguous object which is between the two, and for which we can speak neither of reality nor of unreality, this is how Winnicott very appropriately articulates it, and instead of introducing us into all the problems this brings about concerning the introduction of this object into the order of the symbolic, he gets there in spite of himself because we are forced to go there as soon as we involve ourselves with these semi-real objects which are the transitional objects he refers to. These objects to which the child clings – a small corner of his blanket, a bit of his bib... and this is not observable in all children, but in the majority... these objects for which he sees very clearly what must be their ultimate relation to the fetish, which he is wrong to call a primitive fetish, but which is, in fact, its origin. Winnicott stays here and says that after all, this object which is neither real nor unreal is something to which we attribute neither a full reality nor a fully illusory character.

Everything in the midst of which a good English citizen lives, knowing in advance how one is to act, that is, your philosophical ideas, your religious system... nobody dreams of telling you that you believe in one philosophical or religious doctrine or another, nor does anybody dream of taking them away from you. It is this domain between the two. And he is not wrong. It is very much in the midst of it that life situates itself, but how to organise all the rest if that wasn't there? He points out that one must not have too many requirements, and that the character of half-existence in which these things are established is, indeed, marked by the one thing that no one thinks of, short of being forced to impose it on others as being an object to which one must adhere – the authenticity or the cold, hard reality of what is advanced as religious idea or as philosophical illusion. In short, that inspired world points out each one has a right to be mad, and on the condition of remaining mad separately, and this is where would begin the madness of imposing one's private madness on the set of subjects, each one constituted in a sort of nomadism of the transitional object. This transitional object, this imaginary penis of the fact of having her own child is nothing other than what we are told when it is affirmed to us that she has her imaginary penis from the moment she starts mothering her child. So what is needed for her to pass to the third moment, that is, the second stage of the five situations – which we will not look at today – at which this young girl in love lover arrives.

128 She is homosexual, and Freud tells us that she loves like a man. Even though the translator translated this in the feminine, our homosexual is in the virile position, namely, that this father who is at the level of the big 'A' in the first stage is now at the level of the ego, inasmuch as she has assumed the masculine position.³¹ Here, there is the Lady, the object of love that has been substituted for the child, then the symbolic penis, namely what is there in love at its most developed point, what is beyond the loved subject. What is loved in love is what is beyond the subject, it is literally what he or she does not have. It is precisely insofar as the Lady does not have the symbolic penis, but that everything points to her having it, for she is the chosen object of all the subject's adoration... it is insofar as all of this that she is loved.

³¹ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La jeune homosexuelle (2)*.

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There arises a permutation which causes the symbolic father to slide into the imaginary through the subject's identification to the function of the father. Something else comes into the ego here with regard to the love object. It is precisely the having of this beyond that is the symbolic penis, which was first to be found at the imaginary level. At this point, let us simply ask what happened between the two? The second moment, and the characteristic that can be observed there, and which we find again in the fourth moment... it is that there has been, at the level of the imaginary relation, the introduction of the real action of the father, this symbolic father who was there in the unconscious. For when the real child begins to be substituted for the desire for the penis, a child which the father is going to give to her, this is an imaginary or real child which is already there. It is rather unsettling that it is real, but it comes from a father who, himself, remains... and even especially so since the child is real... he remains unconscious as a progenitor.

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Except the father really gave a child, not to his daughter, but to the mother, which is to say that this real child unconsciously desired by the daughter, and to which she gave this substitute by which she satisfies herself, already shows, without a doubt, an escalation of need, which gives the situation its dramaticism. The subject has been frustrated in a very particular way by the fact that the real child, coming from the father qua symbolic father, has been given to her own mother. These are the characteristics that can be observed. When we say that it is undoubtedly to some accommodation of the instincts or the tendencies, or some primitive drive, that we owe the fact that in such a case things have taken shape in terms of a perversion, are we always, in fact, starting from these three absolutely essential elements – providing in distinguishing them – which are imaginary, symbolic and real? Here we may remark that it is insofar as the real has been introduced, a real that responded to the unconscious situation at the level of the imaginary register, that the situation revealed itself to be – for highly structured reasons – a relation of jealousy. The untenable character of this imaginary satisfaction to which the child was confining herself is that, through a sort of interposition, he is there, realised at the level of the imaginary relation. He has effectively entered into play, and no longer as a symbolic father. At this point, another imaginary relations establishes itself, which the child will fill in as best she can, but it is marked by this fact that what was latently articulated at the level of the big Other begins to... in the style of a perversion, and this is why, for that matter, it results in a perversion and for no other reason... begins to articulate itself in an imaginary way, in that the girl identifies, at that moment, with the father. She takes on this role herself and becomes the imaginary father. She, too, will have kept his penis, and attaches herself to an object to which she must necessarily give the very thing that the object does not have. It is this necessity of motivating, of focusing her love not on the object but on what the object does not have, this something that takes us right to the heart of the

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romantic relation itself, and of the gift, this something which renders necessary the ternary constellation in this subject's history.

This is where we will take things up next time. This will allow us to go deeper into the dialectic of the gift as it is seen and experienced so primordially by the subject, that is, to see its other aspect, the one we left to one side earlier. I emphasised the paradoxes of frustration on the side of the object, but I did not say what caused the frustration of love, or what it signified as such.

Session of 23rd January 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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There are certain texts in this booklet¹ that will allow you to find a fresh attempt at this logic, to find it where it is particularly alive – that is, in our practice. Taking up again what I am alluding to, our famous game of odds and evens², you will very easily find the three moments of subjectivity insofar as this game relates to frustration, providing we take frustration in the sense of the lack of the object. You can find them easily if you think about the zero position of the problem, the opposition which institutes the pure symbol – plus (+) or minus (–), presence or absence – in which there is nothing but a sort of objectivisable [*objectivable*] position of the rules of the game. You can easily see the second moment in the fact that in this sort of demand, which is the declaration of the game, you put yourself in a position of being gratified, or not, by someone who, having the dice in their hands from that point on, is in fact completely helpless. It is no longer up to him whether what he has in his hands answers to your demand. So, there you have the second stage of the dual relation as instituting this call and its response, at which the level of frustration is established, and you can see, at the same time, its absolutely ephemeral and literally insatiable character. If this game involves something which interests you and which gives it a meaning, it is evidently because you introduce the third dimension, that of the law, in a form which is always latent in the playing of the game – namely, what is at stake from the point of view of the one who demands? The Other, of course, is supposed at every moment to suggest a regularity – a law, in other words – which at the same time he is trying hard to conceal [*dérober*]. It is in this dimension of the institution of a law, a regularity, understood as a possibility, and which is constantly being revealed to him at every instant by the one who suggests the hidden part of the game, the part concealed from him, the appearance of which is momentarily suggested to him... It is at this moment that what is most fundamental in the game and what gives it its intersubjective meaning is established, which establishes the game in a dimension which is no longer dual but ternary, such that it is essential.

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The value of my introduction hinges on this, that it is necessary to introduce three terms in order for something resembling a law to be articulated, these three intersubjective terms through which we will attempt to see how this object is introduced – an object which, by the mere fact of coming within our reach, under our jurisdiction in analytic practice, is an object that must enter the symbolic chain. This is what we arrived at last time, when we took up the story of our case of female homosexuality.³ We reached what I called the third moment, that is, the moment constructed in the following way. In the first situation which we arbitrarily took as the starting point... but then there was already a kind of concession to a progressive point of view, going from the past to the future in a chronological ordering of terms... in order to facilitate things by bringing them closer to what happens in the dialectic of frustration, which, being conceived in a summary way, without distinguishing between real, imaginary, and symbolic levels, results in impasses that I hope to make more and more apparent to you as we move forwards. For the moment, we are trying to establish the principles of these relations between the object and the constitution of the symbolic chain. So, we have the girl's position when she is still going through puberty, and the first symbolic and imaginary structuration of her position takes place

¹ See Lacan, J. (1955). *Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'*.

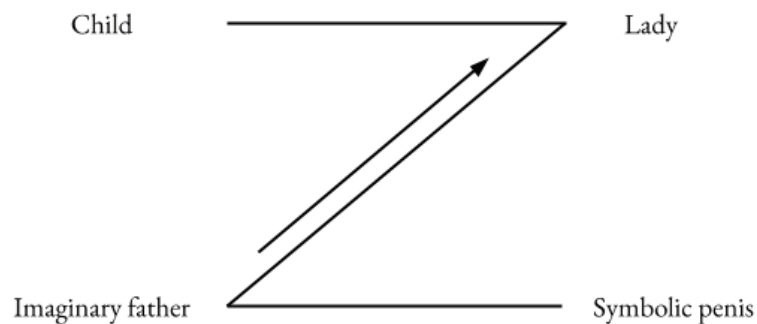
² Lacan refers to Poe's description of a game played by schoolboys in 'The Purloined Letter': "This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one."

³ See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman (SE XVIII)*, pp. 145-172.

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classically, as prescribed by the theory, with this equivalence between the imaginary penis and the child, which establishes her within a certain relation of imaginary mother with regard to this beyond, which is her father, who intervenes at this moment as a symbolic function, that is to say, as the one who can provide the phallus. Nonetheless, at this point, the power of the father is unconscious, and whoever can produce the child is unconscious.

- 133 It is at this stage, one might say, that the fatal moment occurs, wherein the father intervenes in the real to give a child to the mother, making this child, with whom the girl is in an imaginary relationship, into something realised, and something that, consequently, she can no longer sustain in the imaginary position in which she established it. We now find ourselves in the second moment, wherein the intervention of the real father at the level of the child of which she was thus frustrated, produces the transformation of the whole equation, which is posed as follows: the imaginary father, the Lady, the symbolic penis. That is to say that, by way of a sort of inversion, her relation to the father crosses over from the symbolic order in the direction of the imaginary relation or, if you like, it is, in a way, the projection of the relation of the unconscious formula, which at that moment is of her initial stability into a perverse relation, an imaginary relation – that of her relationship with the lady.⁴



And so, after a first application of our formulas, the positions of these terms are posited in what is without a doubt an enigmatic fashion, and over which we might even pause for a moment. Nevertheless, we must note that these terms, whichever they may be, impose themselves. I mean, they impose a structure – that is, if we were to change the position of any one of them, we would have to move all the others around... and not to just anywhere we please. Let us now attempt to see what this means. Its meaning is given to us by analysis. What does Freud say at the crucial moment of this case⁵? That is, at the point where, through a certain conception he has developed concerning the position at stake, through an intervention he makes in this direction, he crystallises, in a certain way, the position between himself and the patient, but in an unsatisfying way, since he backs out and then affirms that at that moment the analytic relation breaks off?

- 134 In any case, whatever Freud might have thought, he is far from being led into putting all the blame for an impasse onto the patient's position. His own intervention, or his conception, his prejudices regarding this position, must count for something in the fact that the situation breaks off. Let us

⁴ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La Jeune Homosexuelle (3)*.

⁵ The term Lacan uses here is "*observation*", which has been variously translated as "case" or "case study".

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remind ourselves what this position is, and how Freud formulates it for us. He tells us that the patient's resistances were too great to overcome. How does he materialise these resistances? What examples does he give us of them? What meaning does he give them? He sees them expressed particularly in dreams that, paradoxically, might have produced many hopes – that is, hopes that the situation will normalise. These are the dreams which are exclusively conjugal, dreams of union and happy marriage. In these dreams, the patient is subjected to an ideal spouse and has children. In short, the dream manifests something which goes in the direction of what society – as represented here by the family, if not Freud – can hope for as the best outcome of the treatment.

Freud, informed by everything that the patient tells him of her position and her intentions, far from taking the text of the dream at face value, only sees a trick, as he puts it, on the part of the patient. He sees something expressly designed to deceive him, more precisely in the manner that I evoked earlier in this use of the intersubjective game of divination. He sees something designed to delude and disillusion him at the same time. What is remarkable is that this supposes, as Freud points out, that we may now object to him: “But, then, the unconscious can lie!” It is a point on which Freud lingers for a long time, discussing it, and taking care to respond in a highly articulate manner. For, taking up the distinction made in *The Interpretation of Dreams* between the preconscious and the unconscious, he presents something similar, which he recalls in another case to which we will return, and for which I gave, following Lagache's report on transference, a short intervention⁶ summarising the positions through which I believe we should conceive of the Dora case⁷. It is an observation which must be brought out in the Dora case – a passage from the *Traumdeutung* which is the comparison, regarding the relations of unconscious desire and preconscious desire, the comparison between capitalist and entrepreneur⁸. Preconscious desire is, we might say, the entrepreneur of the dream, but the dream would not have sufficient resources to establish itself as representative of this thing called the unconscious if there were not another desire providing the background of the dream, which is unconscious desire. He draws this distinction very well, except that he does not draw its ultimate consequences. In short, there is a distinction between what the subject brings into the dream, which is at the level of the unconscious, and the factor of the dual relation, the relation to the one we are addressing when we recount this dream, when we take it up in analysis. And it is in this sense that I am telling you that a dream produced over the course of an analysis always has a certain direction towards the analyst, and this direction is not always necessarily the unconscious one.

135 But the entire question is in knowing where to put the accent, whether with respect to the intentions, which always end up being those intentions which Freud tells us are avowedly those of the patient, that is, intentions of playing games with her father, in which the patient succeeds in formulating the game of deceit by pretending to be insulted and maintaining her positions and her fidelity towards the Lady, or whether this thing that is expressed in the dream be purely and simply conceived in this perspective of deceit – in other words, in its preconscious intentionalisation [*intentionnalisation*]. It doesn't seem...⁹ For if we look at it closely, what can we see being expressed? No doubt, there is a dialectic of deceit here. But what is being expressed, what is brought back to the signifier, is precisely what is diverted at the origin in the first position, and is called... in the unconscious, at this stage, and hence

⁶ See Lacan, J. (1953). *Presentation on Transference. i n Écrits*, pp. 176-185.

⁷ See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria (SE VII)*, pp. 7-114.

⁸ See Chapter VII of Freud, S. (1900 [1895]). *The Interpretation of Dreams (SE V)*, p. 561.

⁹ Lacan breaks off here.

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also in the unconscious in the third stage, which is formulated as follows, as coming from the father, in the way in which the subject receives her own message in its inverted form – “You are my wife”, “You are my master”, “You shall have a child by me”. It is at the point of entry into Oedipus, or insofar as the Oedipus is not resolved, that the promise on which the girl’s entry into the Oedipus complex is founded. It is from here that the position sets out. And if, in fact, we find something in the dream which is articulated as a situation in which this promise is fulfilled, it always turns out to be the same content of the unconscious, and if Freud hesitates in the face of it, it is precisely for want of a perfectly pure formulation of what transference is. There is, in transference, an imaginary element and a symbolic element, and consequently there is a choice to be made. If transference has any meaning, if what Freud subsequently brought us with the notion of *Weiderholungszwang* [repetition compulsion] such that I took care to spend a year going around it in order to make you see what meaning it might have, it is first and foremost inasmuch as there is an insistence proper to the symbolic chain as such. This insistence proper to the symbolic chain is not, by definition, assumed by the subject. Nonetheless, the sole fact that it is reproduced and that it emerges in the third stage as a remainder, as formulated in the dream, means that even if at the imaginary level – that is, in the direct relation to the therapist – this dream appears to be a deceitful dream, the dream is nonetheless, strictly speaking, the representative of the transference in the proper sense. And it is here that Freud – with an audacity grounded in a less oscillating position of his notion of transference, could have securely placed his confidence, and could have intervened, on condition of conceiving, very precisely, that the transference essentially happens at the level of symbolic articulation, that when we speak of transference, when something takes its full meaning from the fact of the analyst becoming the site of the transference, it is quite precisely insofar as it is a question of a symbolic articulation as such.

136 This is, of course, before the subject has assumed it, because it is quite precisely a transference dream. Freud notes that at this particular moment it is mostly reproduced as something belonging to the order of transference. Simply put, he draws neither the direct consequence, nor the correct method of intervention. I am pointing this out because in truth this is not simply to be remarked on for this particular case. We have, equally, another case – Dora’s case, to be precise – within which the problem opens up at the same level in the same manner, except that Freud makes the exact opposite mistake. One might say these two cases balance each other admirably. They are strictly interwoven, the one with the other, but not only insofar as there is produced, in one case, in one direction, this conflation of the symbolic position with imaginary position, and in the other case, a conflation in the opposite direction. We could say that in their sum constellation, these two cases strictly correspond with one another, except that the one is organised in relation to the other in the form of the positive to the negative. I could say that there is no better illustration of Freud’s formulation that “perversion is the negative of neurosis”. Still, it must be further developed. Let us quickly recall the terms of the Dora case, by way of what they have in common with the terms of the present constellation. We have, in the Dora case, precisely in the foreground, the same figures – a father, a daughter, and also a Lady, Mrs. K. And it is all the more striking for us that it is also around the Lady that the whole problem turns, and yet this fact is hidden from Freud in the girl’s presentation as a little hysteric, brought to him for a few symptoms she has had, undoubtedly minor but clearly all of the same character. Above all, the situation becomes intolerable following something that is a sort of demonstration or intention of suicide, which ends up alarming her family. When they bring her to Freud, the father presents her as

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137 being ill, and undoubtedly the shift to the level of a consultation is an element that in itself denotes a crisis in the social group, which until then had been held in a certain balance. Nevertheless this singular balance had broken apart two years earlier, and had been established by a position which was initially concealed from Freud, namely that the father had Mrs. K. as his mistress, and that this woman was married to a man named Mr. K., who existed in a sort of quartet, a relation with the couple made up of the father and the daughter, the mother being absent from the situation. We can already see, as we continue to move forward, the contrast with the young homosexual's situation. There, the mother is present, for it is she that seizes the father's attention from the daughter, and introduces this element of real frustration which will have been the determining factor in the formation of the perverse constellation. Where, in the Dora case, it is the father who introduces the Lady and appears to keep her there, here it is the daughter who introduces her. What is striking, in this position, is that Dora immediately points out to Freud her extraordinarily vivid claim concerning her father's affection, which she tells him has been snatched away by this liaison, and she immediately demonstrates to Freud that she has always kept herself informed of the existence, permanence, and prevalence of this liaison but that she has come to tolerate it no longer, and that all her behaviour is a protest in relation to this. Freud, in a step that is decisive for the properly dialectical quality of the first step of the Freudian experiment, brings her back to the question, "What you rebel against here, this disarray, is this not something in which you yourself have played a role?"

And, indeed, he very quickly highlights that up until the critical moment, this position had been propped up in the most efficient manner by Dora herself, who proved to be more than ready to oblige this singular position and was really its lynchpin, protecting, in a way, the secret meetings of her father and the lady, even substituting herself for the lady, in one case, in terms of her role – namely, taking care of the children – and on the other hand, as we proceed further into the concept and the structure of the case, even demonstrating a very special bond with the lady, who was discovered to be [Dora's] confidante, and in whom she seems to have gone very far in placing her confidence. This case is so rich that we can still discover things in it, but this brief reminder can in no way replace a careful reading of the case. Let us point out, for one thing, this interval of nine months between two symptoms that Freud believes he is discovering because the patient transmits it to him in a symbolic way¹⁰. But, if we look more closely, we notice that in [Freud's] notes it is actually fifteen months. And these fifteen months have a significance, because it is a fifteen which is found throughout the case, and it is helpful in understanding things insofar as they are founded on numbers, and on a purely symbolic value.

138 Today, I can only remind you of the terms in which the problem is articulated throughout the case study. It is not only that Freud notices afterwards that his failure is due to the patient's resistance in admitting – as Freud suggests to her, with all the weight of his insistence and his authority – the relationship that ties her to Mr. K. This is not all that can be read throughout the case study. It is not simply as a side note or an afterthought that Freud indicates that there undoubtedly was an error, namely that he should have understood that Dora's homosexual attachment to Mrs. K. was the true

¹⁰ *Ibid.* In a footnote in 'Part III: The Second Dream', Freud writes "I looked about for a method of approaching the puzzle. Periods of time had been mentioned in the dream; and time is assuredly never a matter of indifference in any biological event. I therefore asked Dora when this attack of appendicitis had taken place; Every difficulty was resolved at a single blow by her prompt reply: 'Nine months later.' The period of time is sufficiently characteristic. Her supposed attack of appendicitis had thus enabled the patient with the modest means at her disposal (the pains and the menstrual flow) to realise a phantasy of childbirth."

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meaning of both the establishment of her original position, as well as her crisis, which we are just now approaching. It is not merely that Freud recognises this afterwards. All throughout the case study, Freud has a great ambivalence concerning the true object of Dora's desire. Here, again, we find ourselves in an arrangement of the problem which is a possible formulation of this unresolved ambiguity, as it were. It is clear that Mr. K is a character of primary importance for Dora and that there is something like a libidinal attachment established between them. It is also clear that something of a different order, which nonetheless carries a very great weight, is playing a role at every moment in the libidinal attachment to Mrs. K. How are we to conceive of the one and the other in a manner which would justify the progression of the affair, its crisis, and the breaking point of its equilibrium? That is, in a manner which would allow us to see equally both the progression of the affair and the moment when it stops? Already in a first criticism or first approach to the problem, in an observation I made five years ago¹¹, I indicated that, in accordance with the hysterical structure, the hysteric is someone who loves by proxy. You can see this in a host of observations of hysterics. The hysteric is someone whose object is homosexual, and who approaches this homosexual object by way of identification with someone of the opposite sex. This is a first approach to the patient, a kind of clinical one. I went further, starting with the notion of the narcissistic relation insofar as it is foundational for the ego, and the matrix of the constitution of this imaginary function called the ego. I said that ultimately we had enough traces to make the following observation – that it is insofar as Dora's ego, and only her ego, is identified with a virile figure... I'm referring to the completed situation in the quadrille... it is only insofar as Dora is Mr. K, insofar as men are, for her, one of the many possible crystallisations of her ego, that the situation can be understood. In other words, it is through the intermediary of Mr. K., it is insofar as she is Mr. K... and it is by this imaginary point which constitutes the personality of Mr. K, that she is attached to the figure of Mrs. K.

¹¹ Between 1950 and 1953, Lacan conducted private seminars on three of Freud's major case studies – Dora, The Wolf Man, and the Rat Man – at his residence in Paris. Lacan's seminar on Dora provided the backdrop for his 1951 paper – see *Lacan, J. (1953). Presentation on Transference.*

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- 139 I went even further, and I said that Mrs. K. is a person of importance. Why? She is not important simply because she is a choice among other objects. She is not simply someone who we could say is invested with this narcissistic function, which is at the bottom of any state of being in love. Mrs. K. is Dora's question, as the dreams indicate... for the essential weight of the case is carried in the dreams¹². Let us now attempt to transcribe this using our present formulation and try to situate, in the quartet, what organises itself in our fundamental schema. Dora is an hysteric, that is, someone who has arrived at the Oedipal crisis and who in this crisis has overcome it and simultaneously could not overcome it. There is a reason for this, which is that her own father, unlike the young homosexual's father, is impotent. The entire case rests on this central notion of the father's impotence. This is, therefore, an opportunity to foreground, in a particularly exemplary manner, what the function of the father as such might be, in relation to the lack of object. By what means does the daughter enter the Oedipus? What might be the function of the father as a donor? In other words, this situation rests on the distinction that I made with regard to primitive frustration, with regard to what can be established in the mother-child relation – that is, the distinction that the object belongs to the subject only after her being stripped of it. It is only after this frustration that her desire subsists, and this frustration only has a meaning insofar as the object subsists after the frustration has occurred. The situation rests on the differentiation that is made in the mother's intervention at this point – that is, in another register, whether she gives or does not give and whether this giving is or is not a sign of love. Here the father is made to be the one who gives this missing object symbolically. But he does not give it, because he does not have it. The phallic deficiency of the father is what traverses the entire case history as an absolutely fundamental and constitutive ingredient of the situation.
- Do we not find ourselves here, in a sense, in a single register? That is to say, is it not purely and simply in relation to this lack that the whole crisis will establish itself? Let us look at what is at stake. What does it mean to give? In other words, what dimension is introduced into the object relation where it is raised to the level of the symbolic, by the fact that the object can or can not be given? In other words, is it ever the case that the object is given? This is the question in which we see, in the case of Dora, one of the most exemplary ways out, for she remains very attached to this father from whom she does not symbolically receive the virile gift. She remains so attached that her story begins, at the age of her exit from Oedipus, precisely with a whole series of hysterical accidents which are very clearly related to
- 140 manifestations of love for this father, who at that point, appears more decisively than ever as an injured and sick father, as a father stricken in his vital potency itself. The love she has for this father is at that point very precisely and strictly related, correlatively and coextensively, to the decline of this father. We thus have a very clear distinction. What takes place in the love relation, what is demanded as a sign of love, is only ever something which has value as a sign. Or, to go even further, no greater gift, no greater sign of love is possible, than the gift of what one does not have. But be sure to take note of this: the dimension of the gift only exists with the introduction of the law, with the fact that the gift, as all sociological reflection affirms and presents to us, is something that circulates.¹³
- The gift you give is always the gift you have received. But between two subjects, this cycle of gifts always comes from elsewhere, for we might say that what establishes the love relation is that this gift is given for nothing. The 'nothing for nothing', which is the principle of exchange, is a formula in which

¹² See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 64.

¹³ See, for instance, Mauss, M. (1950 [1925]). *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*.

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this ambiguous ‘nothing’ comes up, like in every formula. This ‘nothing for nothing’ which seems to be the very formula of interest, is also the formula of pure gratuity. In fact, in the gift of love there is only ever something given ‘for nothing’, and which can only be ‘nothing’. In other words, it is insofar as a subject gives something gratuitously, and insofar as behind what he gives, there is all that he lacks, that the original gift... such as it is effectively practised at the origin of human exchanges in the form of the *potlatch*... what makes it a gift is that the subject sacrifices something beyond what he has. I would ask you to take notice of the fact that if we suppose a subject that carries within himself the full stock [*charge*] of all possible goods and riches, a subject who has, in a sense, all [*comble*] it is possible to have, then a gift given by such a subject would literally have none of the value of a sign of love. And if it is possible that believers imagine that it is possible to love God because God is supposed to effectively have this total plenitude, this everything [*comble*] within Him, it is quite certain that if such a thing is even conceivable of being recognised as such, in relation to what would very precisely claim ... at the bottom of every belief that there is nonetheless something which remains there, as long as this being – who is supposed to be thought as a whole being – undoubtedly lacks the principal aspect of being, namely, existence. This is to say that at the bottom of any belief in God as perfectly and totally munificent there is this *je ne sais quoi* that he always lacks, which makes it always conceivable that he does not exist. There is no reason to love God except that he might not exist.

- 141 What is certain is that this is indeed where Dora is situated at the moment when she loves her father. She loves him precisely for what he does not give her. The entire situation is unthinkable outside of this primitive position, which is maintained until the end, but what must be conceived is how she could bear this position, tolerate it, given that the father engages in something else in front of Dora, which she herself even seems to have induced. The entire case is founded on the following: Father, Dora, Mrs. K.¹⁴

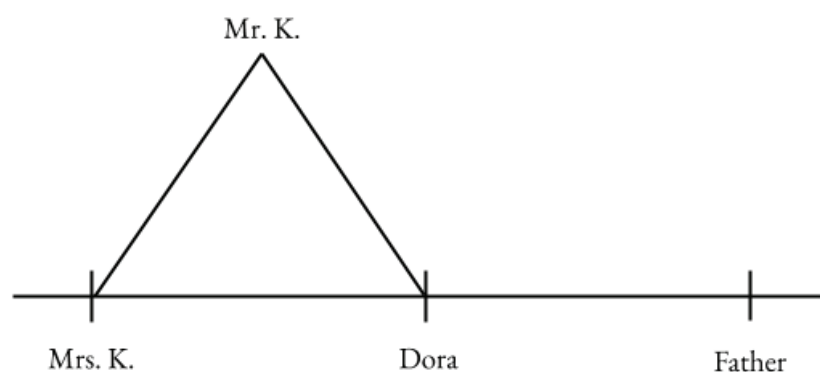


The entire situation is established as if Dora were to ask herself “What does my father love in Mrs. K?” Mrs. K. presents herself as something her father may love beyond Dora, and what Dora is attached to is what is loved, by her father, in another, in this Other, such that she does not know what it is, and this very much conforms to what is supposed in all the theory of the phallic object, namely, that in order for the feminine subject to enter the dialectic of the symbolic order, she must enter it through this gift of the phallus. She cannot enter it otherwise. This supposes, then, that real need – which is not denied by Freud, which emerges with the feminine organ itself, the woman’s physiology – is never granted entry into the establishment of the position of desire. Desire aims at the phallus insofar as it must be received as a gift. For this to happen, it must be raised to the level of the gift, present or absent. In fact, it is insofar as it is raised to the dignity of a gift object that it causes the subject to enter

¹⁴ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora*.

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the dialectic of exchange, which will normalise all these positions, up to and including the essential prohibitions which ground the general movement of exchange. It is herein that the real need – again, whose existence Freud never dreamed of denying – associated with the feminine organ itself, will prove to find its place and its satisfaction, we might say, laterally. But it is never symbolically located as something which has a meaning. It is always essentially problematic in itself, placed in the way of a certain access to the symbolic, and it is effectively what is at stake during the deployment of these symptoms and the deployment of this case. Dora asks herself, “What is a woman?” And it is insofar as Mrs. K. incarnates this feminine function as such that she represents the question that Dora projects herself into. It is insofar as Dora herself is on the way to a dual relationship with Mrs. K, that Mrs. K. is what is loved beyond Dora – which is ultimately the reason why she, Dora, feels herself to be implicated in this position. In a sense, Mrs. K. is loved beyond Dora herself because she embodies [réalise] what Dora can neither know nor understand of this situation in which she, Dora, cannot find her place. Insofar as love for another being is love for something beyond what they are, it is ultimately something in a being which they lack, and love, for Dora, is situated somewhere between her father and Mrs. K, insofar as, because her father loves Mrs. K, Dora herself is satisfied, on condition, of course, that this situation is maintained. This situation which, for that matter, is symbolised in a thousand ways – namely, that this impotent father substitutes the symbolic gift by every possible means, including material gifts, to make up for what he does not accomplish as a virile presence, and makes Dora benefit from this along the way through all sorts of generousities which are distributed equally between the mistress and his daughter. He thus makes her participate in this symbolic situation. However, this is not quite enough and Dora attempts to re-establish, to restore access to a position manifested in the opposite direction. What I mean by this is that it is no longer vis-à-vis the father, but vis-à-vis the woman in front of her, Mrs. K, that she attempts to re-establish a triangular situation, and it is here that Mr. K comes in that is, it is effectively through him that the triangle can be closed, but in an inverted position.¹⁵

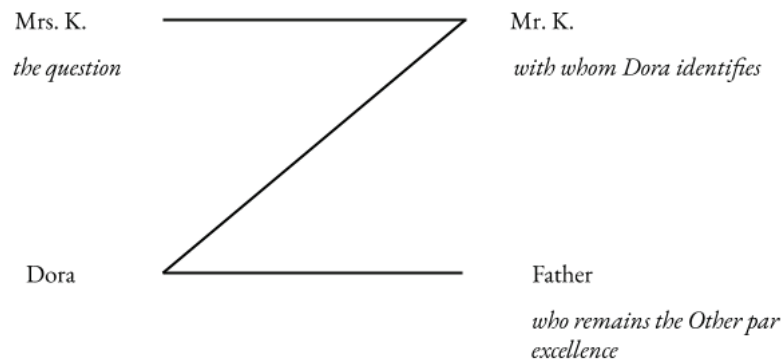


Through an interest in her own question, Dora views Mr. K to be someone who participates in what symbolises, in the case, the dimension of the question in Mrs. K's presence. That is, again, this adoration expressed by a quite obvious symbolic association, given in the case study – namely, the

¹⁵ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora (2)*.

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143 Sistine Madonna.¹⁶ Mrs. K. is the object of adoration of all those who surround her, and it is as a participant in this adoration that Dora is ultimately situated in relation to her. Mr. K is the means by which she normalises this position, in an attempt to reintegrate something that brings the masculine element into the circuit, and it is effectively at the point when Mr. K tells her neither that he is courting her nor that he loves her, nor even approaches her in a manner intolerable for a hysteric, but when he tells her *“Ich habe nichts an meiner Frau”* [‘I get nothing out of my wife.’] that she slaps him¹⁷. The crucial element is that Mr. K at some point says something which has a particularly vivid meaning. Providing we grant this term ‘nothing’ its full impact and all its resonance, the German formula is particularly expressive. In short, he tells her something which results in his own removal from this circuit as it is constituted, as it is established in the following order.¹⁸



Dora can very well admit that her father loves in her and through her what is beyond her – that is, Mrs. K. But for Mr. K to be bearable in this position, he must occupy exactly the inverse counterbalancing function, that is, he must love Dora above and beyond his wife – but, insofar as his wife is something for him. This ‘something’ is the same thing as this nothing which must be beyond that is, in this case, Dora. When he tells her that on the side of his wife there is nothing, this ‘*an*’ in German clearly indicates, in this very particular account, that he does not say that his wife is nothing for him, but that there is nothing.

‘*An*’ is a word which we find in hundreds of German locutions. The German formula which is particular to Mr. K demonstrates that ‘*a n*’ is an addition, in the beyond, of what is lacking. This is

¹⁶ See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 96. A painting by Raphael Sanzio, located in Dresden from 1754-1945. In ‘Part III: The Second Dream’ of his case study, Freud describes Dora’s response to the painting: “She remained two hours in front of the Sistine Madonna, rapt in silent admiration. When I asked her what had pleased her so much about the picture she could find no clear answer to make. At last she said: “The Madonna.””

¹⁷ See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 98. Freud writes: “No sooner had she grasped the purport of his words than she had slapped him in the face and hurried away. I enquired what his actual words had been. Dora could only remember one of his pleas : ‘You know I get nothing out of my wife.’”

¹⁸ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora* (3).

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precisely what we find here. He means that there is nothing after his wife: “My wife is not in the circuit”. What is the result? Dora cannot tolerate this – that is, the fact that he is interested in her. The whole situation gives way at once. If Mr. K is only interested in her, her father is only interested in Mrs. K., and this is the moment when Dora can no longer tolerate it. Why? She fits very well, as Freud sees it, into a typical situation as described by Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*¹⁹. The exchange of bonds of alliance consists precisely in this: “I received a woman, and I owe a daughter.”

144 The trouble is that this, which is the very principle of the institution of exchange and of the law, makes the woman purely and simply an object of exchange – there is nothing which incorporates her into it. If, in other words, she has not given something up herself, that is, precisely the paternal phallus conceived as a gift object, then she cannot conceive, subjectively speaking, of receiving any others, that is, from a man. To the full extent that she is excluded from this first institution of the gift and the law in direct relation to the gift of love, she can only experience the situation as a feeling of being reduced purely and simply to the status of an object. And this is what happens at that moment. Dora rebels absolutely and begins to say: “My father is selling me to someone else”, which is a clear and fitting summary of the situation, in fact, insofar as she is kept in this half-light. It is indeed a way of paying for, we might say, Mr K.’s complacency – permitting him, with a kind of veiled tolerance, to pursue this courtesanery by which, over the years, he gives himself to Dora. So, it is insofar as Mr K. admits to not being part of a circuit in which Dora can either identify him with herself, or can imagine that she, Dora, is his object beyond the woman, this object through which she is attached to him, insofar as the rupture of these bonds... which are undoubtedly subtle and ambiguous but which have, in every case, a perfectly clear meaning and orientation... insofar as this rupture is understood, and that Dora can no longer find her place in the circuit, except in an extremely unstable manner... but she does find it, in a certain manner... and at every moment it is insofar as there occurs the rupturing of these bonds that the situation loses its balance and Dora sees herself diminished to the role of pure and simple object, and she then begins to enter into making claim to this something which she was very well-disposed to considering, and which she received until this moment, through the intermediary of another, which is her father’s love. From that moment on, she claims it exclusively for herself, since it is totally refused to her.

145 What difference appears, between these two registers and these two situations in which Dora and our homosexual are respectively involved? To move quickly and end with something illustrative, I will tell you the following, which we will confirm. If it is true that what is maintained in our homosexual’s unconscious is the father’s promise – “You shall have a child by me” – and if what she shows in this exalted love for the Lady is precisely, as Freud tells us, the model of absolutely disinterested love, love for nothing, then do you not see that in this first case everything happens as if the girl wanted to show her father what authentic love is, this love that her father refused her? Undoubtedly, it became entangled in the subject’s unconscious, because he finds more benefits with the mother, and this relation is fundamental for the child’s entry into the Oedipus – that is, the crushing superiority of the rival adult. What she demonstrates to him is how one can love someone not only for what they have, but literally for what they do not have, for this symbolic penis which she knows very well that she will not find in the Lady, because she knows very well where it can be found – that is, with her

¹⁹ See Lévi-Strauss, C. (1949). *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, p. 136.

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father, who is *not* impotent. In other words, what perversion reveals, in this case, is that it expresses itself between the lines, through contrasts, by allusions. It is this way we have of speaking of something completely different but which, through a rigorous sequence of terms which are brought into play, necessarily implies its counterpart, which is what we want to make the Other here. In other words, we find here what I have previously called metonymy – that is, in the broadest sense, to make one thing heard whilst speaking of something else entirely. If you do not understand, in all its generality, this fundamental notion of metonymy, it is completely inconceivable that you would arrive at any conception at all of what perversion in the imaginary could mean. This metonymy is the principle of all that can be called realism, in the order of make-believe and of art. For realism literally has no kind of meaning. A novel, made up of a bunch of little marks, will mean nothing if, quite precisely, it does not make something vibrate with a sense of the beyond. If great novelists are bearable, it is insofar as everything they dedicate themselves to showing us finds a meaning, not merely symbolically, nor allegorically, but through that which they hold at a distance. It is the same with cinema. Similarly, the function of the subject's perversion is a metonymic function. But is it the same thing for Dora, who is neurotic? It is completely different. Looking at the schema, we notice that in perversion we are dealing with a signifying action which indicates a signifier further along the signifying chain, inasmuch as it is attached to it by a necessary signifier. It is insofar as Dora, taken as a subject, places herself under a certain number of signifiers in the chain with every step. It is insofar as Mrs. K. is literally her metaphor.

146 For Dora can say nothing about what she is, nor what purpose she serves, nor what purpose love serves. Simply, she knows that love exists and she finds a historicisation for it, in which she finds its place in the form of a question, centred on the content and the articulation of all her dreams which mean nothing else – the jewellery box, etc. It is insofar as Dora questions herself on what it is to be a woman that she expresses herself as she does, through symptoms. These symptoms are signifying elements, but beneath them runs a signified that is perpetually shifting, which is Dora's way of involving and concerning herself. It is as a metaphor that Dora's neurosis makes sense, and can be untangled. And it is precisely insofar as Freud himself is introduced into this metaphor, and for his having tried to force the real element that tends to slip into all of this metaphor by saying "What you love is precisely this", that, of course, something in the situation is normalised by the entrance of Mr. K into the game. But this something remains in a metaphorical state, and the proof is that Freud can think – with this sort of prodigious, intuitive sense he has of meanings – that there is something resembling a kind of pregnancy for Dora, something after the crisis of separation with Mr. K. In fact, it is a kind of strange, meaningful miscarriage that takes place. Freud thinks 'nine months' because Dora herself says 'nine months',²⁰ and she admits by this that there is a sort of pregnancy there. But, in fact, it is beyond this point, past what would be normal for Dora to call the gestation period, that it is significant that Dora sees the final resonance of this something which continues to tie her to Mr. K. And in fact we can find here, in a certain form, the equivalence of a sort of copulation, translated into the symbolic order, in a purely metaphorical way. Once again, the symptom here is but a metaphor, an attempt to rejoin the law of symbolic exchanges with the man by which one is united or disunited. On the other hand, the childbirth which can equally be found on the other side, at the end of the case of the young homosexual before she is taken into Freud's care, manifests itself in the following way. She

²⁰ See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 102.

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suddenly jumps off a low railway bridge at the moment when, once again, the real father intervenes, in order to demonstrate her irritation and her wrath to him, and which the woman who is with her sanctions, in telling her that she no longer wants to see her. At this moment, the young girl finds herself stripped of the last of her resources, for until then she had been quite frustrated for having been deprived of what ought to have been given her – namely, the paternal phallus.

147 But she had found the means, via the path of this imaginary relation, to maintain her desire. At this moment, in the wake of the Lady's rejection, she can no longer sustain anything at all – that is to say, the object is definitively lost, this nothing in which she has established herself in order to demonstrate to her father how one can love no longer has its *raison d'être*, and it is exactly at that point that she commits suicide. But Freud points out to us that this also has another meaning. It has the meaning of a definitive loss of the object, that this phallus – which is clearly denied her – falls, *niederkommt*. This has the value of a definitive privation and, at the same time, the mimicking of a sort of symbolic birth. And you can find here this metonymical aspect that I was telling you about, for if this act of throwing oneself off a railway bridge at the critical and terminal moment of these relations with the Lady and the father, can be interpreted by Freud as a sort of demonstrative way for her to bring about this child she did not have, and at the same time destroying herself in a final act, signifying the object, then it is an interpretation founded solely on the presence of the word '*niederkommt*', which metonymically indicates the third term and the theme of suicide in which it is expressed for the homosexual in question, and which is the sole and unique mainspring of all perversion. And this conforms to all Freud has repeatedly affirmed concerning the pathogenesis of a certain type of female homosexuality – namely, an unwavering and particularly intense love for the father.

Session of 30th January 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

30th January 1957

As we continue our reflections on the object, I will today offer some conclusions concerning a problem which makes the question of the object particularly palpable and acute – namely, the fetish and fetishism. You will be able to see the fundamental schemata which I have been trying to provide lately, which are expressed especially well in the following paradoxical statements. That what is loved in the object is what it lacks, and further, that we only give what we do not have. So then, this fundamental schema, which involves the permanent, constitutive character of something beyond the object in every symbolic exchange – however this exchange may function – may allow us to reconfigure and shed new light on what I would call the fundamental equations of fetishism, this perversion which has played an exemplary role in analytic theory. Already in two of Freud's foundational texts addressing the question of fetishism, which are spread out between 1904 and 1927 – he then revisits the question in other texts, but the two most invaluable are the "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality"¹ and the article titled "Fetishism"² – Freud says, from the outset, that the fetish is the symbol of something, but that we will undoubtedly be disappointed by what he has to say. Much has been said about this fetish, ever since analysis has been a topic of discussion, and ever since the fetish has been discussed by Freud. This 'something' is, once again, the penis. But immediately afterwards, he emphasises that it is not just any penis. And the clarification he provides, of what we might call its structural foundation, hardly seems to have been put to its full use with regard to the basic suppositions which, naïvely, it appears to imply on a first reading.

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This fetish is not just any penis. Simply put, it is not the real penis. It is the penis precisely insofar as the woman has it – that is, exactly insofar as she doesn't have it. I'd like to emphasise this oscillating point around which we must pause for an instant in order to notice what is ordinarily avoided and which we must not avoid, which is this: for someone who does not use our terms [*clefs*], it is simply a case of misapprehending the real [*méconnaissance du réel*]. Simply, this is the phallus that the woman does not have, and for reasons that hinge on the child's uncertain relationship with reality, quite simply, she [the woman] must have it. This standard approach, while it usually lends support to all kinds of speculation – about the future, the development and outbreaks of fetishistic episodes – is exactly what I have been able to verify through a generous reading of everything that has been written on fetishism, and it reliably leads to all kinds of dead ends.

Here, as always, I have tried not to extend myself too far into the forest of analytic literature, as it were, because in truth this would require not only hours, but a more restrained reading, in order to be effective. For there is nothing more delicate – fastidious, even – than finding the precise point where the material becomes evasive, where the author elides the crucial point of a distinction. Thus, I will give you the more or less distilled result of what I am presenting here, and I will ask that you follow me. [This] must be approached in the spirit of making fine distinctions, in order to adopt one's true position, in order to avoid the blind alleys into which authors have blundered over the years by sidestepping this point. We must see that what is at stake is not a real phallus, insofar as it exists or does not exist as real, but that it is a symbolic phallus the nature of which, insofar as it is symbolic, is to present itself in the exchange as absence. An absence functioning as such, since everything that can be transmitted in the symbolic exchange is always something just as much absent as present. It is made

¹ See 'Unsuitable Substitutes for the Sexual Object – Fetishism' (part I, section II). in Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), pp. 153-155.

² See Freud, S. (1927). *Fetishism* (SE XXI).

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153 to have this sort of fundamental alternation such that, having appeared at one point, it disappears, only to reappear at another. This means that it circulates, leaving behind the sign of its absence at the point of its origin. In other words, we immediately recognise that the phallus in question is just this symbolic object which limits the direction and the use of the real phallus by establishing the structural cycle of imaginary threats. Moreover, this is the meaning of the castration complex. This is the sense in which man is caught in the castration complex. But there is another function [*usage*] that is hidden, as it were, by the more or less formidable fantasies involved in man's relation to prohibitions insofar as they bear on the use of the phallus – this is its symbolic function. I want to point out the fact that it is the presence or absence of this function, and solely its presence or absence, that symbolically establishes the differentiation of the sexes³. In other words –and this is especially the case for the woman – [this differentiation is established] insofar as the woman does not have this phallus symbolically. But, to not have the phallus symbolically is still to participate in the possibility of its absence – it is just another way of having it. This phallus is always beyond any relation between man and woman. This phallus, which is sometimes the object of an imaginary yearning on the part of the woman – insofar as she only has a very small phallus – is not the only one which comes into play for her. Insofar as she is caught in intersubjective relations, there is, beyond her, for the man, this phallus which she does not have, namely the symbolic phallus which exists there as an absence. And not only because she has but a small, insufficient one. As for her real participation with the phallus, it is completely independent of the inferiority which she might feel on the imaginary level. This symbolic penis, which I put into the schema of the homosexual woman the other day, plays an essential role in her initiation into the symbolic exchange. Its function is so essential that Freud tells us that it is *qua* not having the phallus – that is, also *qua* having it, at the symbolic level – that she becomes part of the symbolic dialectic of having or not having the phallus.

This is how she gets into this ordered, symbolised relation which is the differentiation of the sexes, which is certainly the interpersonal relation as we live with it. It is just as tidy, codified, struck by prohibitions, marked by the fundamental structure of the law of incest, for instance. This is what Freud means when he tells us that for the woman, the intervention of what he calls the 'idea of castration'⁴ is exactly that she does not have the phallus, but it is *symbolically* that she does not have it, and so she can come to have it. This is how she enters the Oedipus complex, he says, while the little boy exits it in this way. In other words, we can see that in a certain manner – fundamentally, structurally speaking – the androcentrism which marks the Levi-Straussian schema of the elementary structures of kinship is justified. Women are exchanged within lineages founded on the male line, which is chosen precisely insofar as it is symbolic, which is unrealistic. It is a fact that women are exchanged as objects within the male lineages, and they enter them through an exchange which is that of the phallus they receive symbolically and in exchange for which, they give this child which, for them, takes on the function of an *ersatz*, a substitute, an equivalent of the phallus. This is precisely how they introduce natural fertility into this patriocentric symbolic genealogy, of itself sterile. But it is in attaching themselves to this sole, central object, which is characterised by the fact that it is precisely not an object, but the phallus, an object which has been subjected to the most radical kind of symbolic

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³ See Freud, S. (1925). *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* (SE XIX).

⁴ The only instance of the exact phrase 'the idea of castration' in the Standard Edition is to be found in the text of the 'Wolf Man' case. See 'Anal Eroticism and the Castration Complex' (section VII) in Freud, S. (1914 [1918]). *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (SE XVII). p.84.

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valorisation, [it is] through the intervention of this relation to the phallus that they are initiated into the chain of symbolic exchange, get comfortable there, acquire a status and a value. This is expressed in countless ways once you have understood it – namely, that what is ultimately expressed by the basic theme of ‘the woman giving herself’, when we look closely, is precisely nothing other than this need to affirm the gift.

Here we can see concrete psychological experience, such as it is given to us. In this case it is so paradoxical, since ultimately, in the act of love, it is clear that it is the woman who really receives. She receives much more than she gives. All this indicates – and through experience, analysis has put the accent just there – that there is no position which, on the imaginary register, is more captivating, more devouring, than hers. And precisely, if this is inverted into the contrary statement that the woman gives herself, it is precisely inasmuch as symbolically it must be like this, namely that she must give something in exchange for the symbolic phallus, which she receives. This is how the fetish, according to Freud⁵, represents this phallus, this symbolic phallus, as absent. How can we fail to see straight away that if something of this kind necessarily takes place, it is because there is this sort of initial inversion which allows us to understand things which are otherwise completely paradoxical – for example, that the boy is always the fetishist and never the girl? If everything were at the level of imaginary deficiency, of imaginary inferiority, it seems at first that it would be both sexes, and that fetishism would appear most overtly in the one who is really deprived of the phallus. Yet this is not the case. Fetishism is extremely rare in women, in the specific and individualised sense where it is embodied in an object which we may consider to be responding, symbolically, to this phallus as absent.

Let us first try to see how this singular relation to an object which is not an object can be engendered.

155 The fetish, according to the analyst, is a symbol. In this regard it can, right away, be put on the same footing as any other neurotic symptom. If there is neither a neurosis nor a perversion, it is not quite so easy. This is how things are classified, nosologically speaking, for reasons of outward appearance in the clinic, which no doubt has a certain value. But to confirm it in its structure, from the point of view of analysis, we must look rather closely, and in truth many authors show some hesitation and go as far as to place it at the margins of perversion and neurosis, precisely because of the especially symbolic character of its central fantasy. Let us pause for a moment over the fact that, starting out from the highest level of the structure and arriving at this intermediate position, what is loved in the love object is something beyond, which is surely nothing, but which has precisely this symbolic property of being there. And because it is symbol, not only can it be this nothing, it *must* be this nothing.

What could materialise for us, so to speak, in the clearest way possible, this relation of interposition due to which what is aimed for is beyond what is present – which is truly one of the most fundamental images of the human relation to the world – if not the veil, the curtain? The veil, the curtain in front of something, allows us to better illustrate the basic situation of love, and we may even say that with the presence of the curtain, that which is beyond, *qua* masked, tends to be realised as an image.

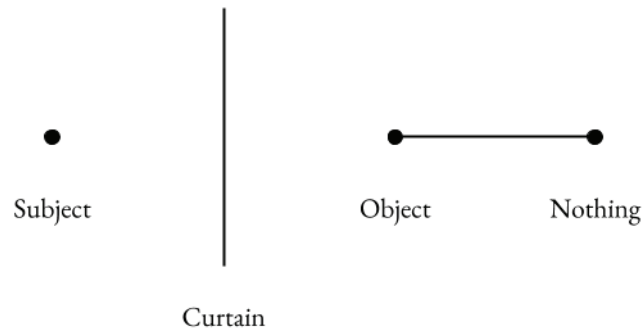
Absence is painted on the veil, and this is nothing other than the function of a curtain. Whatever it may be, the curtain takes on its value, its very being and its consistency, by being precisely that on which absence is projected and imagined. The curtain is, as it were, the idol of absence, and ultimately it is no accident that the veil of Maya⁶ is the metaphor most commonly used to express man’s

⁵ See, for example, Freud, S. (1938 [1940]). *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (SE XXIII), p. 273.

⁶ The word *Māyā* has a deep significance in Hindu scripture, where it is commonly translated as ‘illusion’ or ‘magic’.

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relationship to whatever captivates him. And, no doubt, this is certainly at least in part because man's feeling of a certain fundamental illusion in all his relations of desire is indeed how he incarnates and idolises his feeling of this 'nothing' which is beyond the love object. This is the fundamental schema you must keep in mind if you want to correctly situate the elements that are involved whenever we consider the establishment of the fetishistic relation.⁷



156 So the subject is here, and the object is this 'beyond', which is nothing, or a symbol, or the phallus the woman lacks. But as soon as the curtain is set up, something is painted on this curtain which says: 'the object is beyond'. This is the object which can then occupy the place of the lack and, as such, it can also sustain love. But this is precisely insofar as it is not the point to which desire is attached. In a certain way, desire appears here as a metaphor for love, but only along with the illusory object which ties it there, insofar as it is highlighted [*valorisé*] as illusory. The famous splitting of the ego⁸, where the fetish is concerned... which is explained to us by saying that through the fetish, for example, the woman's castration is simultaneously affirmed and denied, since the presence of the fetish means precisely that she has not lost this phallus but at the same time she can be made to lose it – that is, she can be castrated.

The ambiguity of this relation to the fetish is constant and manifested through symptoms at every moment. This ambiguity turns out to be, as it were, experienced [*vécue*] as an illusion both sustained and cherished as such, and at the same time experienced through this fragile equilibrium we call illusion, which at each instant is at the mercy of the collapse or the raising of the curtain. This, strictly speaking, is the relationship at stake in the fetishist's relation to his object. In fact, if we follow his text, Freud emphasises it. He speaks of *Verleugnung*⁹ with respect to the basic stance taken in the resolution of the relation to the fetish. But he also speaks of holding up this complex relation, as if it were a piece of decoration. This is how the terms of Freud's language, both vivid and precise, take on their full value. He also says: "The horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute"¹⁰. And he also says that this fetish is a trophy. The word trophy does not occur, but in truth it is there, reinforcing the 'token' [*Zeichen*] with 'triumph' [*Triumphes*]¹¹.

⁷ The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma du voile*.

⁸ See Freud, S. (1938 [1940]). *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (SE XXIII).

⁹ 'Denial', but usually translated as 'disavowal' in psychoanalytic literature.

¹⁰ See Freud, S. (1927). *Fetishism* (SE XXI), p. 154.

¹¹ Ibid. The full sentence reads "[The fetish] remains a token of triumph [*Zeimen des Triumphes*] over the threat of castration and a protection against it."

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157 Again and again, authors addressing distinctively fetishistic phenomena speak of something through which the subject declares his relationship to sex. Here Freud makes us take a step further. Take note that we are still concerned with structure. We will discover later on why this occurs, why this is necessary. But as always we are too much in a hurry. We start by asking why and we immediately get into a kind of pandemonic chaos, with different [clinical] orientations crowding around to explain why the subject may be more or less distant from the object and feel arrested or threatened, or feel conflicted. Let us first look at this structure. Here, it is in this relation of the 'beyond' and the veil – the veil on which we can in some sense project ourselves, establishing for ourselves... as imaginary capture, as the seat of desire... this relation to a 'beyond' which is fundamental for any establishment of the symbolic relation. The descent of the ternary rhythm subject-object-beyond into the imaginary register, is fundamental for the symbolic relation. This projection of the object's provisional status into the function of the veil... this is what is at stake. Before going further, we may glimpse another axis on which a symbolic relationship is established in the imaginary. This is not yet about demand, which makes the subject need the veil. Here is the second step I would like to take. You will recognise what I said last time regarding the perverse structure as such.

In this regard I spoke to you of metonymy, allusion, or relation(s) between the lines. These are elementary forms of metonymy. Here, Freud tells us in the clearest manner, except without using the word 'metonymy'¹², that what constitutes the fetish is this symbolic 'something', especially in the historical dimension that fixes the fetish and projects it on the veil. This 'something' is the moment in the history where the image is arrested. I remember once having used the comparison of a film which suddenly freezes. It is just before this moment when what is sought in the mother, namely, this phallus which she does or does not have, must be seen as 'presence-absence' or as 'absence-presence'. It is the moment following which the recalling [*remémoration*] of the [subject's] history is arrested and suspended. I said 'recalling of the history' because no other meaning can be given to the term 'screen memory', which is so fundamental for Freudian phenomenology and conceptualisation. A screen memory is not simply a snapshot. It is an interruption of the history, a moment which fixes and arrests it, and which, at the same time, indicates a pursuit of its movement beyond the veil. The screen memory is bound to the history by a chain, and it is metonymic in the sense that it arrests the chain. The history, by its very nature, continues while arrested there, indicating its own developments which are henceforth veiled, developments which are absent and the repression which is clearly at stake, according to Freud. We mention repression only insofar as there is a symbolic chain. And if a phenomenon which may appear imaginary – insofar as the fetish is, in a certain sense, an image, a projected image – may be designated as a point of repression, it is because this image is but the limit point¹³ between the history as continuous and the moment when it is interrupted. It is the sign, the landmark, of the point of repression. If you read Freud's text carefully, you will see that the way things are articulated is the clearest way to measure the full weight of all the expressions he uses. Here, once again, we can see the distinction between the relation to the love object and the relation of frustration with regard to the object. These are two different relations. Love, here, is transferred via a metaphor of desire which attaches to this object as illusory. However, the constitution of this object is something else entirely – it is not metaphorical, it is metonymic. It is a point in the historical chain where the

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¹² Ibid. Freud writes "Something else has taken its place... [Etwas anderes ist an seine Stelle getreten]."

¹³ It is worth noting that a 'limit point' is a theoretical term in set theory, also commonly referred to as a 'cluster point' or 'accumulation point'.

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history stands still. It signals the beginning of the 'beyond' constituted by the subject.

Why? Why is it here that the subject must constitute this 'beyond'? Why does man value the veil more than reality? Why does the organisation of this illusory relation become an essential, necessary constituent of his relationship to the object? This is the question posed by fetishism. To be sure, in what I just told you, and before going any further, you can start to see all sorts of things with greater clarity. Up to and including the fact that Freud gives us as a first example of the analysis of a fetishist, this marvellous story of a play on words – a gentleman who had spent his childhood in England and had come to Germany to be a fetishist, always looking for a little shine on the nose¹⁴, which he did then see, although this meant nothing more than looking at the nose, which itself was, of course, a symbol. Here, you can clearly see this point on which the projection is articulated and comes into play – this projection on the veil of the historical chain, such as it may contain an entire sentence, or even a sentence in a forgotten language.

159 What causes the establishment of this structure? On this point the Kleinians can assure nothing – in any case they have been uneasy for a while now. For to tell the truth, we cannot lose sight of the idea that, on the one hand, the genesis of fetishism essentially hinges on its relationship with the castration complex, and, on the other hand, it no longer appears certain that pre-Oedipal relations are the decisive and motivating element. This is, moreover, indicated by the very notion of the phallic mother at the centre of everything. The authors may be more or less successful in joining up these two things. Let us simply observe the relative unease of the members of the English school, due to the existence of Melanie Klein's system – by the structuration she gives to the first stages of the oral drives [*tendances*], particularly their most aggressive moment, introducing at the very heart of this moment the retroactive projection and the presence of the paternal penis – namely, retroactivating the Oedipus complex into the first relations with objects insofar as they are introjectable¹⁵. Obviously, this more easily offers up the material that will, in any case, enable the interpretation of what is at stake. I have not yet attempted an exhaustive criticism of what Ms Melanie Klein's system is trying to express. So for now, we will leave aside what one author or another has to say and stick to what we have ourselves brought to light today. We have said that, in fact, it concerns a fundamental relation between the real child, the symbolic mother, and her phallus, which is imaginary for her. So, we must handle this schema with caution, for as much it is focused on one level, it reflects several different levels at once and becomes operative during successive stages of the history. This is because of course, for a long time, the child is not capable of appropriating the relation of imaginary belonging, which profoundly divides the mother for the child. And this is just what we will try to elucidate, this year, with regard to this question. We are on our way to seeing how and at what moment this is taken up by the child, as well as how it comes into play when the child himself assumes this relation to the symbolic object, insofar as the phallus is its main currency. This poses chronological, temporal questions, questions of order and succession which we will try to address from the angle of pathology – which is natural, as the history of psychoanalysis indicates.

160 What do the observations show us? If we scrutinise them closely, [we can see that] it is exactly surrounding and in correlation with this singular symptom, which places the subject in a privileged relationship to something – a fetish – around which his erotic life revolves. I say 'revolves' because even

¹⁴ See Freud, S. (1927). *Fetishism* (SE XXI), p. 152.

¹⁵ See Klein, M. (1928). 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 9, p. 168.

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though the object inscribed on the veil is one that captivates, it retains, of course, a certain freedom of movement. When we make an observation and we analyse, rather than simply doing a clinical description, we see – and Binet had seen it himself¹⁶ – those elements which I expressed today, namely, this striking point of the screen memory – the arrest at the hem of his mother's dress, or even her corset. We can see the essentially ambiguous relationship of an illusion, experienced as such, and which, as such, the subject prefers to the fetish. We can see the particularly satisfying function of an object which is in itself inert, and completely at the mercy of the subject for the manoeuvres of his erotic relations. We can see all of this, but we need analysis in order to see what is at stake a little more closely. That is, to see how it happens that each time, for whatever reason, the fetish gives way, exhausts itself, gets used up, simply gives out. What we see in romantic behaviour, and more simply in the erotic relations of the subject, comes down to a defense. You can verify this by reading, in the *International Journal*¹⁷, the observations of Ms. Sylvia Payne¹⁸, Mr. Gillespie¹⁹, Ms. Greenacre²⁰, Mr. Dugmore Hunter²¹, or in the *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*²².

This was glimpsed by Freud, and it is expressed in our schema. Freud says: "Fetishism is a defense against homosexuality."²³ As Mr. Gillespie says, the line is incredibly thin. In short, what we find in the relations to the love object that organise this cycle for the fetishist is an alternating identification with the woman insofar as, for him, the imaginary phallus of the primordial experiences of the oral-anal stage is oriented towards the aggressiveness of the sadistic vision of coitus. Many of these experiences, revealed by analysis, demonstrate an observation of the primal scene, perceived as cruel, aggressive, violent, or even murderous. It is thus an identification with the woman, confronted with this destructive penis, or conversely, an identification with this imaginary phallus on the part of the subject, which turns him into a pure object for the woman; something she can devour or even destroy.

But it is this oscillation, between the two poles of this primitive imaginary relation, to which the child is brutally exposed, which is not yet established in its oedipal lawfulness via the introduction of the father as a subject, as a centre of order and legitimate possession. The subject is engaged in this bipolar oscillation of the relation between two objects which we may call irreconcilable and which, in any event, ends in destruction or even murder. This is what we find at the bottom of the subject's romantic relations every time they start to take shape and assume an order, every time they emerge in the subject's life. And this is what is meant, in a certain approach to understanding analysis, which is precisely the modern approach, and which is gaining some ground on this point. This is where the analyst intervenes to make the subject perceive the alternation of his positions, as well as their significance – that is, to introduce, in some way, the symbolic distance needed for him to notice their meaning.

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¹⁶ Fetishism was coined as a medical term in 1887 by Alfred Binet, a student of Jean-Martin Charcot's. See Binet, A. (1887) 'Le fétichisme dans l'amour' in *Revue Philosophique*, vol. 24.

¹⁷ The following references are approximate.

¹⁸ Payne, S. M. (1939). 'Some Observations on the Ego Development of the Fetishist' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 20, pp. 161-170.

¹⁹ Gillespie, W. H. (1940). 'A Contribution to the Study of Fetishism' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 21, pp. 401-415.

²⁰ Greenacre, P. (1956). 'Re-Evaluation of the Process of Working Through' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 37, pp. 439-444.

²¹ Hunter, D. (1954). 'Object-relation changes in the analysis of a fetishist' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 35, pp. 302-312.

²² Greenacre, P. (1953). 'Certain Relationships Between Fetishism and Faulty Development of the Body Image' in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol. 8, pp. 79-98.

²³ See Freud, S. (1927). *Fetishism* (SE XXI), p.154.

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Here the observations are extremely fertile, and when they show us, for instance, the countless forms the subject's premature life may assume at any given moment, they border on this fundamental incompleteness [*décomplétage*] which abandons the subject to the imaginary relation as such – either by way of identification with the woman, or taking the place of the imaginary phallus – in any case, insufficiently symbolising the relation of the third. For example, the authors say that very often, we note the absence, repeated in the [case] history – the deficit, as it is called – of the father as a presence. He goes travelling, to the war, etc. But even more often, a certain kind of position singularly reproduced in the fantasy, which is that of a forced immobilisation, is sometimes expressed as the bondage of the subject, which actually and really did take place.

There is a very nice example in Sylvia Payne's observations²⁴. Following an exaggerated medical prescription, a child had been prevented from walking until the age of two – he was held in place by restraints in his bed. And this did not occur without consequences, including that being tightly monitored in his parents' bedroom in this way puts him, as far as we are concerned, in this exemplary position of exposure to a purely visual mode of relation, without any hint of muscular response from him, and in the presence of his parents' relation, a position assumed with all the rage and anger which you might suppose. To be sure, such exemplary cases are rare. But some authors have insisted on the fact that certain phobic mothers, for example, who keep their child away from contact as if it were a source of disease certainly count for something in the priority given to the visual mode of relation in the constitution of the primitive relation to the maternal object.

Whatever we may make of this, what is much more instructive than any one example of a tainted primary relation is one which appears as a pathological relation, which presents itself as the other side or the complement of the libidinal attachment to the fetish. Fetishism is a class which, nosologically, covers all sorts of things whose resemblance to one another is simply indicated by our intuition. It is very clear, for instance – and we are not mistaken about this – that the fact that the subject is attached to a raincoat seems to be of the same nature as if he were attached to a pair of shoes.

162 However, structurally speaking, this raincoat contains its own revelations, indicating a slightly different position than that of the shoe or the corset, in that the latter are, strictly speaking, directly in the position of veil between the subject and the object. This raincoat, like any other type of fetish of garments that envelope and which also have the special quality of being made of rubber, has a feature which is encountered very frequently and which always harbors a kind of ultimate mystery. This would no doubt be illuminated by the psychology of sensation, in that this contact with rubber in particular, and more so than other things, can itself contain something like a second skin, or something which has special insulating capacities. Whatever we might make of the structure of the relationships, such as they lend themselves to this or that direction of analytic observation, we see that the raincoat plays a role here which is not quite exactly that of the veil, but rather of something behind which the subject focuses himself [*se centre*], not in front of the veil, but as if behind it, namely, in the mother's place. And, more specifically, stuck on this identifying position of the mother in which she needs to be protected, in this case by being enveloped – this is what renders the transition between the case of fetishism and the case of transference.

²⁴ See Payne, S. M. (1939). 'Some Observations on the Ego Development of the Fetishist' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 20, pp. 165-166.

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The envelopment is clearly a protection, and more simply, not a veil but an aegis [*égide*]²⁵ under which the subject who is identified with the female character envelops himself. Other typical and veridical relations, sometimes particularly exemplary ones include outbreaks, or even switches, between fetishism and exhibitionism, in some truly reactive cases. Here it is always a matter of some effort on the subject's part to exit his own labyrinth, a matter of a few gambles with reality, which place the subject in these unstable positions, where there occurs a kind of crystallisation or reversal of the position. I consider this to be quite manifestly illustrated by the schema of the case of female homosexuality inasmuch as we see, in one moment, via the introduction of this real element – the father – that the places are swapped. And what was situated in the 'beyond', the symbolic father, comes to be caught in the imaginary relation in the form of the homosexual position, exemplary and demonstrative in relation to the father, which the homosexual woman takes up. Likewise we have, in these observations, some very nice cases in which we see the subject – insofar as he has attempted, under certain conditions, an artificial rendering, a forcing of the real, to attain a full relation. The subject²⁶, precisely at that moment, expresses it by 'acting out'²⁷ in the imaginary register, what is symbolically latent in this situation. For instance, the subject who attempts a real relation for the first time but precisely in a position of experiment, of going there to show, we might say, what he is capable of doing, and he succeeds more or less, thanks to the woman's assistance, for example. And, within the very next hour, although nothing in these symptoms allow us to predict such a possibility, he gives himself over to a very singular exhibition, very well calculated, consisting of showing his sex to a passing international train, in such a way that no one can catch him red-handed. He has thus been forced, in a sense, to find a resolution to something whose entire symbolic impact he himself has not understood, and you can see that this resolution is none other than the expression or the projection of this something into the imaginary register, in which it becomes implicit and contained.

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[It is a resolution he finds] in this act [of exhibition], which is ultimately nothing but the act of trying to show, simply, that he is just as capable as anyone else of having a normal relation.

We find this kind of reactive exhibitionism again, many times over, in observations very much akin to fetishism, or even in plainly delinquent acts inasmuch as they are equivalents of fetishism... we get a good sense of what is at stake. It is very strange to see, at the same time, to what extent she [Melitta Schmideberg] manages to sidestep the main and essential thing. She represents this man who had married a woman about twice as tall as himself. He was truly her victim, her punching bag. One fine day this man, who was doing his best in the face of this horrible situation, is informed that he will be a father, hurries to a garden and starts to show his organ to a group of girls. Of course, Ms. Schmideberg who seems to be a little too Anna-Freudian here, finds all kinds of analogies in the fact that the boy's father had already been a victim, and had managed to disengage himself from the situation by getting caught with the maid one day, which, by way of jealousy, had left his wife a little bit at his mercy. It nonetheless seems that nothing is explained by this, which seemed to Ms. Schmideberg to be an example of a case in which she was able to analyse a perversion. There is no need to wonder, because it is not a perversion at all, and she has done no analysis at all, for she leaves aside the fact that all

²⁵ 'Aegis' is a Greek term that denotes a kind of shield or protective covering. There are a number of references to the aegis in the *Iliad*, where it is held by Zeus, Athena, and Apollo.

²⁶ See Schmideberg, M. (1956). 'Delinquent Acts as Perversions and Fetishes' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 37, pp. 423-424.

²⁷ English in the original.

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the same, the subject has in this case manifested himself through an act of exhibitionism. And there is no other way of explaining this act of exhibitionism except by referring to this release mechanism by which something that is in the real somehow comes out of a surplus which is symbolically unassimilable, and strives to precipitate what underwrites the symbolic relation – for this brave²⁸ man, quite precisely the phallus-child equivalence.

164 And, for want of being able to assume in any way, or even believe in this paternity, he went to show the equivalent of the child in the appropriate place – what remained of the function [*usage*] of his phallus at that point.

²⁸ “Brave” can mean ‘courageous’, ‘good, honest’, but also ‘not the sharpest knife in the drawer’.

Session of 6th February 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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165 From time to time I hear responses about how you are receiving each new contribution I make - at least, that is what I hope I am doing. Last time I took a step in the direction of elucidating fetishism as a particularly fundamental example of the dynamic of desire, especially the desire which most crucially concerns us, because that this desire is the one we deal with in our practice - that is, not a constructed desire, but a desire with all its paradoxes. Thus, just as we are dealing with an object with all its paradoxes, nevertheless it is clear that Freudian thought is built on these paradoxes. In particular, in the case of desire, it is built on perverse desire.

It would really be a shame for this to be forgotten in the attempted unification or reduction vis-à-vis the more naïvely intuitive theories that psychoanalysis is being related to, today. To take things up where we left off last time, I would start by saying that this small step I made surprised those who were already satisfied with the idea of the theory of love that I have presented to you, founded on the fact that what the subject is addressing is this lack in the object. This already led some to the cases of perception or meditation, which seem to be sufficiently enlightening, although they have some difficulty [*trouble*] realising that there is a beyond and a lack to this subject-object relationship.

166 Last time I brought in an additional complication, namely, yet another term situated before the object: the veil, the curtain, the location of imaginary projection where something appears which can figure as this lack. As such, it can be a free point that supports and inaugurates desire - a perverse desire, however. It is on the veil that the fetish comes in to figure as precisely what lacks beyond the object. This schematisation is intended to capture these successive schema which should allow you, in certain cases, to orient yourselves a little better in this sort of perpetual ambivalence and confusion, the equivalence of the 'yes' and the 'no', of the one direction with its exact opposite... in everything that, unfortunately, the analysand [*analysé*] and the analyst regularly use to escape this embarrassment, under the guise of ambivalence.

At the very end of what I was telling you last time about fetishism, I showed you the emergence of a complementary position that also emerges in the fetishist's culture, and even in the fetishist's attempts to join up with this object which has been separated from him by this 'something', the function and the mechanism of which, of course, he does not understand. This is what we might call the symmetrical respondent, the correspondent, the opposite pole of the fetishist - namely, the function of transvestism, in which the subject identifies himself with what is behind the curtain, with this object which he is lacking. A transvestite - the authors notice this in their analysis¹ - is someone who, as they put it in their language, identifies himself with the phallic mother insofar as she veils this lack of the phallus.

This transvestism brings us very far in the matter, for the psychology of clothing started long before Freud. In any use of clothing there is something of the function of transvestism, and while the immediate, common, everyday understanding of the function of clothing is to hide the genitals from the analyst's eyes, the matter gets more complicated, especially if there is someone who should notice

¹ These authors are probably the ones Sigmund Freud cites in Part II of *Female Sexuality* (1931b) SE XXI pp. 221-243, See SE XXI p. 242 where Otto Fenichel (1930) & Melanie Klein (1928) are referenced. Probably Fenichel, O. (1930), *The Psychology of Transvestism*, International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, vol. 11, pp. 211-225 & Klein Melanie (1928), Early Stages of the Oedipus conflict, International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, vol. 9, p.167. Or this may be a further reference to the Sacha Nacht collection. See for example Bouvet, M, *Clinical Analysis, The Object Relationship* (1956) pp. 19-77 of *Psychoanalysis of Today*: Compiled by S. Nacht; Ruth Emma Roman (Ed); Grune & Stratton (1959).

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the significance [*sens*] of what he is saying when he speaks of the phallic mother. Clothing is not only for hiding what one has, but also precisely what one does not have. Both functions are essential. It is not always and essentially about hiding the object, but hiding the lack of the object - in this case, a simple application of the imaginary dialectic which is too often forgotten, that is, this function and this presence of the lack of the object.

167 Conversely, what is always understood as self-explanatory in a kind of rough usage of 'the scopophilic relation'^{2,3} - that showing oneself is correlative to the activity of 'seeing', voyeurism - is also a dimension that is readily forgotten⁴. It allows us to say that the subject does not always simply let himself be 'seen' insofar as what is at stake here is the correlative, corresponding relation to this activity of 'seeing', the implication of the subject in the ebb and flow of visual captivation. In scopophilia, there is also this supplementary dimension of the implication [of the subject] that is expressed in the use of language by the presence of the reflexive form, the same as the one used in other forms of the verb, and other languages which have it, that is, 'giving oneself to be seen' [*se donner à voir*]⁵. And if you combine these two dimensions, what the subject gives to be seen - in a type of activity which is here⁶ confused with the relation of voyeurism-exhibitionism⁷ - what the subject [*l'autre*] is giving to be seen when he shows himself is something other than what he is showing, which gets buried in the rough usage of 'scopophilic relation'. The authors who are, despite their apparent clarity, very bad theorists, such as Fenichel, but who nonetheless have analytic experience, have indeed noticed this. If you read articles in which the theoretical effort ends in desperate failure, like some of Fenichel's articles⁸, you will sometimes find clinical gems, and even a feeling or an intuition that a whole series of facts must be grouped together. They are grouped together with a sort of flair which the analyst fortunately gets from his experience, around a selected theme or branch of the analytic articulation of the fundamental imaginary relation.

On the topic of scopophilic transvestism, where the author senses - in a more or less obscure way - a kinship, a common bunch of stems⁹ [*tiges groupées*], you can see, in fact, events which are extremely well distinguished from one another. And in particular this is how, in the process of learning about this vast and insipid literature - which allowed me to realise to what extent analysts have attained a true articulation of these facts - I recently became interested in one of Fenichel's articles which appeared in *Psychoanalytical Journal*, about what he calls the 'girl = phallus' equivalence. He himself authorised us to make these kinds of equivalences in the well known series of equations, 'faeces = child = penis'. This is, in fact, an interesting equation that does have some bearing on the equation that Fenichel is trying to offer us, the 'girl = phallus'¹⁰.

² Probably a reference to Freud S. 1905(d), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, SE VII pp. 123-245. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

³ Jacques Lacan seems to be using 'relation' in the mathematical sense, thus it is translated as 'relation'

⁴ Fenichel (1930) p. 226.

⁵ Ibid p. 225.

⁶ Ibid p. 226.

⁷ Ibid p. 226.

⁸ Fenichel, O. (1949) *The Symbolic Equation - Girl = Phallus*. *Psychoanalytical Quarterly*, vol. 18 pp. 303-324, Originally *Int. Ztschr. f. Psa.*, XXII, (1936) No. 3.

⁹ Apparently 'tiges groupées' can be bought from flower shops - like a bunch of roses.

¹⁰ Fenichel, O. (1949) *Op. Cit.*

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We can see that this demonstrates a lack of orientation on this point, which constantly leaves us with a logic free of the lack of orientation of certain theoretical analyses. Here we can see a series of facts grouped around analytic encounters such that, from the very start, the child can be taken as the equivalent, equalling the phallus in the subject's - especially the feminine subject's - unconscious. That is, we see here the phylum¹¹ of everything related to the fact that the child is given to the mother as a kind of substitute or, indeed, an equivalent of the phallus. But there are many other facts besides this. And it is quite surprising that these are gathered together in the same breath, with these [other] kinds of facts.

168 When I spoke of the child, I did not especially mean the feminine child. But the article here specifically targets the girl, and to be sure, [Fenichel] must base himself on a number of well-known features of the fetishistic, or quasi-fetishistic, character of certain perversions interpreted as the subject's equivalent of the phallus. This is something like analytic data - the girl, and generally, the child, can conceive herself to be the equivalent of the phallus, and demonstrate through her behaviour that she positions herself as its equivalent. That is to say, she experiences the sexual relation as the relation that allows her, herself, to provide her masculine partner with his phallus, and she situates herself - right down to the details of her chosen amorous¹² position - as something appended, nestled in a certain corner of her partner's body. This is another type of fact that cannot fail to strike us and give us pause for thought.

In some cases, the masculine subject also gives himself to the woman as this something which she lacks, providing to her the phallus as such, in the name of what she is lacking, imaginarily speaking. This is what all the facts that have been emphasised here seem to point to. But we can also see, in the way they are grouped together, put into the same equation, that here we are gathering together extremely different kinds of facts, since in these four kinds of relation that I just sketched, the subject is absolutely not in the same relationship with the object - he either provides it, gives it, desires it, or substitutes himself for it.

As soon as our attention is drawn to these registers, we cannot but see that it is for reasons beyond a simple theoretical requirement that an author groups these together as equivalent, that the little girl can be the main object of attachment for an entire type of subject, that what we might call a single mythical function cannot but be drawn out from these perverse mirages as well as in a whole series of literary constructions that can be grouped together according to the authors, under more or less famous figureheads [*chefs*]. Some went as far as to mention a 'Mignon type'¹³. You all know this fictional Mignon, this androgenous, bohemian, as Goethe himself clearly emphasises, who lives with this sort of super-paternal protector, both enormous and brutal, called the Harper. He ultimately acts as Mignon's highest servant, but at the same time he needs her very much.

Goethe somewhere says, in reference to this couple: "the Harper, who she needs very much, and Mignon without whom he can do nothing"¹⁴. We can recognise here a sort of couple, between what we could call unrefined, brutal power, power incarnate, and on the other hand this 'something' without

¹¹ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/phylum> Phylum - 1 Zoology, A principal taxonomic category that ranks above class and below kingdom, equivalent to the division in botany. 2 Linguistics, A group of languages related to each other less closely than those forming a family, especially one in which the relationships are unclear.

¹² 'amoureux' is translated as amorous throughout, to distinguish it from 'd'amour' which is translated as 'of love'. This chimes with the distinction Sigmund Freud makes, see SE XVIII p. 111.

¹³ Mignon is a character in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (German: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*), the second novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, published in 1795-96. Available to download at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/36483>

¹⁴ Probably Goethe (1795-96) *ibid* p. 97-98.

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169 which power is stripped of its efficacy. This is something that power itself lacks, which is ultimately the secret of its true power, this 'something' which is nothing but a lack, the ultimate point where the notorious magic resides, which always gets confusedly attributed, in a confused way, to the idea of total power in analytic theory.

Contrary to what you may think, if there is one thing which is not in the subject, [it is] the structure of omnipotence, which is, rather, in the mother - that is to say, in the primitive Other. It is the Other that is all-powerful. But, behind this all-powerful one there is this ultimate lack on which this power hinges. I mean that as soon as the subject notices the lack in the object from which he is expecting this total power, this lack gives him his power and the ultimate source of this total power is again deferred beyond [the object]. That is, to the place where something does not exist, the limit [*maximum*] which in itself is nothing but the symbolism of the lack... this fragility, this smallness - this is where the subject can situate the secret, the true source of total power. And this is why what we are today calling the 'Mignon' type, which is reproduced in many different versions in literature, is of interest to us. Three years ago I was on the verge of announcing a conference on Cazotte's *Le diable amoureux*¹⁵. There are few things that so strongly exemplify such a deep divination of the imaginary dynamic that I am trying to develop before you, and especially today. I remembered it as a grand illustration, accentuating it, and giving the meaning of this magical being beyond the object, to which a whole series of idealising fantasies can be attached.

It is a story beginning in Naples, in a cave [*caverne*] where the author gives himself over to an invocation of the devil who does not fail to appear, after the usual formalities, in the form of a formidable camel's head specifically endowed with large ears, which tells him in a great hollow voice, "*Che vuoi?*" ["What do you want?"]¹⁶.

I believe this fundamental interrogation is just what gives us, in the most striking way, the function of the superego. But the important thing here is not that we have a captivating illustration of this image of the superego, it is to recognise that it's the very same being which is supposed to immediately transform itself, once the pact is made¹⁷, into a small dog that, in a transition which surprises nobody, becomes a charming young man, then a beautiful young woman, the two being constantly entangled in a perfect ambiguity and becoming, for the narrator of the story, the surprising source of all bliss and the fulfilment of all desires, the literally magical satisfaction of all his wishes.

170 Nonetheless, all this happens in an air of fantasy, dangerous irreality, permanent threat, which does not fail to influence its surroundings, this immense mirage finally coming to a head in the catastrophic breakdown [rupture] of an increasingly accelerated and crazy chase, representing the relation with the beloved character who has a very significant name which I cannot remember. All this ends in a kind of catastrophic dissipation of the mirage at the moment when the subject returns to his mother's castle, as planned.

¹⁵ Published 1772. Available to download in French from <http://www.gutenberg.org>

¹⁶ 'Che vuoi?' appears at the top of *Graph 3, Graph of desire*, in Lacan J., *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire* 19th to 23rd September 1960. p. 315 of *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan, Tavistock/Routledge (1977). This appearance of 'Che vuoi?' predates this, so may be seen as the beginning of the 'Graph of Desire'

¹⁷ The protagonist makes an agreement with the Devil, who promises to transform himself into each of these forms in sequence.

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Another novel, Latouche's *Fragoletta*¹⁸, introduces a curious, plainly transvestite character since - all the way through and without it being clarified, even for the reader - it is a girl who is a boy, playing a role analogous in function to the one I just described as the 'Mignon type', with details and subtleties that culminate in a duel during which the hero himself kills the character Fragoletta who, at that moment, presents herself to him as a boy, although he does not recognise her, indicating the equivalence of a certain feminine object with the other, as a rival, the same other who is at stake when Hamlet kills the brother of Ophelia. Here we are in the presence of a fetish, or fairy character... it is the same word, fundamentally, both stemming from the Portuguese *feitiço*. This is how the word 'fetish' was born historically - it is none other than the word 'false' [*factice*]... [we are in the presence of] an ambiguous feminine being who he himself represents, and who somehow incarnates, the beyond of the mother, the phallus that she lacks. And he incarnates it all the better as he does not have it himself, but is instead wholly invested in its representation. Here we are in the presence of one more function of the 'falling in love' [*énamourante*] relation of the perverse paths of desire, which can be exemplary in enlightening us on the positions we must distinguish when we analyse.

We are thus finally led to ask the question of what is implicit here, and perpetually called into question by this very critique that is, the notion of identification, which is latent, present, emerging at every moment and then disappearing again in Freud's work, since its very origins. For the implications of these identifications are already in *The Interpretation of Dreams*¹⁹, which reaches its major point of explication when Freud writes *Group (Mass) Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*²⁰, in which there is a chapter explicitly devoted to identification. This chapter has the goal of showing us - as happens very frequently, as it is the merit of Freud's work to show us - the greatest perplexity on the part of the author.

171 There is an article where Freud admits his difficulty - his impotence²¹ even - in finding his way out of the dilemma posed by the perpetual ambiguity facing him, between two terms that he specifies, 'identification' and 'object choice'²². In so many cases, they appear to substitute each other with the most disconcerting metamorphosis, in such a way that the transition itself is not captured, but nonetheless there is the necessity of maintaining their distinction. As Freud says, it is one thing to be on the side of the object, another to be on the side of the subject. If an object becomes an object of choice, it is quite clear that this is not the same as it becoming the support of the subject's identification. This is incredibly instructive in itself and it also brings instruction to the unsettling ease with which everyone seems to be comfortable, using the terms as strict equivalents both in observation and theorisation, without asking for anything more.

¹⁸ *Fragoletta ou Naples et Paris en 1799* (1829), Henri de Latouche.

¹⁹ Probably Freud S. (1900) *Interpretation of Dreams* SE IV pp. 150-151. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

²⁰ From Freud S. (1921) *Group (Mass) Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* SE XVIII pp. 69-143: Chapter VII Identification SE XVIII pp. 105-110. See www.Freud2Lacan.com Note on the title : Published in 1921 as *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* Translated into French, probably by Marie Bonaparte, in 1920 as *Psychologie des masses et analyse du moi* Published, in 1922, translated into English by James Strachey as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* The French translation of Masse is nearer to the original German than Strachey's 'Group'. In this translation both Group and Mass are given.

²¹ Freud S. (1921) p. 106.

²² Freud S. (1921) pp. 106-110.

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If we ask for something more, we get an article like the one written by Gustav Hans Graber, “The two Types of Identification Mechanism” [*Les deux espèces de mécanismes d'identification*] in *Imago*, 1937²³, which is the most dizzying thing one can imagine. For everything seems to be resolved for him in the distinction between active identification and passive identification. When we take a closer look, it is impossible not to see - he sees it himself - the active and passive poles of every kind of identification, such that we really must return to Freud, and in some sense take up his way of articulating the question again, point for point.

Chapter VIII of Freud's work *Group (Mass) Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*²⁴ immediately follows the chapter which is officially about identification, and it starts with a statement which brings us back to the feeling of something which would otherwise be pure, more so than what we usually read²⁵ - “Linguistic usage always remains, even in its caprices, faithful to some kind of reality.”²⁶ I wanted to point out in passing how Freud speaks about identification in the previous chapter. He starts out by talking about identification with the father as an example by which we might approach this phenomenon in the most natural way. We get to the second paragraph, and here is an example of a very bad French translation of Freud's texts. We read in the German text²⁷: “At the same time as this identification with the father, perhaps even a little sooner”²⁸, which is translated as “a little later”. At that point the little boy starts to direct his libidinal desires toward his mother, and with this translation we would have license to wonder whether the identification with the father might not come first. We can see another example of this in the passage I would like to come round to this morning, which I chose for you because it is the most condensed and the most apt to demonstrate what I have called Freud's perplexities. What is at stake is the amorous state vis-à-vis identification... identification which, according to Freud's text, is the most primitive, fundamental function insofar as it implies an object

²³ Gustav Hans Graber (1937) *Die zweierlei Mechanismen der Identifizierung* *Imago* 23(1) pp. 24-48.

²⁴ Freud S. (1921) SE XVIII pp.105-110.

²⁵ Jacques Lacan read German, he therefore read all these references to Freud in the German edition, published as the eighteen-volume *Gesammelte Werke* (GW), in the years 1940 to 1952, which along with an unnumbered supplemental volume (the *Nachtrag Band*) constitutes the second complete edition of Freud's work in German. The text *Group (Mass) Psychology* was translated into French probably by Marie Bonaparte in 1920 as *Psychologie des masses et analyse du moi*. In this passage Jacques Lacan is critiquing the translation of the original German to French. The complete texts, translated into English by James Strachey as the Standard Edition (SE), appeared in the mid 1950s. In these passages Jacques Lacan's remarks on the French translation of Freud's German text & the text itself, have been translated into English. For comparison, the SE, James Strachey, English translation has been included which contains some of the same mistakes.

²⁶ In German: Freud S. (1921) GW XIII p. 104 “Der Sprachgebrauch bleibt selbst in seinen Launen irgend einer Wirklichkeit treu.”

James Strachey's translation: SE XVIII p. 111 (Ch VIII) : “Even in its caprices the usage of language remains true to some kind of reality.”

²⁷ In Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire livre IV, La relation d'objet*, Du Seuil (1994) p. 172, the text in German is not given

²⁸ French in the original. Freud S. (1921) Ch VII.

The German is: GW XIII p. 98: “Gleichzeitig mit dieser Identifizierung mit dem Vater, vielleicht sogar vorher, hat der Knabe begonnen, [From Google translate : maybe even before that, the boy began,] eine richtige Objektbesetzung der Mutter nach dem Anlehnungstypus vorzunehmen.”

XE XVIII p. 105 (James Strachey's translation): At the same time as this identification with his father, or a little later, the boy has begun to develop a true object-cathexis towards his mother according to the attachment [anaclitic] type.

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172 choice, but an object choice which nonetheless still needs to be articulated in a very problematic way.²⁹ This object choice, so deeply linked to narcissism in Freudian analysis, this object which is a kind of other 'ego' [*moi*] in the subject... to take things further than the sense in which Freud so perfectly articulates, this is what is at stake - how can we articulate this difference between identification and *Verliebtheit* in its most elevated forms, seemingly its fullest forms, which we call fascination, amorous adherence [*appartenance amoureuse*]... in their most elevated manifestations known as subservience, or this amorous adherence, so easy to describe.

[Reads German text]³⁰ Der Unterschied der Identifizierung von der Verliebtheit 30 in ihren höchsten Ausbildungen, die man Faszination, verliebte Horigkeit heibt, ist nun leicht zu beschreiben. Im ersteren Falle hat sich das Ich um die Eigenschaften des Objektes bereichert, sich dasselbe nach Ferenczis [1909] Ausdruck »introjiziert«; im zweiten Fall ist es verarmt, hat sich dem Objekt hingegeben, dasselbe an die Stelle seines wichtigsten Bestandteiles gesetzt. Indes merkt man bei naherer Erwägung bald, daß eine solche Darstellung Gegensätze vorspiegelt, die nicht bestehen. Es handelt sich ökonomisch nicht um Verarmung oder Bereicherung, man kann auch die extreme Verliebtheit so beschreiben, daß das Ich sich das Objekt introjiziert habe. Vielleicht trifft: eine andere Unterscheidung eher das Wesentliche. Im Falle der Identifizierung ist das Objekt verlorengegangen oder aufgegeben worden; es wird dann im Ich wieder aufgerichtet, das Ich verändert sich partiell nach dem Vorbild des

²⁹ Possibly Freud S. (1921): GW XIII p. 104: In einer Reihe von Fällen ist die Verliebtheit nichts anderes als Objektbesetzung von seiten der Sexualtriebe zum Zweck der direkten Sexualbefriedigung, die auch mit der Erreichung dieses Zieles erlischt; das ist das, was man die gemeine, sinnliche Liebe heibt. Aber wie bekannt, bleibt die libidinöse Situation selten so einfach. Die Sicherheit, mit der man auf das Wiedererwachen des eben erloschenen. Bedürfnisses rechnen konnte, muß wohl das nächste Motiv gewesen sein, dem Sexualobjekt eine dauernde Besetzung zuzuwenden, es auch in den begierdefreien Zwischenzeiten zu 'lieben'.

SE XVIII p. 111, translated by James Strachey: In one class of cases being in love is nothing more than object-cathexis on the part of the sexual instincts with a view to directly sexual satisfaction, a cathexis which expires, moreover, when this aim has been reached; this is what is called common, sensual love. But, as we know, the libidinal situation rarely remains so simple. It was possible to calculate with certainty upon the revival of the need which had just expired; and this must no doubt have been the first motive for directing a lasting cathexis upon the sexual object and for 'loving' it in the passionless intervals as well.

³⁰ Freud S. (1921) *Group (Mass) Psychology and the Ego, Ch VIII Being in Love & Hypnosis* (See www.Freud2Lacan.com) GW XIII pp. 106-107 As translated by James Strachey, SE XVIII p113-114:

It is now easy to define the difference between identification and such extreme developments of being in love as may be described as 'fascination' or 'bondage'. 1 In the former case the ego has enriched itself with the properties of the object, it has 'introjected' the object into itself, as Ferenczi [1909] expresses it. In the second case it is impoverished, it has surrendered itself to the object, it has substituted the object for its own most important constituent. Closer consideration soon makes it plain, however, that this kind of account creates an illusion of contradistinctions that have no real existence. Economically there is no question of impoverishment or enrichment; it is even possible to describe an extreme case of being in love as a state in which the ego has introjected the object into itself. Another distinction is perhaps better calculated to meet the essence of the matter. In the case of identification the object has been lost or given up; it is then set up again inside the ego, and the ego makes a partial alteration in itself after the model of the lost object. In the other case the object is retained, and there is a hypercathexis of it by the ego and at the ego's expense. But here again a difficulty presents itself. Is it quite certain that identification presupposes that object-cathexis has been given up? Can there be no identification while the object is retained? And before we embark upon a discussion of this delicate question, the perception may already be beginning to dawn on us that yet another alternative embraces the real essence of the matter, namely, whether the object is put in the place of the ego or of the ego ideal.

1 [The 'bondage' of love had been discussed by Freud in the early part of his paper on 'The Taboo of Virginity' (1918a).]

Ferenczi, S. (1909) 'Introjektion und Übertragung', *Jb psychoanal. psychopath. Forsch.*, I, 422 [Trans.: *Introjection and transference, First Contributions to Psycho-Analysis* London (1952) Chap. II].

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verlorenen Objektes. Im anderen Falle ist das Objekt erhalten geblieben und wird als solches von seiten und auf Kosten des Ichs überbesetzt. Aber auch hiegegen erhebt sich ein Bedenken. Steht es denn fest, daß die Identifizierung das Aufgeben der Objektbesetzung voraussetzt, kann es nicht Identifizierung bei erhaltenem Objekt geben? Und ehe wir uns in die Diskussion dieser heiklen Frage einlassen, kann uns bereits die Einsicht aufdämmern, daß eine andere Alternative das Wesen dieses Sachverhaltes in sich faßt, nämlich *ob das Objekt an die Stelle des Ichs oder des Ichideals gesetzt wird*.

The French translation reads “In the first case, the ego enriches itself with the object’s qualities, and assimilates them”³¹.

In truth, one should simply read what Ferenczi translates: “interjects itself”³² [*s’introjecte*], and it is here that the question of introjection in its relationship with identification is to be found. The French author³³ translates:

“In the second case, it weakens, having given itself entirely to the object and erased itself before it”,. That is not quite what Freud says:

“This object which he has positioned in the place of his constitutive element...”

This is completely erased in the sentence, and we cannot see that it translates something so very articulate with “erased itself before it”.

Here, Freud lingers over the opposition between, on the one hand, that with which the subject enriches himself and ‘introjects’, and on the other, this ‘something’ which takes something from him and impoverishes him. He had previously paused for a long while over what happens in the amorous state, as something where the subject dispossesses himself more and more, to the benefit of the object loved with everything of himself, an everything that becomes literally taken from him by [his] humility, by a complete subjection vis-à-vis the object he is invested in.

Freud articulates here that this object for whose benefit the subject becomes impoverished is the very same as that which he places in the stead of his most important constitutive element.

This is how Freud approaches the problem. He pursues it by backtracking, he does not spare us his workings. He takes a step forward and realises that it is incomplete, so he comes back and says that this description reveals oppositions which, in fact, from the economic point of view, do not exist: “From the economic point of view, there is neither enrichment nor impoverishment, for even an extreme amorous state can be conceived as an introjection of the object into the ego”³⁴. The distinction in the following may bear on the essential points. “In the case of identification, the object becomes volatile and disappears, reappearing in the ego, which undergoes a partial transformation on the model of the lost object, in the other case the constituted object benefits from many qualities, due to and at the expense of the ego”. That’s what the French text says.

Why would the object become volatile and disappear and reappear in the ego after undergoing a partial transformation on the model of the lost object? We had better refer to the German text: *Vielleicht trifft eine andere Unterscheidung eher das Wesentliche. Im Falle der Identifizierung ist das Objekt verloren gegangen* [“Maybe a different distinction would be the essential one. In the case of identification, the

³¹ SE XVIII p. 113 op. cit.

³² Ferenczi, S. (1909) op. cit.

³³ This is probably Princess Marie Bonaparte.

³⁴ SE XVIII pp. 113-114 James Strachey’s translation: “Economically there is no question of impoverishment or enrichment; it is even possible to describe an extreme case of being in love as a state in which the ego has introjected the object into itself.”

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173 object has been lost”]³⁵. This is a reference to this fundamental notion we encounter again and again, since Freud explains to us the notion of the origin of the object formation, the notion as fundamental to the identification with the lost object or the abandoned object. Hence there is no object that becomes volatile or disappears, since quite precisely it does not disappear. “It is then reinstated once again in the ego, and the partial ego transforms itself partially, on the model of the lost object. In the other case, the object has remained preserved, and is as such over-invested on behalf of and at the expense of the ego. But this distinction, in turn, brings about a new question: how can we be sure that identification presupposes an abandonment of the investment of the object? Can one not also have an identification with the preserved object? But before we become involved in this particularly thorny problem, we must also pause for a moment to consider another option that can conceive the essence of this state of affairs, namely that the object is placed in the stead of the ego or the ego-ideal”.³⁶

We are left confused by the way this text proceeds. There seems to be no clear result of these forward and backward movements, in which Freud makes it patently obvious that the ambiguity around the very place we might give the object in these different moments, which shift back and forth, around which the object is constituted as object of identification or object of amorous capture... [this ambiguous place] remains almost entirely at the stage of a question.

But the question is indeed asked, and this is all I wanted to emphasise to you. While we cannot quite say it is Freud’s testament, this text we are facing is among those texts where he is at the height of his theoretical work. Let us then attempt to come at the problem using the points of reference we have provided ourselves with in the work we are trying to do here on the relationships between frustration and the constitution of the object. First, we must conceive of the link we regularly establish in our practice, in our way of speaking, between identification and introjection. You will have seen it appear at the very beginning of the passage of Freud’s I just read out. This is what I propose to you - the metaphor underlying introjection is an oral metaphor.

174 As soon as introjection, incorporation, is involved, we usually get pulled into all the formulations given in the Kleinian period - for instance, the well-known constitution of primordial objects, neatly sorted into good and bad, in this alternation of the introjection of objects thought to be something simple, given in this famous primitive, without limits, world, where the subject would make a whole out of his own engulfment in the maternal body. Introjection is taken here to be a function strictly equivalent to

³⁵ GW XIII pp. 106-107, SE XVIII pp. 113-114 James Strachey’s translation: “Another distinction is perhaps better calculated to meet the essence of the matter. In the case of identification the object has been lost or given up;”

³⁶ GW XIII p. 107 “...; es wird dann im Ich wieder aufgerichtet, das Ich verändert sich partiell nach dem Vorbild des verlorenen Objektes. Im anderen Falle ist das Objekt erhalten geblieben und wird als solches von seiten und auf Kosten des Ichs ilberbesetzt. Aber auch hiegegen erhebt sich ein Bedenken. Steht es denn fest, daB die Identifizierung das Aufgeben der Objektbesetzung voraussetzt, kann es nicht Identifizierung bei erhaltenem Objekt geben? Und ehe wir uns in die Diskussion dieser heiklen Frage einlassen, kann uns bereits die Einsicht aufdammern, daB eine andere Alternative das Wesen dieses Sachverhaltes in sich faBt, namlich *ob das Objekt an die Stelle des Ichs oder des Ichideals gesetzt wird.*” SE XVIII p114 James Strachey’s translation: “... ; it is then set up again inside the ego, and the ego makes a partial alteration in itself after the model of the lost object. In the other case the object is retained, and there is a hypercathexis of it by the ego and at the ego’s expense. But here again a difficulty presents itself. Is it quite certain that identification presupposes that object-cathexis has been given up? Can there be no identification while the object is retained? And before we embark upon a discussion of this delicate question, the perception may already be beginning to dawn on us that yet another alternative embraces the real essence of the matter, namely, *whether the object is put in the place of the ego or of the ego ideal.* “

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projection. We can also see, in the way these terms are used, that the object is in this kind of perpetual movement from outside to inside, and when the inside becomes intolerable, it is then pushed from inside to outside, which leaves introjection and projection in a perfect symmetry.

What I will try to articulate for you today is aimed precisely against this misuse, which is far from being a Freudian misuse. I believe it is strictly impossible to conceive - I do not only mean in the conceptualisation, in the order of our thoughts, but in clinical practice - the connections that exist between phenomena such as manifest oral drives, for example, correlative to the turning points of this symbolic reduction of the object that we get fixed on from time to time with varying success in the patients, this 'something' which brings out bulimic impulses at a given point in the cure of a case of fetishism. It is strictly impossible to conceive of this evocation of the oral drive at a certain moment if we hold on to the vague notion, which in these cases will always be close at hand, someone is always going to say that now the subject is regressing because that is indeed why he is here.

Why? Because just as he is making progress in the analysis, that is, trying to take on the perspective of his fetish, he regresses. We can always say it, and no one will be there to contradict us. It is certain that the evocation of the drive - whether it appears in analysis or elsewhere - must be conceived with regard to a certain register, to its economic function, and in relation to the unfolding of a certain symbolically defined relation.

And is there not something that permits us to approach the issue, to clarify it, in terms of the primitive schema I gave you of the child between, on one side, the mother, the support of the first amorous relation inasmuch as love is symbolically structured, insofar as she is an object of appeal and hence an object which is as absent as it is present... the mother, whose gifts are a sign of love and are annulled as such insofar as they are something entirely other than signs of love. And, on the other side, the object of need that she presents to him in the form of her breast? Can't you see that, between the two [sides], it is a question of equilibrium and compensation? Whenever there is a frustration of love, frustration is compensated by the satisfaction of need.

175 It is insofar as the child misses his mother, calls her, hangs on to her, hangs onto her breast and makes it something more significant than this thing from which he cannot be separated - as long as it is in his mouth and as long as it satisfies him, as it leaves him nourished, restored, satisfied. Here, the satisfaction of need is at the same time a compensation, and I would almost say, starts to become an *alibi* for the frustration of love. Henceforth, the prevalence that the object, the breast or the pacifier [*la tétine* - also dummy] accordingly, is founded on precisely the fact that a real object acquires its function as a part of the object of love, that is, it acquires its signification *qua* symbolic; a real object, it becomes a part of the symbolic object and the drive addresses the real object insofar as it is a part of the symbolic object.

This is how we must understand oral absorption, this supposedly regressive mechanism of oral absorption which can intervene in any amorous relation. Of course, this object satisfies a real need at this stage of the object. As soon as a real object can become an element of the symbolic object, any other can satisfy a real need in its place. And the primary candidate - speech - is something that is already symbolised but, as it is plainly materialised, is also an object and can take this place.

Inasmuch as the oral reaction to the primitive 'devouring' object comes in to compensate for the frustration of love - insofar as this is an incorporation-like reaction - the mould, the model is given to this form of incorporation which is an incorporation of certain words among others, and which is at the origin of the premature formation of what we call the superego. What the subject incorporates, in

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the form of the superego, is analogous to the object of need - not because it is itself a gift, but because it is a substitute for the absent gift. That is not the same thing. This is also how the fact of possessing or not possessing a penis can take on a double meaning, entering the subject's imaginary economy in two initially very different ways. For the penis, being a thing, can at any moment place an object somewhere in the lineage and in the stead of the breast and the pacifier [*la tétine* - also dummy]. And it is an oral form of the penis' incorporation that plays a role in the determination of certain symptoms and certain functions. But there is another way the penis becomes part of this economy: not as an object which - if I may say - compensates for the frustration of love, but as something precisely beyond the object of love, something that it lacks. The first, call it the penis, with all that it implies, is all the same an imaginary function insofar as it is imaginarily [*imaginaiement*] incorporated. The second is the phallus that the mother lacks and that is beyond her, beyond her power of love. It is something that she lacks and which I have been asking you about ever since the beginning of this year's seminar: at which moment does the subject discover this lack, in such a way that he himself can end up being involved in substituting himself for it, choosing another path in the reunion with the object of love that slips away, namely, supplying him or her with his or her own lack? This distinction is central, and today it will allow us to make at least a first sketch of what must be in place for such a moment to arise. We already have symbolic structuration, possible introjection, and thus we have in place the most characteristic form of primitive Freudian identification.

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It is this second stage that *Verliebtheit*³⁷ can occur. *Verliebtheit* is absolutely not possible and cannot be articulated other than in the register of the narcissistic relation, the specular relation as the one speaking to you has defined and articulated it. It is insofar as, on a date which can be traced, no earlier than the sixth month, this relation to the other's image appears, which gives the subject a matrix from which to organise what I would call his or her experienced incompleteness, namely, the fact that he or she is missing something, that he or she can be the one who lacks something vis-à-vis this image which presents itself as total - not only fulfilling, but a source of jubilation for him or her, insofar as there is a specific relation between man and his own image.

Insofar as the imaginary comes into play, and on the foundation of these first two symbolic relations between the child's mother and the object, the following can appear: that just as the mother can, he or she can imaginarily lack something; something can exist which is a lack, inasmuch as the subject himself or herself apprehends and experiences a possible lack in the specular relation.

It is thus only at the stage of narcissistic realisation - no further - insofar as this deeply aggressive, tensioned coming and going of the other, around which the successive ego-constituting layers will crystallise, that something can be introduced which makes something appear to the subject beyond what constitutes him or her as an object for the mother. What appears is the form in which in any case the object of love³⁸ is caught, captivated and retained in, something which he or she, himself or herself qua object, cannot manage to embrace - namely this nostalgia, namely this 'something' which relates back to his or her own lack.

³⁷ *Verliebtheit* = being in love, crush. See GW XIII pp. 106-107. SE XVIII pp. 113-114.

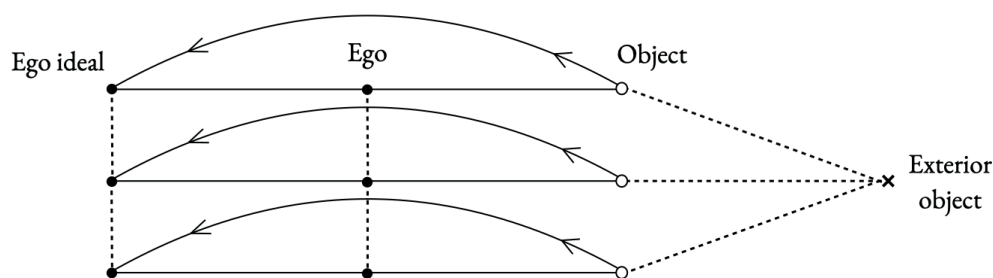
³⁸ 'd'amour' is translated as 'of love' to distinguish it from 'amoureux' translated as amorous. This chimes with the distinction Sigmund Freud makes, to which Jacques Lacan points.

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177 In fact, where we have gotten to today, all this rests on the fact of transmission which makes us suppose - for it is experience that imposes this on us, and because it is an experience to which Freud remained dedicated until the last of his writings - that no satisfaction due to any real object whatsoever that is substituted for it can ever fill this lack - this lack which makes the mother's relation to the child stay like an attachment point for her imaginary involvement with this lack of the phallus. And inasmuch as after the second stage of imaginary specular identification, the child - the subject - gains access to the body image as such, and insofar as the latter provides the original matrix of his or her ego, he or she has already from this moment succeeded in realising what the mother lacks.

But a necessary condition for this specular experience of the other forming a totality regarding which he or she can lack something, is that the subject brings this lack, to which he or she may be led to substitute himself or herself, beyond the object of love, a lack to which he or she can propose him or herself as the object which fills it. I think you have in mind the following: I have led you up to a complete proposal of a shape [*forme*] which you need only keep in mind so that we may resume things exactly and show you what this shape is already giving us. What you can see being sketched here is a new dimension, a new property of what is called the function of the ideal ego in the current state of discussion on the topic, when the functions are distinguished as superego, ideal ego, and ego.

We have to figure out what this object is which, in *Verliebtheit*, positions itself in the place of the ego or the ego ideal - as Freud saw very clearly, and mentions at the end of his article³⁹. Until now, because in explaining narcissism I had to place the accent on the ideal formation of the ego - I mean, in the formation of the ego insofar as it's an ideal formation, the ego unties itself from the ego ideal - I did not sufficiently articulate the difference. But if you simply read Freud, along with his fertile obscurities and his schemas which none of his readers thought to reproduce, what do you find at the end of this chapter? This is how he positions the egos of the different subjects.⁴⁰



178 We have to see why these subjects take communion in the same ideal.

He explains to us that there is an identification, on the part of the ideal ego, with objects which are in the text supposed to be all the same. Simply, if we look at the schema, we notice that he made sure to connect these three objects which we might otherwise suppose to be identical, with an external object behind all these objects. Can you not see in this a striking indication of a direction, a resemblance to what I am trying to explain to you? Namely, that the ideal ego does not simply concern an object, but

³⁹ SE XVII Ch. VII pp. 109-110.

⁴⁰ This schema appears on p. 177 of *Jacques Lacan - Séminaire IV* Éditions du Seuil (1994) edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Graphische Darstellung de Freud*.

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something that is beyond the object and is reflected in this case, as Freud puts it, not purely and simply in the ego which, to be sure, can feel something of it and become impoverished by it, but in something else in very foundations - in its first forms, its first demands, and in fact, the first veil it projects, in the form of the ego ideal. Next time I will take things up again where I am leaving them: relationship of the ego ideal, the fetish, and the object insofar as it is the object which lacks, that is to say, the phallus.

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- 179 Today I intend to take up, once again, the terms in which I am trying to formulate for you this necessary re-casting of the notion of frustration - without which we can see a widening gap between the currently prevalent theories in psychoanalysis and the Freudian doctrine which, as you know, is in my mind nothing less than the sole correct conceptual formulation of the experience that this very same doctrine has created. I will try to articulate something today which may be a little more algebraic than usual, but everything we have done previously has prepared us for it.
- Before starting again, let us punctuate what must come along with certain terms among those we have articulated up until now. Frustration... such as I tried to situate it for you in the little threefold chart¹, that is, between the castration which we started out from in the analytic expression of the Freudian doctrine, and privation which some refer to -- or, rather, let us say that it is variously referred to. Frustration, as a fundamental experience... and insofar as *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*² places it at the heart of all the shortcomings that can be observed through their analysable consequences -- in symptoms, strictly speaking, which are our field... we must understand frustration, I say, so that we can make valid use of it.
- 180 To be sure, it is not entirely without reason that the problem of analytic experience has brought it to the fore of the terms in use. However, even though its prevalence profoundly modifies our entire economy of thought in the presence of neurotic phenomena, it brings us to impasses, in some respects. This is what I am undertaking to demonstrate to you, hopefully with success, through many examples. This is what you will see demonstrated further, insofar as you start to put the analytic literature into practice with one eye open.
- As for frustration, let us first state that it is not purely and simply the refusal of an object of satisfaction. 'Satisfaction' means satisfaction of a need - I do not need to keep insisting on this. We usually state nothing specific when we speak of frustration. We have frustrating experiences, and we think they leave traces. We make use of this without looking any further; we simply forget that in order for things to be this simple, we have to explain why the desire that is apparently being frustrated possesses this characteristic - this property which Freud, ever since the beginning of his works, so strongly emphasises. I am indicating to you that the whole development of his works is geared towards interrogating this enigma, namely that the desire in the unconscious, repressed, is indestructible. This is, strictly speaking, inexplicable if we remain within the perspective of need, for it is certain that all experience we may have of what happens in an animal economy - which is that the frustration of a need necessarily leads to various modifications that are more or less acceptable to the organism - but assuredly one thing is evident, and confirmed by experience: the maintenance, as it were, of desire as such: either the individual yields, or the desire is modified, or it wanes.
- There is, in any case, no necessary link between frustration and maintenance of desire's permanence, or rather its insistence - to use the term I was led to foreground when we spoke about: the automatism of repetition³.
- Also, Freud never speaks of frustration as of a *Versagung*, which lines up much more adequately with the notion of termination, in the sense of terminating a treaty, breaking the contract. And this is so true, that sometimes we may even put *Versagung* on the opposite side, the *Versagung* which can

¹ See *Graphische Darstellung de Freud*, end of Seminar IV: 6th February 1957.

² Nacht S, Bouvet M. and others, *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*, P.U.F; 1956.

³ Probably a reference back to *Seminar III*: 16th May 1956, p. 235 of Russell Grigg's translation.

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even mean both 'promise' and 'breaking a promise', which holds here as it very often does with these words starting with the prefix 'ver-' which is so essential in German that it still holds a stable position in the choice of words in analytic theory.

181 Let us say it straight away: the triad of 'frustration-aggression-regression' is - strictly speaking - if it is given that way - far from having the seductive character of a meaning that is more or less immediately comprehensible. One only has to approach a little closer to notice that it is not in itself comprehensible, that it raises the question of comprehensibility. There is no reason to speak of this sequence as opposed to another - I could say 'depression-contrition', and this would be entirely contingent; I could invent many others. We have to ask the question of the relationships between frustration and regression. This has never been done in a satisfactory way. I am saying that it's not satisfying because the notion of regression is itself not elaborated.

Frustration, then, is not a refusal of an object of satisfaction, and this is not what defines it. It is - and here I will merely leave for later a series of formulae which have already been worked out here. I am thus relatively free from having to prove them - except by allusion. I can display for you a sequence so that you can retain its main articulations, in order to use them and to see if they are of some use. Frustration is originally - since we are submitting ourselves to the method of taking things from the beginning, I am not saying in their development, for this doesn't have the character of a development, but of the primitive relation of the child with his⁴ mother. Frustration in itself is only thinkable - not just any frustration, but a frustration which is of use in our dialectic - as the refusal of the gift which is itself a symbol of something which is called love.

In saying this, I am saying nothing which is not spelled out by Freud himself. The fundamental character of the love relation, with all the complexity that it entails - not only to the second degree, but also to the third degree - involves not only an object before oneself, but a being [être]. This is in Freud, in many passages, thought in terms of the relation which is there from the start. What does this mean? It does not mean that the child knows all about the philosophy of love, or that they've made the distinction between love and desire. It means that they are already steeped in the existence of this symbolic order, and that we can already find proof, in their conduct, that is, certain things are happening which are only conceivable if this symbolic order is present.

Here we are still dealing with this ambiguity, which is born from the fact that we have a science which is a science of the individual, a science of the subject, and we succumb to the need to take things up again at the beginning: in the subject. We forget that the subject qua subject is not identifiable with the individual - that even if the subject were detached, qua 'individual', from the entire order which concerns them qua subject, this order exists. In other words, that the law of intersubjective relations, since it fundamentally governs what the individual depends on, involves them - whether they are aware of it or not - in this order.

182 In other words, far from being able to succeed in this desperate attempt - which is nonetheless always made and remade - I am alluding to these articles of someone named Mallet on the phobias⁵, who wants to tell us how phobias - primitive phobias - explain the child's first relations with the dark, and

⁴ At different places in the translation, the pronouns 'he' and 'she' are used interchangeably to connote that the reference is to a subject, and not necessarily to a specific gender.

⁵ Mallet J., *Contribution à l'étude des phobies*, PUF (1955). Also see "Contribution à l'étude des phobies". ("Contribution to the study of phobias"), Mallet, J. (1956) *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 2 0 (1-2):237-293. (The first part on phobias).

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in particular how these anxieties give rise to the image of the father. This is an attempt which I may actually qualify as desperate, which can only be pulled off by pulling strings as big as your arm. The order of paternity exists, whether the individual lives or not.

Children's terrors take on their meaning, articulated in the intersubjective father-child relation, which is deeply symbolically organised, and they form what might be called the subjective context within which the child will no doubt have to develop their experience, this experience which at each moment is deeply caught up in and reconfigured by this intersubjective relation - retroactively reconfigured - and in which they are engaged by a series of triggers, which are only triggers insofar as they set something off.

The gift in itself entails the whole cycle of exchange: there is only a gift because there is an immense circulation of gifts which capture the intersubjective whole from the standpoint of the subject who enters into it and who is introduced into it in as primitive a fashion as one might suppose. The gift, then, emerges from a 'beyond' of the objectal relation. For, precisely, it supposes that behind it there is this whole order of exchange for the child who will enter it, and they will only emerge from this 'beyond' in her properly symbolic constitutive character. Thus, nothing is a gift unless it is constituted by this act which previously cancelled it, revoked it. It is thus against this background, and *qua* sign of love which has first been cancelled, only to reappear as a pure presence, that the gift responds [se donne] or does not respond to the call.

And I would go even further: I said the 'call', which is in the foreground, but recall what I said when we were doing the psychoses [*Seminar III, 1955-56*] when we were talking about the call, essential as it is for speech.⁶

I would be wrong to stop there, in terms of the structure of speech which entails, in the Other, that the subject receives their own message in inverted form.⁷ But even if we can keep the call isolated, the first moment of speech cannot be sustained in isolation. That is what the Freudian image of the small child's 'fort-da' shows us.⁸ If we remain at the level of the call, it has to be facing its opposite - let us call it the reference point. It is insofar as what is called can be rejected that the call is already fundamental and foundational in the symbolic order, at least is already a completely engaged introduction to the symbolic order. It is precisely this: insofar as this gift responds to the call of what is [there] when it is not there, and when it is there manifests itself essentially only as a sign of a gift - namely, as an object of satisfaction, ultimately, it is nothing.

183 And when it is there, it is precisely there in order to be pushed away, insofar as it is this nothing. The fundamentally deceptive character of this symbolic game, this is the essential articulation around which satisfaction itself is situated and takes on its meaning. Of course, I do not mean that the child does not occasionally have this satisfaction granted to them, where there would be a pure, vital rhythm, but I am saying that all satisfaction that is at stake in frustration comes to be there against the background of the symbolic order's fundamentally deceptive character. And here, satisfaction is only the substitute, the compensation: the child, we might say, destroys whatever is deceptive about the symbolic game itself - in the oral grasp of the object of satisfaction - that is to say the breast, the real object.

⁶ Probably a reference to *Seminar III: 30th November 1955*: pp. 39-40 of Russell Grigg's translation.

⁷ *Seminar III: 30th November 1955*, p. 36 of Russell Grigg's translation.

⁸ Also cited in *Seminar IV: 16th January 1957*: Freud, Sigmund (1920g), "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," SE II, pp. 14-17. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

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And in fact, what lulls the child in its satisfaction is precisely their disappointment, their frustration, this painful dialectic of the object which is at the same time always and never there, in which [painful dialectic] it engages in what Freud generally understands as the outcome, the pure play of what is at the bottom of the subject's relation to the 'presence-absence' couple. Of course here, Freud captures it in its purest state, its detached form, but he recognises this play of relation to a presence against the background of absence, absence as constituting the presence.⁹ The child, then, in its satisfaction, destroys the fundamental insatiability of this relation, in its oral capture with which it [the child] puts the play to rest.

The child smothers what emerges from this fundamentally symbolic relation, and nothing can surprise us in the fact that it is precisely in sleep that, at that moment, the persistence of their desire at the symbolic level manifests itself. Because, I am emphasising it to you this time, even the desire of the child in the supposedly super-simple dreams of childhood - the dream of little Anna Freud - it is not a desire that is associated with pure and simple natural satisfaction. Little Anna Freud says, 'raspberry, flan'¹⁰. What does this mean? These are all transcendent objects, which are already so far into the symbolic order that they are precisely all objects that are forbidden, qua forbidden.

Nothing forces us to think that little Anna Freud was satiated that night; rather, on the contrary. What is sustained in the dream as a desire, certainly an expressed desire, but with all the transposition of the symbolic order, is the desire of the impossible. And, of course, if you could still doubt that speech plays an essential role, I would point out to you that if little Anna Freud had not articulated this in speech, we would never have found out about it. But what happens at the moment when satisfaction, qua
184 satisfaction of a need, is substituted for symbolic satisfaction? Since it is there precisely in order to be substituted, it undergoes a transformation due to this very fact.

If the real object becomes in and of itself a sign in the demand of love, namely, in the symbolic request, it immediately brings about a transformation. I say that the real object here takes on the value of a symbol. It would be pure and simple sleight of hand if I were to tell you that by this fact it becomes a symbol, or nearly, but what takes on accent and symbolic value is the activity which puts this object in the child's possession. It is the child's mode of apprehension. And thus, morality becomes not only what it is - namely, an instinctual mode of hunger carrying a libido, preserving one's own body, which is what Freud is asking himself about. What is this libido: the libido of preservation, or sexual libido? Of course, it is the latter in itself; it is even the latter that involves 'destrudo'¹¹, but it is precisely because it became involved in this dialectic of substitution of satisfaction in the face of the demand of love that it is an eroticised activity in the first place: libido in the strict sense, a sexual libido. All this is not simply vain rhetorical articulation, for it is completely impossible to get by, without eluding them according to the objections that some not-so-subtle people have made to certain analytic remarks - on

⁹ Ibid. SE II, p.p 14-15.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, (Ed. and Trans.), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887- 1904*, pp. 275-276. Initially mentioned in letter of 31st October 1897 (Letter 73). Lacan appears to be mistaken as Freud says strawberries, not raspberries.

¹¹ As in the transcript & untranslated. *Mortido* or *Destrudo* are terms used by some Freudian psychoanalysts to refer to the energy of the death instinct, formed on analogy to the term libido. In the early 21st century, the term has been used more rarely, but still designates the destructive side of psychic energy.

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the topic of the eroticisation of the breast, for example, by Charles Blondel.¹²In the latest issue of *Etudes Philosophiques*, focused on Freudian commentary, Favier-Boutonnier¹³ reminds us in one of her articles¹⁴ that Blondel said: “I am quite open-minded, but what do they make of the case in which the child is not fed by the mother’s breast, but by a bottle?” This is precisely what the things I have just been laying out respond to.

The real object, as soon as it enters the dialectic of frustration, is not in itself indifferent, but there is no reason for it to be specific - to be the mother’s breast - it loses none of the value of its position in the sexual dialectic, the mainspring of the oral zone’s eroticisation. For what plays an essential role in this is precisely not the object, but the fact that the activity took on this eroticised function at the level of desire, which orders itself in the symbolic order. I also ask you to notice in passing that this goes so far that it is possible for the same role to be played even if there is no real object at all, since what’s important here is what makes way for the substitutive satisfaction proper to symbolic satisfaction. This - and this alone - explains the true function of symptoms such as mental anorexia [anorexie mentale].^{15,16}

185 I spoke to you of the primitive relation to the mother, who at this moment becomes a real being, precisely because in being able to refuse indefinitely, she can do literally everything. And, as I told you, it is at her level - and not the level of some hypothesis of a sort of megalomania, which projects onto the child what is merely the analyst’s mind - that the dimension of total power appears for the first time. This *Wirklichkeit*, in German, means efficacy and reality. This essential efficacy first presents itself in this guise, as the total power of the real being on which the gift or absence thereof depends absolutely and irrevocably.

I am telling you that the mother is primordially all-powerful, and that in this dialectic we cannot understand anything at all worthwhile if we eliminate her. This is one of the essential conditions. I am not, as Melanie Klein does, saying that she contains everything.

Another thing I’ll allude to in passing is that we can now start to understand how the immense container of the maternal body, where we find all the primitive fantasy objects, is possible. That it is possible has generally been shown by Melanie Klein. But she has always been hard-pressed to explain how it is possible. And, of course, her adversaries have made use of this in order to say that surely she was dreaming. Of course she was dreaming - she was right to dream, for these facts are possible only through a retroactive projection within the sense of the maternal body, of the whole range of imaginary objects. But they are there, in effect, since it is in the virtual field, in the symbolic nullification through

186 which the mother constitutes herself that all subsequent objects will in turn take on their symbolic value.

¹² Charles Aimé Alfred Blondel (1876-1939), a French philosopher, psychologist, and doctor, was a virulent critic of psychoanalysis.

¹³ Juliette Favez-Boutonnier was a French academic, psychologist and psychoanalyst who founded the organisation Société Française de Psychanalyse (French Society for Psychoanalysis) in 1953 and remained its Vice President for 10 years until its dissolution in 1964.

¹⁴ Favez-Boutonnier, Juliette “La psychanalyse et les problèmes de l’enfance” *Les Études philosophiques*, Nouvelle Série, 11e Année, No. 4, Psychanalyse (Octobre/Decembre 1956), pp. 628-633.

¹⁵ ‘anorexie mentale’ can also be now translated as anorexia nervosa. It is probable that this psychiatric term, which was brought into common use when German-American psychoanalyst Hilde Bruch published *The Golden Cage: the Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa* in 1978, would not have been used by Jacques Lacan in 1957.

¹⁶ In *Jacques Lacan - Séminaire IV Éditions du Seuil* (1994) pp.184-185, two paragraphs are included which have not been translated as they do not appear in the original transcript used for this translation. Adrian Price refers to this as ‘interpolated material’ in Translator’s Notes, ‘XI The Phallus and the Unfulfilled Mother’ – Note 2, *Jacques Lacan – The Object Relation, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV*, Polity Press 2020, p. 437.

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Seen from a slightly more advanced level of a child of two, it is not at all surprising that he finds them projected retroactively, and we might say that in a sense, just like all the rest: since they were ready to be there one day, they were there already. We thus find ourselves at a point when the child ends up in the presence of maternal total power. Since we are dealing with Melanie Klein, you will notice that even though I just made a quick allusion to what might be called the paranoid position, as she herself calls it, we are already at the level of maternal total power with this 'something' that suggests to us what was the depressive position. For, before total power we can suspect that there is something there that is not without relationship with the relation to total power; this sort of disappearance, this micromania - which indeed, contrary to megalomania, takes shape, according to Melanie Klein, in this state.

It is clear that we must not move too fast, because this is not given as such merely by the fact that the dawning of the mother as all-powerful is real. For this to create a depressive effect, the subject must be able to reflect on himself and on the contrast with his impotence. This allows us to specify, in the neighbourhood of this point, what corresponds to this in clinical experience. This brings us to about the sixth month Freud mentions,¹⁷ when the phenomenon of the mirror stage is already happening. You will say: you have already taught us that at the moment when the subject can grasp his own body in its totality, in its specular reflection, it is rather a sense of triumph that they experience, this total other whereby the subject finishes himself off, and gets acquainted with himself. Actually, this is something that we are reconstructing, and not without confirmation from experience - the happy character of this encounter was not in doubt.

But let us not forget that this is different from the experience of mastery, which has an element of 'splitting' which is totally essential to the child's distinction from him or herself, and ultimately for the child's relation to their own ego. Yet another thing, of course, is the experience of mastery and the encounter with the master. It is because, in fact, the form of mastery is given to the child in the form of a totality which itself is alienated from them - but in some way tightly linked to them and dependent on them. But this form, once given... it is precisely before this form in the reality of the master, that is, if the moment of triumph is also the translation [*truchement*] of his defeat and if it is at this moment that this totality in the presence of which the child now finds itself in the form of the maternal body, does not obey the child.

187 It is quite precisely, then, inasmuch as the reflected specular structure of the mirror stage comes into play, that we can imagine that the maternal total power is only reflected as a clearly depressive position - namely the child's feeling of impotence. This is where what I was alluding to earlier, about mental anorexia [*anorexie mentale*], can make an entrance. We could, to rush ahead a bit, say that the only power that the subject has against this total power is to say 'no' at the level of action, and introduce the dimension of negativity there, which of course is not without relationship to the moment I have in mind.

Nevertheless, notice that experience shows, no doubt for a reason, that resistance to total power in the dependence relation is not worked out at the level of action or in the form of negativism. It is at the level of the object insofar as it appeared to us in the guise of 'nothing', the object which is annulled insofar as it is symbolic. It is at the level of the object that the child overcomes their dependency and, precisely by feeding themselves with 'nothing', reverses their relation of dependency. They thereby

¹⁷ Probably a further reference to the 'fort-da' game. See Freud, S., "The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)", "Section H Affect in Dreams - Footnote 1" (1919) SE V p. 461.

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make themselves the master of the total power, avid to support it. And the child depends on this total power yet, from that point on, this power depends on their [the child's] desire and is at the mercy of a manifestation of their caprices, that is, their [the child's] own total power.

So we have to hold it in mind that, very precociously, as a necessary space for even the first imaginary relation to come into play, on which the entire game of the projection of their opposite can take place, we need to start with the following which is essential (to illustrate it in psychological terms which only show a different shade of the first exposition I gave you), the intentionality of love constitutes, very precociously and before any 'beyond' of the object, this fundamentally symbolic structuration. It is impossible to conceive it without positing the symbolic order as already established and, as such, already present.

Experience shows us this. Very quickly Susan Isaacs long ago¹⁸ pointed out that from a precocious age, a child can tell punishment from accidental mistreatment. Before speaking, a child does not react in the same way to a collision and a slap. I'll let you ponder what this implies. You might say: it's interesting, animals are also like this, at least household animals. You'd maybe make an objection which I believe is easy to overturn, but it could be used as a counter-argument. This in fact proves precisely that animals can get a hint of a relationship to their masters, which are within a very peculiar identificatory relationships, a hint of going beyond., But that this is precisely because the animal is not involved with their very being, as people are, within an order of language - even though they do manage to develop the ability to recognise the fact that instead of being hit in the back, they are being punished, but for them [animals] it stops there.

188 Let us once again recall this, since for now we are illuminating the outlines. You may have seen a sort of booklet come out in 1939, as the fourth edition of the year of the 'International Journal of Children's Analysis'. It seems that someone said: 'All the same, there is something in language...'¹⁹. And it seems that a few people were called on to fill the order. I'm basing this on Loewenstein's article²⁰, which is marked by a careful distance and not without skill, which consists in recalling that De Saussure²¹ taught that there is a signifier and a signified -- in short, to show a bit of familiarity, not at all adapted to our experience, though except to say that we have to reflect on what we say such that if we stay at that level of development, I forgive him for not citing my teaching because we are much further ahead. But there is someone named Rycroft who, in the name of the Londoners, is trying to go a bit further, that is to more or less tell us what we are doing: analytic theory about intrapsychic powers [*instances intrapsychiques*] and their interrelations...²² But maybe we should recall that communication theory is needed and that we should remember this regarding the different subfields in the analytic field which must communicate. And we're reminded that when a child cries out, this can be considered a 'total situation': the mother, the cry, the child -- and that because of this, we're in communication theory.

¹⁸ Probably Isaacs, Susan, (1930) *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, Routledge, which examines the relation between thought and fantasy.

¹⁹ Probably Isakower, O. (1939). "On the Exceptional Position of the Auditory Sphere", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 20, pp. 340-348.

²⁰ Possibly Loewenstein, Rudolph (October 1956) "Some remarks on the role of speech in psycho-analytic technique" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 37 p. 460 Published in the same journal as Charles Rycroft (October 1956.)

²¹ Saussure, Ferdinand de *Course in General Linguistics*, Translated by Wade Baskin, Published Columbia University Press (1959.) Translation of *Cours de linguistique generale* (1916).

²² Rycroft, C (October 1956) "The Nature and Function of the Analyst's Communication to the Patient" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Vol. 37 pp. 469-472. Published in the same journal as Rudolph Loewenstein (October 1956).

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The child cries out, and the mother receives the cry as a signal. If we look at it this way, we might be able to reorganise our experience, he says. So now the cry intervenes here as a signal of need -- in fact, this is fully articulated in the article.

The difference between this and what I am teaching you is that this is not at all what is happening. The cry in question is a cry which, already is -- as Freud shows us when he emphasises in the child's manifestations -- not a cry that is taken as a signal, but already insofar as it calls for an answer, it calls as it were against the background of a response, in a state in which language not only is already instituted, but the child is already swimming in a linguistic environment of which, in the form of alternating couples, he can catch onto and articulate the first scraps. The fact here is absolutely essential. It is a cry, but this cry -- the one at play in frustration -- is a cry that's integrated into the synchronic world of cries that are organised into a symbolic system.

189 Some of these cries are already organised into a symbolic system, here and virtually. The human subject is not only made aware of something, which every time signals an object. It is absolutely vicious, fallacious and erroneous, when we're dealing with the symbolic system, to ask about the sign via its relationship to the object of the signal, to the object of the set of the other cries. The cry is already, from the start, meant to be taken note of, almost for us to be held accountable to an Other, beyond. In fact, we have only to notice the interest the child takes, and the child's essential need to receive these moulded cries which we call language, these articulated cries which we call speech, and the interest the child takes in this system for him or herself.

And if the typical tone is precisely the tone of speech, this is because in fact the tone, we might say, is equal to its principle, and from the beginning the child consumes as much speech as they do bread. For words kill them, and as the Evangelist says, 'man doesn't perish only from what enters his mouth, but also from what comes out of it'²³. So, we have to take the next step. You will have noticed that - or rather you didn't notice it but I'd like to point it out - that the term 'regression' can here become applicable, appearing in a light in which it does not ordinarily in any sense.

The term 'regression' is applicable to what happens when the real object, and at the same time the activity which sustains it, becomes a substitute for symbolic demand. When I told you that the child wipes out their disappointment in his satiation and satisfaction, with the contact of the breast or any other object, what is really at stake is what will allow them [the child] to encounter the necessity of the mechanism whereby symbolic frustration can always follow regression. Now we have to make a 'jump' [*English in the original*], because we would be doing something wholly artificial if we were content with pointing out that as of now, everything happens as a matter of course. Namely, in this opening made for the signifier by the imaginary entrance, that is all the relations which will now be established with their own body via the specular relation, you can see clearly how all the body's appurtenances accede to the signifier.

It shouldn't surprise us that excrements are the gift object of choice for a while, since it is surely in the material the child is offered in relation to her own body that she can sometimes find this real that can feed the symbolic. It should be completely unsurprising to you that retention can also sometimes become refusal, and whatever refinements and phenomenological richness analytic experience has found regarding anal symbolism, this should not hold our attention too long. I mentioned a 'jump' because now we have to see how the phallus is introduced into this dialectic of frustration.

²³ St Matthew's Gospel, ch. 4 v4, King James' Bible.

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- 190 Even here, you are still defending the pointless demands of a natural genesis. And if you would like to deduce the fact that the phallus plays an absolutely principal role in genital symbolism from any constitution of the genital organs, you simply won't ever succeed. You will succumb to contortions that I hope to show you in detail: those made by Jones²⁴ when he tries to give a satisfying commentary on the phallic phase such as Freud²⁵ defends it -- just like that, brutally -- and tries to show how it's possible that the phallus she does not have, can be so important for the woman.
- According to him, if a woman has much more difficulty than a boy in integrating this reality of what is going on with their uterus or vagina into a dialectic of desire that satisfies her, it's actually because she has to go through something concerning which she has an entirely different relationship than a man, namely, to what she lacks: that is, the phallus. But the reason why it is like this is certainly not to be deduced in any way from anything originating in the physiological situation of one of the two sexes. We have to base ourselves on the fact that an imaginary phallus's existence is the pivot point of a whole series of facts which require it as a postulate, namely, that we have to study this labyrinth in which the subject regularly gets lost, even comes to be consumed. It's the guiding thread given by the fact that this is what has to be discovered: that the mother lacks the phallus, that it is because she lacks it that she desires it, and that it is only insofar as something gives it to her that she can be satisfied.
- This might seem literally astounding. We have to set out from astonishment. The main virtue of knowledge is to be able to confront what is not straightforward: we are nonetheless maybe a little prepared to admit that it is the lack which is here the main desire.
- 191 If we allow that this is also the characteristic of the symbolic order, in other words that it is insofar as the phallus plays a major signifying role that the situation looks as it does, and it presents itself like this because the signifier is not invented by each subject at the whims of his or her sex or constitution, or the way he or she goes around frolicking at birth: the signifier exists. There is no doubt that the phallus as a signifier plays an implicit role, since it took analysis to discover it, but it is absolutely essential. I am emphasising simply in passing the question it poses, so that we may leave the field of analysis behind for a moment. I asked the following question of Lévi-Strauss: about *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*²⁶ "You speak of the dialectic of the exchange of women through lineages, which you posit as a sort of postulate, a choice: women are exchanged between generations. I took a woman from one lineage, so I owe another woman to the following generation or to another lineage. This has to close off at some point. If we do this following the law of exchange and arranged marriages between cross-cousins, things would circulate very quickly in a circle which would have no reason to close off, or to break, but if you do it with what we call 'parallel cousins' some pretty troublesome things can result, because things tend to converge after a certain while, and there tend to be bits and pieces in the exchange within the lineages."
- I then asked this question of Lévi-Strauss: "Ultimately if you created this circle of exchange, but reversed, so that according to each generation the feminine lines produce men and exchange them ...

²⁴ Jones, Ernest (1933) "The Phallic Phase" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. XIV; Jones Ernest (1948) *Papers on Psychoanalysis* Fifth Edition, Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London, p. 456.

²⁵ See Freud, S. (1924d) "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" SE XIX pp. 174-176 & pp. 178-179 and Freud, S. (1925) "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" SE XIX pp. 251-253.

See www.Freud2Lacan.com

²⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss (1949) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, (*Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté*). A revised edition under the same title was published in France in 1969. Translated from the French by James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer and Rodney Needham (Ed), Beacon Press Boston (1969).

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for ultimately we are already informed that the lack in women that we're speaking of is not a real lack, for as everyone knows, she can have the phallus. They have phalluses, and they also produce them, they create boys - phallus-bearers²⁷ - and as a consequence we can describe the exchange across the generations in a very simple way. We can describe things in the reverse order. We can describe, from the point of view of formalisation, the exact same things in the same way, symmetrically, taking our reference points and our coordinate system from the women".

Only, if we do it this way, a bunch of things become inexplicable and they are only explained as follows: in all cases where political power - even in matriarchal societies - is androcentric, it is represented by men and male lineages. And any strange anomaly in these exchanges- any modification, exception, paradox - which may appear in the laws of exchange at the level of the elementary structures of kinship, are strictly speaking explicable only with regard and in reference to something which is outside the game of kinship: the political context. That is, namely, the order of power and specifically the order of the signifier, where the sceptre and the phallus coincide.

192 It is precisely for reasons that are inscribed in the symbolic order, namely in this 'something' that transcends individual development; it is as symbolised imaginary that the fact that one has or doesn't have a phallus takes on the economic importance that it has at the level of the Oedipus. This simultaneously motivates the importance of the castration complex and the preeminence of the major authority of the phallic mother which, ever since it appeared on the analytic horizon, has been such a problem, as you know. Before I come to the way the dialectic of the phallus is articulated at the level of the Oedipus, and how it is finished and resolved, I want to show you that I, too, can stay awhile in the preoedipal stages, as long as I am guided by the thread of the fundamental role of the symbolic relation - and I want to make a few remarks, which are as follows: at the level of its imaginary function, at the level of the supposed demand of the phallic mother, what role does this phallus play?

Here I would like to show you once more how this notion of the lack of the object is absolutely essential, simply in order to read the right psychoanalytic authors, among which I count Karl Abraham who wrote a simply admirable article on the castration complex in women in 1920²⁸. He gives the example of a little girl of two, who goes into the cigar chest after lunch and gives one to daddy, the second to mummy who doesn't smoke, and puts the third between her legs. Mummy cleans up the whole display, and puts the cigars back in the box. It is no accident that the little girl goes back and starts all over again - everything is in its proper place.

I regret that this is not commented on in a more articulate way, for if we admit that the third action - as Abraham admits implicitly, since he cites it as an example - indicates that the little girl is lacking this symbolic object, she is manifesting this lack in this specific way. And doubtless it is in this sense that she first gave it to the one who is not lacking it, to show what the mother has to do with it (she who is lacking it), and to emphasise in what sense she can desire it, to satisfy the one who is lacking it, just as experience proves. For if you read Freud's article on feminine sexuality²⁹, you will learn that for the

²⁷ *Phallophores* in the French transcript. The suffix -phore has the primary meaning of 'bearing', 'having, by its nature'; the secondary meaning is 'transmitting', 'transporting', 'producing'.

²⁸ Abraham, Karl (1922) "Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Vol. 3 pp. 1-29; Abraham Karl (1927) *Manifestation of the female castration complex*, Selected Papers, Hogarth Press, p. 338 First published in 1920 as "Äusserungsformen des weiblichen Kastrationskomplexes" This is also cited in *Seminar IV 30th January 1957*.

²⁹ Probably Freud S. (1931b) "Female Sexuality" SE XXI . p. 225; pp. 221-243. See www.Freud2Lacan.com.

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little girl it is not simply a matter of lacking the phallus, but indeed giving it or giving its equivalent to the mother, as if she were a little boy.

193 This is just a story to introduce you to the fact that you must be able to figure that nothing is conceivable in the phenomenology of perversions - I mean, directly - if you do not set out from this idea that it's about the phallus, which is much simpler than what is usually given with these sort of shadows of id-entification, re-entification³⁰, projection, and all these layers... we get lost in this labyrinth. We must figure out how the child, consciously or not, realises that their mother is all-powerful with regard to *something*, and the question is by what means they will give her the object she is lacking - an object which they themselves still lack.

For let us not forget that after all, the little boy's phallus is not much more robust than the little girl's, and this, naturally, has been noted by good authors. Jones nonetheless noticed that Karen Horney was siding with his opponent - in this case, Freud³¹. And this fundamentally deficient character of the little boy's phallus - indeed, the shame he experiences about it, and the deep inadequacy he may feel, is something she was able to bring to the forefront - not in an effort to bridge the gap that is the difference between the little girl and little boy, but in order to illuminate one with the other.

Let us remember, in light of this, the value of the little boy's discovery about himself, so that we can understand the precise value of seduction attempts towards the mother. These seduction attempts are deeply marked with a narcissistic conflict. It is always the arrival of the first narcissistic wounds which are but preludes, indeed the preconditions, of certain subsequent effects of castration, but which we should look at more closely. Ultimately, rather than a simple drive or sexual aggressiveness, what is at issue is the fact that the boy wants us to think he is a male, or a phallus-bearer, even though he is only halfway a phallus-bearer.

In other words, what matters in the whole pre-oedipal period, where perversions originate, is a game which is being played, a counting game, Three-card Monte³², or even our game of odds and evens.³³ We must see where this phallus is and is not. It is fundamental as a signifier within this imaginary of the mother, which must be encountered for absolutely fundamental reasons, since the child's ego is

³⁰ Entification: The action of giving objective existence to something, Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, (1989)
Note: Jacques Lacan elaborates this to produce, id-entification & re-entification.

³¹ Sigmund Freud comments on Karen Horney

"Thus, for instance, Karin Horney (1926) is of the opinion that we greatly over-estimate the girl's primary penisenvy and that the strength of the masculine trend which she develops later is to be attributed to a secondary penisenvy which is used to fend off her feminine impulses and, in particular, her feminine attachment to her father. This does not tally with my impressions." Freud, Sigmund (1931b) "Female Sexuality" SE XXI pp. 242-243 Karen Horney (1926) "The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity-Complex in Women, as Viewed by Men and by Women" International Journal of Psychoanalysis Vol. 7 pp. 324-339, See p. 324.

Sigmund Freud comments on Ernest Jones

"A similar objection applies to Ernest Jones's view (1927) that the phallic phase in girls is a secondary, protective reaction rather than a genuine developmental stage. This does not correspond either to the dynamic or the chronological position of things." Sigmund Freud (1931b) p243 Ernest Jones (1927) "The early development of female sexuality" International Journal of Psychoanalysis Vol. 8 pp. 459-472, See pp. 460-461.

³² From Wikipedia : 'Three-card Monte' – also known as 'Find the Lady' and 'Three-card Trick' - is a confidence game in which the victims, or "marks", are tricked into betting a sum of money, on the assumption that they can find the "money card" among three face-down playing cards.

³³ 'Odds and evens' is cited in *Seminar IV 5th December 1956 & Seminar IV 23rd January 1957* & also *Seminar II 23rd March 1955 & Seminar II 30th March 1955 & Seminar II 27th April 1955*.

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resting on the mother's total power. The phallus is never really where it is, and it is never completely absent where it is not.³⁴

194 And we must understand the whole classification of perversions by the following fact: whatever the value of what we have been able to bring in by way of identification with the mother, identification with the object, etc., what is essential is that in, let us take for example transvestism - see the article by Otto Fenichel in the introduction to the International Journal³⁵ - the subject calls into question his phallus in transvestism. We forget that transvestism is not simply a matter of a more or less transposed homosexuality. It is not simply a particular form of fetishism, specific to the fact that the fetish must be worn on the subject, shows Fénelichel - who rightly emphasises that what is under women's [*féminins*]
clothes is a woman. The subject identifies with a woman who has a phallus, only she has one insofar as it's a hidden one.

This demonstrates that the phallus must always participate in this 'something' which veils it, and we see there the essential importance of what I have called the veil, the existence of the clothes - which means that it is through them that the object materialises. Even when the real object is there, we must be able to think that it might not be there, and that it is always possible that we think that it is there precisely where it is not.

Similarly, in masculine homosexuality - to restrict ourselves to that, today - it is still the phallus that is at stake for the subject. But, oddly, it is still his, even insofar as he seeks it in another. As a matter of fact, all perversions can be identified through the extent to which they in some way play with this signifying object insofar as it is by its nature and in and of itself, a true signifier - that is, something which can never be reduced to its spatial coordinates. Yet we nonetheless get our hands on it, when we find it fixed definitively in the perversion of perversions, the one which is called fetishism. For that is the one that shows, not only where it truly is, but what it is. When we find it, it is really nothing: old worn clothes, a rag - a part of fetishism is what we see in transvestism. Ultimately, it's a little worn-out shoe³⁶.

When it appears, when it truly reveals itself, it's the fetish. What does this mean? It means that what emerges at this stage and just before the Oedipus is a primitive relation, which I established for you today and which I set out from: primitive frustration and Oedipus. We have, as constitutive of the intersubjective dialectic, the stage when the child gets involved in the dialectic of the lure wherein, essentially to satisfy what cannot be satisfied, namely a desire of the mother which is fundamentally insatiable. The child, by whatever path, sets out along this path, that of making themselves a deceptive object.

I mean that this desire, which is insatiable, must be tricked, and it is quite precisely insofar as he [the child] shows that he does not belong to his mother that he constructs the network of pathways around which the ego stabilises itself. These characteristic stages are already marked - as Freud showed in his last article, *On Splitting* - by the deep ambiguity of the subject and of the object³⁷.

³⁴ Probably a reference to 'Wo es war soll Ich werden': Where it was I must come to be. Last paragraph of "Lecture XXXI - Dissection of the personality" Freud Sigmund (1932) SE XII. Two previous citations in *Seminar IV 5th December 1956*

³⁵ Probably p. 213 of Fenichel Otto (1930) "The Psychology of Transvestism" International Journal of Psychoanalysis Vol. 11 pp. 211-226.

³⁶ Other references to a shoe in *Seminar IV* on 28th November 1956 (p. 11), 5th December 1956 (p. 1) On foot and shoe fetishes see Freud, S. (1905), "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" SE VII p155 & in *Seminar IV* on 19th December 1956 (p. 11), 16th January 1957 (p. 7) & 30th January 1957 (p.8).

³⁷ Probably Freud, Sigmund (1940e) "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence" SE XXIII pp. 271-278. See p.275.

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That is to say, it is insofar as the child makes a deceptive object of themselves, that they find themselves engaged vis-à-vis the other in this position where the intersubjective relation is fully constituted - not simply as a sort of immediate lure, as happens in the animal kingdom, where in short the one who is decked out in colours just has to erect the whole situation in making his display - but on the contrary, in that the subject supposes desire in the other. It's an implicit desire that must be satisfied, and since it is a desire that cannot be satisfied, one can only deceive it.

What gets established in this relation, which is so characteristic and which we always forget: human exhibitionism is not like the exhibitionism of others, like the robin. It is something which undoes its pants at a given moment, and then closes them again. If there are no pants, there is a dimension of exhibitionism that is missing. So, what is happening here? There we also possibly see regression, for ultimately this unquenchable, unsatisfied mother, around whom the child's whole lead-up towards the path of narcissism is constructed, is a real person. She is there and like all unsatisfied beings, she is there looking for what she is going to devour. The very same thing that the child previously used to destroy his symbolic satisfaction, he now finds in front of him, possibly an open mouth.

We also find the projected image of the oral situation at the level of imaginary sexual satisfaction.

The gaping hole on the head of Medusa is a devouring figure which the child encounters as a possible escape, in this search for the mother's satisfaction. It is a great danger which is precisely that which our fantasies reveal to us. We find the fantasy of being devoured at the origin, and we find it again along this detour where it presents the original form in which phobia manifests itself.

We can see this when we look at the little Hans' own fears³⁸. Little Hans now appears in slightly clearer conditions. At this detour, if you have the support of what I gave you today, you will be better able to see the creations of phobia and perversion. You will also be able to see more clearly what I pointed out to you last time: how the function of the ego ideal appears, and you will be able to better interpret, I believe, than Freud was able to - for there is a hesitation on this subject in his observations - the way of identifying what little Hans calls the big giraffe and the small giraffe.

As Prévert said: "Large giraffes are mute, small giraffes are rare"³⁹. In little Hans it is quite badly interpreted, but we nonetheless get close to what is at stake, and this is pretty clear from the simple fact that little Hans is sitting on it, despite the cries of the large giraffe - which is incontestably his mother.

³⁸ Freud, Sigmund (1909) "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy – 'Little Hans'" SE X pp. 5-149. See p. 22. www.Freud2Lacan.com

³⁹ The giraffe opera - Theater / Poems by Jacques Prévert.

Session of 6th March 1957¹

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

¹ NOTE: From Adrian Price's Translator's Note on "XII On the Oedipus Complex", p438 of Jacques Lacan - The Object Relation - The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, Polity Press (2020), the dates given to two sessions have been reversed. This session given on 6th March is published as if given on 13th March & the session given on 13th March is published as the 6th March. The same reversal has been made in Jacques Lacan - Le Séminaire livre IV - La relation d'objet edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, du Seuil (Mars 1994). In this translation, the page number which refer to the French text jump from p. 198 at the end of 25th February 1957 to p. 215 at the beginning of this session. More detail at <https://lacanianworks.net/2022/03/seminar-iv-6th-march-1957-reversing-sense-1st-march-2022-julia-evans/>

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Agent	Lack	Object
<i>Real</i> father	Castration: <i>symbolic</i> debt	<i>Imaginary</i> : phallus
<i>Symbolic</i> mother	Frustration: <i>imaginary</i> detriment	<i>Real</i> : breast, penis
<i>Imaginary</i> father	Privation: <i>real</i> hole	<i>Symbolic</i> : child

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Chart adapted from [http://staferla.free.fr/Séminaire 4 – La relation d'objet](http://staferla.free.fr/Séminaire%204%20-%20La%20relation%20d'objet), Jacques Lacan, p. 282. Also shown in *Le Séminaire Livre IV (1994)*

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Today we will try to talk about castration. You can see that in Freud's works, even though castration understood in terms of the Oedipus complex is everywhere, it is really only for the sake of the Oedipus complex that Freud attempts to fully articulate its formulation, in an article from 1931² about something completely new. And yet, the Oedipus complex is there from the beginning in Freud's thought³, because we might say that the great personal problem he started off with is: 'what is a father?' There can be no doubt about this because we know that his biography – his letters to Fliess – confirm that the presence of this topic and his preoccupation with it are at the origin of the Oedipus complex. And Freud only explained this at a much later date. As for castration, we can't find it anywhere, or anything comparable. Freud never fully articulated the precise meaning, the precise psychic impact of this fear, this threat, this insistent plea, this dramatic moment – where these words can also be laid out with a question mark regarding castration.

Ultimately, when last time I started to approach the issue through the covert arrival of frustration⁴, the imaginary phallic game with the mother, many of you – even if you understood the way I illustrated it with the intervention of the father (his symbolic persona being purely and simply the symbolic persona of dreams) – remained perplexed on the topic: What is this castration all about? What does it mean to say that for the subject to attain 'genital maturity', he more or less has to have been castrated? If you consider things simply at the level of reading – even though it is nowhere articulated in this way – it is literally implied everywhere in Freud's works.

If you will, castration is the sign of the Oedipal drama, for it is its implicit hinge. This may pass

² Freud Sigmund "Female Sexuality" (1931b) SE XXI p221-243. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

³ Freud's letters to Fliess enable us to see him get to grips with the Oedipus complex. In the summer and autumn of 1897 his self-analysis revealed the essential features of the Oedipus complex. The first hint of the Oedipus complex can be seen in Draft N - Notes (III) (31st May 1897), enclosed with Letter of 31st May 1897 - Letter 64: 'It seems as though this death wish is directed in sons against their fathers and in daughters against their mothers.' p250 of *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904* Translated & edited by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Belknap Press (1985)

⁴ References to frustration in the last session :

Seminar IV : 27th February 1957 : paragraph 1, p1, Today I intend to take up, once again, the terms in which I am trying to formulate for you this necessary re-casting of the notion of frustration

Then about 23 further references to frustration TO

Seminar IV : 27th February 1957 : paragraph 54, p12, When it appears, when it truly reveals itself, it's the fetish. What does this mean? It means that what emerges at this stage and just before the Oedipus is a primitive relation, which I established for you today and which I set out from: primitive frustration and Oedipus.

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unnoticed, may be taken as a sort of 'as if', which comes down to hearing the flow of analytic discourse which seems questionable in its [...] But from the moment when it's enough that the text makes you stop for a moment – as I am doing now – so that in fact the abruptness of this statement will appear to you as problematic, as it in fact is. And moreover, as paradoxical as it may be, you may take this formula which I was just alluding to as a point of departure. What does such a formulation mean, then? What does it imply? What does it presuppose?

This is indeed what authors have been attached to. Because all the same, a few have not failed to stop at the strangeness of such a consequence. And first among them, for example Ernest Jones – you will notice it, if you read his works – never managed to overcome the difficulties of getting a handle on the castration complex as such. He tried to formulate a term unique to him. But to be sure [...] like everything that is introduced in the analytic community [...], made its way in and made waves. This notion, specific to him and cited mainly by English authors, is 'aphanisis' [Greek φανισις, to disappear].⁵

217 This is the solution Jones tried to give for the way castration impacts the history of psychic life: We cannot, at least according to him, attribute the fear of castration to accidents, to contingent threats – even if these always recur in histories, or by the fact that it's expressed in the well-known parental threat: 'We'll have someone cut that off'. The paradoxically motivated aspect, which is not rooted in the need for a kind of necessary constant for interpersonal relations, is not the only thing that has puzzled other authors. The very handling of castration that Freud articulates, indeed as something which precisely threatens the penis: the phallus ... This is exactly the question. This difficulty of integrating something so singular, in its positive form, encouraged Jones to ground the central developmental mechanism in it - the mechanism through which it [castration] is mainly constituted. This is his focus, at the moment when he really starts to approach the problem around which the superego must build itself. This leads him to foreground the notion of aphanisis – for which it will suffice for me to try to explain to you in order to see to what extent it presents great difficulties. In fact, aphanisis is disappearance⁶, but the disappearance of what? For Jones, the disappearance of desire. The castration complex, understood as aphanisis, is substituted for castration. This is the subject fearing that desire will fade in her. I believe you cannot fail to see that such a notion itself represents a highly subjectivised relation. It is perhaps indeed something conceivable as a source of primordial anguish [*l'angoisse*]⁷. But surely, this is a strangely reflective form of anguish [*l'angoisse*]?

It seems that we really have to make a sort of leap into an open-ended understanding, which supposes the opening of a great chasm. This way, we can set off from the given of a subject who is caught from her first movements of relation to the place of these objects – assumed to already be able to take the kind of step back which lets her not only express frustration as such, but append to this frustration the fear of desire drying up. In fact, it is indeed around the notion of privation, insofar as it invokes

⁵ Ernest Jones, The early development of female sexuality, International Journal of Psycho-Analysis (IJPA), vol viii (1927) pp. 459-472 or Ernest Jones, Papers on Psycho-Analysis: Fifth Edition (1948) pp. 238-451. Further citations in Seminar IV on 5th December 1956; 9th January 1957; 27th February 1957. Aphanisis is used on p. 461, p. 462, p. 463, p. 467, p. 468, p. 470, p. 472 of Jones (1929). Information <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12161>

⁶ Seminar XI: 4th June 1964 is a session where Jacques Lacan further explores aphanisis. pp. 216-229 of Alan Sheridan's translation, titled 'The Subject and the Other – Aphanisis'. Jacques Lacan. The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964. London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977. See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=1145>

⁷ '*Angoisse*' has been translated as anguish to distinguish it from anxiety (*anxiété*)

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the fear of aphanisis, that Jones attempted to articulate his theory of the genesis of the superego as the normal outcome – the form the Oedipus normally comes to take. And of course he met with the same distinctions to which, I believe, we can give a form that makes them easier to handle.

Namely, when he is talking about the term ‘privation’ he cannot, not even for an instant, fail to distinguish between pure privation – which means that the subject is not satisfied in one of her needs – and what he calls ‘deliberate’ privation, which supposes that there is another subject in front of her who refuses the satisfaction she seeks. Moreover, it is not easy, from ambiguous data, to make the transition from one to the other, especially when they are treated as synonymous. Naturally, he ends up pointing out that privation is most often taken to be frustration, and is equivalent to frustration for the subject.

218 From this point on, of course, much is facilitated within the articulation of a process. But if they are facilitated for the locutioner [*élocuteur*], this does not mean that they are as easy for the more demanding listener [*auditeur*]. In fact on this table, I do not use the term [*terme*] ‘privation’ with the same meaning as Jones. The privation we’re talking about in this table⁸, insofar as it intervenes as one of the terms, is this something in relationship to [*par rapport*] which the concept of castration must locate itself. If, as you have seen, I try to give back to the term, frustration, its complexity of the true relationship [*rappport*] and this, in the session before the break⁹, I did this in a very articulate way¹⁰, and there’s enough for you to see that I don’t use the term frustration in the summary form in which it is usually used. ...privation and castration are distinguished, only because it is indeed not possible to articulate on the impact of castration without separating out the notion of privation insofar as it is what I called a ‘real hole’. In other words – in order to reestablish things, rather than muddying the waters [*noyer le poisson*, lit. “drowning the fish”] – let us instead try to isolate the privation that is at stake. Privation is the privation of the fish [*le poisson*]: The fact that women, specifically, do not have a penis. I mean that the impact of this fact is constantly felt in the development of almost all the cases Freud presents:

- that the woman does not have a penis, and
- that the assumption of the fact that the woman lacks one, and
- that she gives the boy the clearest example that we encounter all the time in the history of Freud’s cases
- that castration, therefore, if we are looking for it, takes as its base this apprehension in the real, of the absence of a penis in women,
- that here is the crucial point in most of the cases on which the notion of privation hinges, in the experience of the male subject, the basis on which it rests in such an especially anguishing [*angoissante*], efficacious manner.

It’s simply that a part of all human beings is actually, as it is called in some texts, ‘bowdlerised’ [*châtrés*]¹¹. Of course, the term is totally ambiguous: they are ‘bowdlerised’ in the subjectivity of the subject. What

⁸ See beginning of this session.

⁹ This is from 6th February 1957. There were no sessions on 13th February & 20th February, and they resumed on 27th February 1957.

¹⁰ See i) Similar ground is covered in Seminar III : 21st March 1956 - P176 of *The Psychoses*, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book III 1955-1956 : Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller : Translated by Russell Grigg : Routledge : 1993 : from ‘I should say that strictly speaking there is no symbolisation of woman's sex as such. ...’ See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=657> ii) Seminar IV : 6th February 1957 : paragraph 34-40, p10 [Why? Because just as he is making progress in the analysis, ... to ...the most characteristic form of primitive Freudian identification.] See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=11980>

¹¹ ‘*Châtrés*’ also translated as ‘neutered’.

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they are in the real, and what is invoked as real experience, is that they are in reality deprived [*privés*] of something. The sense I am alluding to is this reference to the real around which the experience of castration turns in the doctrine of Freud's texts. I pointed out to you that in order to correctly articulate our thoughts on this topic, what we have to correlate with this privation in the real, is the fact that necessarily what matters – just in putting things this way in reference - is not the patient's experience. It is the experiences of our thoughts, our own way of apprehending what is going on.

219 The very concept of privation is made particularly tangible and visible in an experience like this one, which implicates the symbolisation of the object. In the real, nothing lacks anything. Everything real is self-sufficient, because the real is full by definition. It is insofar as we already symbolise the real to some extent that we introduce the notion of privation into the real. And we even symbolise it fully, if we are able to indicate that if something is not there, it is precisely because we are presupposing its possible presence. That is, we introduce the very order of the symbolic into the real so that we can, in a sense, cover it up; dig into it. This is why I am saying that at the level of this step, the object in question is the penis. This object is given to us in symbolic form as a moment or a layer where we speak of privation.

Agent	Lack	Object
<i>Real father</i>	Symbolic castration	Imaginary phallus
<i>Symbolic mother</i>	Imaginary frustration	Real (réel) breast
<i>Imaginary father</i>	Real (réelle) privation	Symbolic phallus

By the way, I want to remind you of the indispensability of this chart. It is totally clear that castration – insofar as it is effective, experienced, present in the genesis of a neurosis – is the castration of an imaginary object. No castration that is at stake in the formation of a neurosis is a real castration. Castration comes into the picture inasmuch as it enjoys¹² within the subject under the form of an action bearing on an imaginary object. Our problem is to figure out why – by what necessity – this castration occurs in the subject's typical development.

He acts by himself as [*Il s'agit qu'il*] he re-joins this complex order that constitutes the relation [*relation*] of the man to the woman, which means that the genital realisation is, for the human species, subject to a number of conditions. Like last time, we begin with the subject in his originary relationship with his mother, within the stage we call 'pre-oedipal'¹³. We have seen that there is a lot we can say about this stage. We hope to have been more articulate than is usually the case when this

¹² The transcript gives '*elle joue*'. It is probable that '*jouir*' has been misheard as '*jouer*'. The transcription should read '*elle jouit*'. On this premise it is translated as 'enjoys' rather than 'plays'.

¹³ References to relationship with his mother in the last session :

27th February 1957, paragraph 46, p10, I want to show you that I, too, can stay awhile in the preoedipal stages, as long as I am guided by the thread of the fundamental role of the symbolic relation - and I want to make a few remarks, which are as follows: at the level of its imaginary function, at the level of the supposed demand of the phallic mother, what role does this phallus enjoy [*joue/jouit*]?

27th February 1957, paragraph 52, p11, In other words, what matters in the whole pre-oedipal period, where perversions originate, is a game which is being pursued, a counting game, Three-card Monte, or even our game of odds and evens. We must see where this phallus is and is not. It is fundamental as a signifier within this imaginary of the mother, which must be encountered for absolutely fundamental reasons, since the child's ego is resting on the mother's total power. The phallus is never really where it is, and it is never completely absent where it is not.

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pre-oedipal stage is discussed – I mean, by recognising more distinctly that which, incidentally, is always somewhere or other in all authors' discourse. Even if these are demonstrated, it is not handled as well or as convincingly. We will start from there, in order to, in some sense, catch this necessity of the phenomenon of castration at its birth, insofar as symbolising a symbolic debt; a symbolic punishment; something which is inscribed in the symbolic scene insofar as he uses this imaginary object as he would use his own instrument.

In order to guide us, so that we can refer to terms that I have already introduced, I ask you to first accept for a moment the hypothesis – the supposition – on which our articulation can then be based. We saw it last time¹⁴: behind this symbolic mother we say that there is this symbolic father who is in some sense a necessary element for symbolic construction. But also, we saw that we can only situate this in a 'beyond' – I would almost say a transcendence – at any rate in something that, as I indicated in passing, is only achieved through a mythic [*mythique*] construction.

I have often insisted on the fact that this symbolic father is ultimately not represented anywhere. And the following will confirm whether this is valid, whether it is actually useful for helping us find these elements of this castration drama in a complex reality.

Here we can see the real father, hidden, and here is the imaginary father:

Agent	Lack	Object
Real father	Symbolic castration	Imaginary phallus
Symbolic mother	Imaginary frustration	Real breast
Imaginary father	Real privation	Symbolic phallus

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If the symbolic father is the signifier, we can never speak about him other than by finding both his necessity and his character – which we have to accept as a sort of irreducible given of the signifier's world. If, then, this is how it is with the symbolic father, the imaginary and real father are two terms with which we have far fewer difficulties. We are constantly dealing with the imaginary father. In the permitted dialectic he was what was referred to most commonly: the whole dialectic of aggressivity, of identification, and of idealisation – through which the subject attains what is called 'identification with the father'. All this happens at the level of the imaginary father.

We are calling it 'imaginary' because he is thus integrated into this relation of the imaginary that forms the psychological basis of relations that are, strictly speaking, 'species' relations, relations of similarity – the same that are at the bottom of all libidinal capture, as well as all aggressive reaction. This applies equally to this imaginary father, with his typical characteristics. This imaginary father is at the same time the frightening father that we recognise at the bottom of so many neurotic experiences. This is a father who has no necessary relation at all to the child's real father.

This explains why a figure of the father also, especially, a figure of the mother, crops up in children's fantasies so often. This figure, sometimes very distorted, really only has a very distant relationship

¹⁴ For the 'last time' see i) Seminar IV: 27th February 1957: paragraph 9, p.2 [The fundamental character of the love relation, ... [to] ... if this symbolic order is present.] ii) Seminar IV: 27th February 1957: paragraph 11-13, p2 [It means that they are already steeped in the existence of this symbolic order, ... [to] ... when we were talking about the call, essential as it is for speech].

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with what has been present in the child's real father. And this is solely tied to the period and also the function that the imaginary father is going to enjoy¹⁵ at any given moment of development. The real father is something entirely different. It is something that the child, like every other human being, ultimately can apprehend only with great difficulty, because of this interposition of fantasies, as well as the necessity of the symbolic relation.

If there is anything basic and fundamental to all analytic experience, it is why it is so hard to apprehend what is most real around us – that is, human beings just as they are. This is the entire difficulty, not only of psychic development, but of daily life: knowing who we are really dealing with – at least, a figure who is, in ordinary conditions, bound by his presence to the development of a child. He is a father, who can rightly be considered a constant element within what these days we call the child's family circle.

And, to be sure, I ask you to take on what may, from certain angles, look like a question which may initially appear paradoxical. Actually, contrary to a normative, typical, conception of the father in the insistence of the castration complex in the Oedipal drama, the key function of what happens around the castration complex is in fact deferred to the real father.

So you can see that, with the way I am formulating it, what can already appear as a contingent fact, difficult to explain – why this castration? - why this bizarre form of intervention in the subject's
221 libidinal economy called 'castration'? is something shocking in itself.

I would augment its contingency by saying that it is not an accident, that it is not due to some sort of oddity of this subject's early mannerisms that the doctor first attended to those things that are recognised as being more fantasmatic than we first thought – that is, the scenes of primitive seduction. You know that it is a stage in Freud's thinking, before he became doctrinal about the topic. But for castration, we don't need to 'fantasmaticise' [*fantasmatiser*] the whole business of castration as we did with the scenes of primitive seduction.

If castration is indeed something that deserves to be isolated and given a name in the history of the subject, it is always linked to the impact, the intervention, of the real father. Or, if you will, it is also very deeply marked, and deeply destabilised, by the absence of the real father. And it is solely regarding this necessity that a sort of deep atypicality comes into the picture, which requires that the real father be substituted with something else which is deeply neuroticising [*névrosant*]. Thus, it is on the supposition of a fundamental link between the real father and castration that we will set out to attempt to orient ourselves in the complex dramas that Freud constructs for us, where quite often we have the feeling that he allows himself to be directed in advance by a guiding thread – which is sometimes very certain, like in the case of little Hans¹⁶ – such that, as I pointed out, we ourselves had a sense of being guided at every moment, albeit without grasping anything, not even the patterns which direct us at every turn.

So I ask you to admit for a moment, provisionally, that we will start to attempt to understand this necessity of the significance of the castration complex according to this position. Let us take the case of little Hans. Little Hans, from the age of four and a half, experiences what we call a phobia – that is, a neurosis. This phobia is handled by someone who turns out to be one of Freud's disciples. He is a very

¹⁵ 'va jouer' is given in the transcript. It is probable that 'jouer - to play' has been mixed with 'jouir - to enjoy' so the transcription should read 'va jouir'. The translation 'is going to enjoy' is given rather than 'is going to play'

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy – 'Little Hans' (1909) SE X pp. 5-149, www.Freud2Lacan.com

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222 good man, that is, the best real father you could have, and he also says that little Hans truly has all the best feelings for him¹⁷. It is clear that he loves his father very much, and all in all he is far from fearing that he would inflict any treatment as abusive as castration.

On the other hand, we cannot say that the little Hans is really deprived of anything. As we see at the beginning of the observations, little Hans, an only child, is utterly content. He is the object of an attention which certainly the father manifests without waiting for the appearance of the phobia. He is also the object of the mother's most tender care – so tender that he is given anything and everything. In truth, it takes Freud's sublime equanimity to ratify the mother's actions: it is clear that these days, all kinds of criticisms would rain on the mother who, every morning, admits the little Hans into his parents' bed against the father's, her spouse's, express reservations¹⁸.

Sometimes he shows a tolerance which is not only peculiar, but completely off the mark given the situation. For no matter what he says, things nevertheless continue most decisively. We do not see the mother take even any momentary notice of the observation that is respectfully suggested by the father, even for a moment. This little Hans is not being deprived of anything, anything at all. At the beginning of the observations, all the same, the mother went as far as to prohibit masturbation. Not only is this not nothing, she went as far as to pronounce these fatal words: "If you masturbate, we'll have Dr. A cut it off"¹⁹.

This is reported at the beginning of the observations, and we don't get the impression that this was something decisive in itself. The child continues. Of course, it is not an element of evaluation [*appréciation*], but surely this event must be noted because of the scrupulousness with which Freud records the observation that the parents were sufficiently informed – which, however, did not prevent them from acting just as though they knew nothing. Nevertheless, it is certainly not at this moment that Freud himself dreams [*songe*] of linking anything decisive in terms of the appearance of the phobia. The child listens to this threat, I would almost say, 'as he should'.

223 And you'll see that all the same, later on comes the consequence that after all we can say nothing more to a child, that this is precisely what he will use as material to construct what he needs – that is, precisely, the castration complex. But why he needs it is another question – the question we are concerned with – and we are not close to having an answer just yet. For now it is not a matter of castration; this is not the foundation of my question. It's a matter of phobia and the fact that we can, under no circumstances, relate it in any simple or direct way to the prohibition of masturbation. As Freud puts it very well, at that moment the masturbation itself did not generate any anguish [*angoisse*]. The child continued to masturbate. Of course, he would subsequently integrate it into the trouble that was expressed when his phobia set in. But there is no obvious traumatic impact arising at all, at that moment, which would allow us to understand the appearance of the phobia. The conditions surrounding this child are optimal, and the problem of the gestation of the phobia remains a problem which must be approached in its truly dignified, sometimes questionable character. This is what is going to help us find some cross reference or other, which will be illuminating for us, or even encouraging.

There are two things: a point I will make for you here, which will serve as a reminder of what we can

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 44

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 23

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 7-8. Sigmund Freud's Footnote 2, SE X p.7 'I have nevertheless put forward the view that the term «castration complex» ought to be confined to those excitations and consequences which are bound up with the loss of the penis.'

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call the fundamental situation regarding the phallus of the child in relationship to [*par rapport à*] the mother. We said it before: what do we have within the pre-oedipal relation [*relation*], within the child's relation [*relation*] to the mother that we have? The child's relation [*relation*] to the mother, insofar as she is an object of love, an object whose presence is desired, and an object which presupposes a relation [*relation*] as simple as they come, but which can manifest very prematurely in experience, in the behaviour of the child: the sensitivity and reactivity to the presence of the mother, and not long after, their articulation as a 'presence-absence' couple.

As you know, this is our point of departure, and even though difficulties have been raised about what we might call 'the child's first objectal²⁰ world', this is only because of an insufficient distinction within the very term 'object'. There is a primordial object which we cannot, in any case, ideally constitute – that is, in our ideas. I am not the first to challenge this idea of the child's world, seen as a pure state of suspension at the edges of the organ that satisfies her, that is, the one that feeds her. Everything Alice Balint²¹, for instance, writes and articulates serves to articulate differently – less convincingly, I think – what I am telling you, namely that the mother exists... but that doesn't suppose that there is already this something named Ego and not-Ego [*moi (me) et non-moi (not-me)*] ...and that the mother exists as a symbolic object [*objet symbolique*] and as an object of love [*objet d'amour*].

This will be confirmed both by experience, and what I am formulating within the position I am giving the mother here on this chart - insofar as she is first of all, as we are told, symbolic mother - and that it is only within the turmoil of frustration that she starts to become real through a number of confrontations and defining features which occur in the relations [*les relations*] between the mother and the child. This mother is an object of love [*objet d'amour*] that at any moment can become the real mother precisely insofar as she frustrates the child of this love. The child's relation [*relation*] to her is a relation of love [*relation d'amour*], and indeed she does have something about her that can open the door to what we usually call 'the primary undifferentiated relation [*la relation*]'. In fact, what happens fundamentally – and this is the first concrete stage of this relation of love [*relation d'amour*] as such, something which forms the basis on which the child's satisfaction happens, or does not happen with a signification, what is it?

224 What it is, is that the child²² takes on this relation [*relation*] by including herself as the object of the Mother's love [*l'objet de l'amour de la mère*]. That is to say, the child learns that she brings pleasure to the mother. It is one of the fundamental experiences of the child that she knows [*sache*] that if her presence commands so little, whether this is that of the presence which is necessary for her, it is, by reason, where she herself introduces something there, this radiance [*éclaircissement*] which makes that, there, this presence surrounds her as something to which she herself brings a satisfaction of love. The "to be loved" [*être aimée*] is fundamental, it is the base [*fond*] on which is going to be plied [*va s'exercer*] all that is going to develop between the mother and the child. It is precisely, in so far as something articulates itself little by little within the experience of the child, which indicates to her that within this presence of the mother to herself [*the child*], she is not alone. It is around this, that is going to be articulated [*va s'articuler*] all the dialectic of the progress of this relation [*relation*] of the mother to the child.

²⁰ 'objectal' in the original.

²¹ Alice Balint, Love for the Mother and Mother Love, IJPA (1949) V30 p. 251.

See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12199>. Referred to twice in Seminar IV: 12th December 1956

²² 'Child' is referred to as 'she'.

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As I indicated, the question proposed by the facts is of knowing how he apprehends what he is for the mother. And, you know, we posed this as a basic hypothesis. If he is not alone and if everything revolves around that, this of course opens to our mind [*esprit*] one of the most common experiences: that, first of all, he is not alone because there are other children. But we have indicated as our basic assumption, that there is another constant and radical term - and independent of the contingencies and particularities of history and the presence or absence of the other child, for example - the fact that the mother retains to a varying degree, different depending on the subjects, - the *penis-neid* which makes that the child is something through relationship [*par rapport*] to that.

He may make up for it or not, but the question is there. The discovery – both the child's discovery of the phallic mother, and mother's discovery of the *penis-neid*, are strict co-existents in the problem we are raising at the moment. It is not at the same level, and I have chosen to start from a certain point to arrive at a certain point, and it is at this stage, that we must retain, among the fundamental data of the analytic experience, this *penis-neid* as a constant term of reference of the relation [*relation*] of the mother to the child, which does what experience proves because there is no way otherwise to articulate the perversions, as they are not integrally explicable, contrary to popular opinion, by the pre-oedipal stage, where one sees it, that it is within the relation [*relation*] to the mother:

- that the child experiences the phallus as being the centre of the desire of the mother,
- 225 - and where he situates himself in different positions, by where he is brought to sustain and very exactly to lure this desire of the mother.

That was the articulation of the session to which I was earlier alluding. In some way or other, the child presents himself to the mother as something that offers her the phallus itself, to varying degrees and in diverse positions. There is here a high degree, not of abstraction, but of generalisation of this level of the imaginary relation [*relation*]... of the relation [*relation*] that I call luring ... via where the child in a way attests to the mother that he can fill [*combler*] her, not only as a child but also for that which is the desire and that which lacks, to say the least, to the mother.

The situation is certainly structuring [*structurante*], fundamental, since it is around that, and uniquely around that, that the relation [*relation*] of the fetishist to his object can be articulated. For example, all the intermediate routings [*gammes intermédiaires*] that link him to such a complex and, also elaborated relation [*relation*] – and to which analysis alone has been able to give its accent and its term, transvestism - homosexuality being reserved here for what is at stake in homosexuality, namely, the need for the object and the real penis in the other. At what point do we see that something puts an end to the relation [*relation*], thus sustained? What puts an end in the case of little Hans for example? That we see at the beginning of the observation, by a kind of happy encounter of the illumination, of a happy miracle that occurs every time we make a discovery: We see the child completely engaged within this relation [*relation*] in which the phallus enjoys²³ [*jouit* from *joue*] the most obvious role.²⁴

In the notes, which are provided by the father as being what has been raised within the development of the child until the hour H(ans) begins the phobia, we learn that the child is always going around fantasising about the phallus, questioning his mother about its presence quite precisely in herself, then

²³ 'le phallus joue' is given in the transcript. It is probable that 'jouer' has been mixed with 'jouir' so the transcription should read 'le phallus jouit'. This translation gives 'enjoys' rather than 'plays'.

²⁴ SE X p7 Op. Cit. The first reports of Hans date from a period when he was not quite three years old. ... he was showing a quite peculiarly lively interest in that portion of his body which he used to describe as his 'widdler' ['Wiwimacher' in the original.]

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in the father, and in animals. He is talking solely about the phallus; it is truly the pivotal object, the central object of his world's organisation – at least, if we stick to the points that are given. We have Freud's text before us, and we are trying to find its meaning. What, then, has changed, since there is in truth nothing remarkable, nothing critical that arises in little Hans' life? What has changed is that his own penis has become something completely real. It is beginning to stir; he is starting to masturbate. And the fact that the mother intervenes then is not so important as the fact that the penis is already becoming something real.

226 This is the main fact of the observations. On that basis, it is completely clear that we must ask ourselves whether there isn't a relation [*une relation*] between this and what appears at that moment, namely, anguish [*l'angoisse*]. I have not yet broached the problem of anguish, [*l'angoisse*] here, because we have to go through things in order. All throughout Freud's works²⁵, as you know, anguish [*l'angoisse*] is truly one of the permanent issues – that is, how we ought to perceive it. While I cannot sum up the distance Freud has travelled in one sentence, it is nonetheless something which, seen as a mechanism, is always present within the stages of its observation. The doctrine comes afterwards. The anguish [*l'angoisse*] on which he (Hans or the child) acts by himself [*il s'agit*] on this occasion, how should we conceive it? As close as possible to the phenomenon.

I ask you for a moment to simply try this sort of mode of approach which consists in having a bit of imagination, and realising that anguish [*l'angoisse*], in this highly evanescent relation [*relation*] through which it appears every time the subject, is – no matter how imperceptibly – detached from his existence, and where, if only slightly, he notices that he is about to be taken up into something which, according to context, you could call the image of the other, or temptation. In any case, it's a moment where the subject is suspended between a moment where he doesn't know where he is, going towards a moment where he will be something, where he'll never be able to find himself again. That's what anguish [*l'angoisse*] is.

Can't you see that at the moment where it appears, in [*chez*] the child in the form of a drive, in the most elementary sense of the term, something that stirs, the real penis. It is at this moment, begins to appear as a trap, what for a long time has been the very paradise of happiness [*bonheur*], namely, this game where one is what one is not; where one is, for the mother, all that the mother wants. Because I cannot, of course, talk about everything at the same time, but all this depends, after all, on what the child really is for the mother. And we will try later on, to make out some difference, and we will try to approach closer to what Hans was for his mother. But for the time being, we remain on the crucial point which gives us the general schema of the matter. Until then the child – in a way that is satisfying or not, but after all, there is no reason not to see that he can carry on this game for a long time in a satisfying the child is in this paradise of the lure with a little happiness [*bonheur*], and even very little to sanction this relation [*relation*] so delicate that it can be to undertake [*puisse être à mener*]. On the other hand, the child tries to pour himself, to integrate himself within what he is for the love of the mother.

²⁵ Note on translation : Sigmund Freud uses the term 'angst' which James Strachey translates as 'anxiety' see Inhibitions, Symptoms & Anguish – Angst [Hemmung, Symptom und Angst] : 1926d : Sigmund Freud, SE XX p75-175 : See www.Freud2Lacan.com. Jacques Lacan, who read Sigmund Freud in the original German, translates 'angst' from German into French as 'l'angoisse'.

Cormac Gallagher, Adrian Price & most other translators, translate 'l'angoisse' as 'anxiety'. This is a mistake. It is almost certain that Seminar X (See <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=212>) should be called, Of Anguish (De l'angoisse) & the references in the text to 'anxiety' changed to 'anguish'. The same is true of James Strachey's & others' translation of Sigmund Freud.

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227 But from the moment his own drive, his real penis intervenes, there appears this detachment, about which I was talking earlier, namely, that he is caught in his own trap, that he is a dupe of his own game, that all the inconsistencies, that all the gaps and the particularly immense gap that exists between the fact of satisfying an image and of him having there precisely something to present to her, to present 'cash'²⁶ if I might say so. And what does not fail to happen, it is not simply that the child, in his attempts at seduction, fails for whatever reason, or that he is refused by the mother who, at this moment, is enjoying [*jouit* from *joue*] there the decisive role, it is that what he ultimately has to present, is something that, from time to time, can appear to him, and we have thousands of experiences of this within the analytical reality, as something miserable.

At this moment the fact that the child is placed in front of this opening, this dilemma of being the captive, the victim, the element made passive [*passivé*] of a game... from then on he becomes prey to the significations of the Other. It is quite precisely at this point, that what I indicated to you last year, as the origin of paranoia²⁷, branches off because from the moment when the game becomes serious – and when at the same time it is only a game of luring – the child is entirely dependent on the way in which the partner indicates, through all her manifestations... for him all the partner's manifestations become a sentence for his - yes or no - adequacy. This is what happens very precisely insofar as this situation is pursued, namely, where the *Verwerfung* doesn't intervene, leaving outside this term of the symbolic father, which we will see precisely, in the concrete, how much it is necessary.

Let us leave him aside, for the other child, for the one who is not in this very particular situation of seeing and being entirely delivered, from this moment on, to the eye and the gaze of the Other, that is the future paranoiac. For the other (child), the situation is a dead-end [*sans issue*] of course it is around the way out [*avec l'issue*], because if I am here [*puisque si je suis là*], it is in order to show you in what way the castration complex is the way out from it [*en est l'issue*]. The castration complex takes up, on the purely imaginary level, everything that is at stake with the phallus, and it is precisely for this reason that the real penis has to be, in some way, set out of the loop [*mis hors du coup*]. It is through the intervention of the order, which introduces the father with his prohibitions, with the fact that he introduces the reign of the law, namely, the something that, at the time, makes the case leave the child's hands but that it is nevertheless settled elsewhere. That he (the father) is the one with whom there is no more chance of winning than by accepting the allocation of the stakes as is. This means that the symbolic order intervenes, and precisely on the imaginary level. It is not for nothing that castration is the imaginary phallus, but it is in a way outside the real couple that the order can be re-established where the child finds something within which he can await the evolution of events. For the moment, this may appear to you as a simple solution to the problem.

228 It is a hint, not a solution. It's quick. It's a bridge thrown. If it were easy – if there was only a bridge to throw, there would be no need to throw it. It's the point. It's where we are that's interesting. It's the place we're at, that is precisely the same place that little Hans has reached at the moment where, rightly so, nothing the same occurs for him, where he is confronted, where he is put at this meeting point of the real drive and this game of imaginary phallic lure, and this by relationship [*rapport*] to his mother.

²⁶ 'cash' in English in the transcript.

²⁷ Seminar III : 15th February 1956, p150 of Russell Grigg's translation (1993),

see <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=657> : What is at issue when I speak of *Verwerfung*? At issue is the rejection of a primordial signifier into the outer shadows, a signifier that will henceforth be missing at this level. Here you have the fundamental mechanism that I point as being at the basis of paranoia. It's a matter of a primordial process of exclusion of an original within, which is not a bodily within but that of an initial body of signifiers.

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What arises at this moment, there, since there is a neurosis? You will not be surprised to learn that a regression arises.

I would nonetheless prefer you be surprised by this, because the term 'regression', I articulate it neither more nor less than in the strict scope I gave it in the last session before the break, when we spoke about frustration²⁸. Just as in the presence of the mother's failure [*du défaut de*], I told you that the child crushes himself in the satisfaction of feeding, so at this moment when he is the centre, that is no longer sufficient to give what there is to give – he finds himself in this turmoil of being no longer enough.

At that very moment, regression occurs, which simulates the same short circuit with which primitive frustration is satisfied, just as he [the child] seized the breast to resolve every problem. The only thing that opens in front of him like a hollowness [*béance*] – which is exactly what is happening now – is the fear of being devoured by the mother, and this is the first guise that the phobia takes on..

This is very precisely what appears in the case of our little fellow, because any horse that is the object of phobia is, all the same, of a horse that bites, is what it is all about. And the theme of devouring is always in some way, to be found in the structure of the phobia. Is that all? Of course not!

It is not just anything that bites, nor that devours. We find ourselves confronted with the problem of phobia every time a certain number of fundamental relations [*relations*] occur with an object – some of which have to be left well aside in order to articulate something clear-cut.

What is certain is that phobic objects, which are often animals, strike immediately the most casual observer's eye by something which makes them by essence an object of the symbolic order. If the object of the phobia is a lion, no matter whether the child lives – and especially if she doesn't live – in areas where this animal is even remotely... not even dangerous, but simply present... that is, lions, wolves, even giraffes, are precisely these strange objects, among which the horse shows a sort of very specific limit, which shows well to what extent they are objects, if one can say, that are borrowed from a kind of list or category of signifiers which are of the same homogeneous nature: what we find within coats of arms [*armoiries*].

229 These objects, which led Freud, and which also made it necessary for Freud in the construction of Totem and Taboo²⁹ the analogy between the father and the totem, have a very special function. They are there precisely insofar as they, in some way, have to compensate for this signifier of the symbolic father – a signifier for which we don't see what the final term is, and for which it is precisely the question of knowing why it takes on such and such form, such and such apparel. There certainly has to be something of the order of facts, or experience; and of the positive and the irreducible, in what we encounter. This is not a deduction but an apparatus necessitated [*nécessité*] by the assistance of what we find in experience. Moreover, we are not here to solve why phobia takes on the form of this or that animal. That is not the question.

What I will leave you with is to ask you, between now and next time, to take the text about little Hans and see that it is, without a doubt, a phobia, but, if I might say so, it is a phobia in motion. As soon as it [the phobia] appeared, the parents immediately took the thread, and, up to the point where it ends, the father does not leave it [thread]. I would like you to read this text, you will have all the flickering

²⁸ For frustration in the session before the break, see Seminar IV : 6th February 1957 : paragraph 33-36, p10-11 , [It is strictly impossible to conceive of this evocation of the oral drive at a certain moment if we hold on to the vague notion, ... to ... in two initially very different ways. For the penis, being a thing, can at any moment place an object somewhere in the lineage and in the stead of the breast and the pacifier [*la tétine* – also dummy].

²⁹ Totem and Taboo: 1912-1913 : Sigmund Freud, SE XIII p 1 - 162 See www.Freud2Lacan.com Little Hans is examined SE XIII p128-129

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impressions that one can have of it, you will even have the feeling of being completely lost on many occasions. Nevertheless, I would like those of you who have been willing to undergo this task to tell me, next time, if there is anything in what you have read that does not strike you as a contrast between the initial stage, where we see little Hans developing to the full [*à plein tuyau*] all sorts of extraordinarily romantic imaginings about his relations [*relations*] with everything he adopts as his children.

It's a theme of the imaginary where he reveals himself with great ease, as in some way, still within the state where he can prolong, where it's so much the same game of luring with the mother that he prolongs, that he himself can feel quite at ease within a position that blends identification with the mother, the adoption of children, and at the same time a whole series of all ranges of amorous forms [*formes amoureuses*] from the little girl he serves and courts a little closely who is the daughter of the owners of the holiday resort where they go, to the little girl whom he loves from a distance and whom he situates as already inscribed in all the forms of the amorous relation [*relation amoureuse*] which he pursues with great ease on [*sur*] the level of fiction.

230 And the contrast between that and what is going to happen when after the interventions of the father, under the pressure of the father's more or less directed questioning of him, he surrenders himself to this sort of truly fantastic romance in which he reconstructs the presence of his little sister within a coffer [*caisse*] within the vehicle over [*sur*] the horses, many years before her birth. In short, the coherence that you can see massively between what I will call the imaginary orgy throughout little Hans' analysis and the intervention of the real father. In other terms if the child ends up with a most satisfactory cure, we'll see what 'satisfactory cure' means regarding [*à propos*] his phobia, it's very clearly in so far as the real father, who had done so little until then, intervened. Moreover, he was able to intervene because he had behind him the symbolic Father, who is Freud.

But he intervened! And in so far as he intervened, everything that was trying to crystallise itself over the ground [*sur le plan*] of a kind of premature real goes back within an imaginary so radical that we don't even know where we are anymore, that at any moment, we wonder if little Hans isn't there to make fun of the world, or to exercise a refined sense of humour and it is indeed undeniably so, since it is an imaginary that enjoys [*joue/jouit*]³⁰ in order to reorganise the symbolic world. But, in any case, one thing is certain and that is that the cure comes at the moment when the castration is expressed in the clearest way, in the form of an articulated story. Namely, that the 'installer' comes, unscrews it and gives him another one³¹. That is exactly where the observation ends. The solution of the phobia is linked to, if we can say, the constellation of this triad: intervention of the real Father and we'll come back to this next time, all supported and backed up by the symbolic Father. He enters into it as a poor old fellow. Freud at any moment is forced to say: "it is better than nothing, it was necessary to let him speak, especially," he says, - and you'll find it at the bottom of a page³² as I'm articulating it - "don't understand too quickly" and these questions with which he presses him. Obviously, he's got on the wrong track. No matter! The result is punctuated by these two points: Hans' imaginary orgy, and the advent, if we may say, of castration fully articulated as this: what is real is replaced by something more beautiful, larger.

³⁰ '*qui joue*' is given in the transcript. It is probable that '*jouer*' has been mixed with '*jouir*' so the transcription should read '*qui jouit*'. So it is translated as 'enjoys' rather than 'plays'.

³¹ 'Little Hans' (1909) op. cit., SE X pp. 98-99.

³² 'Little Hans' (1909) op. cit. SE X p22-23, www.Freud2Lacan.com, we will begin by examining the material before us. It is not in the least our business to 'understand' a case at once: this is only possible at a later stage, when we have received enough impressions of it. For the present we will suspend our judgement and give our impartial attention to everything that there is to observe.

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The advent, the bringing to light of castration, is what simultaneously puts the end [*le terme*] to the phobia, and shows, I won't say its finality, but that which it (the phobia) begged [*supplée*]. It is only there, you can feel it, an intermediate point of my discussion [*discours*]. I simply wanted to give you enough in order that you could see where the level [*étage*] is, where its range of questions blossoms. Next time we will take up again the dialectic of the child's relation [*relation de l'enfant*] with the mother, and the value of the true significance of the castration complex.

Session of 13th March 1957
Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

13th March 1957

	<i>Real father</i>	Castration: <i>symbolic debt</i>	<i>Imaginary: Phallus</i>
<i>Symbolic father</i>	<i>Symbolic mother</i>	Frustration: <i>imaginary detriment</i> [<i>dam</i>]	<i>Real: breast, penis</i>
	<i>Imaginary father</i>	Privation: real hole	Object: symbolic Phallus

[p199]¹ We tried last time to rearticulate the notion of castration, at least the use of the concept in our practice. I have for you, in the second part of this session, the place where this interference of the imaginary occurs in this relation [*relation*] of frustration, which is infinitely more complex in its function than what usually unites the child to the mother. I told you that it was only in a purely apparent way, and by the order of the exposition, that we find this way to progress from front to back, figuring, so to speak (and we won't have occasion to revisit it) the kinds of stages [*étapes*] which follow one another in the line of development.

Quite the contrary, it is always a question of grasping that which, intervening from the outside at each stage, retroactively reshuffles what was started within the previous stage for the simple reason that the child is not alone. Not only is he not alone, [p200] there is the biological surrounding, but there is another surrounding which is more important than the biological surrounding: it is the legal environment, it is the symbolic order which surrounds it. This is the particularities of the symbolic order, and I've found a passage which gives, for example, its accent, its prevalence in this imaginary element which is called the phallus.

So this is where we had arrived, and in order to begin the third part of my talk [*exposé*], I have placed you on the track of little Hans' anguish [*l'angoisse*]², since from the beginning we have taken these two exemplary objects: the fetishistic object and the real object.

It is at the level of little Hans that we will try to articulate what we are going to talk about today. Attempt, not to re-articulate the concept of castration, because God knows, if it is put forcefully [*puissamment*] and in an insistent and repeated manner within Freud, but simply to talk about it again and the reference we can take from it, in the usage of this complex in the observations, after all as soon as we avoid talking about it, it becomes thin on the ground [*plus en plus rare*].

¹ Note: This is Chapter XII - *Du Complexe d'OEdipe* - 6 Mars 1957, p199 of Jacques Lacan - *Le Séminaire livre IV - La relation d'objet* edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, du Seuil (Mars 1994). See Footnote 1, 6th March 1957 of this translation. See also www.LacanianWorks.org / Seminar IV, 6th March 1957 – Reversing Sense : 1st March 2022 : Julia Evans

² Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy – 'Little Hans': 1909, SE X p5-149. Available www.Freud2Lacan.com SE X: p35: Hans's anxiety, which thus corresponded to a repressed erotic longing, was, like every infantile anxiety [*angst*], without an object to begin with: it was still anxiety [*angst*] and not yet fear. Or SE X p26 : He was with his mother, and yet he still suffered from anxiety [*angst*]-that is to say, from an unsatisfied longing for her. It is true that the anxiety [*angst*] was less; for he did allow himself to be induced to go for the walk, whereas he had obliged the nursemaid to tum back. Nor is a street quite the right place for 'coaxing', or whatever else this young lover may have wanted. But his anxiety [*angst*] had stood the test; and the next thing for it to do was to find an object. It was on this walk that he first expressed a fear that a horse would bite him. Where did the material for this phobia come from?

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So let's talk today about this notion of castration, since we follow on in the line from our discussion, of last time.

What is it all about at the end of this preoedipal phase and at the edge of the Oedipus? It is that the child assumes this phallus as a signifier, and in a way that makes it an instrument of the symbolic order of exchanges which presides over the constitution of lineage [*lignées*]. In short, it is a matter of being confronted with this order which will make the function of the father, the pivot of the drama in the Oedipus. It is not that simple.

At least, if I have said enough on this subject to tell you it is not so simple, something responds in you: indeed, the father is not so simple. The function of the existence, on the symbolic level [*plan*], in the signifying [*signifiant*] father, with all that this profoundly problematic term implies, raises the question of how this function came to the center of the symbolic organisation.

This leaves us to think that we will have some questions to ask ourselves as to these three aspects of the paternal function. We have already learned, and this from the first year of our seminars, the one where the second part was devoted to the study of the Wolf Man³, to distinguish the paternal incidence within the conflict under the triple head of the symbolic father, imaginary father and real [*réel*] father, and we have seen that it was impossible [p201] to orient ourselves within the observation, in particular within the case of the Wolf Man⁴, without making this essential distinction.

Let's try to get to the point where we have reached this introduction into the Oedipus which is what is proposed to the child within the chronological order. In short we could say that we see the child, there, where we have left him, in this lure position where he makes a go at his mother, but not, I told you, of a lure in which he would be completely implicated, of a simple lure - in the sense where within the game of the sexual parade, we, who are on the outside, can realise that the imaginary elements which captivate one of the partners thanks to aspects [*apparences*] of the other, this something of which we do not know to what extent, the subject acts on it - the same as of a lure. Although we know that we could do so on occasion, that is, to present a simple coat of arms [*armoire*] to the desire of the mere opponent - here this lure, as which it operates [*dont il s'agit*], is very significantly manifest within the acts, activities even, that we observe in [*chez*] the little boy, for example, the seductive activities towards his mother.

When he shows off, this is not a pure and simple act of showing [*monstration*⁵], it is the act of showing himself, by himself, to the mother who exists as a third, and with the emergence behind the mother of something which is good faith [*bonne foi*], to which the mother can be held, so to speak. It is already one trinity, or even an inter-subjective quaternity that is emerging. But what is it all about, in the end?

³ Note: Between 1950 and 1953, Lacan conducted seminars on Freud's case-studies of Dora (Freud :1901), The Wolf Man (Freud :1914) and the Rat Man (Freud :1909) at his house in Paris. See www.LacanianWorks.org / Notes on the Wolfman - 4 sessions from 1951-1952 (1st November 1951) : Jacques Lacan

⁴ From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (The 'Wolf Man'): 1914 [published 1918b]: Sigmund Freud See www.LacanianWorks.org /From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (The 'Wolf Man') : 1914 : Sigmund Freud SE XVII p3-122 Published bilingual <http://www.freud2lacan.com/>

⁵ Background to this use of 'monstration' A monstrance, also known as an ostensorium (or an ostensory), is a vessel used in Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, High Church Lutheran and Anglican churches for the display on an altar of some object of piety, such as the consecrated Eucharistic host during Eucharistic adoration or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. It is also used as reliquary for the public display of relics of some saints. The word monstrance comes from the Latin word *monstrare*, while the word ostensorium came from the Latin word *ostendere*. Both terms, meaning "to show", are used for vessels intended for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but ostensorium has only this meaning. From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monstrance>

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If we take up things from where we left them, it is that, to summarise, within the Oedipus it is a question of the subject being caught up in this lure, in such a way that he finds himself engaged within an existing order, which to him is different from the psychological lure through which he entered, and where we left him. For in the end, if the Oedipus has analytic theory's normative function, let us also remember that our experience teaches us that this normative function is not sufficient to achieve the fact that the subject has an objectal choice, but that he has a heterosexual object choice and we well know that it is not enough to be heterosexual according to the rules, we know that there are all sorts of forms of apparent heterosexuality, and on occasion that the frankly heterosexual relation [*relation*] may contain a positional abnormality [*atypie positionnelle*] which in an analytic investigation will allow us to see it well as derived for example from a frankly homosexualised position.

It is therefore necessary not only, that the subject after the Oedipus results in [*aboutisse à l'hétérosexualité*] heterosexuality, but it must be achieved in such a way that it is correctly situated through relationship [*par rapport*] to the function of the father, whatever it is, boy or girl, and this is the centre of all the problematic of the Oedipus.

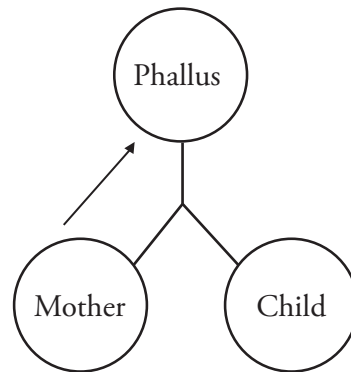
Let's say it right away and because we have already indicated this, this year, through our way of approaching the relation from object [*relation d'objet*] - and Freud expressly articulates this within his article [p202] on feminine sexuality⁶ - in the end, seen in this light and if one may say from the preoedipal perspective, the problematic of the woman is much simpler.

If it appears much more complicated in Freud, that is in the order in which he discovered it, it is precisely because he first discovered, and not without reason, the Oedipus, and that moreover it is quite normal to take things this way, because if there is something that is preoedipal, it is because first of all we have posed the Oedipus and we cannot speak of this greater simplicity of the female position, at the level of development that we can define as preoedipal, because first of all we know that we have to achieve the complex structure of the Oedipus.

This said, indeed for the woman we could say that it is only a question of the sliding of this phallus, that she has more or less located, approached within the imaginary where it is found, within the beyond [*l'au-delà*] of the mother, within the progressive discovery of the fundamental [*foncière*] dissatisfaction that the mother experiences within the mother-child relation [*relation*] itself. It is about the sliding of this imaginary phallus to the real, and this is what Freud explains to us when he tells us that within this longing for the originary [*originaire*] phallus, at this imaginary level where it starts to appear in [*chez*] the little girl, within the specular reference to her semblant [*semblable*], other little girl or little boy, when he tells us that the child is going to be the phallus's substitute, really it is a somewhat abbreviated form of seizing what is happening within the observed phenomenon.

⁶ Sigmund Freud: Female Sexuality: 1931b, SE XXI p221-243: Published at www.Freud2Lacan.com SE XXI p230: Thus in women the Oedipus complex is the end-result of a fairly lengthy development. It is not destroyed, but created, by the influence of castration; it escapes the strongly hostile influences which, in the male, have a destructive effect on it, and indeed it is all too often not surmounted by the female at all. For this reason, too, the cultural consequences of its break-up are smaller and of less importance in her.

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And if you see the position as I have sketched it here, the imaginary, that is, the desire of the phallus owned by [*chez*] the mother, and the child who is central, who has to make the discovery of this beyond [*au-delà*], of this lack within the maternal object. It is obviously for this reason that at some point, the situation within one of the possible outcomes revolves around the child, to wit from the moment where the subject, the child, becomes saturated with the situation, to get out of it, by conceiving of it, itself, as possible.

But this is indeed what we find within the little girl's and also the little boy's phantasm, it is only as far as the situation revolves around the child, the little girl then finds the real [*réel*] penis where it is, beyond the child, within the one who can give her the child, within the father, Freud tells us⁷. And it is well as far as she does not have it as a belonging, and even significantly that upon this groundwork [*sur ce plan*] [p203] she refuses it, that she may be able to have it as a gift from the father, and this is rightly why it is through this relation [*relation*] to the phallus that, Freud tells us, the little girl enters within the Oedipus, and like you see it in a simple manner, it will not subsequently have to slip through a kind of equivalence, it is the same term Freud uses.

The little girl will be introduced sufficiently to the Oedipus to realise what is sufficient - I am not saying that there can't be many more - and through all the anomalies within the development of the feminine sexuality - but [the little girl] as of now has some relationships [*rappports*] already with this fixation to the father as bearer of the real penis, the one who really can give the child. It is already sufficiently consistent for her that we can say, in the end, that since the Oedipus through itself brings all sorts of complications, perhaps impasses, within the development of feminine sexuality. Conversely this Oedipus, as path of integration within the typical heterosexual position, is much easier for the woman. Of course, this should come as no surprise to us, insofar as the Oedipus is essentially

⁷ Sigmund Freud Lecture XXXIII: 'Femininity' (1932 (published 1933)), SE XXII p112-135. See www.Freud2Lacan.com SE XXII p128: The wish with which the girl turns to her father is no doubt originally the wish for the penis which her mother has refused her and which she now expects from her father. The feminine situation is only established, however, if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby, that is, a baby takes the place of a penis in accordance with an ancient **symbolic equivalence**. It has not escaped us that the girl has wished for a baby earlier, in the undisturbed phallic phase: that, of course, was the meaning of her playing with dolls. But that play was not in fact an expression of her femininity; it served as an identification with her mother with the intention of substituting activity for passivity. She was playing the part of her mother and the doll was herself: now she could do with the baby everything that her mother used to do with her. Not until the emergence of the wish for a penis does the doll-baby become a baby from the girl's father, and thereafter the aim of the most powerful feminine wish. Her happiness is great if later on this wish for a baby finds fulfilment in reality, and quite especially so if the baby is a little boy who brings the longed-for penis with him. Often enough in her combined picture of 'a baby from her father' the emphasis is laid on the baby and her father left unstressed. In this way the ancient masculine wish for the possession of a penis is still faintly visible through the femininity now achieved.

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androcentric or patrocentric, a dissymmetry [*dissymétrie*] which requires all sorts of particular quasi-historical considerations to make us see the prevalence, over the sociological and ethnographical framework [*sur le plan*], of the individual experience which allows us to analyse the Freudian discovery. Conversely, it is quite clear here that we so to speak see the woman is in position - since I spoke of decree of symbolic order or of subordinate ordination, that here, what is for her the object of her love, I say her love [*son amour*], that is to say object of feeling, which is properly addressed to the element of lack within the object insofar as it is through the way of this lack that she has been led to this object which is the father, the latter becomes the giver of the object of satisfaction, the object of the natural relation [*relation*] of giving birth [*l'enfantement*]. From then on, all it takes for her is a little patience until the father is replaced by one who will fulfil exactly the same role, the role of father.

This involves something on which we will return and which gives its particular style to the development of the female superego, it is that there is a kind of balance between what one has called very rightly the importance, the prevalence of the narcissistic relation [*relation*] within the development of the woman. But since indeed this renouncement, a once-made, [p204] the phallus is abjured as belonging, it becomes, as far as it is the belonging of the one, onto whom she attaches her love [*amour*], the father from whom she actively expects this child, it puts the woman within a dependance of what from then on is only this which must be given to her within this very particular dependance which, paradoxically as the authors have noticed, gives birth [*fait naître*] within the development at a given moment, to the properly narcissistic fixations in [*chez*] the most intolerant being to a degree of frustration. Perhaps we will revisit this later when we re-speak of the monogamous ideal in [*chez*] the woman.

It is equally moreover around this simple reduction of the situation, that identifies the object of love [*amour*] and the object that gives satisfaction, that is within a development which can describe as normal, especially fixed, or even stopped, precociously stopped, of the development in [*chez*] the women, including Freud within certain passages and at certain turning points of his writings, takes such a singularly misogynistic tone in order to complain bitterly about the great difficulty there is, at least for certain feminine subjects, to make them move, to mobilise them with a kind of morality, he says, "of soup and dumplings"⁸, of this something so imperiously demanding with respect to [*quant aux*] the satisfactions to be torn from the analysis itself, through example. I am only here indicating a certain number of starting points, and in sum in order to tell you that we will have to return over [*sur*] the development brought through Freud over [*sur*] female sexuality.

It is the boy that we want to focus on today, for the reason that, since for him the Oedipus seems to us much more clearly destined to allow him the identification with his own sex, it occurs in sum within the ideal relation [*relation*], within the imaginary relation [*relation*] to the father. Conversely, the true purpose of the Oedipus, which is its rightful place through relationship [*par rapport*] to the function of

⁸ Observations on Transference-Love (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis III): 1914 [1915]: Sigmund Freud: SEXII p157-170: see www.Freud2Lacan.com : SE XII p166-167 - There is, it is true, one class of women with whom this attempt to preserve the erotic transference for the purposes of analytic work without satisfying it will not succeed. These are women of elemental passionateness who tolerate no surrogates. They are children of nature who refuse to accept the psychical in place of the material, who, in the poet's words, are accessible only to 'the logic of soup, with dumplings for arguments'. With such people one has the choice between returning their love or else bringing down upon oneself the full enmity of a woman scorned. In neither case can one safeguard the interests of the treatment. One has to withdraw, unsuccessful; and all one can do is to tum the problem over in one's mind of how it is that a capacity for neurosis is joined with such an intractable need for love.

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the father, that is to say, that he himself accedes one day to this completely paradoxical and problematic position which is being a father, this presents a mountain of difficulties. But precisely, it's not because one hasn't seen this mountain that one cares less and less about the Oedipus, it's because one has seen it, and because one has seen it, one prefers to turn one's back on it.

Let us not forget that, in sum, all the Freudian interrogation lies not only within the doctrine, but within Freud's own experience, which we can find re-traced throughout the confidences which he makes to us, his dreams, the progress of his thought, all which we now know about his life, his habits, even his attitudes to the inside of his family - which Mr. Jones relates [*rapporte*] to us in a more or less complete but certain way - all the Freudian interrogation is summed up in this: What is it to be a father? [p205] This was the central problem for him, the fertile point from which all his research is truly oriented.

Observe equally that if this is a problem for every neurotic, it is also a problem for each non-neurotic in the course of his infantile experience. What is a father? This is one way of approaching the problem of the signifier of the father, but let's not forget that it, itself, acts, also that the subjects become it, at the end of the day, and raise the question: what is a father? It's again another thing than being a father oneself, a father accessing the paternal position.

Let's look at it closely: provided that for each man the accession to this paternal position is one time, a quest, we can ask ourselves the question: it is not unthinkable to say to oneself that finally no one has ever truly been it completely, because within this dialectic we suppose, and we have to start from this supposition, that there is somewhere someone who can fully assume the position of the father and can answer him: I am it, father.

This is a supposition that is essential to the whole progress of the Oedipal dialectic, but it does not settle in any way the question of knowing what is the particular intersubjective position of the one who, for the others, and especially for the child, fulfils this role.

So let's start again with little Hans. It's a world, this observation, it's the one I left to last - and not for nothing - of the Five Psychoanalyses⁹. What do the first pages give us, which are very precisely at the level of where I left you last time? It's not without reason that Freud presents things in this order, the question is that of this *Wiwimacher*¹⁰ that is translated into French as *fait-pipi* [make wee-wee]. It does not act by itself - I'm only talking about the way in which things are presented literally through Freud - that of the questions that little Hans asks himself concerning not just his own wee-wee, but the wee-wees of living beings, says Freud, and especially of living beings bigger than him.

You have seen the pertinent remarks concerning the order of the child, but within the order, it is to his mother, first of all, that he asks the question: "Do you also have a *fait-pipi* [wee-wee maker]?"

What his mother says to him we'll talk about later, and Hans blurts out at this point: "Yes, I had only

⁹ Sigmund Freud's Five Case Studies : Sigmund Freud: Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria ('Dora'): 1901 [1905] SE VII p7-114, Sigmund Freud: Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy – 'Little Hans': 1909 SE X p5-149, Sigmund Freud: Notes upon a case of Obsessional Neurosis (The 'Rat Man'):1909d: SE X p155, Sigmund Freud: Psychoanalytic notes on an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia (Dementia Paranoides) (President Schreber): 1910 (published 1911c) SE XII p3-90, Sigmund Freud: From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (The 'Wolf Man'): 1914 [published 1918b] SE XVII p3-302, See www.LacanianWorks.org /Downloading Sigmund Freud : 1st August 2022 : Julia Evans & www.Freud2Lacan.com

¹⁰ SE X p7 The first reports of Hans date from a period when he was not quite three years old. At that time, by means of various remarks and questions, he was showing a quite peculiarly lively interest in that portion of his body which he used to describe as his 'widdler' [*Wiwimacher* in the original German.]

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thought..."¹¹, that is to say that, not bad at all, he is actually in the process of simmering some stuff. He then re-asks his father the question¹², [p206] he revels [*se rejouit*] after having viewed the lion's wee-wee maker¹³ which is not entirely through chance, and from that moment on, that is to say before the onset of the phobia, he clearly indicates that if his mother must have this wee-wee-maker as she asserts this to him - not in my opinion without some impudence - it should show itself. For one evening, which is not very far from the time of this questioning, he literally stalks her in the process of undressing, pointing out that if she had one, it should be as big as the one of a horse¹⁴.

The notion of *Vergleichung* which one translates into French as comparison or compared - we almost say that the word equalisation would seem to us to be the best, at least in economics if not in strict tradition - this kind of effort of equalisation between what we can call within its phallic imaginary perspective, that where we left it last time, it acts by itself [*il s'agit*] as an equalisation between a sort of absolute object [*objet absolu*], the phallus, and its testing of the Real. It does not act by itself [*II ne s'agit pas*] as all or nothing with which the subject enjoys [*jouit* from *joue*] hitherto. With the game of bingo [*bonneteau*], the game of hide-and-seek, it is never, there, where one looks for it, never, there, where you find it, it now acts by itself to know where it really is.

There is, there, the whole distance to cross which separates that which makes semblance [*fait semblant*] or which enjoys [*jouit* from *joue*] to make semblance [*faire semblant*], and it is not for nothing that a little further within the observation, when little Hans has a dream, the first dream - Freud and his parents tells us - where an element of deformation intervenes, a displacement, this will be precisely through the means of a game of guarantee [*gage*].

If you are following, moreover, all this imaginary dialectic, if you remember it as I approached it during these last sessions, you will be struck to see that it is there, enjoying [*jouissant* from *jouant*] at the surface, at this pre-phobic stage of the development of little Hans. Everything is there up to and including the fantastical children: suddenly, after having had his little sister, he adopts a bunch of imaginary little girls to whom he does everything one can do to children. The game, strictly speaking imaginary, is really gathered in its entirety, almost without intention. It's about all the distance to cross, which separates the one who makes semblance [*semblant*] of the one who knows that he has the power [*puissance*].

What is it that in the first instance gives the Oedipian relation [*relation oedipienne*]? This is what there is, there at that moment, which we see enjoy [*jouir* for *jouer*] on [*sur*] the groundwork [*le plan*] of this comparative act [*cet acte comparé*], it is that we can conceive that the game continues itself on [*sur*] the groundwork [*plan*] of the lure, on [*sur*] the imaginary groundwork [*plan*] that the child simply associates [*adjoit*] to his dimensions, the maternal model, the larger but essentially homogeneous image.

¹¹ SE X p7 Hans: 'I was only just thinking.' (James Strachey's translation)

¹² SE X p9 Hans (aged three and three-quarters): 'Daddy, have you got a widdler too?'

¹³ SE X p9 At about the same age (three and a half), standing in front of the lions' cage, at Schönbrunn, little Hans called out in a joyful and excited voice: 'I saw the lion's widdler.'

¹⁴ SE X p9-10 Another time he was looking on intently while his mother undressed before going to bed. 'What are you staring like that for?' she asked.

Hans: 'I was only looking to see if you'd got a widdler too.'

Mother: "Of course. Didn't you know that?"

Hans: 'No. I thought you were so big you'd have a widdler like a horse.'

This expectation of little Hans's deserves to be borne in mind; it will become important later on.

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The fact remains that if this is how the dialectic of the Oedipus is engaged, he will only ever have to deal in the end with a double of himself, a double enlarged by this perfectly conceivable introduction of the maternal image in the ideal form of the self, we remain in the imaginary dialectic, in the specular dialectic of the relationship [*rapport*] of the subject to the little other, whose penalty [*sanction*] doesn't take us out of this: or else, or else, or him or ego, [*ou bien, ou bien, ou lui, ou moi*] which is linked to the first symbolic dialectic, that of [p207] presence or absence. We don't leave the game of odds and evens, we don't leave the framework [*plan*] of the lure, and in the end we know, and we know it through [*par*] the facet both theoretical & exemplary [*exemplaire*], we only see the symptom, the manifestation of anguish [*l'angoisse*], coming out of it, as Freud says¹⁵. And Freud underlines at the beginning of the observation of little Hans, that it is necessary to separate anguish [*l'angoisse*] from phobia¹⁶. There are two things that follow one another and without a doubt, not without reason, one comes to the rescue of the other, the phobic object comes to fulfil a function over the base of anguish [*sur le fond de l'angoisse*]. But on the imaginary level, nothing allows us to conceive of the leap that brings the child out of this game of lure in front of the mother, someone who is all or nothing, the one who is enough or the one who is not enough. Certainly, by the very fact that the question is posed, it [*elle reste*] remains on the groundwork [*sur le plan*] of fundamental insufficiency.

This is the primary scheme of the notion of the entry into the Oedipus complex, the quasi-fraternal rivalry with the father, on the level that we are led to nuance much more than it is commonly articulated. This aggressivity that we are talking about is an aggressivity of the type that comes into play in the specular relation [*relation*], in this: 'or Ego or the other' [*ou moi ou l'autre*], which is always defined as the fundamental spring, and on the other hand the fixation remains completely to the one who has become the real object after the first frustrations, that is to say the mother.

It is because this stage exists, or more precisely, this essential central experience of the Oedipus on the imaginary level, that the Oedipus spreads in all its neurotic consequences, found in a thousand aspects of analytic reality. It is through this, in particular, that we see one of the first terms of the Freudian experience enter, this sort of degradation of the amorous life [*la vie amoureuse*] to which Freud devoted

¹⁵ Possibly a reference to Inhibitions, Symptoms & Anguish/Angst [Anxiety]: 1926d: Sigmund Freud SE XX p75-175: See www.Freud2Lacan.com, SE XX p91: A symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of the process of repression. Repression proceeds from the ego when the latter - it may be at the behest of the super-ego - refuses to associate itself with an instinctual cathexis which has been aroused in the id. The ego is able by means of repression to keep the idea which is the vehicle of the reprehensible impulse from becoming conscious. Analysis shows that the idea often persists as an unconscious formation.

¹⁶ Possibly SE X p6: When a physician treats an adult neurotic by psycho-analysis, the process he goes through of uncovering the psychological formations, layer by layer, eventually enables him to frame certain hypotheses as to the patient's infantile sexuality; and it is in the components of the latter that he believes he has discovered the motive forces of all the neurotic symptoms of later life. From Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy - 'Little Hans': 1909, SE X p5-149 See www.Freud2Lacan.com /homepage

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a special study¹⁷ which is linked to this, because of the permanent attachment to this real object, to this primitive real-object of the mother as frustrating¹⁸, From then on, no female object will be anything but devalued through relationship [*par rapport*] to the mother, a substitute, a broken, refracted, always partial mode through relationship [*par rapport*] to the first maternal object. And we will return to what to make of this a bit later...

Let us not forget, however, that if the Oedipus complex can have its enduring consequences in terms of the imaginary jurisdiction [*ressort*] that it involves, this is not all there. Let us not forget that normally, and this from the beginning of the Freudian doctrine, it is in the nature of the Oedipus complex to resolve itself, and when Freud tells us about it, he tells us that undoubtedly what we can conceive of in the backdrop [*l'arrière plan*] of the hostility to the father, it is something that we can legitimately link to a repression. But within the same sentence, he would like to emphasise that this is one more occasion for us to get to grips with the notion of repression as it applies itself always to a particular articulation of history, and not [p208] to a permanent relation [*une relation permanente*]. He says: I am willing that through exception one here applies the term of repression but listen well he tells us, that it acts itself [*il s'agit*] normally at this age, between 5 and 5 and a half where the dissolution of the

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love II) (1912) SE XI p177-190. See www.LacanianWorksExchange.net/freud (1912). The affectionate current is the older of the two. ... It corresponds to the child's primary object-choice. We learn in this way that the sexual instincts find their first objects by attaching themselves to the valuations made by the ego-instincts, precisely in the way in which the first sexual satisfactions are experienced in attachment to the bodily functions necessary for the preservation of life. [Footnote 1, James Strachey states, The 'attachment' (or 'anaclitic') type of object-choice was discussed more fully in Freud's later paper on narcissism (1914c).] The 'affection' shown by the child's parents and those who look after him, which seldom fails to betray its erotic nature (the child is an erotic plaything'), does a very great deal to raise the contributions made by erotism to the cathexis of his ego-instincts, and to increase them to an amount which is bound to play a part in his later development, especially when certain other circumstances lend their support.

¹⁸ Two factors will decide whether this advance in the developmental path of the libido is to fail. First, there is the amount of frustration in reality which opposes the new object-choice and reduces its value for the person concerned. ... Secondly, there is the amount of attraction which the infantile objects that have to be relinquished are able to exercise, and which is in proportion to the erotic cathexis attaching to them in childhood. Sigmund Freud (1912) SE XI p179

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Oedipus occurs, of the Oedipian complex's cancellation and destruction¹⁹.

¹⁹ Possibly, Lecture XXXIV Explanations, Applications and Orientations, APPLICATIONS AND ORIENTATIONS (1932[1933]) SE XXII

We recognised that particular importance attached to the first years of childhood - up to the age of five, perhaps - for several reasons. Firstly, because those years include the early efflorescence of sexuality which leaves behind it decisive instigating factors for the sexual life of maturity. Secondly, because the impressions of this period impinge upon an immature and feeble ego, and act upon it like traumas. The ego cannot fend off the emotional storms which they provoke in any way except by repression and in this manner acquires in childhood all its dispositions to later illnesses and functional disturbances. We realised that the difficulty of childhood lies in the fact that in a short span of time a child has to appropriate the results of a cultural evolution which stretches over thousands of years, including the acquisition of control over his instincts and adaptation to society - or at least the first beginnings of these two. He can only achieve a part of this modification through his own development; much must be imposed on him by education. We are not surprised that children often carry out this task very imperfectly. From Sigmund Freud: New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis: SE XX11 (1932-36) See www.LacanianWorksExchange.net /Freud (1932)

OR The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex (1924) SE XIX p173-179: Published at www.Freud2Lacan.com

To an ever-increasing extent the Oedipus complex reveals its importance as the central phenomenon of the sexual period of early childhood. After that, its dissolution takes place; it succumbs to repression, as we say, and is followed by the latency period. It has not yet become clear, however, what it is that brings about its destruction. Analyses seem to show that it is the experience of painful disappointments. SE XIX p173

OR Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy (Little Hans) (1909) SE X p6, at www.Freud2Lacan.com, *ibid.* See previous footnote

OR Summary of Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality 1905 SE VII p234

We were then obliged to recognise, as one of our most surprising findings, that this early efflorescence of infantile sexual life (between the ages of two and five) already gives rise to the choice of an object, with all the wealth of mental activities which such a process involves. [1] Thus, in spite of the lack of synthesis between the different instinctual components and the uncertainty of the sexual aim, the phase of development corresponding to that period must be regarded as an important precursor of the subsequent final sexual organisation.

The fact that the onset of sexual development in human beings occurs in two phases, i.e., that the development is interrupted by the period of latency, seemed to call for particular notice.

Footnote [1] James Strachey states, 'Cf. the end of the footnote on p222.

SE VII p222 (Essay II Infantile Sexuality): The finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it [Footnote 1, p222]

[1, p222] [*Footnote added* 1915:] Psycho-analysis informs us that there are two methods of finding an object. The first, described in the text, is the 'anaclitic' or 'attachment' one, based on attachment to early infantile prototypes. The second is the narcissistic one, which seeks for the subject's own ego and finds it again in other people. This latter method is of particularly great importance in cases where the outcome is a pathological one, but it is not relevant to the present context. [James Strachey writes: The point is elaborated in the later part of Section II of Freud's paper on narcissism (1914c).-The paragraph in the text above, written in 1905, does not appear to harmonise with the remarks on the subject on pp. 200 and 234, written in 1915 and 1920 respectively.]

Sigmund Freud: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: 1905d SE VII p123-245 Published bilingual at www.Freud2Lacan.com

OR Essay II Infantile Sexuality, SE VII Footnote 2 [1910] p193-194

Footnote: In addition to this, the 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy' (1909b) has taught us much that is new for which we have not been prepared by psycho-analysis: for instance, the fact that sexual symbolism - the representation of what is sexual by non-sexual objects and relations - extends back into the first years of possession of the power of speech.

I was further made aware of a defect in the account I have given in the text, which, in the interests of lucidity, describes the conceptual distinction between the two phases of auto-erotism and object-love as though it were also a separation in time. But the analyses that I have just mentioned, as well as the findings of Bell quoted on p. 1496 n., above, show that children between the ages of three and five are capable of very clear object-choice, accompanied by strong affects.

Sigmund Freud: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: 1905d: SE VII p123-245. Published bilingual at www.Freud2Lacan.com

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There is something other than what we have described so far, which would be in some way the erasure, the imaginary attenuation of a relation [*relation*] that is fundamentally in itself imperishable, there is really a crisis, there is really a revolution, there is really something that is what leaves behind this result, and this result is the formation of something particular, something very precisely dated in the unconscious, namely the formation of the superego, and it is here that we are confronted with the necessity of bringing forth something new, original and fresh, and which has its own solution within the Oedipal relation [*relation*].

To see this, we only need to use what is our usual schema, namely that at the point we reached last time, the child here offers the imaginary object of the phallus to the mother to give her complete satisfaction, and this in the form of a lure. That is to say, by making the Other intervene with the mother, who is in a way the witness, the one who sees the whole situation, this term without which no exhibition of the little boy before the mother has its meaning, simply implied through the mere fact that what we describe as the presentation, or even of the offering that the little boy makes to his mother, it is obviously there, at the level of this Other that it must occur for the Oedipus to exist, that it must produce the presence of something that, until then, was not in the game, that is to say, someone who always, and in all circumstances, is in a position to enjoy [*de jouir* from *de jouer*] and win.

The schema of the game of guarantee [*jeu de gage*] is there to tell us, among a thousand other features - which we can read within the observations, which we can see at this stage enjoy [*jouir* from *jouer*] within the very activity of the child - is there to show us that it is indeed in effect, a moment where the game, which one finds in a thousand forms in the case of little Hans, that one re-finds [the game]

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within his way of going to isolate himself all of a sudden within the dark, within a small closet²⁰ which is the same one that becomes his very own, whereas until then he was in everyone else's - there are a thousand traits, there is a moment where everything oscillates [p209] around the game's transition. There²¹ is the notion of something that adds to the dimension which was waited for on the groundwork [*sur le plan*] of the symbolic relation [*relation*], to know that what was until then only within the contribution of the symbolic relation [*relation*] that this call and recall I told you about last time, which characterises the symbolic mother, becomes the notion that at the level of the big Other there is someone who is able to respond in any event, and who only responds in all cases the phallus, the truth, the real penis²². It is that he has it. It is he who has the core asset and who knows it. It is this introduction of this real element within the inverse symbolic order of the mother's first position, who symbolises herself [*se symbolise*] within the real through her presence and her absence.

²⁰ Little Hans: 1909, SE X p14: From the observation, his interest in widdlers led him to invent a special game of his own. "Leading out of the front hall there is a lavatory and also a dark storeroom for keeping wood in. For some time past Hans has been going into the wood-cupboard and saying: "I'm going to my W.C." I once looked in to see what he was doing in the dark storeroom. He showed me his parts and said: "I'm widdling." That is to say, he has been "playing" at W.C. That it is in the nature of a game is shown not merely by the fact that he was only pretending to widdle, but also by the fact that he does not go into the W.C., which would after all be far simpler, but prefers the wood-cupboard and calls it "his W.C.""

RELATED TEXTS

Essay III The Transformation of Puberty, Infantile Anxiety SEVII p224

Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality 1905 SE VII

The truth is merely that children who are inclined to be timid are affected by stories which would make no impression whatever upon others, and it is only children with a sexual instinct that is excessive or has developed prematurely or has become vociferous owing to too much petting who are inclined to be timid. In this respect a child, by turning his libido into anxiety when he cannot satisfy it, behaves in his anxiety like a child: he begins to be frightened when he is alone, that is to say when he is away from someone of whose love he had felt secure, and he seeks to assuage this feat by the most childish measures. [Footnote 1]

[1] For this explanation of the origin of infantile anxiety I have to thank a three-year-old boy whom I once heard calling out of a dark room: 'Auntie, speak to me! I'm frightened because it's so dark.' His aunt answered him: 'What good would that do? You can't see me.' 'That doesn't matter,' replied the child, 'if anyone speaks, it gets light.' Thus what he was afraid of was not the dark, but the absence of someone he loved; and he could feel sure of being soothed as soon as he had evidence of that person's presence. [Added 1920:] One of the most important results of psycho-analytic research is this discovery that neurotic anxiety [*die neurotische Angst*] arises out of libido, that it is the product of a transformation of it, and that it is thus related to it in the same kind of way as vinegar is to wine. A further discussion of this problem will be found in my 'Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis (1916-17) Lecture XXV (See www.LacanianWorksExchange.net/freud), though even there, it must be confessed, the question is not finally cleared up. [James Strachey writes: For Freud's latest views on the subject of anxiety see his *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anguish (Angst)* (1926d)

[See www.Freud2Lacan.com and *New Introductory Lectures (1933a) Lecture XXXII.*]

From Sigmund Freud: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: 1905d: SE VII p123-245* Published bilingual at www.Freud2Lacan.com

OR

Possibly Little Hans: 1909, SE X p24-25: 'On the same day his mother asked: "Do you put your hand to your widdler [*wiwimacher*]?" and he answered: "Yes, every evening, when I'm in bed." The next day, January 9th, he was warned, before his afternoon sleep, not to put his hand to his widdler. When he woke up he was asked about it, and said he had put it there for a short while all the same.' www.Freud2Lacan.com

²¹ This paragraph has been very difficult to translate and despite having taken advice from others, it remains difficult.

²² Given the Biblical references further on, this may be a reference to John chapter 14, verse 6. 'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" English Standard Version

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There is what at that moment makes this object

- that was both there and not there,

- because it was from this point that he had started (in relationship [*par rapport*] to any object) to know that an object is both present and absent, and that one can always enjoy [*jouir* from *jouer*] in the presence or in the absence of an object.

From that moment on, this object is no longer the imaginary object with which he can be duped [*se leurrer*],

- but the object which is always in the jurisdiction of an other [*un autre*]

- to show that he²³ doesn't have it, or that he has it insufficiently.

And which, starting from that moment, establishes that for the rest of his development.

If castration enjoys [*jouit* from *joue*] its absolutely essential role, it is because fundamentally being [*étant*] in order to have to be assumed as the maternal phallus, as before [*devant*]

to be an essentially symbolic object. This is only to start from the fact that within the essential Oedipal experience, it is through the one who has it, who knows that he has it on every occasion, and who has been temporarily deprived of it, that the child can conceive that this same symbolic object will one day be given to him. In other words, the assumption of the very sign of the virile position of masculine [*masculine*] heterosexuality implies the castration from the start. As for that natural appendage of the naturally masculine being [*être masculin*] which is the male [*mâle*], in Man [*chez l'homme*], what we are taught as the notion of the Oedipus within Freud, it is that which he must already perfectly possess, what he has as a member, in contrast to the feminine position, precisely because he has it as a member, he has to get it from someone else.

It is within this relation [*relation*] to something that is the real within the symbolic, the one who is really the father and of whom no-one can finally say what it is really like to be the father, if that is not precisely something that is already there within the game, it is through relationship [*par rapport*] to this game enjoyed [*joui* from *joué*] with the father, this game of 'who loses wins', if I may say so, that the child can conquer the belief which deposits in him this first inscription of the law.

What becomes of this drama in which he is, as described to us within the Freudian dialectic, a petty criminal. It is through the way of this imaginary crime that he enters within the order of the law. But he can only enter within this order of the [p210] law if for at least a moment he has had a real partner in front of him, someone who effectively has provided this level of the Other, something that is not simply 'call and recall', which is not simply a couple of the 'presence and absence', a fundamentally collateralising²⁴ [*néantisant*] element of the symbolic, but someone who responds to him.

But if things can be expressed in this way on the groundwork [*sur le plan*] of the imaginary drama, it is at the level of the imaginary game that this experience must be made. It is not without reason that from this demand for this dimension of absolute otherness of the one who simply has the power and who responds to it, no particular dialogue is born. It (the power) is embodied within those real characters, but these real characters themselves are always dependent on something that, through

²³ Note: it is not clear if this 'he' refers to 'an other' or the child of the previous paragraph. Probably the child.

²⁴ NÉANTISATION, *subst. Fé.m. - Philosophie*

[In Sartre] Action of neantising or of being neantised; action of the being of consciousness (the for-itself) insofar as it frees itself from reality (the in-itself) `` (Miq. 1967). Reduction to nothing, to nothingness. For Sartre, "neantisation" refers to the operation by which one eliminates certain sectors from one's intentional world and makes them unreal, treating them as if they were not: one treats them as not counting. - (Jacqueline Russ, France Farago, Les méthodes en philosophie, 3rd ed., 2017, Armand Colin) From <https://www.lalanguefrancaise.com/dictionnaire/definition/neantisation>

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relationship [*par rapport*] to them, ultimately presents itself as an eternal alibi. The only one who can absolutely respond to this position of the father insofar as he is the symbolic father, it is the one who could say as the God of monotheism said: I am the one who am²⁵. But it is one thing that, apart from the sacred text where we encounter it, cannot be literally pronounced by anyone.

So you tell me: you have learnt for yourselves that the message we receive, it is our own under [*sous*] an inverted form, in other words that everything goes to be resolved through the: ‘You are the one who is’²⁶. Don’t believe it, because in order to say this to anyone else, ‘Who am I?’²⁷... In other words, what I want to point out here, it is that the symbolic father is strictly speaking unthinkable, he is nowhere, he does not intervene anywhere, and the proof is that, at the same time, this shows us that it took a mind [*un esprit*] as bound to the requirements of scientific and positive thinking as Freud was, in order to make this construction to which Jones confides to us that he held onto more than to his entire work.²⁸ He did not put it in the foreground (*au premier plan*), because his major work, and the only one, he wrote it, affirmed and never denied it, it is the ‘Interpretation of Dreams’²⁹ but the one that was most dear to him as a success that seemed to him an achievement, it is ‘Totem and Taboo’³⁰, which is nothing more than a modern myth, a myth constructed in order to explain to us what remained open in his doctrine, namely: where is the father?

It suffices to read ‘Totem and Taboo’ with simply an open eye in order to realise that if it is not what I am telling you, that is a myth, it is absolutely absurd. But on the other hand, if ‘Totem and Taboo’ is made in order to tell us that for fathers to survive, the real father, the only father, the single father must be prior to the entry into [*dans*] history, and that it is the dead father, much more than it is the killed father, why really would this [p211] even be thought of, outside this value, strictly speaking mythical? Because, as far as I know, the father on which he is acting [*dont il s’agit*] is not conceived through Freud, nor through anyone else, as an immortal being. Why should the son have to advance his (the father’s) death in some way? And all this for what? In order, in the end, to deny himself the subject, that which was acting to thrill him [*il s’agissait de lui ravir*], that is to precisely say, he only killed him to show that he is unkillable [*intuable*].

It is this notion that Freud introduces around a major drama whose essence is based on a notion that is strictly mythical, insofar as it is the very categorisation of a form of the impossible, even the unthinkable, this eternisation [*éternisation*] of an only father at the origin, whose characteristics will be that he will have been killed. Why? To be preserved, and I would point this out in passing, that in

²⁵ Je suis celui qui suis Exodus, chapter 3, verse 14, ‘God said to Moses, “ I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘ I AM has sent me to you.’” English Standard Version

²⁶ *Tu es celui qui es(t)* Probably, Mathew chapter 11 verse 2-3, ‘Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “**Are you the one who is** to come, or shall we look for another?”’ English Standard Version

²⁷ Qui suis-je? Probably, Matthew chapter 16 verses 13-17 ‘**13** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” **14** And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven”. English Standard Version

²⁸ Couvre is given in the transcript which translates as cover. It is suggested that this is a transcription error. Oeuvre is a possibility and means work.

²⁹ The Interpretation of Dreams: 6th November 1899 (published as 1900): Sigmund Freud , SE IV & V, See www.LacanianWorks.org /The Interpretation of Dreams : 6th November 1899 (published as 1900) : Sigmund Freud & www.Freud2Lacan.com. la Sciences des rêves in the original French translation - ‘the science of dreams’

³⁰ Totem and Taboo: 1912-1913: Sigmund Freud, SE XIII p 1-162, See www.Freud2Lacan.com

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French, and in some other languages, in German in particular, 'to kill' [*tuer*] comes from the Latin 'tutare' which means to preserve.

This mythical father who shows us what kind of difficulties Freud was dealing with, at the same time shows us what he was actually aiming at in the notion of the father; it is that something which in no moment of the dialectic intervenes, if not through the intermediary of the real father who comes at some point to fill the role and function, which makes it possible to vivify and give a new dimension to the imaginary relation [*relation*], to bring in, not this purely specular game of Ego [*moi*] or the Other, but to give personification [*incarnation*] to this unpronounceable phrase : You are the one that you are [*Tu es celui que tu es*], which we said earlier was not pronounceable by someone who is not himself - but if you'll allow me the wordplay and the ambiguity I already used at the time when we made the study of the paranoid structure of President Schreber³¹ - not therefore 'You are the one that you are' [*Tu es celui que tu es*], but 'You are the one who kills [*Tu es celui qui tue*]

It is essentially as long as something marks the end of the Oedipus complex, locates the repressed within the unconscious but permanent under [*sous*] the form of the establishment of something that is regulated, that there is something that responds within the symbolic. The law is no longer simply after all that something of which, we wonder why all the human community [*communauté des hommes*] is involved in it and [is] introduced, but it has passed within the real under [*sous*] the form of this left nucleus [*ce noyau laissé*] through the complex of Oedipus [*le complexe d'œdipe*], under [*sous*] the form of that something which analysis has once shown, and once for all, in order to be the real form under [*sous*] which it is registered, is attached to what philosophers have until now shown us with more or less ambiguity, as being that density, that permanent core of moral conscience, that something of which we know in [*chez*] each individual, it is very precisely embodied [*incarné*] through something that can take the most multiple forms, the most diverse forms, the most bizarre, the most grimacing, and which is called the Superego [*Surmoi*]. It takes this form because it is always introduced - here at the level of the Id [*Es*] - it is always part of some accident of this deeply accidental situation which means that one does not necessarily know at what point [p212] of the imaginary game the passage was made, of the one who was for a moment there to answer, and which is introduced here within the Id [*Es*] as a homogeneous element with the other libidinal elements, this tyrannical Superego [*Surmoi*], fundamentally paradoxical and contingent in itself, but which to itself, alone, represents, even in [*chez*] non-neurotics, this something that has this function of being the signifier that marks, imprints, leaves the seal in [*chez*] the man of his relation [*relation*] to the signified. That he should have a signifier in [*chez*] man which marks his relation [*sa relation*] to the signified, he has one of it [*il en a un*], that is called the Superego [*Surmoi*], there is even there much more than one, it's called the symptoms.

³¹ Seminar III 27th June 1956, p303 of Russell Grigg's translation, www.LacanianWorks.org /4 Jacques Lacan (19551116) : The object of our love is only ourselves, it's the *tu es celui qui me tues, thou art the one who kills me*. Observe the fortunate opportunity that the signifier offers us in French, with the different ways of understanding *tu es*. [6] [Footnote 6 "Thou art" and "Kill."]

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I stress that with this key, and only with this key, you can understand this on which it is acting [*ce dont il s'agit*] when Little Hans foments his phobia³². What is characteristic, and I think I can demonstrate it to you in this observation, is precisely that despite all his love, all his kindness, all his intelligence, thanks to which we have the observation, there is no real father. The whole game continues in this unbearable, anguishing [*angoissant*], intolerable lure of the relation [*relation*] of little Hans to his mother, insofar as he is him or her [*lui ou elle*], the one or the other, never without us knowing which, the [*le*] phallophore or the [*la*] phallophore, the big or the little giraffe, and despite the ambiguities of appreciation that the various authors who take up the observation make of it, it is quite clear that the little giraffe³³ is precisely this maternal belonging [*appartenance maternelle*] around which the fact of knowing who has it, and who will have it, is played out. It's a kind of waking dream that makes little Hans, (and which for a moment makes him, to the large cries thrust [*aux grands cris poussés*] through

³² Little Hans: 1909: SE X p8-9, Footnote 2, added by Sigmund Freud in 1923: I have nevertheless put forward the view that the term 'castration complex' ought to be confined to those excitations and consequences which are bound up with the loss of the penis. Anyone who, in analysing adults, has become convinced of the invariable presence of the castration complex, will of course find difficulty in ascribing its origin to a chance threat - of a kind which is not, after all, of such universal occurrence; he will be driven out of the slightest hints, which will never be wanting. This circumstance is also the motive, indeed, that has stimulated the search for those deeper roots of the complex which are universally forthcoming. But this makes it all the more valuable that in the case of little Hans the threat of castration is reported by his parents themselves, and moreover at a date before there was any question of his phobia.

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SE X p24-25: 'On the same day his mother asked: "Do you put your hand to your widdler [*wiwimacher*]?" and he answered: "Yes, every evening, when I'm in bed." The next day, January 9th, he was warned, before his afternoon sleep, not to put his hand to his widdler. When he woke up, he was asked about it, and said he had put it there for a short while all the same.'

Here, then, we have the beginning of Hans's anxiety as well as of his phobia. As we see, there is good reason for keeping the two separate. Moreover, the material seems to be amply sufficient for giving us our bearings; and no moment of time is so favourable for the understanding of a case as its initial stage, such as we have here, though unluckily that stage is as a rule neglected or passed over in silence. The disorder set in with thoughts that were at the same time fearful and tender, and then followed an anxiety dream on the subject of losing his mother and so not being able to coax with her any more. His affection for his mother must therefore have become enormously intensified. This was the fundamental phenomenon in his condition. In support of this, we may recall his two attempts at seducing his mother, ... www.Freud2Lacan.com

³³ Little Hans: 1909, SE X p121: Having partly mastered his castration complex, he was now able to communicate his wishes with regard to his mother. He did so, in what was still a distorted form, by means of the phantasy of the two giraffes, one of which was calling out in vain because Hans had taken possession of the other [SE X p37]. He represents the 'taking possession of' pictorially as 'sitting down on'. His father recognised the phantasy as a reproduction of a bedroom scene which used to take place in the morning between the boy and his parents; and he quickly stripped the underlying wish of the disguise which it still wore. The boy's father and mother were the two giraffes. The reason for the choice of a giraffe-phantasy for the purposes of disguise was fully explained by a visit that the boy had paid a visit to those same large beasts at Schönbrunn a few days earlier, by the giraffe-drawing, belonging to an earlier period, which had been preserved by his father, and also, perhaps, by an unconscious comparison based upon the giraffe's long, stiff neck. www.Freud2Lacan.com

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[*par*] his mother³⁴ and despite these large cries), the possessor of the stake [*l'enjeu*], and which is there to underline for us in the most pictorial way, the very mechanism.

I would add to this a certain number of considerations which permit us, if not to affirm - in order in a strict manner for you to get used to this category of castration such that I am in process of trying to articulate in front of you- but of now trying to see what within [*dans*] this perspective situates each one within their plan [*plan*], within their reciprocal relations [*relations*], the imaginary play of the Ego Ideal [*l'idéal du moi*] on the one side, through relationship [*par rapport*] to this sanctioning intervention of castration, thanks to which these imaginary elements take on their stability, their constellation - fixed within the symbolic.

Try to see if it is necessary that, within this perspective and this distinction, we dare to articulate this something that directly emerges from the notion of a relation of object [*d'une relation d'objet*], conceived in [*par*] advance, harmonious, uniform, as if through some conjunction of nature and law, it was ideally and in a constant manner that each has to find his own to the greatest satisfaction of the couple, not without your being able to stop yourself at least for a moment at the question of knowing what the whole of the community might have thought about it. I believe that we must think, if we know how to distinguish the order of the law from [p 213] imaginary harmonies, perhaps the very position of the amorous relation [*la relation amoureuse*], we will begin to pose what if it is true that castration ought to be the essential crisis through which [*par où*] every subject is introduced, is enabled to being [*à être*], so to speak, Oedipalised as by right [*œdipianisé de plein droit*], you will conclude after all that it is only natural to formulate, even at the level of complex structures perhaps quite free of kinship as those in which we live, even at this level, and not only within the elementary structures which at the limit one can establish the formula that any woman who is not permitted, is forbidden through the law. This will allow us to conceive the very clear echo that every marriage carries in it, and not just in [*chez*] neurotics, the castration itself, that if a particular civilization, which is the one where we live, produced marriage symbolically as the fruit of a mutual consent, this will explain to us what might flourish as ideal, the equally ideal confusion of love and conjugation.

It is quite clear all the same that it is as long as this civilization has brought this fact of mutual consent to the forefront [*au premier plan*], that is to say pushed the freedom of unions as far as possible. It has pushed it so far that it still borders on incest and moreover it is enough that you dwell a little on what is the very function of the primitive laws of alliance and kinship in order for you to perceive that any conjunction, whatever it may be, even instantaneous, of individual choice in the interior of the law,

³⁴ Little Hans: 1909, SE X p10: But the great event of Hans's life was the birth of his little sister Hanna when he was exactly three and a half. His behaviour on that occasion was noted down by his father on the spot: 'At five in the morning', he writes, 'labour began, and Hans's bed was moved into the next room. He woke up there at seven, and, hearing his mother groaning, asked: "Why's Mummy coughing?" Then, after a pause, "The stork's coming to-day for certain." 'Naturally he has often been told during the last few days that the stork is going to bring a little girl or a little boy; and he quite rightly connected the unusual sounds of groaning with the stork's arrival.

'Later on, he was taken into the kitchen. He saw the doctor's bag in the front hall and asked: "What's that?" "A bag," was the reply. Upon which he declared with conviction: "The stork's coming to-day," After the baby's delivery the midwife came into the kitchen and Hans heard her ordering some tea to be made. At this he said: "I know! Mummy's to have some tea because she's coughing." He was then called into the bedroom. He did not look at his mother, however, but at the basins and other vessels, filled with blood and water, that were still standing about the room. Pointing to the blood-stained bed-pan, he observed in a surprised voice: "But blood doesn't come out of my widdler."

'Everything shows that he connects what is strange in the situation with the arrival of the stork. He meets everything he sees with a very suspicious and intent look, and there can be no question that his first doubts about the stork have taken root. See www.Freud2Lacan.com

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any conjunction of love and law, even if it is desirable, even if it is a kind of necessary intersection point between beings [*êtres*], is something that participates in incest. So that ultimately, if within [*dans*] the failures, perhaps the degradation of amorous life [*vie amoureux*], Freudian doctrine attributes the lasting attachment to the mother, as a permanent constant of 'I don't know what' that strikes from an original flaw [*tare*] in the ideal that would be desired of the monogamous union, it is not necessary to believe that there be so to speak another thing, a new form of One [*d'un*]: or else, or else, [*ou bien, ou bien,*] which shows us that if incest does not occur where we wish it, that is to say within [*dans*] the existing or within [*dans*] the perfect households [*ménages*], as one would say, it is precisely because it took place somewhere else, but that within the one [*dans l'un*] and the other case, it is indeed the incest that is acting. In other terms, something which carries in itself its limit, which carries in itself a fundamental duplicity, an ambiguity always ready to be reborn, and which allows us to affirm that - in accordance with experience but with the only advantage of not being surprised by it - if the ideal of the conjugal conjunction is monogamous in [*chez*] the woman for the reasons which we said at the beginning, this should absolutely not surprise us.

You are only to be referred to the initial schema of the relation of the child [*relation de l'enfant*] to the mother in order to realise what always attempts to reproduce itself on the side of the man [*de l'homme*], and in so far as the typical, normative, legal union is always marked by castration, attempts to reproduce itself in [*chez*] him this division or this split which makes him fundamentally bigamous - I do not say polygamous, contrary to what one believes, although of course from the moment where the two [p214] have been introduced, there is no longer any reason to limit the game in the palace of the mirages. But it is fundamentally within [*dans*] the full extent, where beyond [*au-delà*] this to what the real father authorises, if one might say, the one who has entered within the Oedipal dialectic to fix his choice, beyond this choice [*au-delà de ce choix*] there is always within love what is intended, that is to say not legal object, nor object of satisfaction, [*objet légal, ni objet de satisfaction*], but being [*être*], that is to say, object grasped within precisely what it lacks.

It is very precisely for this, that in an institutionalised or anarchic way, we see that love and the consecrated union are never confused. Or I'll say it again, this happens in an institutionalised way, like many advanced civilisations have absolutely no hesitation to doctrinise it, to affirm it and put it into practice³⁵.

When one is within a civilisation such as ours or one knows nothing to articulate except that everything happens in some way through accident, namely because we are more or less an Ego [*moi*], more or less weak, more or less strong, and that one is more or less bound to this or that archaic fixation, even ancestral, one realises that it is within the very structure which distinguishes the imaginary primitive relation [*la relation imaginaire primitive*]. The one through which [*par où*] the child is as of now introduced to this beyond [*au-delà*] of his mother, which is what he already sees, touches and experiences through his mother, from that something by which the human being is a private being and a neglected being - it is the distinction between this imaginary experience and the symbolic experience that norms it. It is solely through the interpretation and through the intermediary of the law that many things are preserved that do not allow us to talk about it in any case as being simply the relation of object [*relation d'objet*], even of the most ideal, of the most motivated through the choice and through the deepest affinities and which fundamentally leave open a problematic in any amorous life [*vie amoureuse*].

³⁵ It is possible that these paragraphs are an autobiographical reference.

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This is very precisely that which Freud, his experience and our daily experience, is there for making us touch, and at the same time affirm.