

have isolated a certain number of master signifiers in a patient's life, there is *another* problem. How can "poor Philippe" define himself, not by the phallus but rather by the remainder of the phallic operation, i.e. by his partial objects or rather object *a* (Lacan introduces object *a* as a logification of the partial object)?

The subject has to be driven through yet another labyrinth, not that of his identifications, but that of the ways he obtains jouissance—the ways he transforms the other he loves into an object. If we only isolate one chain ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ), we neglect the fact that poor Philippe loves women in a certain way. How? Does he treat a woman like a breast, setting the tone for his love affairs: clinging, demanding, being rejected, and always coming back? That would be an oral-style love affair, the woman's love being transformed into a breast one clings to. Or does he adopt an anal approach to women, falling in love, and then fleeing like a madman once the object he loves is reduced to an anal object that smells? Or a scopic approach, never seeing, in the object he loves, how that object deceives him blatantly, openly; not seeing the impasse into which he always falls; always falling in love instantly; placing great importance on the moment of being love-struck? Or does he reduce his loved one to a voice, a voice that gives him orders or leaves him with a compulsion to hear from her once more?

All of these approaches to love can be derived from the same chain of master signifiers, and one has to learn in one's analysis not only how one's identification is lacking and that the chain of master signifiers is not a new name for the subject (even in Philippe's case), as the subject's proper name is always lacking; one also has to see that one is not represented by one's love—one does not completely inscribe one's love in the locus of the Other. One must always find that other lack—the fact that as authentic as one's love is, one is always confronted with that same remainder—a remainder in the true sense of the term: one that reminds him of the fact that he is not represented, that there is a limit, that there is only partial representation. It reminds him of the jouissance he experienced through his oral demands and anal demands, and what he tried to obtain from his mother—her gaze or voice—which is not directly linked with need. You need to eat, you need to shit. You don't apparently need the Other's gaze or voice, but you nevertheless desire it more than you know.

#### Note

1. See *L'inconscient*, VIe Colloque de Bonneval, ed. Henri Ey, Desclée de Brouwer, 1966.

## ALIENATION AND SEPARATION (II)



Éric Laurent

Today I will pursue the theme of alienation and separation I began with last week, stressing some of the clinical consequences thereof. I will start with pages 249 and 250 in chapter 19, "From Interpretation to Transference," because these pages contain an explicit statement by Lacan about an error that Jean Laplanche, one of his students at that time, made concerning Lacan's theory of interpretation. The error made by Laplanche (who was not an imbecile) arose because something in Lacan's work seemed to authorize Laplanche's position. Here is Lacan's statement:

Consequently, it is false to say, as has been said [by Laplanche], that interpretation is open to any and all meanings under the pretext that it is but a question of the connection of one signifier to another. (249–50)

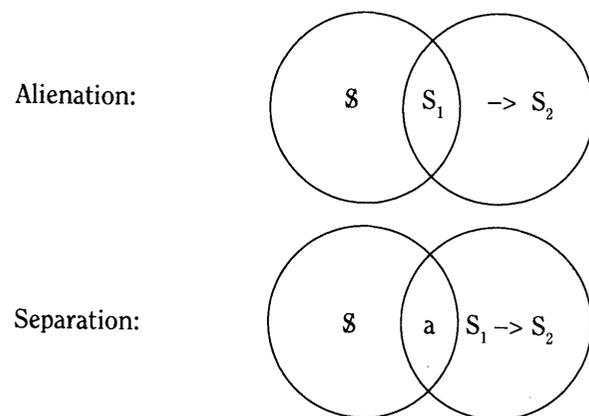
In the heyday of metaphor and metonymy, Laplanche stressed the fact that, while metaphor is an effect of the signification produced by the substitution of one signifier for another, and metonymy is the fact that these signifiers are linked on the same level with an effect of signification, any effect produced is admitted into the formula. You have no constraint on the metaphoric or metonymic aspects of interpretation and, as in jazz age epistemology, "anything goes."<sup>1</sup>

It seemed like anything that produced an effect was acceptable, and at that time some of Lacan's followers thought that Lacan's "expressionist" character and Baroque ways were based on the notion that the most important thing was to produce an effect of any kind. Many people tried to imitate

him and to obtain the same effect in the analytic situation; thus they theorized analytic treatment on the basis of these assumptions.

In contrast, when Lacan established his own school of psychoanalysis and assumed responsibility for training analysts, he denounced such assumptions and stressed that you cannot say that anything goes. "Interpretation is not open to any and all meanings." (250) I will comment upon this. Why does he stress this in the lecture in which he introduces alienation and separation?

As we saw last time, the union of the subject with the Other leaves a loss: if the subject tries to find him or herself in the Other, s/he can only find him or herself as a lost part. S/he is petrified by a master signifier and loses some part of his or her being. Alienation (that is, the fact that the subject, having no identity, has to identify with something) masks or overlaps the fact that, more deeply in a sense, the subject defines him or herself not only in the signifying chain, but, at the level of drives, in terms of his or her jouissance as related to the Other. If we adopt the schemas that Jacques-Alain Miller first developed, we have:



In Freudian terms, alienation masks the fact that the object of jouissance as such is lost, as Freud pointed out in his famous 1925 article, "Negation." These two formulas or logical operations that produce the subject can be read vertically in a sense. First, alienation—the fact that the subject is produced within the language that awaits him or her and is inscribed in the locus of the Other. The subject finds him or herself divided, dismembered between the partial drives, and partial as there is always a loss.

These formulas can be read in another way. The subject is fundamentally an object of the Other's jouissance, and his or her first status as an infant is to be a lost part of that Other, that real Other (generally the mother). S/he begins life in the place of object *a*, and then has to identify

with that lost part and enter the chain of signifiers. S/he will try, as Lacan said, to "assume his or her primary identifications," a phrase used in the *Écrits*. His or her primary identification, in one sense, is with the master signifier. In a deeper sense, his or her primary identification is with an object which s/he will define in the end. It is the complete identification—what s/he was, as such, in the Other's desire, not only at the symbolic level of desire, but as the real substance at stake for jouissance. S/he can only try to recover or identify it within the development of the chain of signifiers.

Thus you can read these schemas both ways. First alienation and then separation, or first separation and then alienation. Logically speaking, alienation comes first. In the analytic situation, separation comes first. When Lacan says, "interpretation is not open to any and all meanings," he is far from authorizing the "anything goes" theory or "the most popular interpretation" theory that some analysts developed (one tries an interpretation, and if it doesn't work, one tries another, and yet another, mapping out the whole range until one reaches the one most "popular" with the analysand, the ones s/he accepts).

Instead you have to address the true meaning of what the analysand says within the signifying chain, and the true meaning analytic interpretation has to address is not an effect of signification but rather the product or remainder of the first encounter between the subject and the Other—the remainder of that experience, *das Erlebnis* in Freudian terms, the remainder of jouissance.

Lacan goes on:

Interpretation is not open to any and all meanings. That would be to concede to those who criticize analytic interpretation for being uncertain that, in effect, any and all interpretations are possible, which is patently absurd. While I have said that the effect of interpretation is to isolate in the subject a kernel, a *Kern*, to use Freud's own term, of non-sense, that does not mean that interpretation is in itself nonsense. (250)

Freud used the word "*Kern*" especially in speaking of *der Kern unseres Wesens* (the core of our being). Lacan adopted the term and described the *Kern* of the subject as a signifier isolated in its deeper meaning—separated from meaning, the binary signifier standing for anything that makes sense, thus separating out in the chain of signifiers what remains at the level of nonsense: the master signifier, *S<sub>1</sub>*.

This is an intuition that Lacan formulated in many ways in his teaching: one's basic identifications have no meaning at all, they simply *are*. One can explore the meanings they have, but one must not neglect the fact that, in the end, they make no sense. Lacan, for example, often referred to Freud's

formulation of the fetish in the case of the man who, in order to become interested in a woman, had to detect a certain “shine on the nose” (in German, *Glanz auf der Nase*). Freud traced this back to the fact that the patient had had an English nurse. Out of sexual curiosity, he tried to “glance” at her, but she told him that somehow his nose would be punished if he tried to look at her when he was not allowed to. Hence *Glanz* and glance were linked to the nose. In this way one can make sense of something that, in its deeper aspects, made no sense at all. That is just the way it is. One cannot explain why all of this man’s sexual life was devoted to the transliteration of English into German. It has a nonsensical side, and that is exactly what Lacan tries to isolate when he stresses the master signifier, “*Glanz*” in this case. Only afterwards does he discuss all the explanations; whatever makes sense can be interpreted.

It is true that in an analysis you have to do the same work that was done by Freud. You try to trace things back and elicit the memories that were linked to the original sexual aspects of the patient’s life. In a deeper sense, at the end you’ve got the kernel, which has been isolated as nonsensical. In the case of Freud’s patient, it is precisely in this *Glanz* (glance) that Freud detects what the boy was at the origin of his life. He was a gaze, and what structured his relationship with the Other was the fact that he identified with that gaze, that is, a partial drive. His jouissance was once and for all fixated within that gaze. It was a necessary condition for him to attain an erection, to take into account his phallic situation. The *Glanz auf der Nase* was a fetish. It was defined in part by a partial drive and also conditioned phallic signification for that subject.

$$S_1 \quad \begin{array}{l} a = \textit{Glanz auf der Nase} \\ \varphi \quad \textit{phallic signification} \end{array}$$

You can see in this example that interpretation is not open to any and all meanings. In the end, you have to point out the partial drive that is at stake. Lacan also defined it in another seminar when he said interpretation has to aim at the object, between the lines, so to speak, because the only way to aim at the object is not to comment on it directly. Analytic interpretation could, in certain schools of psychoanalysis, involve explaining to the patient that when he was a small boy, he wanted to look at his English nurse—which was considered very bad—and so he was anxious that he would be punished by losing his nose, and yet even now he is looking. You could comment on that and lecture your patient about it. That would be a mistake. Why? Why not lecture the patient? Isn’t a lecture the shortest way to the aim?

It isn’t the shortest because the subject always appears as a fading subject, and if you lecture him like that, the only effect is to fixate the subject on that jouissance, which leads to acting out. Thus you have to evoke things—you have to aim at the object between the lines, using the subject’s chain of signifiers and equivocation. As Cicero first said, a concept tries to take hold of or grasp an object. But in psychoanalysis you cannot grab hold of an object. You can, however, aim at it. Using signifiers, you have to target that point. You cannot hit it directly.

These propositions, made by Lacan in Seminar XI, were then formalized in Seminar XVII (1968–1969) when he proposed his formulas for the four discourses.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S_1 & \longrightarrow & S_2 & \textit{alienation} \\ \hline \S & & a & \textit{separation} \end{array}$$

There he combines in a single formula the definition of alienation and that of separation when he concludes, so to speak, the first part of his teaching. Here we have a shorthand formula for what Freud calls “unconscious formations,” not productions but formations, form being implied on the one side, all other aspects of fantasy (the place where “*Es*” was, where jouissance is) being implied on the other. Writing the four discourses in 1969 appears to be the result of the development of an earlier insight in Lacan’s teachings and the inclusion of different aspects into a single formula.

At the same time, however, it was also related to the debate taking place in 1968, the year in which France’s student rebellion led to political trouble that lasted a month and a half. The exact status of these troubles has not yet been established. What were they exactly? There was a wave of student rebellions throughout the world, from the USA (Kent State, etc.) to China (where the first stage of the cultural revolution was the student rebellion). In both the capitalist and socialist systems there were curious events that lasted two or three years, like a chain reaction, and their meaning has yet to be exactly defined.

It was precisely at that time that a debate was taking place at the intellectual level. One of the main points of that debate separated Foucault and Derrida, for instance. As some of you are very familiar with Derrida’s and Foucault’s work, I will try to be brief and show how Lacan viewed the debate and what, in a sense, Foucault and Derrida owe to Lacan.

Derrida accentuates the fact that the subject is defined through the process of alienation and stays alienated, while Foucault stresses the fact

that the deeper meaning of what one says has to do with one's *pratique de jouissance*, one's practice, how one obtains jouissance.

For Derrida, there can always be dissemination. It is always possible to find another meaning. A new signifier can always produce a new development in the chain, and thus in the end the subject is always considered as a void or empty place. Foucault denounced Derrida as metaphysical, as accepting that place in its indeterminacy, and tried to propose a way to eliminate that indeterminacy, defining the jouissance at stake.

Thus went the debate between knowledge and power (*savoir et pouvoir*), common in the 1960s. The debate was organized by the operations Lacan defines. Derrida criticized Foucault, a year before Lacan's seminar, in a lecture on the cogito and the history of madness.<sup>2</sup> Derrida's lecture is a very harsh critique of Foucault's history of madness published a few years before.<sup>3</sup> Foucault did not say anything during the lecture, nor did he reply after the publication of *Writing and Difference*. He waited until the second edition of *Madness and Civilization* in 1972. At the end of the book, he added a very harsh rejoinder to Derrida's critique.

Let me quote a passage from a biography of Foucault (*Michel Foucault, Life and Work*) in which Foucault develops his points very clearly. In these extracts, he says about Derrida:

I wouldn't say that it's metaphysics or its closure that is hidden in the textualization of his discursive praxis. I'd go much further. I would say [...] that what very visibly manifests itself is a little pedagogue who teaches the student that there is nothing outside of the text. It is a pedagogy that gave the voice of the masters the unlimited sovereignty that permits them to indefinitely repeat the text.

It is quite harsh to call Derrida—the most eminent representative and teacher of the *École normale supérieure* and quite a good teacher of phenomenology, who in the past decades transmitted phenomenology to philosophers at the *École normale supérieure*—a little pedagogue. It's rather insulting. Foucault and Derrida stopped talking to each other for ten years over it. That finally changed when Derrida was in prison in Czechoslovakia. He was framed by the Czech police when he went to visit and salute the people who had signed the charter of the Czech dissenters; the police planted some hashish on him, said he was a drug dealer, tried to ruin his reputation, and imprisoned him. In France there was a huge protest to free Derrida, in which Foucault joined, for which Derrida thanked him over lunch. But that was ten years later. There was quite a break between the two.

I mention this break just to show you that, in a certain way, it can be deduced from the operations Lacan proposes in Seminar XI. Foucault, who

was gay, stressed the fact that what is at stake in one's experience is that one speaks from one's own jouissance; Foucault was very well aware that his theory was, in a way, a theory of his own sexual practice, and that it could not be attacked simply by calling him a pervert or something like that. It was, rather, an authentic attempt to define *his* rebellion against the master signifiers, against conformity. His theory referred to the fact that, in the end, it is object *a* which is at stake when one thinks, whether it be in analysis or in the academy.

Derrida wanted to leave aside the fact that the place of object *a* is always full. It is this same place that is at stake when, at the end of the sixteenth lecture of Seminar XI (on May 27, 1964), Jacques-Alain Miller, then twenty years old, asked Lacan a question:

Do you not wish to show that the alienation of a subject who has received the definition of being born in, constituted by, and ordered in a field that is exterior to him, is to be distinguished radically from the alienation of a consciousness-of-self? In short, are we to understand—Lacan against Hegel? (215)

And Lacan replied, "what you have just said is very good, it's exactly the opposite of what Green just said to me." Green, a French psychoanalyst who was vice-president of the IPA ten years ago, attended Lacan's seminar for a year or two in the 1960s, and then wrote a book entitled *The Living Discourse*, stressing that Lacan did not take into account the living aspect of the thing because he left biology out of psychoanalysis. Green was very funny on this question, because as Lacan told the anecdote:

[Green] came up to me, shook my paw, at least morally, and said, "the death of structuralism, you are the son of Hegel." I don't agree. In saying Lacan *against* Hegel, I think you are much closer to the truth, though of course it is not at all a philosophical debate. (215)

What was at stake? It is true that Lacan was *against* Lévi-Strauss' structuralism which tried to eliminate the subject. Lacan reintroduced the subject into structuralism, and also introduced a logic that could admit a certain temporality. In that sense, Green was trying to say, it is the death of structuralism; you are the son of Hegel, since you introduce time and the subject—that's pure consciousness.

Jacques-Alain Miller's question points out that, far from leaving that place empty, Lacan defines it precisely with the Freudian fantasy or lust object, with its full charge of jouissance. The energetic aspects that Freud formulated mechanistically in the context of 19th century physics are refor-

mulated by Lacan within the context of formal logic. That can be seen in Lacan's comments at a lecture given by Foucault in February 1969, a well known lecture entitled "What is an Author?"<sup>4</sup> In this lecture, Foucault made many references to a return to Freud without naming Lacan. The French academy was still Marxist at that time and attacked Foucault, who was quite famous for the role he had played at Vincennes and for his links with the student rebellion, because structuralism and his brand of structuralism, stressing discourse and structure, left the subject behind ("subject", in the old sense of the term, i.e., man). In his lecture, Foucault showed that the modern author is best defined by Beckett's texts, in which, in the end, the possible identity of he who speaks is dissolved.

Lacan makes the following comment:

Structuralism or not, there is no question, in the field vaguely determined by that label, of the negation of the subject. The point is the dependence of the subject—which is extremely different, especially as concerns the return to Freud—on something truly elementary that I try to isolate with the term "signifier." Thirdly, I will limit my remarks here to the following: I do not consider it legitimate for it to be written that these structures do not march in the street. Because if there is something proved by the events that occurred in May, it is precisely that the structures do go marching in the street. The fact that someone wrote that "structures do not march in the street" (it was written by someone marching), in the place itself where this marching took place, proves only that in the structure of the act, the act misrepresents itself.<sup>5</sup>

What was at stake in the writing of Lacan's four discourses or in Foucault's discursive practice was the fact that structures "march in the street," because structure implies a quota of jouissance, and people die for it. Lacan wrote the university discourse—with knowledge located in the position of master —

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\mathcal{S}}$$

That discourse produces the subject who goes marching in the streets, as there is a necessary link between the student rebellion and the university. The academy has existed since the twelfth century, and there have always been student rebellions. There is a necessary connection there. Under many different regimes and conditions, from that time until now, what has been constant is the fact that students rebel. Lacan does not accept the Marxist explanation that the students are rebellious because they are not involved

in production. They are rebellious, he says, because they are made that way by the university discourse.

Now if we turn back to Seminar XI, Lacan stresses the consequence of this in psychoanalysis:

Leclaire's work illustrates particularly well the move from meaning-based interpretation to signifying non-sense, when he proposes, on the subject of his obsessive neurotic patient, the so-called *Poordjeli* formula, which links the two syllables of the word *licorne* (unicorn), thus enabling him to introduce into this sequence a whole chain in which his desire is animated. Indeed, you will see in what he will publish later that things go much further still. (250)

In this same lecture, Lacan refers to the fact that the first part of the article was written by Laplanche, and the second part concerning the presentation of this "Poordjeli" formula regarding the man with the unicorn was written by Leclaire. In fact, however, Leclaire's book did not show how things go much further still, though Lacan's article, "Position of the Unconscious," did. Lacan showed that one has to go further, because there is a chain in which desire is animated—alive—and Lacan speaks quite a few times in the *Écrits* of the *life* of desire. It is not desire, but jouissance that has to be considered, and they have to be considered in opposition to each other.

There is another clinical consequence that Lacan develops in this same lecture. Lacan comments on the proposition made by one of his students, Maud Mannoni, regarding the clinical definition of mental deficiency:

Inasmuch, for example, as the child, the mentally-deficient child, takes the place, on the blackboard, at the bottom right, of this S, with regard to this something to which the mother reduces him, in being no more than the support of her desire in an obscure term, which is introduced into the education of the mentally-deficient child by the psychotic dimension. (237–8)

That "obscure term" to which the mother reduces the child is object *a*. In Lacan's "Notes on the Child," published in *Ornicar?*, written by Lacan to another one of his students, the head of a hospital child psychology ward, Lacan refers directly to the fact that, in a series of phenomena like mental deficiency, psychosis, and other phenomena of this kind, the child is reduced to this object and to realizing the mother's fantasy. This passage in Seminar XI paves the way for his comments on the child, written in 1969.

Thus the clinical consequence of Lacan's work on alienation and separation in Seminar XI was the fact that, after 1964, Lacan stressed ever more, in his conception of psychosis, object *a*'s role as the object to which

the psychotic subject is reduced. This was not present in Lacan's 1958 article on Schreber's *Memoirs*, published in the *Écrits*. From 1964 on, Lacan stressed the clinical importance of the extent to which a child is reduced to the obscure object of its mother's desire and the fact that all of this is important in the clinical understanding of childhood psychosis.

### Notes

1. Cf. Paul Feyerabend's *Against Method*, Verso, 1979.
2. In *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, 1978.
3. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, New York, 1973.
4. In Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D.F. Bouchard, Cornell, Ithaca, 1977.
5. These remarks are not found in the English edition. The interested reader can find them in the *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, 63, No. 3 (1969).

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