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perceived his mode of jouissance as absolutely singular, who has perceived the contingency of this mode of jouissance, and who has grasped – though in what way? – his jouissance as something that lies outside meaning.

Without doubt, when Lacan put forward the equivocation that he lets us hear between jouissance and *sens joui*, enjoyed meaning, between enjoyment and enjoy-meant, it was as an equivalence. However, no sooner had it been set out as an equivalence than he went back on it: jouissance is precisely the nether side of enjoyed meaning. Enjoyed meaning is what serves to make you forget the Being of jouissance.

When at the end of his text on Joyce in the *Autres écrits*, on page 570⁸, Lacan mentions that “analysis turn[s] to meaning to resolve [jouissance]”, this is not to be understood as a prescription, nor as a description. On the contrary, it seems to me that his effort is one of opening up a post-Joycean practice of psychoanalysis, one which precisely does not turn to meaning to solve the riddle of jouissance, which doesn’t tell itself *histories*, but which, beyond the discourse of the unconscious, aims to restore, in all their nakedness and dazzling brilliance, the haphazard elements that have driven us from pillar to post.

Till next week, for the last session in this series.

Translated from the French by Adrian Price

8 Lacan, J., “Joyce le Symptôme (III)”, in *Autres écrits*, *op. cit.*

Jacques-Alain Miller

The Unconscious and the *Sinthome*

A transcription of the sixth session (17 December 2008) of L'orientation lacanienne III, 11, Choses de finesse en psychanalyse, was first published as a special supplement to Ten Line News, No. 435, 5 January 2009, and then with minor editorial modifications as “L'inconscient et le sinthome” in La Cause freudienne, Issue 71, June 2009, pp. 72-9. The text below has been established with footnotes by the translator. The previous session is published above as “We are Haphazardly Driven From Pillar to Post”, pp. 27-38.

I'm searching – because I haven't yet found out how to word it, how to put it well – the proper way to use the *sinthome* in the practice of psychoanalysis, in so far as the *sinthome* designates, in so far as it is, according to Lacan's definition, what is singular in each individual.

Socrates is mortal

Singularity is a logical category, but it is also a category that stands at the limit of logic. Can one speak about the singular beyond the fact of designating it? Can one speak about it at all? Since, as such, the singular does not resemble anything. It *ex-sists*. It ex-sists unto resemblance, i.e. it is *outside*, out of the ordinary. And language only spells out what is ordinary – apart from the proper

name, though without what is proper to the name being an absolute guarantee of singularity.

The proper name is equivocal too. I've been noticing this of late each time I book a table at a restaurant. I say, "For Monsieur Miller", and they ask me for my first name. Because of late, oddly enough, there are a lot of Millers who've been making reservations in restaurants! And so I string together "Jacques" and "Alain", and apparently that's enough to singularise me! For the time being! I don't know how long that will last. If the Millers continue to proliferate in Paris I'll soon be having to give my date of birth! It's hard to be singular. It's hard to get oneself known for that.

I said that, as such, the singular does not resemble anything. I would stress this "as such", because, *nonesuch*, it resembles. I'm referring to the classic syllogism: *All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, Socrates is mortal*. Three propositions. Certainly, it's not unjustified to say that Socrates is mortal in as much as Socrates is a man. He *belongs* to the class of mankind and the class of mortals.

He is *part* of the class of mortals in so far as he is part of the class of men – which needs to be understood as "humankind". I'm pointing this out because these days we don't hear the word "man" anymore except in contrast to the word "woman". The sense of "humanity" included in the word "man" has been lost. By the same token, they want to make us say *Declaration of Human Rights...*, instead of *Declaration of the Rights of Man...* Go and tell them that in 1789! A language and the meaning of the words in a language evolves, and that's a fact.

Under the headings "mortal" and "man", Socrates, the name "Socrates", is not singular, because it is *part and parcel*, it belongs. If the singular is not taken *as such*, then it is taken as belonging.

The belonging of a singular is a question that haunts, that nags the clinic under the heading of diagnosis. If one gives oneself over to it, it will readily embarrass the clinician in supervision. Very often the main question people bring along is, "Is it a psychosis or a neurosis?", "Is the subject more obsessional or more hysteric?", "Is this hysteria really a psychosis?" The practitioner's intelligence allows itself to be assailed by this concern with apportioning the patient, with assigning him to one class or another. This can be seen. Moreover, this worry is very hard to shift in the practitioner. It's hard to bring him any peace that could usher in the point of view of the singular, in so far as this point of view entails a letting-be. Let the one who comes to confide in you be. Leave him be in his singularity.

From the diagnostic point of view, Socrates belongs to one class and to another, but from the point of view of the singular, Socrates is Socrates, like no other. The tautology *Socrates is Socrates* doesn't tell you anything. It's the degree zero of knowledge. If you like, it's quintessential bullshit, arch lameness. It can be taken like that. But, from another point of view, it is an expression of respect

for what is singular and incomparable in each of us. Moreover, it is the permission granted to this other to be, if I may, himself, such as he is, independently of the systems you dream of making him fall in line with, when in fact you, the said therapist, are the one who ought rather to fall in line behind him and allow an ex-sistence to open out, off the beaten tracks.

The orientation towards the singular

Indeed, it so happens that I give supervision [*contrôle*], that someone who is coming to grips with the practice of psychoanalysis comes to speak to me about the problems that his practice is creating for him. What I try to introduce and insinuate into his manner – whilst respecting him in his singularity because the practitioner too has a right to singularity – is the point of view of the singular. Of course, on some occasions I accept the problem posed in terms of diagnostic classes, but always with an eye to forestalling its overly instant aspect so that what I believe to be more properly psychoanalytic can prevail: the anti-diagnostic point of view. The diagnosis will be a bonus.

In so doing, it seems to me that I'm following Freud's line, as it is summed up by Lacan on page 556 of the *Autres écrits*: "Everything in an analysis is to be gathered up...", this is how Lacan sums up Freud's position, "...to be gathered up as though nothing had ever been established elsewhere."¹ In this, I see what for me amounts to the orientation towards the singular.

Bion follows this same line, which he pushes to the limit when he professes in his seminars that, in each session, the analyst has to have forgotten everything. Not only, as Freud advocates, forgetting and suspending the other cases, but even forgetting the previous session, in such a way that each encounter, each session, stands on its own worth. This is a break, a discontinuity that is pushed to the extreme and no doubt means to accentuate the aspect of an event, in the sense of a happening, proper to each encounter with the analyst. I think this is going too far, but none the less it aims in the right direction, which is to restore its singularity to the moment.

The analyst is not a memory, he doesn't carry out any benchmarking, he doesn't compare. He gathers up the emergence of the singular. At any rate, this is what the orientation towards the singular entails.

This isn't all there is to the practice of psychoanalysis. Seen from another angle the analyst is indeed a memory. He keeps tabs on the signifiers that have appeared, he makes correlations, he links them up, he ascertains repetitions. This work of a memorialist, of secretary to the patient, allows him to ascertain the zone his interpretation will be able to bear on. Sometimes he harbours this

¹ Lacan, J., "Introduction à l'Édition allemande des *Écrits*", in *Autres écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001.

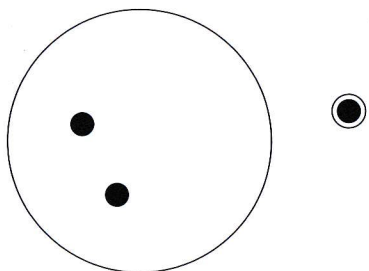
knowledge for a long time, until the timely moment arises when he can speak up and surprise the analysand with his own productions – I mean with the analysand's own productions – by re-representing them unexpectedly.

But all this work of memory, of spotting the repetitions, and of interpreting does not come under the same register as the register I'm designating as the orientation towards the singular.

Kipling's cat

In logic, singularity belongs to the theory of judgement, and precisely to the moment of quantity. The quantity of judgements is distributed across three registers: the singular, the particular and the universal.

If one refers, for example, to Kant's *Lessons in Logic* – which had nothing remarkable about them in the history of logic, being more the expression of classical era common sense – a judgement is the representation of a unity. I quote: "[...] the representation of the unity of the consciousness of various representations, or the representation of their relation in so far as they constitute a concept."² A concept is what allows one to grasp an extension. We can represent this extension here by a circle – Kant says "sphere"³ in reference to three dimensions, but when he himself turns his hand to a little graphic representation, he draws circles and squares in two dimensions. So, what distinguishes the singular concept, the concept that has the quantity of the singular, is that the "concept has no sphere at all", and it holds close to the individual. The singular concept is a concept that has no extension. Its extension is, if you will, a point. One may trace a circle around this point, except that this circle must be conceived of as adjoining to the point itself. The concept truly has an extension when there is a minimum of two points.



² Kant, E., *The Jäsche Logic*, "Second Section, Of Judgements" (§ 17, 9:101), in *Lectures on Logic*, transl. by J. M. Young, p. 597.

³ *Ibid.*, "Quantity of the extension of concepts" (§ 8, 9:96): "The more the things that stand under a concept and can be thought through it, the greater is its extension or sphere." In *Lectures on Logic*, p. 593.

What Lacan calls *sinthome* is the singular concept par excellence, the concept that has no other extension besides the individual. When it's grasped in this way, you can't compare it to anything. From other viewpoints, of course, it belongs to different classes, different particulars, even universals. As does Socrates. But what Lacan calls *sinthome* is the tautology of the singular.

Kant remarks that, from the point of view of logical form, "singular judgments are to be assessed as like universal ones" in that the singular judgment is "without exception". *Socrates is mortal*, from the point of view of logical form, is equivalent to *All men are mortal*. All men are mortal *without exception* and there is *one Socrates* and *one alone*.⁴

Here, we're going via the proper name, the name of Socrates – chosen amongst all the others to enter the syllogism that has been parroted down the centuries, which really takes the cake, as Lacan notes somewhere.⁵ Socrates has been chosen for this syllogism, and his death has been linked to his human nature, when precisely, he was killed! He didn't die of old age. He was killed, apparently of his own will, he did everything to let it happen, and it is this scandal of the killing of Socrates that has been fudged and snuffed out by tucking him into this syllogism where he's supposed to have died simply from being mortal, to have died *logically* when in fact he died *out of desire*.

We're going via the proper name, in the same way that Lacan pins down the proper name of James Joyce, but this time indicating that what is pinned down here corresponds to Joyce's desire for the promotion of his proper name. This is the level at which Lacan acts, by issuing him with a pseudonym: "Joyce the Symptom". Is it a pseudonym? He issues him with his proper name, finished off with what henceforth does not stand as a predicate, it is not "Joyce is a man, therefore Joyce is a symptom", it is "Joyce the Symptom".

In mathematical logic, a proper name is called "a singular term". On page 218 of his book *Methods of Logic*,⁶ Quine defines a singular term as a term that "purports to name one and only one object" and which can therefore be used when ordinary language is mathematised into a variable: *x* is mortal. It is not altogether in coherence with this definition to place the existential quantification in front of this proposition, e.g. there exists an *x* such that *x* is mortal: $\exists x. (x \text{ is } M)$. The Socrates example. He is an *example* because "there exists an *x*" means "there is *at least one*", i.e. there could be several of them. The existential quantifier is rigged up to the *particular*, and this is why, when you display *one* under the regime of the existential quantifier, you display an example.

⁴ See too, *The Vienna Logic*, "Of Judgments", (931), in *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵ Cf. Lacan, J., "Lesson of 15 November 1961" & "Lesson of 23 June 1962" in *Le séminaire IX, L'identification*, unpublished; Lacan, J., "Lesson of 9 December 1964" & "Lesson of 20 January 1965" in *Le séminaire XII, Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse*, unpublished; Lacan, J., *Le séminaire livre XXIII, Le sinthome*, Seuil, Paris, 2005, p. 14.

⁶ Quine, W. V. O., *Methods of Logic*, Harvard University Press, 1950, 1982.

The quantifier that corresponds to the singular, where there is not *at least one* but *one and only one*, does exist. It was created by logicians, though it's seldom employed in common use. It is written with the existential quantifier followed by an exclamation mark: $\exists!x$. Ah! That's the fellow!

As such, the singular is the *incomparable*. It is not the *example*. It can be the *paradigm* – a word that Lacan made use of once and which we've carried to the level of a commonplace – when you shift it over into a particular class, into the class of cases that resemble this singular *x* and which are ordered by the seminal case, the landmark case. For there to be a paradigm, there has to be the singularity of *one* case grasped as incomparable, and afterwards you come along and link the carriages onto this locomotive that goes off on its own, like Kipling's cat that walked by himself.

The instant of embodiment

When the singular is involved, the “geometrical spirit”, as Pascal had it, falters. The *matheme*, in Lacan's sense, falters here. To grasp it, it is impossible to start off from definitions and principles, or even structures, to demonstrate the case through order, through that “order of reasons” Descartes spoke of, and which inspired his most eminent commentator, Martial Guérout.⁷ When the singular is involved, you have to feel and “judge rightly and justly”. You don't proceed through a succession of reasons. To quote Pascal, “we must see the matter in one glance”.

If we adopt the feature that Pascal points out in the passage I gave you at the start of the term⁸, the singular requires the *instant of seeing*. It makes the instant of seeing prevail. It models understanding on the instant of seeing. And it invites one to maintain oneself in the instant of seeing in the practice of psychoanalysis. This is what Bion was inviting by promoting permanent forgetting. And if we are to give a meaning to Lacan's late practice of the ultra-short session, the session of encounter, we shall say that it is a matter of keeping psychoanalysis at the level of the instant of seeing. This could go as far as contenting oneself with the phenomenon.

We have a sense of this – even if we run out of breath keeping up with Lacan on his path – in the practice with certain psychoses, which require a regular contact with their point of address, their therapist, but where the exchange can almost make do with a handshake and a “You okay?” – “I'm okay”. However, in

⁷ Guérault, M., *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted, according to the Order of Reasons*, transl. by R. Ariew, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁸ In the opening session (12 November 2008) of *L'orientation lacanienne III*, 11, *Choses de finesse en psychanalyse*, Jacques-Alain Miller quotes from Pascal's *Pensées*: I in the Brunschvicg Edition; DXII in the Lafuma Edition. Cf. Pascal, B., *Pensées*, transl. by W. F. Trotter, Dutton Press, New York, 1958.

this encounter, an essential function is accomplished by touching, hearing, perceiving, and sensing the other. The guarantee of the world *that you are* for this person, a guarantee that has no need of any chit-chat, simply needs a beating heart and the embodiment of presence.

From the point of view of the singular, the analytic session tends indeed to boil down to an instant. Well, this doesn't conform to the principle of *time is money*. It can be charged with imposture by anyone who refuses the truth of it. The truth is that, for the *parlêtre*, the effect of the encounter is instantaneous. Everything comes down to the event, to an event that must be embodied, which is a body-event – the definition that Lacan gave of the *sinthome*.⁹ Let's come out with it, the rest is window dressing. Window dressing that is necessary in most cases. But the kernel, the *Kern* in Freud's sense, the *Kern* of Being, is this instant of embodiment.

The unconscious is a defence against jouissance

The analytic discourse, and the institution of psychoanalysis, confronts the analyst with the singular. And as the singular is untenable, he takes refuge in the particular. He comforts himself with diagnostics and with communities. With the analytic community! This is what follows psychoanalytic singularity like a shadow, and even what shoves psychoanalytic singularity back into the shadows – this community that spreads out its quarrels, its divisions, its polemics and whatnot, which take up the centre stage, when in fact the truth lies in the abyss of the singular.

To protect himself from the singular, the psychoanalyst demands assistance, insurance, which he finds in diagnostic classes and analytic groups. This is what Lacan dubbed PIPAAD, the Professional Insurance Plan Against Analytic Discourse.¹⁰ Well, there are also PICAAD, Professional Insurance Concepts. This can be seen, it is tangible in everything that is attempted by way of case histories. A case, as I called to mind a long while back, is what falls away. A case is what falls away and in particular what falls wide of systems and wide of the *matheme*. When one writes, most often one thinks only of giving an example, that is – maybe the fashion has passed now – it consisted in putting forward a general proposition, taken from a solid author, and then saying, “Precisely! This case confirms what has been said”. And in this movement of verification, the singularity of the case was lost from the start: “Above all, don't let it contradict the theory! Don't let it sound like nothing at all!” The virtue of a case as I

⁹ Lacan, J., “Joyce le Symptôme (III)” in *Autres écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 569.

¹⁰ Lacan, J., “Television” transl. by D. Hollier, et al., in *Television/A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, Norton, New York/London, 1990, p. 15.

understand it is precisely for it to sound like nothing at all. That was the approach Freud took, at least once, of highlighting the aspect of the case that contradicted the psychoanalytic theory.

This polemical register is easy. There is a level of defence, which is more devious, more paradoxical, but in my geometrical spirit, in my spirit of consecution, I can't help moving into it. From the point of view of the singular, from the point of view of the *sinthome* as what is singular in each individual, I don't see how one can avoid – much as I'd like to – going via the following proposition so as to gauge it: *The unconscious is itself a defence against jouissance in its most profound status which is its status of being outside meaning.*

Thinking through the unconscious on the basis of jouissance

The paternal metaphor is the transcription of the Oedipus complex and its dissolution in linguistic terms, but what is it really? Nothing other than a signifying machine that accounts for how the mind takes to jouissance, or if I may, how meaning takes to jouissance.

Recall if you will how Lacan sets it up. A signifier, the mother's desire – she isn't always beside her little one, she leaves him alone and comes back to him, there is a back and forth, appearing and disappearing, which justifies inscribing it as a signifier – DM. Later on Lacan will restrict this capital D to demand and will set down a lower case *d* for desire, but in his text on psychosis¹¹, it concerns the mother's desire as the signifier of her presence and absence, the signifier of this coming and going. From the outset, what is signified to the subject based on this signifying dynamic appears as an *x*. It's not known, the child doesn't know what it means.

$$\frac{DM}{x}$$

He will learn what it means when another signifier replaces the Mother's Desire, namely the Name-of-the-Father. This substitution is inscribed as follows, with the striking out of the first term...

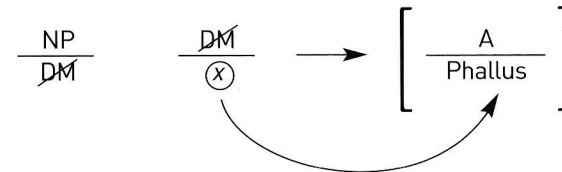
$$\frac{NP}{\cancel{DM}} \quad \frac{\cancel{DM}}{x}$$

¹¹ Lacan, J., "On A Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" in *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. by B. Fink, Norton, New York, 2006, p. 465.

...and the metaphor that ensues making meaning emerge:

$$\left[\frac{A}{Phallus} \right]$$

This metaphor makes the meaning emerge of the mother's enigmatic jouissance which motivates her back and forth. This is what Lacan is inscribing with capital A [for Other] over the Phallus ("Phallus" is spelt out in full). Indeed, the essence of the paternal metaphor is the resolution of the initial *x* into phallic signification, which is normalising and commonplace.



This trajectory translates how jouissance takes on meaning, how it takes on phallic meaning. The Name-of-the-Father is essentially the operator that enables jouissance to take on meaning.

This is what you have to bear in mind to grasp the cutting edge of what Lacan says in his text "Joyce le Symptôme", which I quoted last time, that "analysis turn[s] to meaning to resolve [jouissance]".¹² Well, he says "to resolve *it*", we understand from the context that it's a matter of resolving jouissance, but one can only understand this expression if we bear in mind that it is this *x* inscribed up here [in the paternal metaphor], this unknown entity of jouissance, that effectively finds itself resolved by taking on meaning, by pouring itself into phallic signification.

In relation to which, the symbolic order of the unconscious finds its feet and sets about weaving its logic and its chicanes. The paternal metaphor resolves jouissance through commonplace meaning. Each time we are touched or moved, it's because this is telling us something. The phallus is in the loop. It's the emblem of commonplace meaning.

In relation to this enjoyed meaning, Lacan distinguishes the "jouissance proper to the symptom". We're still in the "proper" here, the same adjective as in "proper name". The jouissance proper to the *sinthome*, which he indicates on the horizon of the orientation towards the singular, is, on the contrary, "opaque

¹² Lacan, J., "Joyce le Symptôme (III)", in *Autres écrits, op. cit.*, p. 570.

jouissance on account of excluding meaning". It is the jouissance that doesn't allow itself to be resolved into phallic signification, and in this respect conserves a fundamental opacity. The orientation towards the singular targets, in each individual, the jouissance proper to the *sinthome* in so far as it excludes meaning.

No doubt Lacan had tried to approach it, to tame it in the guise of the object *a*. No doubt he had realised a long while ago that not everything of jouissance would let itself be resolved by the phallic solution, that there were what Freud called the pre-genital objects, and that he would have to complement the phallus with the symbol *a* to account for this. But, in his teaching, he was endlessly bringing this *a* back into metaphor, indicating that it was linked to the phallus – while remaining distinct from it – that in particular it would fall in line, for example, as a complement, a filler, a stopper of castration. He was endlessly taking it up within the mechanism of the unconscious.

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

But Lacan's very late teaching distinguishes between the unconscious and the *sinthome* as two inhomogenous orders. Without doubt he sought out the articulation between them in the shape of the knot. This is what he explored in his twenty-third *Seminar*, for which he had set out the programme just before. You can see it in [the first appendix to the *Book of*] this *Seminar*, on page 168, when he says, "The unconscious knots itself on to the *sinthome*."¹³ The question is one of knowing in what way these two orders are present in the practice of analysis.

Two phases can be distinguished in a preliminary stage.

There is the phase of the exploration of the unconscious and its formations, the principle of which is that the symptom has a meaning, that everything that goes to make up the symptom – the slip of the tongue, the bungled action, and the rest – possess a meaning that can be deciphered. How could one possibly avoid passing through this phase for those who have not cancelled their subscription to the unconscious? Of course, one can make do without it for Joyce, who moreover never lay down on a couch. The question never came up. It couldn't come up. The orientation towards the singular doesn't mean that the unconscious cannot be deciphered. It means that this exploration necessarily comes up against an end-stop, that interpretation comes to a stop on the outside-meaning of jouissance, and that, alongside the unconscious, where *id speaks* – where it speaks to each of us, because the unconscious is always commonplace meaning – there is the singular of the *sinthome*, where it doesn't speak to anyone.

¹³ Lacan, J., "Joyce le Symptôme (I)", in *Le séminaire livre XXIII, Le sinthome*, Seuil, Paris, 2005, p. 168.

This is why Lacan qualified it as a body-event. It's not a thought-event, it's not a language-event. It's a body-event. We still need to find out which body. It's not an event of the specular body, it's not an event that takes place where the deluding form of the body that pulls you in in the mirror stage is deployed. It is an event of the substantial body, the body that possesses a consistency of jouissance. We are not at the level of the unconscious here in as much as Freud's discovery, such as Lacan formulates it, is that the unconscious is entirely reducible to a knowledge. The reduction of the unconscious to a knowledge, i.e. to an articulation of signifiers – which we are led to suppose based on interpretation, based on the interpretable character of what makes for a symptom – this quality of being a knowledge excludes the event.

So, no doubt what Lacan formulated regarding the *sinthome* may here and there call to mind what he said about the object *a*, but what he called the object *a* was always an element of jouissance thought through on the basis of the unconscious, on the basis of knowledge, whilst the point of view of the *sinthome* consists in thinking through the unconscious on the basis of jouissance.

Well, that has consequences on practice, in particular on the practice of interpretation. Interpretation is not merely the deciphering of a knowledge. It is also to show, to shed light on the unconscious's *nature of defence*.

Without doubt, where *id* speaks, *id* enjoys, but the orientation towards the symptom lays the accent on: *id* enjoys where *id* doesn't speak, *id* enjoys where *id* makes no sense.

Just as Lacan had invited the analyst to hold the place of the object *a*, in his *Seminar on Le sinthome* he formulates that the analyst is a *sinthome*.¹⁴ He is supported by non-meaning, so one avoids going into his motivations, he won't be made to explain himself. Rather he will play at the body-event, at the semblance of trauma. And he will have to sacrifice a great deal in order to deserve to be, or to be taken for, one of the odds and ends of the real.

Translated from the French by Adrian Price

¹⁴ *Le séminaire livre XXIII, Le sinthome, ibid.*, p. 135.