

The Other without Other

Jacques-Alain Miller

THE Other without Other is my title.¹ This title is an abbreviation, in enigmatic form, of a sentence, a proposition, a saying of Lacan's, which was stated in a form that a certain number of you know: "there is no Other of the Other". Lacan uttered this formulation one day in 1959, on the 8th of April, during his seminar entitled *Le désir et son interprétation*. It refers to the logical form of writing S(A) and was preceded by a sentence designed to get the attention of his Seminar's audience: "this, I might say, is the big secret of psychoanalysis."²

"The Big Secret of Psychoanalysis"

Lacan thus wanted to give this formula the value of a revelation, in the sense of a discovery, the bringing to light of a hidden truth. A truth hidden from whom? What one understands is that the big secret is a truth hidden first and foremost from psychoanalysts themselves, a truth that the practitioners of psychoanalysis were unaware of. It reminds one, well at least it reminded me, of a sentence from Hegel's course on aesthetics, where he is speaking about the Egyptians, the mysteries of whom were plumbed by the Greeks, the Romans and, I might say, the whole world. Hegel's formulation is as follows: *The mysteries of the Egyptians were mysteries for the Egyptians themselves.*³ And well, in the same way, at

¹ Presentation of the theme of the next Congress of the NLS to take place in Ghent (May 2014), given in the closing address to the 11th Congress of the NLS, "The Psychotic Subject in the *Geek* Era", Athens, 19th May 2013.

² Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire, Book VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, Paris, Édition de la Martinière, Le Champ freudien, 2013, p.353.

³ Hegel G.W.F., *Esthétique*, first volume (1835, posth.), p.111 of the electronic edition – <http://classiques.uqac.ca> – version based on Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Esthétique, tome premier*, Paris, Librairie Germer-Baillère, 1875, second edition, French translation by Ch. Bénard. Cf. also *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, Bd. 13, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, p. 465. [TN. The reader may wish to note that there are significant differences between this French

least this is how I read this sentence by Lacan, the secret of psychoanalysis, as he called it, had remained a truth hidden from analysts themselves.

I wondered if the revelation of the secret by Lacan in 1959 had been sufficient to lift the veil enveloping the Other without Other. It is very possible that this revelation was not registered, recognised, assumed – I am not speaking of Lacan’s students. Psychoanalysts did not acknowledge receipt of it. And it is perhaps only today, in 2013, that we can take it seriously and draw all of its consequences.

When the NLS meets again in Ghent, we are going to see if we can put this revelation to the test of the clinic. I won’t say that this should be the title for the Congress, but I propose that this “Other without Other” that, in times gone by, Lacan made emerge in his Seminar, should serve as a compass for us. I propose that it should also serve as a compass for the reading of the Seminar in which Lacan says it, the Seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation*. This seminar will appear in the next few days. The publishers have announced that it will be out on the 6th of June. In any case, I have done the work that falls to me in this respect. While I am here, I hope that it is being printed as it should be and that the last corrections that I indicated before coming here have been made. So, I propose that this Seminar should serve as a reference for the NLS Congress in Ghent.

After having taken the time to edit it over the years and having recently tightened up this writing, I would like to provide some points of orientation here, my own in any case, for the reading of this Seminar and in particular I would like to try to shed some light on the great secret of psychoanalysis for you.

A Turning Point

BY WAY of introduction, the seminar begins with the construction of Lacan’s large graph, which he called the graph of desire and which he had started to construct in *Seminar V*. This forms the first two chapters and obviously a detailed commentary of this schema requires a

translation and what is available in English as the latter is based on an edition published by Hegel’s student Heinrich Gustav Hotho. Although the immediate context differs from the electronic version above, the point of overlap between the English version and the French appears to be the following sentence: “The problems remain unsolved, and the solution which *we* can provide consists therefore only in interpreting the riddles of Egyptian art and its symbolic works as a problem remaining undeciphered by the Egyptians themselves.” G.W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, transl. by T. M. Knox, Oxford, O.U.P, 1975 pp. 354.]

different context than this. After it has been introduced, the first part of the Seminar is consecrated to a reading of a dream taken from *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the second part, there is a detailed reanalysis of a dream which features in a case from the English psychoanalyst, Ella Sharpe. Then, in the third part, there are some lessons on *Hamlet*. And finally a certain number of chapters that give a more general orientation, which I would not even dream of summing up in half an hour, three-quarters of an hour.

Shedding some light on the great secret of psychoanalysis is no doubt less difficult, because it is being brought to light, before our eyes, in the vast social movement which, everywhere, progressively, in advanced democratic societies, is putting patriarchy, the prevalence of the father, into question. And well, for me, the fundamental orientation of this Seminar turns around the putting into question of the father, of the father's function. And it is not by chance that Lacan went looking in *The Interpretation of Dreams* for the dream of the dead father that specifically targets a son's relation to his father, constituting a different version of the father-son relation than that typical of the Oedipus. And if Lacan was interested in Hamlet in this Seminar, it is precisely in so far as, in *Hamlet*, the father, far from having a normative and pacifying function, on the contrary, intervenes in a pathogenic way.

It thus does not seem excessive to read Lacan's Seminar, over half a century later, as Yves Vanderveken put it,⁴ for its prophetic value. Lacan gave the formula "there is no Other of the Other" the value of a revelation, of a secret, because it proposed something that he himself had previously not grasped. This moment is a decisive turning point for what would follow in his teaching. I don't think it is my enthusiasm for having finished this task that makes me put it like this. Lacan had to think against himself in order to formulate: "there is no Other of the Other". He had previously taught the opposite.

The Other of the Other: The Name-of-the-Father

THE year before, in 1958, he was teaching on the contrary that there is an Other of the Other – I am condensing things here by abbreviating one of his formulations; it does not appear, as such, either in his *Écrits* or in his Seminars. And this Other of the Other, if one were to give it a name, would be *the name* par excellence, the Name-of-the-Father. I add that this is not an

⁴ Cf. Vanderveken Y., "Points of Clinical Perspectives", this paper immediately preceded J.A. Miller's presentation at the XI Congress of the NLS, Athens, 2013. To be published in the forthcoming issue of *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 10.

interpretation on my part. Or at least, it is only an interpretation in so far as I deciphered it from the definition Lacan gave of the Name-of-the-Father at the end of his article on psychosis, which remains essential for us – the article entitled “A Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis”.⁵ I will quote you a sentence from this text that leads me to say that, just before proposing that “there is no Other of the Other”, Lacan says the exact opposite. The terms in which he posited the Other of the Other are worth weighing very carefully. It concerns the definition that Lacan gave to the Name-of-the-Father at the end of his article on psychosis where he delivers his construction of the paternal metaphor. It must be said that this paternal metaphor had such an effect on people that for the public at large this is essentially what people have retained of what Lacan said (and this was shown very clearly this summer in France): he is the one who promoted the Name-of-the-Father by giving it a decisive, normalising function, and who made it the keystone to everything upholding the world that is common to us.

At the moment when Lacan constructed this paternal metaphor, he gave the following very precise definition of the Name-of-the-Father: “the Name-of-the-Father [is] the signifier which in the Other, qua locus of the signifier, is the signifier of the Other qua locus of the law”.⁶ You only have to read this definition in a formal way to see that it puts two Others into play, two statuses of the big Other: the Other of the signifier and the Other of the law. And the first Other, the Other of the signifier, is presented as containing the signifier of the second, the Other of the law, which I said earlier would henceforth have the value of the Other of the Other. This is how I decipher this definition: the Other of the law is the Other of the Other. What Lacan calls the Other of the law, the signifier of which is the Name-of-the-Father, is the Other of the Other.

A long time ago, I gave a reading of this sentence from the "Preliminary Question" in my course. It was done quickly because I had not yet edited the seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation*, in detail. This sentence has allowed me to understand why Lacan gave such great importance to this mysterious formulation: “There is no Other of the Other”.

If I simplify the formulation, what does the Other of the Other mean? It means, on the one hand, that language obeys a law, that language is dominated by the law, that there is a law of

⁵ Lacan, J., “A Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis”, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink London & New York: Norton, 2006, pp. 445-488.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.485.

language. On the other, it installs the big Other as a set of signifiers among which there is the signifier of the Other and there one cannot fail to recognise echoes of the logicist notion (I did not say logistical) of Bertrand Russell who, as you know, distinguished between catalogues that contain themselves and catalogues that do not – which, in fact, makes the big Other a set which contains its own signifier. At the time that concerns us, Lacan had not yet exploited this Russellian resource that his concept of the Other involves – but a large part of his seminar XVI, *D'un Autre à l'Autre* develops precisely this point, with exclusive reference to Bertrand Russell and to the paradoxes which can arise when one tries to produce a catalogue of all catalogues which do not contain themselves. In so doing, Lacan exploits these paradoxes for the analytic discourse.

The Passion of the First Lacan: the Laws of Language

WHAT is it that Lacan is calling the law here, the law of language?

Well, it must be acknowledged that the first Lacan (and here I am calling the first Lacan everything that precedes the cut introduced by *Seminar VI*, which denies the existence of the Other of the Other, namely the Lacan of the "Rome Report" and the five first Seminars) was constantly fixed on, constantly striving to determine what the laws of language are, the laws of discourse, the laws of speech, the laws of the signifier – this is something that strikes me, looking back. One can make a list of these laws, whose formulation we find at every turn in his texts and Seminars, and see that they are diverse, that they are not all homogeneous. And this occurs to such an extent that one can say that here there is something of a passion – the passion of the first Lacan for finding laws.

To get you to appreciate the value that can be given to this remark, I will take a short detour through Lacan's last teaching. It is this same Lacan who will come to announce in his last teaching that *the real is without law*.⁷ He will come to so disconnect language from the law to such an extent that, in the last period of his teaching, language appears, as Miquel Bassols recalled, as a parasite.⁸ Later, Lacan will even renounce the concept of language, or

⁷ Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire XIII, Le Sinthome*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, p. 137.

⁸ Cf. Bassols, M. "Language as a Disorder of the Real", presented at the XI Congress of the NLS, Athens, 2013. To be published in the forthcoming issue of *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 10.

at least attempt to go beneath the concept of language in order to single out what he called *lalangue* – *lalangue*, which is distinguished from language in that it is precisely without law. Language is thus conceived as a superstructure of laws that capture *lalangue* as that which is without law.

Lacan's teaching thus develops in a direction that is diametrically opposed to his initial passion. It could be said that he began under the aegis of the law and, the more his teaching progressed, the more he emphasised the *without law*. Think of the emphasis that Lacan gives, in the clinic, to contingency, to the event in so far as it occurs as if by chance. There is obviously something to be developed here concerning what, in Lacan's teaching, forms a kind of point of articulation between the law and contingency, namely the moment when Lacan explicitly gives up chasing after the law, at the beginning of Seminar XI, when he explains that the unconscious is more within the register of the cause than that of the law.

Five Registers of the Law

WHY then this passion for the law for Lacan at the start of his teaching? And why does he give it up when he states that “there is no Other of the Other”? He taught us to distinguish different laws (in language, speech and discourse) to the point of arriving at this expression: the law. I have made the effort to try and classify all these laws that Lacan used and rendered explicit in his legalistic passion, if I can put it like that.

First, there are the linguistic laws. These are the ones that Lacan borrowed from Saussure, which lead the signifier to be distinguished from the signified, synchrony from diachrony. They are also the ones he found in Jakobson, who articulated and distinguished metaphor from metonymy. Lacan speaks of them as laws, as mechanisms.

Secondly, there is the dialectical law, which Lacan went to search for in Hegel: this law which says that in discourse the subject can only assume his being through the mediation of another subject. Lacan calls this the dialectical law of recognition.

Thirdly, in Lacan we find (and this was very popular at a certain time that is no longer ours) mathematical laws, like the ones he explored in his "Seminar on The Purloined Letter", with his first graph, that of the α , β , γ , δ , which provides the model for unconscious memory.

Fourthly, there are sociological laws, the laws of alliance and kinship that Lacan adopted from Levi-Strauss's book on *the elementary structures of kinship*.

And fifthly, there is the law, or the supposed Freudian law, this Oedipus, which the first Lacan made into a law, namely that the Name-of-the-Father must be imposed on the Desire of the Mother, that it is only on this condition that the jouissance of the body can be stabilised and that the subject can accede to an experience of reality held in common with other subjects.

So here, I have taken the trouble to enumerate five registers of the law: linguistic, dialectical, mathematical, sociological and finally Freudian. When Lacan starts to reflect upon the analytic experience, at least when he starts to teach on this subject, these five registers of the law are what, for him, constitute what he calls the symbolic. But one only has to enumerate these five registers to see that the symbolic is a catch-all category, a notion that catches everything: mathematics, linguistics, dialectics, etc. And for Lacan this is what constitutes the symbolic in so far as it obeys the law shared out between these different registers.

The Symbolic Order

WHY did Lacan give such a central importance to the notion of the law? It is doubtless because, for him, the law was the condition of rationality and even, more specifically, of science. It was as if he were prompted by the axiom "Science only exists where there is law". And, on this basis, we can now give full weight to a notion that has made such an impression and influenced public opinion to such an extent that in France, as we observed this year, it was at the forefront of the debates about opening marriage to homosexuals.

It is a question of the symbolic order. This notion, which appeared at the start of Lacan's teaching, expresses the interdependence of the five registers of the law in the symbolic. I was surprised to see this notion recently resurface in France, more than fifty years after its formulation, being put forward as the major objection to the opening of marriage to

homosexuals, and to changes in the definition of the family, adoption, etc. – I don't know how it is happening in Greece. And yet, what must be made clear is that, in Lacan's teaching, after initially being promoted, this notion disappeared. Lacan invented it, he introduced it, it appeared as the basis for his conception, as essential to the tripartite division between the symbolic, imaginary and real and then, precisely, he did not preserve it.

It must be noted that in this notion of order, the five registers of the law are mixed up. In other words, from the point of view of order, they indeed appear equivalent, whether it be mathematical law, dialectical law, etc. It is as if the common trait shared by these different registers of the law is to put things in order. The law puts things in order or it expresses the order that is there. Where there is law, there is order. And in the system of the first Lacan, the only order there is is symbolic.

Symbolic order can be opposed, if one can put it like that, to imaginary disorder. In the symbolic, each thing, each element is in its place and it is even only in the symbolic that there are places, properly speaking.

In the imaginary, by contrast, elements exchange their places, so well in fact that the places are indistinguishable, and it is not even certain that the elements themselves are distinguishable as such. In the imaginary there are no discrete, separate elements, as there are in the symbolic. It is in these terms that Lacan described the relation between the ego and the other that is only its own image on the outside, there the ego and the other encroach upon each other, become rivals, make war, only finding unstable equilibriums between each other, to the extent that the imaginary appears marked by an essential inconsistency even being, as Lacan once said, only “shadows and reflections”.⁹

As for the real, it is outside the division between order and disorder – it is, purely and simply.

This year, we have seen (and, in a sense, we had to explain the opposite) that the notion of the symbolic order has become popular. It has become so for all those who militate for the protection of established order. It has become popular amongst conservatives. What is a world ruled by the symbolic order? It is a world in which everything is in its place, a world in which the father, the patriarch, locks everything down. All evidence of disorder is immediately depreciated as being imaginary, in other words both inconsistent and parasitic.

⁹ Lacan, J., “The Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”, *Écrits, op. cit.* p. 6.

This is how the Lacanian notion of the symbolic order was used, to promote the idea of a harmonious order, ruled by invariable laws, those laws being anchored to the Name-of-the-Father.

And one must clearly say that Lacan left himself open to this; he left an opening in this sense, at the start of his teaching. For example, he was able to say, I am quoting, he said this right at the start, in his Rome Rapport, that the Name-of-the-Father, was “the basis of the symbolic function”.¹⁰ Everything of the symbolic order had the Name-of-the-Father as its support, the father incarnating the figure of the law as such. But this is the starting point. After this, the whole of his teaching goes in the other direction. If Lacan’s teaching has a sense, a direction, it is that of a constant, methodological, relentless dismantling of the pseudo-harmony of the symbolic order. And it is precisely because Lacan had exalted the function of the Name-of-the-Father and given it its full splendour, that he was subsequently able to put it so radically into question.

Deconstruction of the Paternal Metaphor

IT IS something of an irony of history that what left its mark, what has proved to be unforgettable for the public is the linguistic form that Lacan gave to the Freudian Oedipus: the paternal metaphor governed by the Name-of-the-Father. And this despite the fact that the whole development of his teaching from the cut introduced by Seminar VI onwards goes in the direction of the dismantling, of the deconstruction of the paternal metaphor. A number of points can clarify this.

First, to start with, one can point out that Lacan only put forward the Name-of-the-Father and the paternal metaphor in order to show it failing in psychosis.

Secondly, he showed the permanence, as object petit *a*, of a jouissance which does not derive its meaning from the paternal metaphor.

Thirdly, when Lacan was excommunicated by the IPA and abandoned his Seminar on *the Names-of-the-Father* to give his Seminar on the *Four Fundamental Concepts of*

¹⁰ Lacan, J., *op. cit.* p.230.

Psychoanalysis, he very clearly, in this seminar - read it - indicted Freud's desire as being at the service of the figure of the father.

Fourthly, concerning the Oedipus, Lacan gives it the status of a myth that exposes castration and veils it at the same time and he stopped making a law of it. He made a myth of it, in other words, an imaginary story, organised, but imaginary.

Fifthly, in a certain way, the paternal metaphor writes the sexual relation in the form of virile predominance over the feminine maternal position. Which he refuted with the theorem "there is no sexual relation". And this theorem ruins the notion of the symbolic order.

Sixthly, there is finally the Name-of-the-Father defined as a *sinthome*, in other words as one mode of enjoyment among others.

And I will finish with the seventh, where I place what is, in fact, the main point, the turning point from which the deconstruction of the Name-of-the-Father as Other of the Other began. In *Seminar III*, on *The Psychoses*, Lacan communicated the discovery of metaphor and metonymy, the two figures of style that according to Jakobson account for the whole of rhetoric. He started by using the figure of metaphor. He used it to formalise the Freudian Oedipus and this is what he does in *Seminar IV*, *La relation d'objet*. It was only then that he used the second figure, metonymy, in order to formalise desire. I would say that these two terms answer one another: the paternal metaphor and the metonymy of desire. Lacan first introduced the paternal metaphor and then, in a way that had a less resounding effect, the metonymy of desire.

The Path of the Father or the Path of Desire

THIS reminds me of the myth of Hercules, as he stands before the two paths offered to him. Similarly, two paths were open to Lacan: on the one hand, the path of the paternal metaphor, on the other, the path of the metonymy of desire. Which path did he take? Obviously, he first put forward the paternal metaphor, but the path Lacan followed in his teaching, and there is no doubt about this, is the path of desire and not that of the father. In *Seminar IV*, he formalised the paternal metaphor. In *Seminar V* and *Seminar VI*, he constructed a large graph with two levels, which is studied in all the clinical sections – the graph of desire. And one

could ask why he made desire the essential function whose value is such that the graph should be referred to with this name. I will tell you the value that this denomination has for me, in my reading. It acquires its value by way of its difference from and opposition to the name it could have had and that Lacan discarded. Instead of being the graph of desire it could have been the graph of the Name-of-the-Father.

What End of Analysis?

LET us suppose that Lacan had maintained that there was an Other of the Other and that the Name-of-the-Father is the signifier of this Other of the Other. If he had kept to what he wrote at the end of his article on the psychoses, the fundamental element to be brought to light in an analysis, the element that would be determinant for the end of an analysis would be your Name-of-the-Father, it would be the signifier, the particularities of the signifier that, for you, gave a meaning to the jouissance that your body suffers from. Well, at the top left of the graph, there where the ultimate response to be expected from an analysis is inscribed, the revelation that it culminates in, would have been written $S(A)$. That would mean that the end of the analysis would be the emergence of the Name-of-the-Father as the signifier that designates the law of your being as a subject. Yet, in this place, what is written is, on the contrary, $S(\mathbf{A})$. This signifies that the response that Lacan gave to the question posed by the subject in his analysis, is not located at the level of his relation to the Name-of-the-Father – the solution is not located at the level of the paternal metaphor. For, at this level, all that the subject encounters is the lack of a signifier, the lack of the signifier that would designate his being in designating the law of this being.

So, by way of hypothesis, I am giving you an idea of what an analysis would be whose end would be the emergence of the Name-of-the-Father as the signifier of the law of the subject's being. I will put forward a second hypothesis and say that this hypothesis is well founded. It is founded on the very point of Lacan's text on the psychoses, as well as on another passage from this same text. Here it is: one could think that the lack of a signifier would be the solution, that the end of analysis would be the revelation of a lack. In my opinion, it must be admitted that Lacan considered this version of the end of an analysis. He concludes his article on the "Direction of the Treatment", which comes immediately before the Seminar on *Le désir et son interprétation*, on this very point.

When you read the Seminar on *Le désir et son interprétation*, I advise you to refer to this article by Lacan, "The Direction of the Treatment", and you will see that the Seminar follows on from the fifth section of "The Direction of the Treatment", where Lacan lays down an injunction with respect to the analyst: "Desire must be taken literally".¹¹ Desire is here defined in terms of metonymy, in the most explicit way, in other words as an effect of the succession of signifiers, an effect of the signifier - *pure* meaning an insubstantial effect, without substance. And to show this, I only have to cite the clear definition that Lacan gave at the end of the "Direction of the Treatment": "desire is the metonymy of the want-of-being".¹² There is no better way of saying that desire is here equated with lack, that it is without substance, that it is equated, in fact, with S(A), to the inexistence of the final metaphor that would make a definitive signification of the Oedipus emerge.

Besides, it is precisely in this respect that Lacan gives a definition of what the interpretation of desire is at the end of his text. And it is this very question of the interpretation of desire that he begins by examining in his Seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation*, but one can see that, in the course of the Seminar, it gets diluted bit by bit. The definition that he gives in his written text is that to interpret desire is to indicate the lack, to aim at the lack, without saying it, by allusion, which he calls, in a sentence that is not without poetry, find the "forsaken horizon of being".¹³ This means something very precise: it envisages the end of analysis as the subject's assumption of the nothing that he is. And it is at the level of the unconscious that he would be nothing. One knows, from dreams that the subject is identified with many elements, that he is dispersed and multiple, and that this multiplicity translates precisely the lack of the signifier that would fully signify his being. In other words, A also means that nothing guarantees the truth of any signifier of any signifying chain for you – in this sense there is no metaphor.

Lacan thus evoked something in the order of an end of analysis by the paternal metaphor, by the constitution of the paternal metaphor, the access to the full paternal metaphor, but discarded it. He discarded the end of analysis by the Name-of-the-Father, the end of analysis that would be the revelation of your Name-of-the-Father as designating the law of your being. He also envisaged that the end of analysis could be the assumption of the nothing, of the lack

¹¹ Lacan, J., *Écrits, op. cit.* pp.518.

¹² Lacan, J., *Écrits, op. cit.* pp. 520.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 536.

designated by \mathbb{A} . In other words an end of the analysis where it turns out, finally, that one can only assume lack and know that one cannot be sure, that nothing assures the subject of the truth of the good faith of the Other. It must be said that this is one possible end of analysis. It is precisely what Lacan will later call the end of analysis that turns the subject into a non-dupe. The non-dupe who is satisfied by the big barred Other, who is satisfied by the inconsistency of the Other.

In the Seminar of desire, Lacan proposes a third end for analysis. The place that will be decisive for Lacan concerning the end of analysis, and the whole of his teaching to follow, is sketched out here for the first time. This decisive place where the endgame of analysis is played out is not the Name-of-the-Father, but the fantasy. It is from this Seminar onwards that one senses lines being set into place that grasp the fantasy as the place where the question of the end of analysis can be situated. And this question will persist in Lacan's teaching henceforth.

Seminar VI is called *Le désir et son interprétation* because its point of departure follows the line opened by the conclusion of the “Direction of the Treatment”. But *Seminar VI* is really designed to challenge the conclusion of the written text by Lacan that gave it its point of departure. *Seminar VI* challenges the claim that the end of analysis depends on the definition of desire as the metonymy of the want-of-being. And if there is one thing that stands out – and here we must say from the first pages of *Seminar VI* – it is that desire as Lacan presents it in this Seminar is absolutely no longer a metonymy of the want-of-being, in other words desire defined as a pure effect of the signifier. The heart of this seminar is not interpretation; it is the subject's unconscious relation to the object in the desiring experience of the fantasy.

Desire and Fantasy

It is thus the subject-object relation in unconscious desire that Lacan names fantasy. The true title of *Seminar VI* is rather “Desire and Fantasy”, at least this is what I have concluded from my reading and editing. Here, fantasy is in the singular. It is not a question of the subject's reveries, it is not a question of the stories that the subject tells himself or tells his analyst, it is a question of a relation which remains unconscious – Lacan's extraordinary

attempts to grasp an unconscious experience of fantasy must be followed in detail. It is in this seminar that we encounter just once, the expression “the fundamental fantasy” (I have made it the title of chapter XX), and it will reappear again, just once, ten years later when Lacan comes to develop the theory of the pass as the end of analysis, the theory of the pass as the traversal of the fantasy.

I remember asking myself, at the time, what exactly this fundamental fantasy is. Well it is in this Seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation*, that the fantasy is specifically approached in the singular and as fundamental, as the subject's relation to the object in a way completely different from that of the relation to conscious knowledge [rapport de la connaissance]. In conscious knowledge, which is maintained at the level of reality, there is harmony, congruence, adaptation of the subject to the object. Conscious knowledge culminates in contemplation, in the subject's accordance with the object. It can even end in the confusion, the fusion of the subject and the object that sought for in intuition.

But the desire in question in this Seminar is not homogenous with reality. The desire at stake is unconscious desire. The object of desire is not an element of reality, as Lacan had previously considered it, it is not a person and it is not an ambition. The object that Lacan here calls little *a* and which he inscribes in the fantasy, is precisely the object in so far as it escapes the domination of Name-of-the-Father and the paternal metaphor.

This object was not unknown in psychoanalysis when Lacan resituated it in the fantasy. It was called the pregenital object and it appeared in its oral and anal forms and the fantasy was occasionally inscribed there. But the interest taken in these objects, the jouissance interest taken in these objects, was supposed to be absorbed in the so-called phallic stage. This is what Lacan's paternal metaphor translated by making what he called the signification of the phallus appears, in its linguistic form. This meant that all jouissance has phallic signification once desire has come to maturity, in other words when desire has finally been placed under the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father. This is why one can say that the end of analysis by way of the Name-of-the-Father was the ambition of all the analysts who believed in the maturation of desire.

And Freud had already discovered that there was no such thing. He had discovered that the Name-of-the-Father was unable to absorb all jouissance under its sign. And it is these very remainders that, according to him, prevent analysis from coming to an end and make it necessary to return periodically to it. Well, in Seminar VI, Lacan orientated himself in

relation to this point in a way that was decisive for the rest of his teaching. I will state this orientation in a negative form and it is a statement that is truly fundamental for a Lacanian oriented practice of psychoanalysis: there is no maturation, and no maturity of desire as unconscious. What, for Freud, were remainders to be absorbed in an infinite task, are permanent elements which unconscious desire remains attached to in the fantasy. It is a question of elements or rather of substances that produce *jouissance* and which are outside of the signification of the phallus, let us say an infringement in relation to castration. These are *jouissances*, supplementary *jouissance* substances, which Lacan will much later refer to as *surplus-enjoyment* (*plus-de-jouir*). These surplus-enjoyments are already here in preparation and they are even more so at the end of the Seminar, when it progresses towards sublimation. These new gadgets and all these apparatuses that occupy us are in fact, in a properly Lacanian sense, objects of sublimation. They are objects that are added on: which is exactly the value of the term *surplus enjoyment* introduced by Lacan. In other words, in this category, we not only have objects that come from the body and are lost for the body, either naturally or through the impact of the symbolic, we also have objects which reflect these first objects in various forms. The question being are these new objects completely new or are they merely reconstituted forms of primordial objects *a*.

Desire and Père-version

THE consequence that can already be drawn from *Seminar VI*, and I will again put it in negative form, is that there is no normality of desire. Unconscious desire remains attached, in fantasy, to *jouissances* that, in relation to the norm, idealised by psychoanalysts, remains intrinsically perverse. Perversion is not an accident that happens to desire. All desire is perverse in so far as *jouissance* is never in the place that the so-called symbolic order would like it to be.

And this is why Lacan can later be ironic about the paternal metaphor, by saying that it is also a perversion. It is ironic in that he writes it *père-version* to signify a version, a movement towards the father [*vers le père*]. But this irony specifies something of capital importance. It is that the father cannot be confused with the Name-of-the-Father, that he cannot be reduced to a pure signifier, installing a total and complete symbolic order, because if it is the case, if

the father plays at being the Other of the Other, if the father plays at being the Other of the law, then he exposes his descendants to the risk of psychosis.

Lacan's irony goes a long way and I will end with that because I know that a great many of you work with psychotic subjects and that it is also the theme of this congress here in Athens. Lacan's irony on *père-version* in fact gives a theory of psychosis that is opposite to the one that has remained classic. It is not the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father that is the mainspring of psychosis, but on the contrary, the excessive presence of the Name-of-the-Father. The father must not confuse himself with the Other of the law. It is necessary, on the contrary for him to have a desire attached to and regulated by a fantasy whose object is a structurally lost jouissance.

Seminar VI, you will see, ends on perversion. It ends, firstly, on a clinic of perversion, opposing voyeurism and exhibitionism. In fact, it is in the passage to the act of voyeurism and exhibitionism that one can see the forms of unconscious fantasy incarnated. In fact, throughout the whole seminar Lacan speaks to us about an unconscious fantasy that is not experienced directly and that has thus to be reconstructed. He ends the seminar by incarnating the logic of the fantasy through the passage to the act of the voyeur and the exhibitionist – it is indeed here that one can see the disharmonious, conflictual relation between the subject and the object.

The Seminar ends with perversion. It first ends with a clinic of perversion and then, to push the provocation, by praising perversion in the commonly understood sense and in particular of homosexuality in so far as it represents the revolt of desire against social routine, in other words against the pseudo symbolic order. Thus it is a complete misrepresentation to have believed that Lacan could be classed, on the question of homosexuality, amongst the reactionaries. I believe that the pages that are published here are decisive. And finally, *Seminar VI* announces the Seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* which, under this title, seeks to articulate the relation between desire and jouissance.

Interpretation

I WILL conclude this journey on the theme of interpretation. The Seminar's point of departure is thus the notion that Lacan renders explicit in his article in the *Écrits* that the interpretation

of desire must bear on the nothing. He gave this the celebrated image of Saint Leonard pointing his finger at an empty place. Well, by the end of the seminar (and this is something that Lacan will only clarify much later) interpretation bears, as he will later go on to say, on the object little *a*. Interpretation does not bear upon nothing, it bears on the object little *a* of the fantasy, on jouissance in so far as it is forbidden [*interdit*] and said between the lines [*dite entre les lignes*].

So how should one read *Seminar VI*? I would say that it is a crossroads Seminar, a bivium, where two paths were open to Lacan. It is clear that he did not follow that of the Name-of-the-Father, but that of desire, which led him to take account of jouissance. For us, who read it with an idea of Lacan's journey as a whole, we can see how the paths were beaten that have led us to our contemporary practice and also our politics.

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I have not specified the theme for the next congress of the NLS that will take place in Ghent. Those responsible will take this in hand. In any case, there is in this Seminar the wherewithal to support all the clinical expositions that could be wished for. It seems to me that a rich vein to pursue would be the following: the opposition between the closed order of the father (the metaphor is always a stopping point) and what desire brings, on the contrary, of the irregular and fundamentally out of place. Perhaps we can bring this out in clinical facts¹⁴.

Transcription: Dosia Avdelidi.
Text revision: Anne Lysy and Monique Kusnierek. Unread by the author.
Translated from the French by Philip Dravers.

¹⁴ In an exchange with the president of the sequence, after his presentation J.-A. Miller added the following remarks: " [...] We will not have a congress on perversion unless we write it like Lacan: : *père-version*. [...] It is a seminar essentially on the clinic of the neuroses. [...] We can explore what determines the place where the end of analysis is situated."

