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ORIENTATION TEXTS

A Real for the 21st Century

by **Guy Briole**



We say of the real that it is enclosed in reality, which is itself only accessible to us in a sifted form – which is to say that, with it, we avoid bad encounters. Being able to avoid the real allows one to think that one knows where it is, that it is localised. Men learned how to deal with unexpected incidents of the real, catastrophes, the part that falls to error in what is predictable in nature as well as the unpredictable part in «human nature». This was the traumatised man of the 20th Century.

Man has believed, and continues to believe, that he can dominate the real, manipulate it, for his happiness. But the real, «it sets fire to everything», a «cold fire», says Lacan[1], in such a way that man continues his vertiginous pursuit whose limit cannot be thought of, imagined; even for mathematicians, who aim at an impossible modelling of the real.

And so is unleashed this dimension of the real without limits, which leads scientists to an acceleration, which laws, even if they are called ethical, cannot frame. It is always in the name of man's good that this endless pursuit, equated with progress, but which in fact always serves capitalism, is conducted.

The disorder, which the impasses of science and capitalism have contributed to unveiling in the real, makes us stumble on this real without law, whose arbitrariness we are increasingly exposed to.

For example, Fukushima outstrips all forecasts; it is not limited to known nuclear consequences, and a year later, is generating genetic mutations in the animal world.[2] And so the real continues on its way, alone. The discovery of stem cells in corpses up to seventeen days after death[3] gives rise to a mad hope, that of remaking life out of death. This transgression of man with regards to death, which touches on a reification of the body, can only return to him in the form of an impossible to fill abyss that stretches to infinity.

The alliance between capitalism and science has generated a *savant mutant* [a *mutant scientist*] whose researching effects have unexpected incidences on the social bond, among which we are beginning to see the excesses of eugenics (which marked the first half of the 20th Century) as well as a redistribution of sexuation.

Jacques-Alain Miller, in his orientation paper for the next Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis in Paris in 2014, also reminded us that «the real invented by Lacan is not the real of science» but a «hole in the knowledge included in the real». He underlined that the issue, new for psychoanalysis, is to think the subject not on the basis of a cause/effect relation, with the production of a repressed element that the act interprets, but to conceive it on the basis of the rupture between cause and effect, which prevails at the level of the real without law. He thus considered that "in the 21st Century it is a question of psychoanalysis exploring another dimension, that of the defence against the real without law and without meaning." [4]

Some issues thus emerge, which we shall soon make progress on at the time of our next Congress:

- The putting into question of interpretation
- The development of a clinic centred on «dismantling of defence»
- The conception of the real unconscious compared with that of the transference unconscious
- The redefinition of the desire of the analyst
- The relevance of approaching the real through the Borromean knot: what forms of knotting are possible for the speaking-being in the 21st Century?

A real *for the 21st Century* is the finely tuned title that Jacques-Alain Miller has given us, with a view to detaching from the real what could otherwise be taken wholesale for everyone. While, in our century, the manifestations of the real are diverse and disorganised, the encounter with A real is always, through its contingency, singular for each.

Moreover, in the place where the symbolic previously used to form a knot and is now found to be lacking, we will find all the do-it-yourself ways that each person attempts with the real and that societies conceive in order to organise relations between people. This is what we have to consider in its impact on the development of the world in which we are living and in its consequences for our way of thinking psychoanalysis in the 21st Century.

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Translated by *Florencia Fernández Coria Shanahan* and *Philip Dravers*

1. Lacan J., *Le Séminaire, Livre XXIII, Le sinthome*. Paris, Seuil, 2005, p. 121.
2. Hiyama A., Joji M. Otaki & al., "The biological impacts of the Fukushima nuclear accident on the pale grass blue butterfly". *Scientific Reports (via Nature)*, August 9, 2012

3. Latil M., Rocheteau P. & al., "Skeletal muscle stem cells adopt a dormant cell state post mortem and retain regenerative capacity". *Nature Communications* **3**, Article number: 903, June 2012

Miller J.-A., «The Real in the 21st Century», Presentation of the Theme of the Ninth Congress of the WAP", in Hurly-Burly 9, May 2013, p. 206 : See [The real in the XXI st century: 27th April 2012: Jacques-Alain Miller](#) or [here](#) : <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=381>

Reference 1 : Seminar XXIII : 16th March 1976 : pIX 3 to IX 4 of Cormac Gallagher's translation : The metaphor indicates nothing but that: the sexual relationship. Except for the fact that it proves in fact, from the fact that it exists, that the sexual relationship is to take a bladder for a lantern. Namely, the best one can do to express a confusion: a bladder may make a lantern, provided some fire is put inside it, but as long as there is no fire, it is not a lantern.

Where does the fire come from? The fire is the Real. The Real sets fire to everything. But it is a cold fire. The fire that burns is a mask, as I might say, of the Real. The Real is to be sought on the other side of it, on the side of absolute zero. All the same this has been reached. No limit to what can be imagined in terms of high temperatures. No imaginable limit for the moment. The only Real thing there is, is the lower limit. This is what I call something that can be orientated. That is why the Real is it. : see [Seminar XXIII: The Sinthome or Joyce and the Sinthome: 1975-1976: beginning on November 18th 1975 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) // <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=971>