

What Cannot Be Said - Desire, Fantasy, Real : 11th September 2013 : Dominique
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Towards NLS Congress on 17th and 18th May 2014 in Ghent

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NLS Congress | 17th and 18th May 2014 in Ghent

What Cannot Be Said

Desire, Fantasy, Real

In my title, some of you will have recognised an echo of Wittgenstein's formulation, the last proposition in his *Tractatus*: "What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence"^[i]. Unlike the philosopher, I have cut the formulation in the middle and allowed the suspense to complete it on the basis of what Lacan proposes in *Seminar VI*, along with the decisive orientation that Jacques-Alain Miller gave to it in Athens.^[ii]

For psychoanalytic experience invites one precisely not to be silent about what cannot be said, "which provides an opportunity to put to the test the fact that words cannot say it all".^[iii] In the course of the treatment, the aspiration to find the word that

would say the thing fades, even if Lacan began by installing the Name-of-the-Father as the final word of the story. He made it into an Other of the Other, the guarantee of the established order, which he consecrated as the symbolic order. But what J.-A. Miller shows in his presentation is that in what follows and right up to the end of his teaching, Lacan systematically dismantled this pseudo-harmony of the symbolic. That is the meaning of this formulation from *Seminar VI*: “there is no Other of the Other”.

Free association necessarily encounters the impossible to say. It is thus at the moment when the word with which to say it is found to be lacking that the subject falters to the point of panic, there where he must, as Lacan says, face up to his existence. “At this moment which is, if one may say, a panic point, the subject must cling to something, and what he clings to is precisely the object qua object of desire.”[\[iv\]](#)

Wittgenstein would be right, says Jean-Claude Milner, “if only what we cannot speak about consented to be silent.”[\[v\]](#) The analysand would thereby conclude his analysis on the revelation of a want-to-be that constitutes the metonymy of his desire and arrive at the “forsaken horizon of being.”[\[vi\]](#) As J.-A. Miller notes, this version of the end of analysis turns the subject into a non-dupe, in other words, a subject founded on erring.

However, as he pointed out in Athens, the place where the end of analysis is played out is not on the side of the insubstantial being of a desire, which would be a pure signifying metonymy, but on the side of the fantasy, which is enjoying substance [*substance jouissante*]. Thus, “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.”[\[vii\]](#)

What is a psychoanalysis practice that aims at the object *a* of the fantasy? What is at stake is not that the analysand narrates his phantasmagorias, it is a question of circumscribing what the subject’s life is structured around when he is a prisoner of his fantasy – in the singular and unconscious – just as Lacan does in his analysis of dreams or of *Hamlet*. There is no direct experience of the unconscious fantasy, which is why it is necessary to reconstitute it in our constructions.

The Congress in Ghent will thus focus on what does not consent to be silent and makes its way through the inter-said [*inter-dit*]. We shall emphasize “the opposition between the closed order of the father (metaphor is always a stopping point) and what desire brings, on the contrary, of the irregular and fundamentally out of place.”[\[viii\]](#) The theme unfolds between what cannot be said except between the lines and what is impossible to say. It may be true that “the analyst offers himself as a support for every demand, and responds to none of them”,[\[ix\]](#) but it is not merely in this non-responding that the mainspring of our presence lies, as Lacan says at the end of *Seminar VI*. As this Seminar reveals, the true nature of the objects of the fantasy is to be real objects, “separated from the subject though they are closely related to his vital drive.”[\[x\]](#) The analyst makes himself into its “inexorable”[\[xi\]](#) support. In the different structures, the reconstitution of the fantasy as support of desire will serve as the turntable with which to articulate the relation of the subject’s desire to the desire of the Other... without Other.

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[NOTE Availability of these references follows]

[i] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1961, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 89. [T.N. Or according to Ogden's translation: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Cosimo, 2007), p 27 and p 108.

[ii] J-A Miller, "The Other without Other", closing presentation at the NLS Congress in Athens, May 2013. To be published in *Mental* 30 and *Hurly-Burly* 10. Working version available on the NLS website.

[iii] J-A Miller, "La psychanalyse, sa place dans les Sciences", *Mental*, 25, p. 19.

[iv] J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, (La Martinière et le Champ freudien editions, 2013), p. 108. (Unpublished in English).

[v] J.C. Milner, "L'oeuvre claire, Lacan, la science, la philosophie", (Paris: Seuil, 1995), p. 169.

[vi] J. Lacan, "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power", *Écrits*. The First Complete Edition in English, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), p 536.

[vii] J-A Miller, "The Other without Other", *op. cit.*, p 9.

[viii] J-A Miller, *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[ix] J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, (La Martinière & le Champ freudien editions, 2013), p. 572 (Unpublished in English).

[x] J. Lacan, *Ibid.* p.469.

[xi] J. Lacan, *Ibid.*, p.565.

References

[i] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1961, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 89. [T.N. Or according to Ogden's translation: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Cosimo, 2007), p 27 and p 108.

[ii] J-A Miller, "The Other without Other", closing presentation at the NLS Congress in Athens, May 2013. To be published in *Mental* 30 and *Hurly-Burly* 10. Working version available on the NLS website. See Jacques-Alain Miller : The Other without Other : 19th May 2013 (Athens, Greece). At www.LacanianWorks.ORG /5 Other Authors A-Z or

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: 26th May 2013 (Paris). At www.LacanianWorks.ORG /Other Authors A-Z or

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210413170153/http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=4144>

Note The English translation of the references is given.

[iii] J-A Miller, "La psychanalyse, sa place dans les Sciences", *Mental*, 25, p. 19.

[iv] J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, (La Martinière et le Champ freudien editions, 2013), p. 108. (Unpublished in English). Availability in English at Seminar VI Desire and its Interpretation (1958-1959) : from 12th November 1958 : Jacques Lacan See www.LacanianWorks.ORG /4 Jacques Lacan or <https://web.archive.org/web/20220814164744/https://lacanianworks.net/1958/11/seminar-vi-desire-and-its-interpretation-1958-1959-from-12th-november-1958-jacques-lacan/>

Seminar VI: “there is no Other of the Other”: See Seminar VI : 8th April 1959 : p206 of Cormac Gallagher’s translation :

This is the great secret: there is no Other of the Other. In other words for the subject of traditional philosophy, this subject subjectivises himself indefinitely. If I am in everything I think, I am in so far as I think that I am, and so on, this has no reason to stop. The truth is that analysis teaches us something quite different. The fact is that it has already been glimpsed that it is not so sure that I am in so far as I think, and that one can only be sure of one thing, which is that I am in so far as I think that I am. Certainly that. Only what analysis teaches us is that I am not the one who precisely is in the process of thinking that I am, for the simple reason that because of the fact that I think that I am, I think in the locus of the Other; I am different to the one who thinks that I am.

But the question is that I have no guarantee of any kind that this Other, through what there is in his system, can give me if I may express myself in this way, what I gave him: his being and his essence as truth. There is no, I have told you, Other of the Other. There is not in the Other, any signifier which is able on this occasion to answer for what I am. And to say things in a transformed way, this hopeless truth that I spoke to you about a while ago, this truth which is the one that we encounter at the level of the unconscious, is a faceless truth, is a closed truth, is a truth which can be bent in every direction. We only know it too well. It is a truthless truth.

[v] J.C. Milner, “L’oeuvre claire, Lacan, la science, la philosophie”, (Paris: Seuil, 1995), p. 169.

[vi] J. Lacan, “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power”, *Écrits*. The First Complete Edition in English, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), p 536. Availability at The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power/ The Rules of the Cure and the Lures of its Power : 10th July 1958 : Jacques Lacan. See www.LacanianWorks.ORG /4 Jacques Lacan or <https://web.archive.org/web/20220718142559/https://lacanianworks.net/1958/07/the-direction-of-the-treatment-and-the-principles-of-its-power10th-13th-july-1958-jacques-lacan/>

[vii] J-A Miller, “The Other without Other”, *op. cit.*, p 9.

[viii] J-A Miller, *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[ix] J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation*, (La Martinière & le Champ freudien editions, 2013), p. 572 (Unpublished in English) : English translation probably: Seminar VI : 1st July 1959 (27) : p346 of Cormac Gallagher’s translation : The problem of analysis is precisely this that the desire which the subject has to encounter, which is this desire of the other, our desire, this desire which is only all too present in what the subject supposes we are demanding of him, this desire finds itself in this paradoxical situation that we must guide this desire of the other which for us is the desire of the subject not towards our desire, but towards an other. We mature the desire of the subject for someone other than ourselves, we find ourselves in this paradoxical situation of being procurers, midwives, those who preside at the advent of desire.

How can this position be held? It can undoubtedly only be held by maintaining an artifice which is that of the whole analytic rule. But the final mainspring of this artifice, does it not contain something which allows us to grasp where there can take place in the analysis this openness onto the cut which is the one without which we cannot conceive of the situation of desire? As always it is undoubtedly both the most trivial and the most hidden truth. The essential thing in the analysis of this situation in which we find ourselves, of being the one who offers himself as a support for every demand, and who responds to none of them; is it only in this non-responding which is far from being an absolute non-responding that there is found the principle of our presence? Should we not give some essential share to what happens at the end of each session, but which is imminent in the whole situation itself in so far as our desire should limit itself to this aim, to this place that we leave to desire in order that it may situate itself there, to the cut? To the cut which is no doubt the most efficacious mode of analytic intervention and interpretation.

And that is why it is one of the things on which we should most insist, this cut which we turn into something mechanical, which we understand as limited by a prefabricated time. It is quite elsewhere not alone that we effectively put it. It is one of the most efficacious methods by which we can intervene; it is also one of those to which we should most apply ourselves. But in this cut there is something, this same thing that we have learned to recognise in the form of this phallic object latent to every relationship of demand as signifier of desire.

[x] J. Lacan, *Ibid.* p.469. : “separated from the subject though they are closely related to his vital drive.” : Seminar VI : 27th May 1959 (22) : p279 of Cormac Gallagher’s translation : I would go further. The cut, let us not forget - and this is already indicated to us in the type of the first object of the phantasy, the pregenital object. What am I alluding to as objects which can here support phantasies, if not to real objects in a close relationship with the vital drive of the subject, in so far as they are separated from him. It is only too obvious that the real is not an opaque continuum, that the real is of course made up of cuts, just as much and well beyond the cuts of language and it is not today or yesterday that the philosopher Aristotle spoke to us about the ‘good philosopher’, which means, as I understand it, just as much someone who knows in all its generality, who can be compared to the good cook, he is the one who knows how to insert the knife in the right place, cutting at the articulations, knowing how to penetrate without injuring them.

[xi] J. Lacan, *Ibid.*, p.565 : “inexorable” support : Probably : Seminar VI : 1st July 1959 (27) : p342 of Cormac Gallagher’s translation : The object in question, in so far as it rejoins the real, participates in it because the real presents itself precisely as what resists the demand, what I would call the inexorable.

The object of desire is inexorable as such, and if it rejoins the real, this real to which I alluded when we were doing our analysis of Schreber, it is in this form of the real that this inexorable is best incarnated, this form of the real which presents itself in the fact that it always comes back to the same place. And this is why it is in the stars that curiously we have seen the prototype.

Or : Seminar VI : 1st July 1959 (27) : p346 of Cormac Gallagher’s translation : How can this position be held? It can undoubtedly only be held by maintaining an artifice which is that of the whole analytic rule. But the final mainspring of this artifice, does it not contain something which allows us to grasp where there can take place in the analysis this openness onto the cut which is the one without which we cannot conceive of the situation of desire? As always it is undoubtedly both the most trivial and the most hidden truth. The essential thing in the analysis of this situation in which

we find ourselves, of being the one who offers himself as a support for every demand, and who responds to none of them; is it only in this non-responding which is far from being an absolute non-responding that there is found the principle of our presence?

Further information

Seminar VI Desire and its Interpretation (1958-1959) : from 12th November 1958 :

Jacques Lacan - See www.LacanianWorks.ORG /4 Jacques Lacan or

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220814164744/https://lacanianworks.net/1958/11/seminar-vi-desire-and-its-interpretation-1958-1959-from-12th-november-1958-jacques-lacan/>

Also www.LacanianWorks.ORG /1) Seminar VI, Jacques Lacan (1 A Lacanian Clinic/ C Cartel or group work)