

The cartel and the real by Catherine Lacaze-Paule

Translated Janet & John Haney

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From the Editorial by Ram Mandil

Catherine Lacaze-Paule, in “The Cartel and the Real”, draws attention to a real in the cartel that presents itself as impossible, the impossible to bear in the group and the impossibility of saying “in a relationship with knowledge marked by a hole”. To these impossibilities, another would be added: “there is a real included in the cartel, which is formulated by a hole, the impossibility of forming a group”. The author argues that if, for the psychoanalyst, the formation of a group is impossible, the analytic discourse, on the other hand, could establish a social bond free from any need for a group.

The cartel and the real **Catherine Lacaze-Paule**

At the source of the cartel

Lacan invented the cartel in 1964 when he created the *Freudian School of Paris* (EFP), and he repeated his choice in 1980, when he created the *School of the Freudian Cause* (ECF). He confirms, then, that there are two organs that constitute the school – the cartels and the pass. He thus splits the question of entry into the school and what it is to be a member. The school is open and welcomes the work of whoever declares a cartel to the school. This opens a topology of the school which is, at one and the same time, closed to its members but open to the production of knowledge that constitutes it.

Why the cartel? What is the real at stake for psychoanalysis?

It finds its source, it seems, both in the example of students of literature at the Sorbonne (and students of mathematics), and in Bion's theory of small groups, which Lacan encountered during his visit to England in September 1945. Lacan draws on the GTU (University Work Group) inviting students to work without a teacher, without hierarchy, without lectures, but by producing knowledge themselves in an egalitarian fashion, and it retains the form of the small group for the production of knowledge.

But it is from certain principles adopted during his experience in England that we shall meet four points that are key to the formation of cartelsⁱ¹.

- Four findings and their subversion for the cartel, of which Lacan seems to teach as a result of this experience and this reflection on the war and the groups for which he proposes his response, his subversion.^{ii 2}

- In the first instance, he remarks on the extraordinary docility of men in groups.

He brings this up ironically when he says: 'It is not the excessive unruliness of individuals that presents the greatest threat to the human spirit'^{iii 3}. In response, Lacan considers that there is a struggle to be waged against the death instinct, which unfolds as the discontent in civilisation, notably in the form of the passion for ignorance.

- Secondly, he raises the English pragmatism of Bion, driven not by the ideal (as was the case in France in the form of Pétainist idealism) but by utilitarianism, which he calls a 'true relation to the real'^{iv 4}. The creation of a small group around a task to be accomplished, and not around an ideal, comes out of isolation – not out of solitude – and allows each person, according to his ability, to put himself there on his own behalf, according to his unique, as opposed to his collective, relation to the ideal.

- Thirdly, Lacan notes the decline of the paternal imago and the promotion of horizontal identification, distinct from the vertical identification with the ideal. However, because he is a psychoanalyst, he indicates that there is always a leader function that is embodied in a group. But it is working, on this function, by reduction and discharge, that the cartel will promote horizontal identification and circulation among its members. Therefore, he invented the Plus-One, a leader function, but a depleted leader function. This makes the cartel not five people, but four plus one, and introduces an entirely new topology.

- And finally, fourthly, for Lacan, it is not about completely eliminating all identification, or imaginary effects specific to groups, imaginary or ideal, but to adjust, otherwise regulate, to counter their effects in a manner arising from analysis. In the cartel, the function of the plus-one is designed to look out for the effects of groups. For this, the plus-one has the function of enabling the 'one by one', to counter the *all*, the *one* of the group. Indeed, Lacan makes the universal serve the 'will to jouissance', an inhuman will. Because, as J-A Miller says in his Turin theory, it is in the universal – the 'for all', and the law of the NDP, of the father – that the superego lives^{v 5}.

The structure of the cartel answers and inscribes – it is this that grounds psychoanalysis – the question of the real as impossible. The transitory, the random, the changeability, and the depleted leader – the few signs of authority – the 'any old one who is the Plus-one' – but it must be someone – are all principles which bring

¹ J. Lacan, 'British Psychiatry and the War', in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, N° 4, 2000.

² Éric Laurent, 'Le discours psychanalytique et le groupe' *Quarto* N° 8, these remarks and these comments are drawn from reading this text.

³ J. Lacan *ibid.*

⁴ J. Lacan *ibid.*

⁵ Jacques-Alain Miller, *Turin Theory of the School*, intervention of 21 May 2000, Transl. by Heather Chamberlain and Vincent Dachy, online at the LondonSociety-NLS website.

into play the impossible, and the crisis. Transient, lasting a year, no more than two, this signifies that there is no group ideal at work in a cartel. There will inevitably be a crisis and this limited duration responds as a cut-off. Randomness: the drawing of lots for a cartel is a reminder that personal affinities offer no guarantee, randomness is not enough to avoid group effects [*et que le hasard se fait répétition de rencontrer les mêmes effets de groupe même constitué sur le mode aléatoire.*] Whether you draw lots, or choose – combination, contingency, the incalculable, fate, chance – they are all of the same order as choosing by affinity. Finally, the depleted leader is there to be on the look out for the imaginary effects, and to encourage elaboration. Let us also recall ‘one is not the father of signifiers, at the very most, one is “because of”’^{vi 6}. As he/she is also the one who inscribes a new topology of the group, thus the analytic operation is inscribed in the structure of the cartel.

- The impossible and the cartel

A fair but quick understanding would lead to the idea that the group creates imaginary effects that the symbolic is going to treat and that the action of the Plus-one is going to regulate, to encourage this passage and this treatment, or again that the symbolic structure of the cartel, its handling, would counter the real, in as much as ‘it is impossible to bear’. In a sense, this is true, but not quite complex enough to realize what Lacan calls the analytic operation, and of which he gives the logic following on from the four discourses.

In this first approach, the emphasis is put not on the impossibility of supporting the group – the cartel and its structure imply a mode of discourse. Psychoanalytic discourse, let us remember, is not all the words, the blah-blah, but a device that creates a social bond. So this is a reminder that it is not the subjects between them who will make the link but the discourse. At the heart of the four discourses is found, is written, impotence (the bottom line) and impossible (top line). This impossible, Lacan designates as follows: ‘The impossible is the real.’^{vii 7} Freud has already mentioned these impossibilities: the impossibility to govern, to educate, to psychoanalyse, impossible to make desire, to cure, which are included in the four discourses. But what Lacan says is the analytic discourse transforms and processes the impossible, ‘it is a device that processes the real.’^{viii 8}

More specifically, the analytic discourse is the device that transforms the impossible to bear, a name of the real, into an impossible to say, another name^{ix 9}.

If it is from the impossible to say that a Plus-one orients him/herself as written discourse in the top line, he separates the inability to say that resonates with the fantasy in play of the impossible to say as real. In both cases, that of ‘the impossible to bear’ of the group and that of ‘the impossible to say’, the question is about a relation to knowledge marked by a hole. It is therefore about obtaining in the cartel struck from the mark of the unconscious of each person. That is to say how does each one appropriate – by reason and logic from knowledge, from his ‘I do not want to know anything about it’ – his encounter with a singular impossible, and according to what he does with it. In the cartel, what is being verified is that there is no apprenticeship of knowledge except that which is with the object, the object cause of desire, that we learn what concerns us.

⁶ J. Lacan, Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg, Norton, New York, 2007, p. 130.

⁷ J. Lacan, *ibid*, p. 165

⁸ Éric Laurent, ‘Le réel et le groupe’, on the internet.

⁹ Éric Laurent, *op cit*.

• The real and the group^{x 10}

To conclude, what grounds the School, the cartels and the group, rests on this statement by Lacan: 'It is impossible that psychoanalysts form a group.'^{xi 11} Here's what was in labour in the invention of the cartel, and which will find its logic in 1975. 'However, the analytic discourse (my spawning) is precisely that which can establish a social bond cleansed of any need for a group'^{xiii12} says Lacan.

In every cartel there is a real that presents itself as a hole, an 'impossible to make a group'. Indeed, the cartel is more than a group, it is the very impossibility of making a group, of which we have given the topology that creates the function of the Plus-one, a group that is closed and outward-looking, countering the temptation to make it a group or to find in analytic knowledge a knowledge that is ended or closed. The production of knowledge that the cartel presupposes has as its cause not the group, but the discourse it serves, that being the analytic discourse.

The cartel is the pivot point, the hinge around which the School and the subject turn. For the School, it is about awaiting and welcoming new knowledge; for the subject it is about entering and taking a step. Both for the School, and for the subject, what works itself out and renews itself is a bit of knowledge issuing from analytic knowledge.

But none of this will happen without the other organ that Lacan wanted for his School, the Pass: namely, the possibility of finding a way out for this knowledge that comes from the unconscious knowledge [*la possibilité de trouver une issue pour ce savoir issu du savoir insu*].

Translated by *Janet & John Haney*

ⁱ J. Lacan, 'British Psychiatry and the War', in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, N^o. 4, 2000. Footnotes 1, 3 & 4 : British Psychiatry and the War : 1947 Availability and notes : [British Psychiatry and the War: 1947: Jacques Lacan](#) or [here: http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=384](#)

ⁱⁱ Éric Laurent, 'Le discours psychanalytique et le groupe' Quarto N^o. 8, these remarks and these comments are drawn from reading this text. Footnote 2 : Éric Laurent, 'Le discours psychanalytique et le groupe' Quarto No. 8, these remarks and these comments are drawn from reading this text. (I will look for an English translation)

ⁱⁱⁱ J. Lacan *ibid.*

^{iv} J. Lacan *ibid.*

¹⁰ Éric Laurent, 'Le réel et le groupe'.

¹¹ J. Lacan, 'L'étourdit', in *Autres Écrits*, édition du Seuil 2001, p. 474.

¹² *Ibid.*

^v Jacques-Alain Miller, Turin Theory of the School, intervention of 21 May 2000, Transl. by Heather Chamberlain and Vincent Dachy, online at the London Society-NLS website.

^{vi} . Lacan, Seminar 17, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg, Norton, New York, 2007, p. 130. Footnote 6 : Sem XVII : 18th March 1970 : Availability [Seminar XVII: Psychoanalysis upside down/The reverse side of psychoanalysis: 1969-1970 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) : [Seminar XVII: Psychoanalysis upside down/The reverse side of psychoanalysis: 1969-1970 : from 26th November 1969: Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) <http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=241> See p130 of Russell Grigg's translation :

Chapter IX p15 of Cormac Gallagher's translation : Freud produced a number of master-signifiers which he covered with the name of Freud. A name can also be used as a stopper for something. I am astounded that people can associate with this stopper which is a name of the father, whatever it may be, the idea that there can be at this level any kind of murder whatsoever. And how can people think that it is by reason of their devotion to the name of Freud that analysts are what they are? They are unable to disentangle themselves from Freud's master-signifiers, that is all. It is not so much Freud that they hold onto, but a number of signifiers – the unconscious, seduction, trauma, phantasy, the ego, the id, and all the rest – there is no question of their leaving that orbit. At this level they have no father to kill. One is not the father of signifiers, one is at most a father *because of them*. No problem at this level. The real mainspring is the following – enjoyment separates the master-signifier, in so far as one would like to attribute to the father, knowledge *qua* truth.

^{vii} J. Lacan, *ibid*, p. 165. Footnote 7 : Sem XVII : 10th June 1970 : Availability [Seminar XVII: Psychoanalysis upside down/The reverse side of psychoanalysis: 1969-1970 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) : [Seminar XVII: Psychoanalysis upside down/The reverse side of psychoanalysis: 1969-1970 : from 26th November 1969: Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#)

P165 of Russell Grigg's translation

Chapter XIV p3 of Cormac Gallagher's translation :

The fact is that there is a relationship between what is happening, and the things I have taken the risk of manipulating for some time which, by that very fact, provide a kind of guarantee that this discourse hangs together. I am taking the risk of manipulating them in a way which, when all is said and done, is absolutely wild! I do not hesitate to speak about the real and that for some time, since it is even in this way that I took the first steps in this teaching. Then, as the years passed, a little formula emerged that the impossible is the real. God knows it was not overused at the beginning. Then I happened to propose some references or other to Truth, which is more common. There are, all the same some very important remarks to make, and I feel obliged to make a number of them today before leaving all of that to the innocents who will use them without rhyme or reason, which is really par for the course, sometimes in my own entourage.

^{viii} Éric Laurent, 'Le réel et le groupe', on the internet. Footnotes 7, 8, 9, & 10 : Éric Laurent, 'Le réel et le groupe' : Availability in English given [The Real and the Group : 2000 : Éric Laurent](#) or [here](#)

^{ix} Éric Laurent, *op cit*.

^x Éric Laurent, 'Le réel et le groupe'.

^{xi} J. Lacan, 'L'étourdit', in *Autres Écrits*, édition du Seuil 2001, p. 474. Footnotes 11 & 12 : L'Étourdit : Availability given 1) [L'Étourdit: 1972: Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) 2)

[Autres Écrits: 2001 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here](#) . Exact page number in the translation has not been established.

^{xii} *Ibid.*