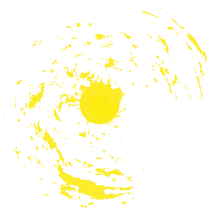


# The dimension $S_0$ and the object nothing in ordinary psychosis

*Domenico Cosenza – SLP*

A point of undoubted interest on the subject of ordinary psychosis that I would like to contribute relates to a proposition advanced by Jacques-Alain Miller in the clinical conversation *Subjective situations of social discontact*<sup>1</sup>, held in Paris in June 2008, in which I participated. Ordinary psychosis was the backdrop to that clinical conversation, with particular emphasis on the theme of social disconnection and disinsertion in the social bond. The question of discontact, which comprised the theme of the conversation, was put in series with those of disconnection and disinsertion, themes much discussed in our field at that time. Disengagement from the Other, a prominent structural feature during times of crisis in psychosis in its ordinary form, reveals something of the psychotic structure in a subject until then apparently well-inserted in the social bond. Whereas today we are examining the discreet signs of ordinary psychosis<sup>2</sup>, at that time the focus of our theoretical and clinical discussions was on the mode of breakdown of the social bond that characterised it.



In the period following Jacques-Alain Miller's 2008 conference "Ordinary Psychosis Revisited"<sup>3</sup>, and a decade after the *Antibes Convention* in which the theory of ordinary psychosis found its moment of formalisation, the clinical conversation of 2008 mentioned above was part of the process of *après-coup* on the theme of ordinary psychosis, providing a valuable contribution that made possible an advance in the process of giving it definition. For this reason, I think it warrants closer examination, in order to clarify our understanding of ordinary psychosis in view of Barcelona 2018, given that this text has perhaps not been given the full recognition that it deserves in our discussions.

In essence, I would say that Jacques-Alain Miller's contribution on the subject of ordinary psychosis in this clinical conversation can be reduced to two key points: 1) a return to a key concept in Lacan's teaching – the object nothing – that reinvents its status;

2) the introduction of a new *matheme*, particularly useful, according to Miller, in considering the clinic of ordinary psychosis, namely  $S_0$ .

This elaboration was produced during the conversation, in particular on the basis of a case of ordinary psychosis presented by Maleval, the case of Charles<sup>4</sup>. The question of the nothing is central to this case. It is expressed phenomenologically as a structural inertia that makes it impossible for Charles to do anything at all, be it to work or to build a relationship. This leads Charles to define himself as “nothing”. In this case, Miller states in agreement with Maleval:

“This highly characteristic  $S_0$  is regularly encountered in ordinary psychosis. It should not be confused with the barred subject. This “I am nothing” relates to another mode, much more radical than a mere undermining of one’s self-esteem. As Maleval has highlighted, it is a question of the attraction of non-being, which is not without evocation of Heidegger. A relationship to the nothing is present in this subject.<sup>5</sup>”

In a certain sense Charles’s case is presented as paradigmatic. According to Miller, it allows us to reconsider the *object rien*, which Lacan had included in the list of objects *a*. In this case, it is a question not of a re-elaboration of the object rien starting from hysteria or mental anorexia (also in certain points in his teaching on obsessional neurosis or phobia), which can be found in Lacan, but rather starting from ordinary psychosis. This difference introduces a new definition of the status of the object cause. For Miller,  $S_0$  is a *matheme* that allows us to consider the object rien in ordinary psychosis. This *matheme* “puts object *a* back on the agenda in approaching ordinary psychosis. It seems to be bound to it and, in a way, gives it its status<sup>6</sup>”.

In this way, it appears that Jacques-Alain Miller is opening the door to a revision of the Lacanian doctrine of the objects *a*,<sup>7</sup> giving to the nothing an unprecedented prominence that makes this object different from the others in the list of objects cause of desire formulated by Lacan. The full weight of this passage can be felt in the new definition of the object rien that Miller arrives at in the conversation that this case of ordinary psychosis gives rise to: “The object *a* as nothing is the only one of the objects *a* to be cause of non-desire and cause of desert.<sup>8</sup>”

The clinic of ordinary psychosis is presented to us as a terrain to be explored – keeping in mind the specific function of the object nothing – within the imaginary compensations and solutions found by the subject in his or her existence, and guided by the compass of the *matheme*  $S_0$ .

*Translated by Carlo Zuccarini*

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- 1 Miller J.-A., (editor), *Situations subjectives de déprise sociale*, Paris, Navarin, 2009.
- 2 On this point, see *Mental*. Revue internationale de Psychanalyse, Revue de la Eurofédération de Psychanalyse, *Signes discrets dans les psychoses ordinaires*, n° 35, January 2017, in particular Y.Vanderveken, « Vers une généralisation de la clinique des signes discrets », p. 13-32.
- 3 Miller J.-A., "Ordinary Psychosis Revisited", *Psychoanalytical Notebooks of the LSMLS*, Issue 26, 2013, p. 33-48.
- 4 Maleval J.-C., « Déprise sociale paradoxale et clinique du désert », in Miller J.-A., *Situations subjectives de déprise sociale*, *op. cit.*, p. 37-48.
- 5 Miller J.-A., (editor), *Situations subjectives de déprise sociale*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
- 6 *Ibid.* p. 169-170.
- 7 On this point, see "The nothing as the only object *a* that is not cause of desire. A recent contribution by Jacques-Alain Miller", in Cosenza D., *Le refus dans l'anorexie* (Refusal in anorexia), Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014, p. 146-148.
- 8 Miller J.-A., (editor), *Situations subjectives de déprise sociale*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

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*Towards Barcelona 2018: The Ordinary Psychoses and the Others, Under Transference*

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# The ordinary psychoses: Their scope and limits

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**Vincente Palomera** sets out from assessment that taking discreet phenomena as signs reveals the most singular signifiers of the subject. In this sense, being discreet doesn't make them any less "interesting". Lacan shows this when he isolates, with Joyce, the hitherto unnoticed discreet phenomenon, of letting the body fall away so as to raise it to the value of the sign of a fault in the body, from which Joyce will construct an ego which will repair the knot. If for us ordinary psychosis is an instrument for reading more closely the *bricolages* of the subjects of our time, then with Joyce Lacan sought to identify these discreet signs, in order to "interpret his position of jouissance".

**François Ansermet** addresses invention as a possible "sinthomatic" way forward in psychosis. Through a reading of the case of Aby Warburg he presents the inventions of this brilliant art historian as always premised upon a fault, an error, an "exploration [...] of the gaps from which novelty emerges against the backdrop of the return of the same". Not only do his inventions provide a route towards solutions for his psychosis, but equally "his psychotic functioning was a vector of his creativity".

The originality of **Domenico Cosenza's** text lies in his extraction of a contribution made by Jacques-Alain Miller during the "Clinical conversation on the subjective situations of social discontact" to consider the clinic of the ordinary psychoses.<sup>2</sup> It has to do with a reinvention of the status of the object *nothing* as cause of "non-desire", and of a certain state of the subject which can be pinpointed with the matheme  $S_0$ , indicating "the pull of non-being", "a link to nothingness".

**Alba Alfaro** examines the question of knowing whether, after twenty years of research, ordinary psychosis can be "consolidated" today as a clinical category. Supporting her text on three axioms, she demonstrates that ordinary psychosis emerged as a research programme aimed at taking into account the clinical consequences of mutations in contemporary discourse. Subsequently put to the test as a "Lacanian category" that makes it possible to refine concepts and categories in order to include the subtleties of certain phenomena, ordinary psychosis can now be considered as a contemporary form of psychosis, in line with today's social discourse.

To conclude, **Fernanda Otoni-Brisset** poses the question of differential diagnosis, and asks what meaning should be given to the term "the others" in the Congress title, given that we're concerned with drawing the consequences of the "fundamental clinical equality between parlêtres".<sup>3</sup> She highlights the displacement of the clinical question "what structure?" by that of "what function?" This leads towards a unitary clinic; one of inventions as defences against the real.

All these texts constitute reflections and attempts to think through today's clinic – that of the contemporary parlêtre – on the basis of a singular position of jouissance; that is, the way in which each subject, whatever their "structure" in a classical sense, constructs a way of being in the world on the basis of their own flaws.

*Translated by Thomas Harding*

