Psychosis, or Radical Belief in the Symptom

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This text is translated from a transcription of the "Presentation of the Theme for the Eleventh Congress of the NLS, Athens 2012", delivered in French at the NLS Congress in Tel Aviv, 17 June 2012.

WHAT do we call "psychosis"? This shall be the object of my introduction to what will be developed in the preparatory work for the Congress so as then to meet its scansion during the Congress itself. I propose an enquiry into the way in which we read, in our present-day practice, what the word "psychosis" means for psychoanalysis.

Psychosis and Discourse

WHAT interests us in the practice of psychoanalysis are the forms of discourse by which the subject inserts himself, though never entirely, into the established discourses, into what we call civilisation, by leaning on his symptom. Freud conceived of the symptom in its relation of opposition to civilisation. For him it was a form of alternative social bond. The symptom, he reminds us, begins with two people, in the sexual bond with the partner, and is opposed to the common ideals of civilisation. The symptom is a private language, distinct from common language.

Lacan came to call into question the idea of civilisation as one sole totality. It is made up of multiple discourses, which number at least four: the master discourse, the university discourse, the discourse of the hysteric, and the discourse of the psychoanalyst, which are a range of combinations that allow the subject, divided in the Other, to be articulated with his jouissance, the object a.[1] To this multiplicity in civilisation, another discourse should be added which gnaws away at each of them: the capitalist discourse where it is the object a that rises to the zenith and redistributes the possible permutations. The symptom must thus be conceived of in its invariably partial insertion into the discourses.

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \xrightarrow{} \frac{S_2}{\lozenge \ \ a}$$

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[1] *Cf.* Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, transl. by R. Grigg, Norton, New York, 2007.

The theme "psychosis" comes down to us from the psychopathology of the classical clinic which, in the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth, endeavoured to classify the different forms of "folly", a much older term, in a new systematicity. The clinic of the visual detail was extended by the clinic of listening and initially gave us an abundance, a limitless multiplicity of follies and manias, before becoming organised and taking shape, set out by Kraepelin in line with two major axes: on one side fell paranoia, schizophrenia and the debates on the paraphrenias; on the other fell mania and melancholia. The final lasting inventions from this clinic were: in France, Clérambault's mental automatism; and at the same time, in the German-language zone, Kretschmer's sensitive paranoias. We have traces of what was at stake therein in the Jaspers/Clérambault debates as conveyed by Jacques Lacan's 1932 Thesis which seals the end of an era.[2]

Freud took up the term "psychosis" just as Kraepelin was organising the paraphrenias as a form of positive discourse, as an effort to rebuild a world when the beliefs that supported it had disappeared.[3] The psychoanalytic discourse was established by Freud upon the belief in the tragic dimension of Oedipus which, for Freud, regulated relationships of libido and jouissance in the established discourses of post-Victorian civilisation from which psychoanalytic discourse was emerging. The nineteenth-century tragedies, not only the tragedies in reality, but also the literary tragedies whose authors – Victor Hugo, August Strinberg, Henrik Ibsen – still speak to us today, were giving an epic form to this moment of civilisation in which the reign of prohibition defined the ideal horizon of discourse. Tragedy and the great Romantic epic of the nineteenth century formed a social bond. We are still sensitive to this, as we are to the musical tragedies, with opera from Verdi to Wagner still being performed around the globe. With these literary forms that were forming a social bond, the author took the shape of a demiurge, a special being, a new priest of a religion still in the making – even Nietzsche believed in this for a while.

Freud democratised the tragic dimension of the nineteenth century by supposing that the common status of the subject of the time was to live out his world as a tragedy. The Oedipus Complex, with its scientific name, was a common, banal, ordinary tragedy for all and sundry, setting the confrontation between father and son in their radical misrecognition. Freud gave an epic form to this banal tragedy and Lacan suspects that he did so because he was himself caught up in the era's discovery of the "facticity" of paternity.[4] The collapse of the Ancien Régime and the belief in the Father it used to support, along with the accumulation in the industrial metropolises of forms of kinship that hitherto did not mix, revealed the arbitrary nature of the Father. The ordinary tragedy of Oedipus gave a common shape to the discourses on kinship structures, alongside the realisation of the classificatory enterprise of the psychiatry that was contemporary with Freud.

The psychoses were understood by Freud as a form of productive discourse, sustaining the effort of subjects who fall wide of any belief in the father and ordinary tragedy, and responding to the clinical field newly systematised by psychiatry. But

[2] Lacan, J., *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*, Seuil, Paris, 1975.

[3] *Cf*. Freud, S., "The Mechanism of Paranoia" transl. by A. & J., Strachey in *Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works…*, Vol. XII, Hogarth Press, London, 1958, p. 62.

[4] Lacan, J., "Proposition on 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School" transl. by R. Grigg in *Analysis*, Issue 6, 1995, p. 11 [TN, *facticité* could also be translated as "fictiveness" or "artificiality"].

this back and forth could not last; it was an unsteady balance. Firstly, psychiatry itself went on to distance itself from taking into account the constituent signs of psychosis and the productive forms of discourse by silencing them, reducing them to the body's interior as psychiatry's place in medicine shifted, and medicine's place in science too. On the side of psychoanalysis, it distanced itself for structural reasons from the epic form of psychical conflict – another name for ordinary tragedy – so as to turn to the shape by which "the symptom's formal envelope"[5] treats the drive and phenomena of jouissance, a shape that is not necessarily conflictive. This twofold distancing forms our present situation and allows us to read just to what extent it is on the basis of the question of psychosis that the twofold face of the clinical phenomenon – belief in the Name-of-the-Father and belief in the symptom – is best broached.

The Paternal Metaphor, I & II

IN the theory, in the classical phase of his teaching, Lacan first situated the originality and productivity of psychosis on the basis of the contrast with the "normal functioning" of the paternal metaphor. From the banal Oedipal tragedy he extracts the structure in which the Name-of-the-Father is an operator that acts upon the enigma, for the child, of the mother's desire. It also forms a guarantee because the phenomena of signification are inscribed in language with a phallic value.[6]

$$\text{Name-of-the-Father} \cdot \frac{\text{Mother's Desire}}{x} \longrightarrow \text{Name-of-the-Father} \left[\frac{A}{\varphi} \right]$$

Psychosis, as a productive form, is what occurs when the Name-of-the-Father no longer plays the role of this operator. It lays bare the fact that language does not house the phenomena of jouissance: the subject's body is the locus of a jouissance that cannot be symbolised under the value *phi*, a jouissance of drive phenomena that are delocalised outside the erogenous zones.

$$\left[\frac{A}{\varphi} \right] \qquad \frac{A}{J}$$

A jouissance that cannot be negativised imposes itself, and at the same time, words, incomprehensible phenomena, unheard of signs and unfamiliar messages, impose themselves and converge towards the subject in an order where, between a new Other and jouissance, there is an impossibility of their conjunction. Common language takes on new accents.

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[5] Lacan, J., "On My Antecedents" in *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. by B. Fink, Norton & Co., p. 52.

[6] *Cf.* Lacan, J., "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis", in *Écrits, op. cit.*, p. 465.

$$A \cap J$$

Lacan described the effort at stabilisation between signifiers and signification that constitute a language based on the contributions of Jakobson's linguistics. The latter allowed the false unity of Saussure's sign to be left behind, combining codes and messages, not only through a code that permits of producing messages, but through the effects of the return of messages on the code.[7]

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

Code-messages and message-codes are produced in a linguistics of speech-in-action where the very fact of speaking, the very language acts of the psychotic subject, modify the language he uses to the point that the new language, modified by the language acts, can take on board the meaningless messages that were circulating outside any norm.[8] The consequences of this radical approach to the psychotic phenomenon, and to the clinical experience of the outcome that the psychotic subject can find, allowed Lacan to generalise his Name-of-the-Father by pluralising it, as Jacques-Alain Miller showed in his extended commentary on the path that goes from the first paternal metaphor in Lacan to the second, where from the pluralisation of the Names-of-the-Father one passes over to language itself as that which takes charge of the phenomena of jouissance.[9]

$$NP \longrightarrow NP\,(s) \longrightarrow \frac{\cancel{A}}{J}$$

In this sense, the second paternal metaphor in Lacan is a generalisation from the singular psychotic effort to the clinical field as a whole. From the psychotic subject we also have to learn how the neurotic subject forms a language from his symptom, and that this symptom stems from both the first and second paternal metaphors.

The second paternal metaphor, in which the whole of language takes charge of the form of the effort of naming jouissance, is closer to Chomsky than to Jakobson. The universal rule of the locus of the Other tries to name this jouissance. Chomsky used an enlightening metaphor to designate this effort. He said that it is possible to undertake the taxonomy of all the fish, to establish the rule for evolution from fossils, to describe all the variations in the species, but so long as one doesn't understand fluid

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[7] *Cf. Ibid.*, p. 452: "…a code constituted by messages about the code and […] a message reduced to what, in the code, indicates the message".

[8] *Cf.* Lacan, J., "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire…" in *Écrits, op. cit.*, p. 683: "Code messages and message codes separate out into pure forms in the psychotic subject…".

[9] Miller, J.-A., "Extimité" transl. by F. Massardier-Kenney in Bracher, M., *et al., Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure and Society*, New York University Press, 1994, p. 85.

dynamics, one will never understand why all fish tend to be shark-shaped. He sought to find out what the fluid dynamics of language are. He didn't manage. He did give some consideration to the limits of his programme, but at the very least the advantage of his dream of a language-organ was to articulate language with bodily phenomena.

For us, the fluid dynamics that gives order to language is the way in which the enjoying substance is taken up by language itself. The lesson that the psychotic subject has transmitted to us in his singular efforts was generalised for us by Lacan to the entirety of the clinical field. There is a real of structures that is plunged into this particular use that defines, after Lacan, the field of our practice and our experience. Yes, "meaning is use", but this use is the use of naming jouissance. Language itself becomes, not the locus of Chomsky's dream of a universal rule, but the locus of generalised equivocation. Lacan does not distinguish between a generative component of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. He considers equivocations at the syntactical level, equivocations at the level of signification, and equivocations at the level of pragmatics.

Our effort likewise lies on the nether side of attempts at classification. The paradox is that we took on board the word "psychosis" at a time when a new systematicity, a new classification, was emerging in the discourses. Lacan's teaching turned this approach to psychosis into the indication of a path where, just as we consider the full set of equivocations at the level of the Other rather than the rules, we consider just how much in each case the subject is unclassifiable. *Les inclassables de la clinique* was a title chosen by Jacques-Alain Miller for one of our congresses.[10] The clinic's unclassifiable cases mark the effort by which the symptom, beyond groupings according to typical forms, can designate a subject's singularity.

This is the horizon of "Joyce-The-Sinthome", which is both a proper name, "Joyce", and a common noun, "sinthome" (with its overhauled use, of course), marked by the definite article. Joyce-The-Sinthome is conjugated in Lacan's effort towards the singularity of writing Joyce's knot. Jacques-Alain Miller noted that Joyce's sublimation is not the sublimation of an unconscious that conveys its truth, but a truth that has made room for a knowledge. To read *Ulysses*, Oedipal anecdote about Joyce is not particularly useful. One can easily read in the biographies devoted to him how everything that Joyce had read, the way he wanted to found a literature in a different way and also to become a new prophet in his language, is an effort by which, through literature and the messages he sends, he has subverted language itself. This is not merely as in Jakobson where the message returns on the code, rather Joyce's subversion operated to the point that one was able to say that after Joyce the English language had become a dead language.

This death was exaggerated: it died and it was resuscitated, but transformed. Literature passed through "the Joyce moment", was transformed, and recreated a world of characters, but differently. Philippe Sollers wrote *Paradis*, then stopped, there was a period of silence, then he wrote *Women*. The literature that transformed anew after Joyce has taken up Molly Bloom's dialogue, turning it to different purposes, and is now inscribing the womanly question at the forefront of the enigmas that literature must decipher. Let's say that literature has been exploring, with the psychotic subject, what it is to be "the woman that men are missing"[11].

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[10] *Cf*. IRMA, *La conversation d'Arcachon, Cas rares : les inclassables de la clinique*, Paon Collection, Agalma/Seuil, Paris, 1998.

[11] *Cf*. Lacan, J., "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis", *op. cit.*, p. 472.

Ordinary and Out-of-the-Ordinary

JOYCEAN generalisation, in which the generalised, ordinary status of the psychotic effort has led us to consider the ordinary forms of psychosis, and no longer just the extraordinary forms that stand in contrast to the banal tragic dimension, starts off on the contrary from the ordinary forms of delusional metaphor, from the effort of particular signification, from the effort of reducing meaning to writing which occurs in the symptom of one and all, regardless of whether one has gone via the experience of psychoanalysis or not. If one has gone via the experience of psychoanalysis, one stands a chance of knowing about it, otherwise it will take one longer "to become a character in one's written story" as Lacan put it.

"Ordinary psychosis" is the name of a work programme that began in the Clinical Section when we asked ourselves what the psychotic subject is when the psychosis has not been triggered. We started off from this question and examined Schreber's text as a way of situating it.[12] Then, with un-triggered psychosis we realised that a great deal of things happen in this space prior to the moment when something collapses or becomes detached. There was the punctuation of the Antibes meeting[13] which allowed for a shape to be given to all these phenomena by naming the phenomena of plugging in and out of the Other, defining a whole field of the ordinary clinic of psychosis that stood to be explored.

However, this field of ordinary psychosis does not mean that everything is psychotic. One should not mix up the lessons to be learnt from the psychotic subject (which bear on the entirety of the clinical field) with a clinical category as such, making it the most sizeable category of our experience. We would be in a similar situation to the time of Kraepelin, when some eighty percent of people hospitalised on psychiatric wards were considered to be paranoiac. We would have ordinary psychosis everywhere. No way! This is a work programme, an enquiry, and an orientation we are holding until we know what we are dealing with. Besides, the day will likely come when the word "psychosis" will be so out of synch with the spirit of the times that instead we will be speaking in terms of "ordinary delusions". As Jacques-Alain Miller puts it in the most recent edition of *Le Point*[14], with the Erasmian tones of Jacques Lacan, of *In Praise of Folly*: "everyone is mad, i.e. everyone is delusional"[15]. This does not mean that everyone is psychotic, but all of this is part of our contemporary enquiry in the twenty-first century into what the question of psychosis means for us.

Just as the ordinary status of psychosis does not mean that it has a universal spread, the lessons we draw from the psychotic subject do not make the paternal function vanish. The paternal function remains, albeit modified. There is a father with a more ordinary status. Lacan called this father the one who is still able to *épater*, to

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[12] IRMA, *Le Conciliabule d'Angers, Effets de surprise dans la psychanalyse*, Paon collection, Agalma/Seuil, 1997

[13] IRMA, *La psychose ordinaire, La Convention d'Antibes*, Paon Collection, Agalma/Seuil, Paris, 1999.

[14] Miller, J.-A., "The Lady Symptom", transl. by A. Price in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 8, October 2012, p. 307.

[15] Lacan, J., "There are four discourses…", transl. by A. Price in *Culture/Clinic*, Issue 1, Spring 2013.

impress or amaze, with a play on the word *pater*.[16] He is the one who constitutes an exception, who is capable of surprising us. Jacques-Alain Miller took this example to show that, even in his clownish function, one can see the contemporary politician striving to impress, caught in the media, in the communication industry, trying to impress.[17] Of course, it has to be done in the right way.

You can see again what is at stake in the Greek elections today. This evening we will know whether it is the technicians of the Euro or the intrepid young Alexis Tsipras, who has impressed everyone, stepping out with his flamboyant rhetoric trying to have us believe he holds the solution – would to God that it were true, but it does not seem altogether convincing. But here we have an effort to impress, in view of which there is a phenomenon of adherence, of belief. The one who impresses is the one who shows up in our world of ever more rules and regulations, ever more bureaucracy, ever more vigilance across all levels to explain to us our hygiene of life and death, and manages to do things differently from everyone else. Individuals like these enter our special category and collaborate in our enquiry into how the ordinary Name-of-the-Father of existence transforms once we have our horizon of the unclassifiable.

In this respect, I would like to iterate just what an instrument of public service the journal of the New Lacanian School is. In the seventh issue of *Hurly-Burly* we find Jacques-Alain Miller's Course on *L'Autre qui n'existe pas et ses comités d'éthique*, revisited and condensed in a perfectly readable form, on the question of naming[18]. An article by Ian Hacking[19], about the differing perspectives of Kripke and Putnam on naming, shows how indeed, from a logical standpoint, the last word that we can read in analytic philosophy and contemporary logic rests on the point at which proper name and common noun – proper name and natural-kind term – meet and radically call into question any attempt at reducing the name to its description. This name is referred back to the fundamental act that Kripke calls the "initial baptism"[20]; an encounter which for us echoes the baptism of jouissance that the subject receives as a shock that occurs at one point and then afterwards finds its name. This name is next transmitted in the set of possible names according to Kripke or according to Putnam. I thank Adrian Price, the journal's editor, who has also gone to the great length of writing the introductory article [to Hacking's paper][21], along with the whole *Hurly-Burly* editorial team, for an issue that stands as a very useful instrument for the preparation of the Athens Congress.

The End of the "Privilege" of Madness

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[16] Lacan, J., *Le séminaire livre XIX, …ou pire*, Seuil, Paris, 2011, p. 208.

[17] Miller, J.-A., "Out-of-the-Ordinary, the Better to Impress", transl. by A. Price in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 8, October 2012, p. 303.

[18] Miller, J.-A., "Five Lessons on Language and the Real" transl. by A. Price in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 7, May 2012, pp. 59-117.

[19] Hacking, I., "Putnam's Theory of Natural Kinds and Their Names is Not the Same as Kripke's", in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 7, *Ibid.*, pp. 129-49.

[20] Kripke, S., *Naming and Necessity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p. 96.

[21] Price, A., "On the Real and Natural-Kind Terms", in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 7, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-27.

I WOULD like to round up on the following point: the ordinary aspect of the psychotic effort and the fact that everyone is mad, or that being mad is no longer a privilege. This effort has to allow us to get out of the confusion between flesh-and-blood fathers and what we call "Father" in psychoanalysis.

Fathers are not responsible for the psychosis of their child any more than mothers are responsible for their children's autism. One day, just as our psychoanalyst colleagues with autistic children have "come out" and said what prompted them to create institutions to tend to their children and invent the mix between educative and clinical approaches that saved them and helped their children, there will have to be a discreet "coming out" of our colleagues with psychotic children. Likewise, our aggiornamento on our uses of psychosis will go via a discreet "coming out". It will be part of the way in which psychoanalysts must speak about psychosis in the twenty-first century. There are veils that will have to be drawn back, and in which dialogues with parent associations and with other users of the category of psychosis will form part of a general conversation on psychosis, which psychoanalysis must help facilitate in a more "ordinary" way in this century before us.

Translated from the French by Adrian Price
Footnotes established by the translator