

THE BODY IN THE TEACHING OF JACQUES LACAN

Colette Soler

Translated by Lindsay Watson

It has been known right from the start that the unconscious is not without having some bearing on the body. What I mean is, it has been known since the beginning of Freud's work. It has been known since the first deciphering of hysterical symptoms. It has been known as well through the Freudian discovery of the generally traumatic nature of sexuality. And thus with the discovery of what has to be called a shortcoming in the sexual instinct in man, I mean the genus, in those whom Lacan calls *parlêtres*, speaking beings; a shortcoming in the sexual instinct which is supplemented by the Oedipus in the Freudian doctrine. It has been known also, this bearing of the unconscious on the body, since the discovery of what Freud termed "beyond the pleasure principle", that is to say, that something which presents itself from time to time as an injurious jouissance. So, right away, it was known that the unconscious was not without a relation to the body.

But it has to be said that psychoanalysis has not brought much in the way of knowledge about the biological body. Lacan observed this. There is a whole paragraph in his text devoted to feminine sexuality to say that psychoanalysis does not, strictly speaking, facilitate any access to "new acquisitions in physiology, the facts about chromosomal sex ... and its genetic correlatives, its distinction from hormonal sex, their quota in anatomical determination."¹

It also has to be said that psychoanalysis did not reply to Tiresias' question. Furthermore, as Lacan observed on one occasion, it has not even been able to enrich eroticism with one single new perversion. Well, obviously, between these two statements: the bearing of the unconscious on the body, and the little that psychoanalysis has brought to that which we imagine to be most bodily about the body, that is to say, its biological functioning, one might well ask, what does psychoanalysis do with the body? It has become a very fashionable question, though it is not really psychoanalysis that has made it so. It has become fashionable through the proliferation of what are known as physical therapies [body techniques]. We could draw up a list of them. It is quite clear that I probably only know of a quarter of these kind of therapies. In any case, think of yoga, of all the various forms of gymnastics, of the primal scream, and all the others; the techniques are multiplying. Well, I will open my report with an affirmation which, I hope, will become somewhat clearer throughout the paper. I will state first of all that I think it can be easily demonstrated that all physical therapies are techniques of the signifier. And, more precisely, that those which are labelled "physical therapies" are therapies of the master signifier. These are techniques whose total essence, I would say, is to make you get in step. That is an image, of course. On the whole, the aim is to make the body fit into an order. Perhaps it could be said that psychoanalysis is in a certain sense a physical therapy; you will see what I mean by this. It's an affirmation that needs to be justified. Psychoanalysis is a physical therapy. And in every case, it is not one that makes you get in step. I've started by throwing that at you. Now I'll try to comment on it.

¹ J. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 726.

Let me put forward a first proposition: that the body is a reality. If, when you hear this proposition, you think that it means that the body is tangible, that it is more tangible than the evanescence of the word which runs around without catching on to anything, I will tell you right away that it doesn't mean that. To say that the body is a reality, means that the body is not primary. It means that one is not born with a body. In other words, I am saying that it is some reality, but in the sense that reality, since Freud, has a subordinate status: it is something which is constructed, which is secondary.

In any case, it means that since I am proposing to talk to you about the body in the teaching of Lacan, we will certainly find that there is a great split on the matter in psychoanalysis. There is a major split between the orientation of Lacan's teaching, and that of the dominant current in the IPA, which is Ego Psychology. It has to be said that we never consider that the body is the nervous system. Of course, there is a nervous system. Who could argue with that? The nervous system is even put to use. But that is not how the body, as we approach it, is defined.

The fundamental postulate of Ego Psychology, and I am remarking on it solely to show the great divide, the great axis that crosses psychoanalysis, is that there are two innate characteristics on the side of the body. On the one hand, what they call the apparatuses, which one could call the apparatuses of reality, one of which, for example, is intelligence. They have read Freud's system perception-consciousness, saying to themselves that he was thereby defining something that came from the body, and which would be a sort of inborn instrument, even though it might be capable of learning, but inborn nonetheless, an instrument for apprehending reality, the *Innenwelt*. So, on the one hand, the idea that the apparatuses of the real are innate and on the other, the idea that, fundamentally, the developmental stages of the body have to do with the body, and with nothing else. Well, leaving aside Hartmann, Lowenstein, or even Kris, let us take an author who comes from this current, such as Margaret Mahler, whom I will refer to again later. Margaret Mahler tells it to you absolutely black on white: there are two innate characteristics which come from the body, and which no-one can influence. In order to help understand them, it is not psychoanalysis that is called upon, but Piaget.

What is more, there is a third register which, itself, would depend on psychoanalysis, and which is that of the object relation. Indeed, to deal with things in that way, I would say, is to take the body out of the game, to a large extent. I will leave this orientation aside.

Instead, I will come back to this: that reality is not a primary given, it is already, I will use this term, a superstructure; that is to say that the relations which define the signifying structure are already inscribed in it, inhabit it, as Lacan says. That means that there is a beyond of reality. This theme of a beyond, as you know, is the title of an article by Lacan called "Beyond the reality principle".² He did not take it very far. He said so himself when he presented that selection of his writings. But he took up the theme much later in an article in Scilicet 1, which is called, "La psychanalyse dans ses rapports à la réalité" [Psychoanalysis and its relations to reality], at the French Institute in Milan.³ In this article, he takes up the expression of "beyond the reality principle" to say that what is beyond the reality principle is science. Science,

² J. Lacan, "Au-delà du principe de la réalité", *Écrits*, French edition, pp. 73-92.

³ 18.12.1968, pp. 51-59.

as such, aims at the real. Thus, since I have introduced the term “reality”, I now introduce that which is its counterweight, if I can put it that way, in Lacan, which is that of the “real”. He defines it, as you know, on the basis of the impossible; that is to say, on the basis of a signifying impasse, more precisely, an impasse of formalisation.

The question for us now is to know if, beyond the body, taken from the start as something of reality, psychoanalysis gives access to something of the body that would be real. That is the question I would like to ask. As I said just now, one is not born with a body. In other words, the body is not primary. The living being is not the body. Lacan himself went into that in some depth. There is a distinction to be made between the organism, the living being, on the one hand, and that which, on the other hand, is called the body.

That is a constant in Lacan’s teaching. Obviously, you know that when you read an author like Lacan, whose teaching spanned 25 years, - a teaching which is always shifting, you can point up either those elements that are constant, or, on the contrary, those which evolved, which changed, or both at once. Here, I am pointing up a constant.

The idea that the living being is not sufficient to make a body, that is a constant, although there are some differences in relation to this constant. In a first phase, as Michael Elias reminded us at the opening [of this conference], it was via the image that Lacan approached the problem of the body. That period of his teaching is what Lacan refers to as “my antecedents”: that is to say, he considers that, properly speaking, it preceded his teaching. Indeed, during this period which preceded the Rome Discourse,⁴ he considers that in order to make a body you need a living organism plus an image. In other words, it was to the unity of that image that he attributed the feeling of the unity of the body - because that is the phenomenon, such a feeling of the unity of the body. At that time, he considered that that unity came from a visual gestalt. It came from the apprehension by the subject of the unity of his form in the mirror. In other words, at that time he opposed the unity and the uniqueness of the image to what there would be of the organism if it was left to itself, which at that time he characterised by its prematurity. He evoked there the state of malaise, the state of dehiscence of the organism, insofar as it is not co-ordinated with this image which allows it to take itself as a whole, delivers it from its fragmentation, which is primary in relation to the image.

We find, then, the opposition of an organism discordant in itself, non-unified, fragmented, with a body which is the organism unified by the image. It has to be said, indeed, that Lacan did not just leave it there, because, from the moment when he wrote “Function and field of speech and language”, he introduced a great principle of deciphering which unifies the work of Freud, which consisted in recognising in the work of the formations of the unconscious, the work of signifying mechanisms. It has to be said, too, that from that moment on, he made a U-turn in his description, and considered that it was the signifier that introduced discourse into the organism. The common point between the two periods is that, in any case, there is a discord. There is a discordance. And in the second period Lacan came, on the contrary, to think that the organism, let us say the animal organism, of itself has at its command a unity. It

⁴ J. Lacan, “Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis”, Report to the Rome Congress... 1953, *Écrits*, English edition, pp. 30-113.

is a cohesion. And it loses this cohesion because of the signifier. If you take the seminar Encore (you know how late it appeared in the teaching of Lacan), you will find the following: Speaking of the body he says: “the important thing is that it all sticks together sufficiently for the body to subsist, unless there is an accident as one might say, whether external or internal. Which means that the body is taken to be what it presents itself as being: a closed body.”⁵

And certainly, it is important to recognise that there is a cohesion of the organism. However, the point is that this cohesion does not suffice to give a body. In order for the organic individuality to become a body, Lacan says that it is necessary for the signifier to introduce the One. And he gives as proof his reference to the polyp. It's such a little thing, he says, this living individual which is the basis of the living being, that zoology, when it looks for the individual at the level of the polyp, can no longer find individualisation. Put another way, there is a split at the level of the organism itself, between the living being and the individuated organism. It has to be added moreover, that in the human species, this organic individual has to have the addition of the signifier that makes him One.

Nonetheless, we should turn our attention to observable things. Let us take the following phenomenon. Let us ask ourselves what is the body of those ill people called schizophrenics. There, however, we can grasp the splitting when, for example, a schizophrenic tells us that his head is a metre above his trunk. I am giving an example that I heard. One could take a hundred others. This schizophrenic tells you that; it does not stop her organism retaining its unity, does it? Her head is not floating around for us. So this head which is floating around one metre above her trunk, is at the level of an image. Or at the level of the signifier. The two possibilities open up. It remains undecided as to whether for her it is a sensation, which would indicate to us that it is what we call her image that is affected, or whether it is not a sensation at all, but simply words: “a floating head”, but at the level of what is said. Well, you can see clearly there, in this very simple example, the disjunction between the organism, the image of the body, and the body in so far as it is caught up in the signifier, in so far as it is, rather, spoken. Along the same lines, let me give you another, though different example. Let us speak about hysterical somatisations, taking the case of the hysteric with a paralysed arm. Her body image is not affected, but, on the contrary, it is her organism that is affected in reality. And that is precisely why physicians rack their brains about it. There is indeed a paralysis, isn't there? It is by no means the same thing as the schizophrenic who tells you her head is floating around - a metre above her trunk. For physicians, the head is right there, in its place. Whereas for the hysteric who has a paralysed arm, her mirror image remains intact, but, in contrast, two things are affected: the organism, on the one hand, and on the other, the body in so far as it is spoken. Well, those were two examples to help you feel these splits that are to be found in the phenomenon.

Now, the true body, the primary body, says Lacan, is language; that is, what he calls the body of the symbolic. It is a perfectly correct usage of the word “body”. You can check it for yourselves in the dictionary. The symbolic is a body in so far as it is a system of internal relations. That is why psychoanalysis is not an idealism. It's because the Symbolic is in a certain way a body, having materiality, that there is – as

⁵ J. Lacan, Seminar XX, Encore, 1972-1973, p. 100.

Lacan points out explicitly in the Seminar on the Four Discourses,⁶ - what he calls the objectivity of the subject which means that, precisely, psychoanalysis retains a link with science.

This idea that language is body had already been put forward by him in the “Rome Report”. He said at that time: language is [a] body, “a subtle body, for sure, but a body nonetheless.”⁷ After all, it is an idea with an illustrious pedigree - there are many others, some much earlier in time - but one predecessor whom it is amusing to recall, since Lacan himself recalled it on occasion, is Stalin. At the time, Marxists were still debating where they could situate the borderline between what they termed infrastructure and superstructure, the principal term for them obviously being infrastructure. Well, Stalin took up a position, in a debate in which the question was, where could language be positioned? saying that language was not a superstructure. Curious. In any case, it is true that this is Lacan’s fundamental thesis: language is not a superstructure. Language is [a] body, and [a] body which gives body, what is more. In “Radiophonie” there is an entire page devoted to this question of the body, and the idea is very simple.⁸ At least, it has to be said in order for it to be found simple. The idea is that it is “the body of the symbolic”, an incorporeal body, he points out, which by embodying itself, gives you a body (“The first body makes the second by embodying itself”).⁹ In other words, this body which you call your own, is bestowed upon you by language. After all, this thesis of Lacan’s is only a particular case of a far more general thesis, namely that there is no fact unless it is said. A fact is something that is said. So let us say that the body is only a fact if it is said. It is a fact, that body of yours, because you say it: it is attributed to you in the singular.

But still, there are a few remarks we need to make on this point, aren’t there? Lacan said it one day: the animal does not have a body. The animal is an organism. There is a nuance here. And that which justifies us in saying “I have a body” - to take our body as an attribute instead of taking it as our very being - is, if I may put it that way, that we, as subjects, can do without it. As subjects of the signifier, we are disjunct from the body, as you can see from the fact that the subject is the one who is spoken about before he speaks. The subject, indeed, is there, in speech, before he has a body, before he is born, to put it bluntly. And he is still there, even when he no longer has a body, that is to say, after he is dead. So the duration of the subject, in so far as it is carried by the signifier, outlasts the duration of the body. It is because language assures us of this margin that Lacan calls this the margin beyond life, to be taken here as meaning the life of the living body. It is because language assures you of the beyond, - which is anticipation of the subject before his body is born, and which is the memory which remains when he is buried - that the body is disjunct from the subject. Of course, if we started again, we could have a lot of fun talking about ghosts, for example. We could also enjoy ourselves - though there might be far less to laugh about - talking about the immortality of the soul. Anyway, there are plenty of topics we could talk about, and which can only be thought about once we have established that the signifier carries something of being independent of the body. That much is clear.

⁶ J. Lacan, Séminaire XVII, *L’Envers de la psychanalyse*, 1969-1970.

⁷ J. Lacan, “Function and field of speech and language”, *Écrits*, p. 301, French edition.

⁸ J. Lacan, “Radiophonie”, *Scilicet* 2/3, pp. 60-62.

⁹ J. Lacan, “Radiophonie”, *op cit*, p. 613.

So language attributes this body to you, and then gives it to you, by unifying it for you. The first effect of this on the body says Lacan, is to mortify it. Where the signifier is concerned, in fact, it doesn't matter that much whether it is alive or dead. That is precisely what burial shows us. Fundamentally, burial is a way of refusing to acknowledge that the body, which is born through the signifier, if I may put it that way, becomes carrion, that the body, like all flesh, ends up disintegrating. Well, basically, the signifier, burial, which is obviously a strictly signifying practice, burial is a way of embalming the body, it is a way of ensuring its survival, having once brought it to life. The only thing is, it survives without that variable - whether it is alive or dead - being taken into account. And fundamentally, the signifier, it has to be said, is like Schreber's God. Schreber's God did not know the living, nor does the signifier. Lacan frequently evoked the effect of devitalisation. He evokes, as a sign of this devitalisation of the body by the signifier, the fact that, for example, the Ancients considered that the Universe of celestial spheres was an image of the body, was a sort of macro-body. Indeed, it is striking that, in order to imagine, to image the body, these Ancients went looking for it in the inanimate world. We could also evoke Descartes here, who, with his Cogito, was, if we can use such a term, the promoter of the subject. Well, Descartes, essentially, shows one thing: namely, that life is unthinkable. The element of the life of the body is unthinkable and, in thought, what can take up a position is nothing but extended substance. The opposition between thinking substance and extended substance in Descartes is, after all, a manifestation of the animation of the body escaping the signifier. It has to be said that this body, in a certain way, is already dead, like the subject, but differently. The first effect of the signifier is thus to negativise the living. The living being can only enter into the signifier at its cost, the cost of life or death.

However, moving on to another theme, it is true that the body prepares itself to receive the mark of the signifier, to be a locus of inscription, from whence it will be able to take itself into account. These bodies will be able to take themselves into account. The model for which is, in essence, the branding of sheep. The branding of sheep is the mark of belonging. If we had more time, I would have liked to go further into this question of branding, the different ways in which the mark, the marks, make their mark on the body, in order to inscribe there, always, it seems to me, a double connotation. On the one hand, of belonging, belonging to a set; and on the other hand, an erotic quality. And there is a whole range of phenomena to think about. Just think of the things Lacan evokes, such as tattoos, tattoos that both identify you and make of you an erotic object - in some societies, anyway. And take phenomena like circumcision. It has become vulgarised these days, if I can say so. But the discovery that in certain societies they still practice female circumcision, stirs up a bit of an outcry among the occidentals. It certainly should give us something to think about, this fact of inscribing a trace on the body in order to transform it into an erotic object. We could also think of scars, and what is particularly amusing, their distribution between the sexes. If you think about women's scars, it is by choice their bellies that are affected by scarring. The caesarean is just that: a scar that can be talked about. Then there will be the blows, received by a masochist, which will leave their traces. It has to be said that men's scars are more likely to be the scars of battle - what is left over to them of their warlike feats. In the same order of ideas, we should think about fashion, which is a mark which is obviously less inscribed in the flesh, and thus more revocable, but which nonetheless is essentially a way of giving yourself a form. And then we could talk about all the forms of gymnastics and also about cosmetic surgery - [*esthétique*, "aesthetic" in French], which not only gives you a new face but, as you know, if necessary, can give you new genitals, take your penis away, or graft one on if you don't have one already.

Let us say that we are in a universe where, obviously, if we wanted to amuse ourselves by exploring these phenomena of the marking of the body, we would find ourselves faced with too much to choose from. I won't dwell on this further. I mention it only because the body which the symbolic attributes to you, is also marked by it. That is what Lacan formulates in different ways when he says, "the body makes the bed of the other."¹⁰

That's a nice way of putting it. And then he speaks of the body as a gaming table. He also says: the body intervenes as a third term, between knowledge - that is, unconscious knowledge - and jouissance, the jouissance of the living being. The effect of this intervention - this is what Lacan says - is fragmentation. We are used to considering fragmentation from its negative side, that is, to consider that the fragmented body is a suffering body. That is only one aspect of the matter, because fragmentation itself also means that it is language which attributes your organs to you. Put another way, it means that the body functions as a fragmented body. In "L'Etourdit", Lacan insists on the fact that it is because the body inhabits language that it has organs.¹¹

In the organism and in the global metabolism of an organism, language isolates organs and gives them their functions. One may sometimes even be aware of this in childhood. For example, I have a memory like this: when one is a child, and ill, and the adult asks you questions to find out, "What's wrong with you?", "Do you feel sick?", "Does your liver hurt?", "Does your stomach hurt?" How can the child from the start reply to such a question, given that the child may be able to localise a stomach on the surface, but as for the liver and the heart, what are they for a child coming into language? It is only once he has truly succeeded in framing this language and slipping into it, that he will be able to reply, "I feel sick." [Literally, "My heart hurts."] And it happens that for a long time he gets confused. So this fragmentation, which is taken to be a vexatious fragmentation of the image, is correlative to the functional working of the signifying body. You can see the corollary of this, precisely Freud's thesis that Lacan denies the truth of: that is, "anatomy is destiny". (S. Freud, "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex"). He says this, obviously, when speaking of the anatomy that differentiates the sexes: man or woman.

It is Freud's thesis, but it is not Lacan's. For Lacan, anatomy is not destiny. Destiny is discourse. This is so true that, in effect, Lacan's entire re-working of the Oedipus, in particular in "L'Etourdit", is to say that sex is not anatomical. He is saying that man or woman is an affair of the subject and it depends on the way in which each individual inscribes him/herself within the phallic function. And it has to be said that the increase, not only of those we call transsexuals but, correlatively, of surgical procedures for transsexuals, which consist of operating on them, I would say, really, makes of this Lacanian thesis, which, at the outset may seem startling, a phenomenon. The choice of one's sex is not a function of anatomy. Obviously, that leaves open the question of what role anatomy does play.

¹⁰ J. Lacan, "De la psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité", *Scilicet* 1, p. 58: "*Tiers 'au-delà' dans ses rapports à la jouissance et au savoir, le corps fait le lit de l'autre par l'opération du signifiant.*" "The third 'beyond' in its relations to jouissance and to knowledge, the body makes the bed of the other via the operation of the signifier." See also: J. Lacan, "De l'Un-en-moins, le lit est fait l'intrusion qui avance de l'extrusion: c'est le signifiant même." "Radiophonie", *Scilicet* 2/3, p. 61.

¹¹ J. Lacan, "L'Etourdit", *Scilicet* 4, pp. 5-51; see particularly p. 12 and p. 30.

So this is the point we have reached for the time being: the spoken body, which the signifier attributes to you, is a devitalised body, a body which functions in the fragmentation that signifies. We have not yet got to the essential point, which I am going to pause on, and which is highly complex; I am not sure I will be able to unfold it in all its complexity. The essential point, the hub of the effect of the signifier on the body, is that the signifier - I mean the unconscious signifier - affects the body. The signifier affects the body, and more precisely, affects its *jouissance*. I would now like to propose to you, for a start, a few formulae which are paradoxical and which may, at the beginning, be rather difficult to understand.

First of all, affect - it is not to be taken for granted that affect can be put on the side of the body. We all live with the inverse conviction, that is to say that it is the subject who is affected. If necessary, we can say "in his/her body", particularly if one is hysterical. One believes that one suffers from one's body. Lacan completely displaces these formulae in the later years, especially in "On psychoanalysis and its relations to reality", "Radiophonie", Télévision, and L'Etourdit. So, here are the formulae. I will give them to you first and then I am going to try to explain them just a little. First of all, "The subject is happy". That's in Télévision.¹² So there is an inversion of the conviction, "The subject does not suffer". He is happy, whatever happens. On the other hand - is it correlative? - "(Unconscious) knowledge affects". Now, that does not surprise us. What is surprising is that he adds, "affects the body". Let me refer you to a useful text entitled "Ou pire", which dates from the year when he was giving a seminar called Ou pire, in which Lacan developed, very didactically, the statement that unconscious knowledge affects, without any doubt. "But what? That is the question where people make mistakes. Not my subject, nor the soul, either... Me, I say that knowledge affects the body of the being who only makes himself a being of speech, in fragmenting his *jouissance*..."¹³ Fine! So, we need to understand what these two propositions mean. I have a couple more, one of which can be found in the Seminar Encore. Lacan says: "in order to *jouir*, there has to be a body."¹⁴ But then there are two other propositions which immediately become problematic: "the body is the desert of *jouissance*", and "*jouissance* is outside the body".¹⁵ I am putting these formulae forward, bringing them together, because you can see that they show that after all there is some deciphering to do, if we want to find our way around a bit...

Let me read you a short passage where Lacan, basically, summarises his thesis, or as he said: "I go over it again...". His starting point is structure, and he says that, in defining it, this structure which is thus signifying, "in defining it according to relations articulated by their order, and such that, in taking part in it, one can only do so at one's own expense."¹⁶ Thus the first affirmation: the living being only enters into language at his own expense. "Expense of life or of death." That is what I attempted to comment on in terms of a mortification. "Expense of life instead of death, is secondary; expense [expenditure] of *jouissance*, that is what is primary. Whence the necessity of the *plus-de-jouir* in order for the machine to turn."¹⁷ As to the passage in "Psychoanalysis and its relations with reality", he defines "what it is about for everyone, where the body is concerned, that it should be precisely this desert of

¹² J. Lacan, Télévision, Paris, Le Seuil, 1974, p. 40.

¹³ J. Lacan, "Ou pire", Scilicet 5, p. 8.

¹⁴ J. Lacan, Encore, p. 26 ["a body is there to be enjoyed"].

¹⁵ J. Lacan: "On psychoanalysis and its relations with reality", Scilicet 1, p. 58.

¹⁶ J. Lacan: "Radiophonie", Scilicet 2/3, p. 86.

¹⁷ J. Lacan: "Radiophonie", Scilicet 2/3, p. 86.

jouissance.”¹⁸ Well, how are we to understand that? What is this expenditure of jouissance, suffered by the body in virtue of the fact that we speak?

Before attempting to embark on this question, which will also make a logical break, if I may put it that way, I would like to make a few comments on this term jouissance which, clearly, is not a Freudian term. This term jouissance has to be situated in relation to the term pleasure, and in opposition to it. In any case, it is the use Lacan makes of it, which is not absolutely obvious in language, because in language, after all, it is a term that can be pulled on to the side of pleasure, and in particular, I would say, concerning what is called sexual jouissance, one can also speak of sexual pleasure. Lacan completely split the term jouissance from all its associations in the register of pleasure. Pleasure in Freud is always connoted by an agreeable sensation and in his work is correlated with the idea of a minimal level of excitation. Pleasure is the agreeable feeling of not too much excitation.

That is why Lacan commented on this, by saying that the Freudian pleasure principle consists in doing fuck all or the least possible, which for him is not really a value. On the contrary, it seems to him to be perfectly opposed to what he considers relevant to the analytic ethic. The analytic ethic is not an ethic of pleasure. This pleasure principle would mean wanting one's good, which for the living being means wanting one's good in the sense of well-being, as Lacan says in “Kant with Sade”, or the unbroken agreement between the creature and its life.¹⁹

Obviously, what Freud has let out of the bag is precisely the inverse of that; it is that one can be well in the midst of evil, to take up again the formula of “Kant with Sade”²⁰ - that is, basically, that there is another satisfaction than that given by equilibrium, by homeostasis.²¹ The beyond of the pleasure principle, which Freud placed under this death drive, phenomena like repetition, the repetition of trauma, masochism, the negative therapeutic reaction, that is to say, so many phenomena where it seems that one is confronted with what can only be described as a determination by the subject to suffer; constancy and determination.

This term “death drive”, which appears to be so unthinkable, and which is, indeed, a contradiction in terms, was split by Lacan into two components. On the one hand, there is the signifying component: the idea is that the signifier assures the subject of an image beyond life, thus giving a death which can be thought, can be anticipated, which means that one could indeed speak of a death drive. On the other hand, within the death drive he places jouissance, a deleterious jouissance, harmful to the ends of the homeostasis of pleasure. On that subject, there are many texts by Lacan in which he evokes, for example, what he calls “what it entails in the way of atrocious promises”. It has always made me laugh, this “what the approach of jouissance entails of atrocious promises”. It is the idea that jouissance is not desirable. Jouissance is not what desire aims at. Quite the contrary. Lacan concerned himself with situating the various barriers to jouissance. What creates barriers to jouissance, in Lacan's teaching, is in part pleasure. Pleasure is what he calls: the incoherent binding of life, that is to say, in fact, the animal's reaction in fleeing from pain, quite stupidly, as a barrier to jouissance, which basically would arise there where pleasure

¹⁸ J. Lacan: “De la psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité”, Scilicet 1, p. 58.

¹⁹ J. Lacan, “Kant avec Sade”, Écrits, p. 766.

²⁰ In Sade's own words “Quel paradis dans cet enfer” [ed.]

²¹ J. Lacan, “Kant avec Sade”, Écrits, p. 766.

ends, and most eminently in the form of pain.

Yet this first barrier, which is a natural one, he says, fundamentally comes to be relayed for humans through a prohibition, by means of the law.²² In other words, the forbidden, which founds desire, in Lacan, is what sets up a barrier to *jouissance*. Ah! Obviously, that cannot be grasped unless you hold on to the vital principle that, for Lacan, desire, in essence, is to be unsatisfied, that is to say, desire has no object which responds to its aspiration. So there we have the first split: pleasure, desire and *jouissance*.

If we try to get a more precise idea, a more positive one, of *jouissance*, what do we find in Lacan's teaching? There are, I would say, allusions, things he says in passing. There is first of all what we could call humanity's dream regarding animal *jouissance*; that is to say, the *jouissance* the animal can be supposed to have in so far as it, the animal, is not under the disharmonious influence of the signifier, it devotes itself to securing the *jouissance* of its body, in the banal sense of the term. One could reflect, for example, on the elucubrations that can be constructed on the *jouissance* of the cat. One might say that for the dog - well, we speak of a dog's life. There is another way one can oppose the dog to the cat. Lacan goes as far as dreaming of the lily of the fields. Does the plant have *jouissance*? How could one imagine the *jouissance* of the plant? It has to be said that Freud, too, dreamed of a *jouissance* that would not be encroached upon by the signifier. Just look at the passage in his text "On Narcissism, an introduction", the short and very amusing passage where he sets up a series: the child, the cat and the woman, or rather certain types of women, not woman in general. He says that when you look at these types of beings, the child, for example, the tiny infant which has not even started to lisp, falling asleep with rosy cheeks after suckling, it is really the very image of the acme of beatitude to which man can aspire, appearing before us. It makes us dream, hearing that coming from Freud. So this little baby, or the cat in its haughty indifference, or even the woman, in the same supposed haughty indifference, are nonetheless images of beings who are supposed to repose in a closed *jouissance*, a *jouissance* to which the other, anything that constitutes the external other, does not have access. And, indeed, as Lacan says, the astonishing thing is that "one gets the idea of beatitude".²³ The strange thing is that the subject who is happy has an idea of beatitude, and believes he is separated from it. Well, that's *jouissance* when you dream of it.

As far as the one which is not dreamt, however, Lacan points out a little series. He says that *jouissance* goes from tickling to grilling. This was at the time when there were quite a few people who were getting inflamed, in the true sense of the word. Today one could say that it goes from tickling to the suicide bomber. *Jouissance*, thus, is caught between on one end what Lacan would call the masochistic affectations, and at the other end: the horrors of war. It is true, too, that we are living in an epoch in which there is an extraordinary split in this respect in the world between the countries of homeostasis and those of *jouissance*. We find ourselves in the lands of homeostasis. These are lands in which people say it won't last, but anyway it's very cosy, our existence. It is so cosy that when you are involved with children and education, you have only one question in your head: these poor little things, what is going to traumatise them? And it's so cosy that you fear that trauma

²² cf. J. Lacan, "Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious", *Écrits*, p. 821, French edition.

²³ J. Lacan, *Télévision*, p. 40.

will arise with every step they take, that it is no longer possible to bear anything; isn't that the case? We are involved in a fantastic destabilisation in this respect, through clinging on to pleasure. And then there are countries where everything is blowing up all over the place. It is a huge split, for sure; there's work to be done in exploring its nuances. There are certainly countries where one does not have the impression of homeostasis, that is the least that can be said; countries where it is rather a case of the unleashing of the most extreme forms of *jouissance*. Those were a few reflections to give a frame of reference for the way Lacan uses the term *jouissance*.

I would now like to try to throw some light on how we can understand this idea that the body is submitted to an expenditure of *jouissance* because it is caught up in the signifier. Such an expenditure that it makes of it a desert of *jouissance*, in so far as *jouissance* empties out the body of the speaking being. There are a few texts where Lacan gives us some landmarks, and particularly in the text called "Psychoanalysis and its relation to reality", where we find the expression "desert of *jouissance*".²⁴ He introduces his reflection via a reference to an early text of Freud's, a text from the very beginning of Freud's teaching, his "Outline for a scientific psychology".²⁵ In this text, Freud affirms that what rules psychic life is the pleasure principle. But to the pleasure principle he adds something which causes pleasure to change meaning completely. What he adds to the pleasure principle is his idea of the trace, which he describes to us as traces in the psychic apparatuses. Lacan, in the traces that Freud tried to clarify, sees, fundamentally, a Freudian way of having perceived the signifying structure, the structure of the signifier. In fact, between what Freud calls the experience of satisfaction and what he calls hallucinatory satisfaction, what happens? The experience of satisfaction, clearly, is a purely mythical experience. It is precisely the idea of a primary satisfaction on a body that would not yet be marked, a body that would be the slab of virgin wax. There we really have an image of the body outside signification, a new body. Freud's idea was that this first experience of satisfaction leaves an inscription, leaves a trace, leaves traces, and his entire work was to study this multiplicity of traces: how they are ordered, how they are articulated.

It leaves traces in return for which satisfaction from then on will never again be obtained except on the basis of these traces, in other words, in hallucinatory fashion. What Freud describes to us there is, all the same, a psychic mechanism famously cut off from reality, a psychic mechanism which only enjoys the trace, and that alone. In any case, he introduces there the idea that for the human being, *jouissance* is always marked by the index of a loss. That means that dissatisfaction is the primary and fundamental component of a psychic mechanism. It is Freud who says this, in every possible way, not Lacan. It's the idea that this myth of a primary experience of satisfaction is there as a foil for the idea that all satisfactions that can ever arise are marked by a loss in relation to the supposed primary and complete satisfaction. This is correlated with the idea that whatever is going to be invested is a trace, a sign, a trait, Freud says; and from there Lacan will deduce his unary trait [*trait unaire*], that is to say, there is nothing other than the signifier of an experience of *jouissance*. But also that, once the signifier is there, *jouissance* - well, I won't say it is no longer there, but in any case it is no longer there so completely. Now, if you like, the Freudian reference to this idea of the body as emptied of *jouissance* is a reference to

²⁴ J. Lacan, "De la psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité", *Scilicet* 1, p. 58.

²⁵ S. Freud, "Outline for a scientific psychology", 1895, *The birth of psychoanalysis*, Paris, PUP, 1969, p. 307.

repetition. In the “Outline for a scientific psychology”, it was nonetheless that which was already anticipated. It is the reference to the idea that the human being does nothing but reproduce signs, traits. But that does not mean that, in so doing, it attains what Lacan would call the thing, the thing precisely to designate both that which is not marked by a signifier and that which is undone in some way by the signifier. In other words, Lacan’s thesis that the signifier consumes the loss of the thing, is a thesis that has very precise Freudian references. It is not a Lacanian invention. It is the idea that the human is a being thirsting after an impossible first time, and between the subject and the thing, it’s like the sun and the moon, they never meet. So you see that after all, these Freudian schema’s of a first lost time, are very close to what Lacan takes up later, for example, in a text like “The direction of the treatment”, where he defines the unconscious as the place of “the first ideal marks in which the drives are constituted as repressed, in the substitution of the signifier for needs.”²⁶ Thus it has to be said that the primary effect of the signifier is the repression or the annulment of the thing where we suppose full jouissance to be. That means, too, that the condition for libido, what Freud called libido, is a certain loss.

At this juncture I would like to say a few words about libido. There are a few pages which we need to look at closely concerning the libido, which can be found in “The position of the unconscious”.²⁷ Here Lacan conjoins the notion of the libido with what he will later call, even though the term does not appear in this text, the desertification of the body by jouissance. In this text, as you know, he posits the idea that the libido is an organ, an instrument, at the same time as it is very close to that which could be a description of an object relation. When Freud introduced the idea of the libido, it was to account for that movement, there is no other term for it, which pushes the human being towards another, towards another that we are going to call here the object. The libido is what goes looking for a part of itself outside itself in some fashion, which assures you of an extension of yourself outside of yourself. Lacan’s idea is that this extension is only possible on the basis of a prior subtraction, on the basis of something that has been removed. He takes that at two levels in this text. He takes it even at the level of the animal, since he does not entirely take exception to the idea of an animal libido. At the level of the animal, he speaks of the libido in so far as it marks out the limits of the territory and he refers it to the loss that the living being is subject to in virtue of being sexed.²⁸

There we find all of Lacan’s elucidations on the fact that sexed reproduction is correlative with the death of the individual. Which is not the case, for example, at the level of the polyp. Obviously, what interests us here is not so much the level of the animal, but of man. Lacan takes up the myth of Aristophanes who, in order to give an account of the libidinal movement of love, had invented this myth of the sphere which had been divided in two, which at once drove each half to seek for the other half. Lacan takes up this myth with what he calls the myth of the lamella, to introduce the idea that it is from the basis of a subtraction that there is a libido. He tells us in the text just what this subtraction is but in such an involved way that it really needs to be deciphered. He puts it in two ways. It seems to me that the subtraction in question is that of castration. Look at the text; he takes the example of the breast to say that

²⁶ J. Lacan, “The direction of the treatment”, *Écrits*, p. 256, English edition.

²⁷ J. Lacan, “La position de l’inconscient”, *Écrits*, p. 848, Fr. ed.

²⁸ J. Lacan, “Position of the unconscious”, *Écrits*, pp. 847-848.

fundamentally, what psychoanalysis has apprehended in the breast has nothing to do with any relation whatsoever to the sensoriality of the mother's body: its warmth, its smell, its presence and what you will. The breast, as it comes into play in the weaning complex, is a breast that belongs to the infant, it's a breast that isn't the mother's, it's a breast in which the cut, he says, passes between the mother's body and the infant's body. In other words, it is a prehensile breast. It's a breast that is going to hook the mother.

Lacan's idea is that, in the weaning complex, it is not the mother that the child loses, but a part of himself, a part that belongs to him. Where excrement is concerned, that is obvious, of course. What is it that allows him to say this? He tells us that the breast prefigures castration. There is a little note at the end of "Position of the unconscious" where he points out that everything he has said in the text on the partial object in its four occurrences, the breast, faeces, the voice, the gaze, can only become intelligible if it is referred to the phallic object. This is exactly what he says: "We have not been able to extend (these considerations on the object) up to this point which constitutes its crucial interest, that is to say the object (-phi) as 'cause' of the castration complex."²⁹ In other words, this loss, this subtraction which founds the libido as a vector towards the object is identified with the subtraction of castration (-phi). It is, besides, what he expounds in the article that follows it, called "Du Trieb de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste".³⁰ Now, if that is how we are to take things, we ought here to consider the question of the psychoses. I will come back to that shortly, because I would like to take the current question one step further, by asking: what is left over in this negativisation of jouissance? For something is left over. Lacan says that this jouissance is going to be redistributed outside the body. For example, in ancient burials, where objects, which are placed next to the dead, enumerate jouissance in its extra-corporeal form. In other words, what subsists of jouissance is precisely the jouissance of the drive, it is what is at play in the drive. And in what sense is it outside the body? It is outside the body precisely because the signifying cut, the inscription of signifiers which operates by way of the demand of the other, will localise jouissance around the anatomical rims and in connection with the object which corresponds to it, but an object which is outside the body. Put another way, it should be borne in mind that, in the drive, there are two aspects, which were not very prominent in "Subversion of the subject", but which Lacan highlighted more in "Position of the unconscious". There is the signifying aspect of the drive, in so far as it inscribes a "unary trait", but there is also the fact that it concerns an object, an object that Lacan will end up calling surplus jouissance, *plus-de-jouir*.

Moreover, if you take the expression "representative of the representation" that Lacan took up again from Freud, you will find these two aspects, since, according to the case, it is either a signifier or the object small *a*. What I am saying is that it is this object that he ended up calling *plus-du-jouir*, on the model of Marx's "surplus value". But, as you can see, it corresponds to the logic of the proceedings: in that this "plus" corresponds to the "minus" which came before it. This is because there was, first of all, through the effect of the signifier, a loss, a subtraction; that there is something or other that is going to be restored, a sort of compensation. That is what he says in "Radiophonie", the text I read just now, whence comes the necessity for the "surplus jouissance" in order for the machine to work.³¹ This expression "surplus jouissance"

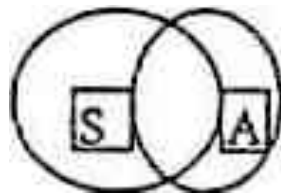
²⁹ J. Lacan, "The position of the unconscious", *Écrits*, p. 850, note of 1966.

³⁰ J. Lacan, "Du Trieb de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste", op. cit, pp. 851-854.

³¹ cf. J. Lacan, "Radiophonie", *Scilicet 2/3*, pp. 61-62.

is a bit ambiguous because the status of the object in Lacan's teaching is complicated. At the same time, it is a lost object, it is an object that cannot be re-appropriated, and thus it is an object that is part of a series (--), but at the same time, it is "re-positivised" in some sense, in so far as it restores a certain coefficient of *jouissance*.

The body is affected, indeed, in the form of the extraction of *jouissance*, with its small compensation of "surplus *jouissance*". So the subject is happy. *Bonheur* (happiness), says Lacan, you can see he plays on the word *heur* (hour): the encounter, fortune, the *tuche*; that is to say, the subject has nothing else in his head, if we can allow that he has a head at all - but to go on repeating himself. The subject is the insistence of repetition, and in this regard, everything serves his purpose. To repeat himself with a correlative that is not the other, in particular not the other sex, but that is this "surplus *jouissance*". In Télévision, the example he takes is very purified, very condensed. It is the example of Dante and Beatrice. From Beatrice, Dante obtains nothing but a fluttering of the eyelashes. That is sufficient for him, for the time being. That is to say, what he meets is the object "gaze" and the Other (here the other is Beatrice) remains barred to the subject. In this sense, the encounter with the fantasy makes her exist. We can write this using the two circles of Euler as Lacan used them in Seminar XI:



These circles - well, I'm not making the same use of them as you find in Seminar XI. The subject is on the left and the Other is on the right. It has to be said that the subject, from whom a part of *jouissance* has been deducted, what he finds in the intersection is the fluttering of eyelashes. The Other, in so far as it is incarnated by Beatrice, remains barred, ex-istant. So, of the body and its *jouissance*, the only thing that can be approached by psychoanalysis, in so far as one talks about it there, is this object, which we can describe as real. Real, not because it has the materiality of a body, or spatial extension - it has neither of those things - but it is real precisely, in Lacan's definition, in so far as it is impossible to apprehend by means of the signifier: that is to say, the signifier circles around it. The signifier makes it return to a certain place, but it cannot all the same be said that it designates it. It is certain that this object *a* in Lacan's teaching cannot be grasped the way the Kleinians grasp objects. The pre-genital object such as is current among Kleinian analysts, for example, who make of it an object of reality, an object-phenomenon - that is not Lacan's object *a*. Lacan's object *a*, ultimately, is what cannot be circumscribed, the point which is circumscribed, but which yet remains impossible to circumscribe in any words.

Well, you can see that Lacan travelled a long road concerning the place of the body. He set off from the imagination. Then he placed the accent on the body divided up by the signifier, and drew implications from that. He went on to try to show using just one letter, this letter *a*, what was the most real of the body for psychoanalysis. In other words, it is a journey that leads us - that is a play on words - from what is experienced/felt [*éprouvé* (in the sense of "to feel something") all the way to proof [*la preuve*]. That is what Lacan always deemed to be demandable from psychoanalysis: proof.

On that basis, I would like to make a few remarks in two registers: one concerns psychosis, and the other, the end of analysis, with the double meaning of the term "end". If it is because of castration, which is the effect of the Name-of-the-Father, that the order of the drives exteriorises jouissance, that is to say, substitute themselves for the full jouissance of the body; if, in other words, the libido is, in Lacan's teaching, the other name of desire, then we could expect that psychosis, which Lacan formulated initially as being caused by a flaw in signification, shows us, proposes to us, certain anomalies which concern this order of the drives and the libido. As you know, Lacan came to think and indeed did say that psychosis reintroduced jouissance in the place of the Other. Obviously, that is perfectly logical, it may appear a little surprising, but the logic is impeccable. If it is the Name-of-the-Father which, via the operation of "castration" empties the body of its jouissance, we can expect that if there is a flaw, it will not be emptied. After all, that is precisely what Schreber showed us. Everything he described is a body which is by no means a desert of jouissance. It is a body which is invaded by jouissance, permanently. He describes for us an intrusion of jouissance into his body, at the same time as this jouissance, moreover, exceeds his body, since it is also the jouissance of God. So, Schreber describes a space of jouissance where his body is, I won't say the body of God, since he tells us that his God is nothing but a number of words. It couldn't be said more clearly that this is the universe of the signifier, but I won't dwell on that. It seems to me that that has been touched on many times since last year's meetings on psychosis.

Rather, I would like to refer to certain phenomena concerning autistic children; I would like to make a few remarks about them. To delimit the concept of "autistic children", let us say that it is a question of children who fall within the classification of psychosis, without them being delirious. In all cases, it has to be said that all those who work with these autistics discern what I would call disorders of the drive. What is the regulated order of the drives? That is what Freud described for the [developmental] phases of the libido, and which was later taken up as the oral phase, and the anal phase, which preceded the phallic phase. For us, it is a mystery that this order should be perturbed in autistic children, in so far as we consider, with Lacan, that what inscribes this order is the Other. It is the veering of the demand of the Other that causes the child to pass from, for example, what is written as an oral demand to an anal demand. That comes to him from the Other. It is not, for us, a developmental phase of his body. Thus, the fact that it is a perturbation in the relation to the Other that perturbs this order - I would say that only confirms the thesis. Obviously, authors like Margaret Mahler and Melzer, for example, - I am taking these two authors whom you might not suspect of having read Lacan - on the other hand, come up against this disorder of the drives as if it were a problem, because they ask where that disorder can possibly come from. And Margaret Mahler cannot understand it at all, she finds a little ninny of six years who shows signs of oral eroticism which are reminiscent of those of a baby of two months. She doesn't understand, and if she wants to explain the phenomenon, she will have to have recourse to hypotheses on the disturbance of the body in so far as it is organic. Which is tantamount to using one mystery to explain another. The same goes for Melzer. Melzer invents a little doctrine, very much in the English empiricist style. To explain, for example, the prevalence of an oral eroticism, he comes up with the hypothesis that there may be some children who are born with one of the five senses especially prevalent, especially sharp, and that would explain why the child does not engage in the ordinary order of the drives. So there, at all events, we have a phenomenon which, in Lacanian doctrine, is perfectly comprehensible, and which, for these other styles of author, is not at all. So much is clear.

I would like to speak about another trait. It is a trait which is frequently observed by these authors, and here I will refer to two cases which have the merit of being known to everyone. One is the case of "Stanley" described by Margaret Mahler, and the other is the case of "Joe" by Bruno Bettelheim. There is a common trait, quite a banal one, which is that of being plugged into a machine. Joe is an absolutely exemplary case. His body will not function, in the sense of vital functions, except via the intermediary of machines. In other words, in order to eat, to excrete, to sleep, he has to be connected up to his machines. That doesn't happen automatically. The case of "Stanley" is less extreme, but very similar. Margaret Mahler describes only two states for this child; one state in which he is completely amorphous, and the other in which he is animated. In the former, he is limp as a rag, like a thing dumped on the floor, vaguely sucking at some part of his body, but as if completely delibidinised. For after all, the libido is nothing other than the aspiration for something else, and he looks completely delibidinised.

I would like to add something in parentheses. What Freud called the narcissistic libido is that libido which, in psychosis, remains fixated on the ego, sometimes on one's own body. It is clear how Lacan introduces a distinction into this. What Lacan says is: *jouissance* remains in the body. Libido is not there, in so far as libido is the movement of desire. So, I would say that what for Freud is the narcissistic investment of the ego, is the equivalent of what Lacan describes as the body which is not emptied of its *jouissance*. So now I will close my parentheses and return to Stanley. Either he is completely amorphous, or he is momentarily animated by plugging in to the Other. That can happen in two ways. Margaret Mahler has the merit of describing it to us very precisely. She says; this child has two ways in which he becomes animated: either he puts his hand on the therapist, that is to say, he establishes physical contact with the body of the therapist, and everything happens as if this contact breathed some animation into him. Or, she says, and this is the priceless trait, he gets the same result by pronouncing certain words, that is to say, in putting the signifiers into play. This case is priceless, because it shows us that the external machine is the Other, the body of signifiers. It is so true that the body of the therapist has the same value, has the same affect as pronouncing some words. So there is a truly priceless example. At that moment, he starts to get animated like Bettelheim's Joe, when he is plugged in to his machines; he can eat, etc., etc... If I take up Euler's circles again, if we put the child on the left, and the Other on the right, we have the impression that they are like two circles that just touch each other, that is to say, the signifier doesn't encroach on the body. Lacan mentions the *disencroachment* [*desempiètlement*] of the unconscious. Anyway, that was to give an example of these rather arid theses I have presented to you.

Now I would like to say a few words about the ends of psychoanalysis. I hope you can see now why I was able to say at the beginning that psychoanalysis is a technique of the body. Psychoanalysis is a technique of the body precisely in so far as, through the work of the signifier, it detaches this element "surplus *jouissance*". Lacan offers two intuitive approaches to this "surplus *jouissance*". He says: when you say of someone, "Now, there's someone!", it is certain that there is a surplus *jouissance* which is perceptible to the other. There is another case in which one is in the presence of a surplus *jouissance*, which is when you say, "What a cunt!". Not to say: "He's an imbecile", but to designate a manner the subject has of sitting tight on his *jouissance* and being unshakeable there. It is in this sense that I could say that psychoanalysis is a technique of the body. Obviously, that poses a problem. It poses a problem of knowing whether psychoanalysis works for *jouissance*. I think we can reply with a No, in any case if we take our inspiration from Lacan. If we had to say

what it works for, it is sure - that it is not without some relation to surplus jouissance, but it is a relation of detachment. That is to say, it works more for desire than for jouissance. It works to detach the cause of desire.

I will say two things: first, that doesn't just happen on its own. As we know. It is true that, after all, psychoanalysis is an ordeal [*épreuve*]. I said just before that Lacan's teaching concerning the body goes from the "experienced" [*épreuve*] to the proof [*preuve*]. It passes via the ordeal of the cure. It happens so little of its own accord, that Lacan considers that it needs something to make up the difference, an injection of ethics. There is no way we can speak of ethics without implying the idea of volition. This ethic, which, he says, is nothing other than the ethic of speaking well. Speaking well satisfies - write it in two words - it allows you to ask, "So what does that achieve?" This speaking well achieves the subject in his division with his jouissance, that is to say, against the fantasy, if I can put it like that. Of course, the fact that an ethic is needed in all that, has its practical applications. A practical application, for example, is the few pages that Lacan devotes to the affects in Télévision.³² Just now, I took up his thesis according to which knowledge affects the body. That does not prevent Lacan - indeed he uses it as the very basis for his argument - from reflecting on what are termed affects, in the everyday meaning of the word. In Télévision, he situates three principal affects: anguish (anxiety), sadness, and "gai savoir", as well as two which he considers to be more marginal, and which he emphasises less: boredom and moroseness. In any case, where anguish, sadness and gay science are concerned, it can be clearly seen how that is organised in relation to a body affected in its jouissance. Where anguish is concerned, it is obvious. I would say, this affecting of the body in its jouissance has an affect, and it is anguish. What he says about sadness and "gai savoir" is less obvious because he tells us that sadness is a moral shortcoming, a form of cowardice. He is not shy to re-animate the whole vocabulary of the Christian ethic. Defect, moral cowardice, etc... Anyway, sadness is a shortcoming, while gay science is a virtue. That is understandable, it seems to me, only if you refer it to the passion for ignorance, which is the contrary of the ethic of speaking well. I would say that sadness is the affect which corresponds to the fact of not satisfying the ethic which precisely will circumscribe this real object of the body, this pure object. Gay science is the inverse. In the absurd, gay science is what allows you to enjoy the deciphering, which means that in deciphering you find a surplus jouissance. We could expand a great deal more on this idea which is that, for Lacan, ethics reorganises the doctrine of affects, in the classical sense.

The second remark I want to make concerns one of Lacan's expressions which can be found in the lecture at the EFP in 1967, where he says that the analysand, even though he has passed through what I have called the ordeal, will "make a cause for himself from surplus jouissance".³³ "Make oneself a cause" is one of those expressions beloved of Lacan; it is perfectly equivocal. It has the characteristics of an interpretation, at that level. Initially he puts it in parentheses: "make a cause of surplus jouissance (as one might say to accept the inevitable [*se faire une raison*])."³⁴ Obviously if you approach the "making oneself a cause" from the angle of "accepting the inevitable", it immediately introduces a little note of resignation, or at least of renunciation. It means: having renounced making oneself a cause of something else. Generally, what is it that one makes oneself a cause of outside of psychoanalysis,

³² J. Lacan, Télévision, pp. 33-43.

³³ J. Lacan, "Lecture to the EFP [6/12/67]", Scilicet 2/3, p. 26.

³⁴ J. Lacan, "Lecture to the EFP [6/12/67]", Scilicet 2/3, p. 26.

and perhaps in spite of psychoanalysis, if it is “ego-psychologising”? In general, one makes oneself the cause of the master signifier, or of a signifier that functions like a master signifier. The causes, all the beautiful worthy “causes”, the good causes to defend, are a function of a signifier which has command over them. It has to be said that the cause of surplus jouissance is a cause which is fundamentally different from the causes organised by a master signifier. It is a singular cause, which only causes one by one. One all alone. It is a cause which does not collectivise. On the contrary, the causes which hook on to the master signifier are the causes which collectivise, that make crowds, make groups. In other words, with the master signifier, you can found an orthodoxy, even a psychoanalytic one.

That is exactly what the IPA has done. The IPA makes use of Freud’s master signifier, whatever it likes to say; it collectivises. It is so true that the IPA, as a group, will never creak. It’s robust, much more robust than all the Freudian causes, institutionally speaking. Obviously, good causes have an effect: segregation. Lacan frequently pointed this out. The good cause, in so far as it always consists in integrating itself into the discourse of the master, has an effect of segregation. That is to say that it designates a frontier between those who are collectivised under such and such a signifier - and those outside the field. It has to be said: what effect can it have to inscribe oneself in the analytic discourse in so far as it does not collectivise, and that the only social bond that is instated is the bond of the treatment, that is to say, two people for a limited time. One might perhaps be tempted to say that the “authorising oneself”, rather than the master signifier - for that is the alternative we are faced with - has a centrifugal effect. It is hard to see why groups would form around the notion of “self-authorisation”. To do what? I said to myself, when Lacan said to us, “wager from the father to the worse” [*parier du père au pire*] it was a way of saying, “wager from the master signifier to the object *a*”. Obviously, the command of the father - I am taking “father” here as equivalent to master signifier - the command that organises these causes, is one for all. That is what creates cohesions, devotions, common memories, old boys’ networks, etc... It has its charms. But this is at the level of collectivity. Is it the worst thing that could happen that it should be each for his own? It couldn’t just stop at that, in so far as Lacan nevertheless always considered that there was a collective function for the psychoanalyst and that this function at the level of the collective is a function that can only be conceived of because the discourse of the master reigns. It cannot be conceived of all alone. It is conceived of as an antidote, if I can put it that way. He designated this function by taking the image of the saint, each time he calls upon psychoanalysts to measure the political weight which should be theirs. Thus, devoting oneself to the object *a*, Lacan seemed to consider could have its political weight. I would like to finish now, by saying to you that there are perhaps worse things than understanding [*pire que capire*], in any case. It seems to me that the master signifier can bring about something worse to the power of two. And I was thinking precisely of the suicide bombers, for after all, it’s topical. There was a time when the phenomenon of suicide bombers was not apparent. Then there were some, not so long ago, during the last war. Then once again they were not to be seen. Now it is starting again. Think about it: a suicide bomber is someone who conjugates the father and the worst. It is someone who marches for the cause, for the cause he incarnates: it is not important whether it is Muslim power or not. Whatever cause is being defended, he marches to the master signifier, with his brothers or all alone. But at the same time, it ends up in that orgy of jouissance which is “blowing oneself up”. Lacan evoked grilling. Well, blowing yourself up with your own bomb is another way of doing that. That is what I call conjugating the father and the worst. There you are. I will stop there. I hope we’ll be able to discuss it a bit.

Editor's note: We are grateful to Colette Soler for permission to publish this spoken version. Text based on a wording by Guy de Villiers. Not checked by the author. First published in Quarto, May 1984. Written versions have been published since in Italian and Spanish. Editorial intervention has been kept to a minimum. Editor's and translator's notes in square brackets. After 5 years and 6 issues of JCFAR in England, "jouissance" is no longer italicised.