

THE SPEAKING BODY

On the unconscious in the 21st Century

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Speaking with one's body-stepladder (corps-escabeau)

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Transcript by Didier Mathey and his team, based on the recording of a Radio Lacan broadcast

The Stepladder (Escabeau) and Freudian Sublimation. From forcing to manipulation

So let's get to the stepladder (escabeau) and the way Jacques-Alain Miller talks about it in his presentation, and with critical distance, but he introduces it thusly as « what the speaking-being hoists itself on, climbs onto, to make itself beautiful. It is its pedestal, that allows it to raise itself to the dignity of the Thing». This phrase is a reference to the reading of Freudian sublimation that Lacan gives in his Seminar The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, which comes five years after the Seminar IV. It differs from that of Seminar IV in the new relationship to the Real that is introduced. To properly place the new perspective of The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, let us go back to the emphasis in Lacan's reading of Freudian sublimation as one of the « destinies of the drives », as Freud puts it in his opening chapter of Metapsychology (1915), « Instincts and their Vicissitudes»[1]. He gives four destinies for the drives: the reversal into its opposite (seeing — being seen); reversal onto the person proper; repression, and sublimation. He was reformulating what he had stated in the Three Essays on Sexuality and in a following article dealing with « civilized sexual morality » where he put forward that « The sexual drive provides cultural endeavors with quantities of extraordinarily great forces. And this because of the especially pronounced particularity in this sexual drive to displace its goal without losing the essential of its intensity. We call this capacity to exchange the original, sexual goal for an other, no longer

sexual yet still related one, the capacity of sublimation » [2]. So sublimation is displaced as to the sexual goal, *zielgehemmt*, but it is satisfied without repression. There is enjoyment. Freud reforms this sublimation over the course of his discoveries. When he isolates narcissism, he remarks that not only is sublimation a transposition of the sex drive, but that it must also transit through narcissistic passion in order to become « desexualized ». Then, when he introduces the death drive in the 1920s, he questions whether it wouldn't be possible to sublimate not only the satisfaction of the partial drive, the life drives, but also of the death drive. So many enigmas that Freud will unravel one after the other, while holding onto the « displacement as regards the goal » as one of the major characteristics of the drives. In his Seminar XI, Lacan comments on how much this enigma was there from the outset of Freud's work. It will be Lacan who proposes diverse ways of resolving it that all take into account the disparity between the sexual goal and the enjoyment of the drive. The drive is displaced with regard to the goal because its autoeroticism does not vary. Freud's « sublimation » is the point where it approaches the Lacanian « sexual relationship that does not exist », the point where the sexual separates from the « auto-eroticism » of the drive and its enjoyment, remarks Jacques-Alain Miller. The whole problem for Lacan is to account for the articulation between enjoyment and the sexual, or how autoerotic enjoyment of the drive comes to join the desire of the Other.

The Seminar on The Ethics of Psychoanalysis goes a step further than the Seminar IV that we began with reading. Because, what is presented there in Seminar VI as absolute otherness will be set in the dimension of the real. He introduces enjoyment in the dimension of the Real at the center of the subject's psychic reality, in a dimension different to the Imaginary and the Symbolic. It is the zone of *das Ding*, at the center, but as excluded, unapproachable and protected by a barrier... Lacan invented a pretty word for this: « extimacy[3] ». It is sublimation that populates this void, this zone, with a certain number of objects that are in the space of the void, that paradoxically neighbor it, occupy it, and create its boarder following the contours of the barrier that defends the zone of Real enjoyment. There is the sublimation of love that aims at this zone and there are the objects that come to fill it. This disjunction can be approached in different ways, according to the solutions or paradigms that Lacan employs. The term paradigm echoes with the title Jacques-Alain Miller gave to the revised version of a presentation he gave in Los Angeles at a symposium on Cultural Studies for his class *The Real in the Psychoanalytic Experience*. [4]The third paradigm, contemporary with *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, under the general heading of the real in the psychoanalytic experience, highlights the mode of impossibility for the pleasure principle to attain the zone of the real of enjoyment. There must therefore be a forcing to get to this place, the place of enjoyment. The structure according to which « the object is raised to the dignity of the Thing » is a complex one that, in relation to the real, brings into play symbolic elements as well as imaginary ones. In describing this structure, Jacques-Alain Miller named these elements, remarking that

« This is how I managed to enumerate, within this Seminar VII, nine incarnations of the Thing. Nine cases where successively Lacan shows us that they enter this place of enjoyment. I underscore this term place, that we also find in the *Ecrits*. If there is a place, it is because there is this barrier. [...] There are the terms that come from the symbolic

which lodge themselves there [...]. For example Kant's moral law, the Kantian imperative in its absolute, detached from everything [...]. There is another element that comes from the symbolic, namely science [...] that in its demand to base itself on what always returns to the same place, occupies at its fundamental level the place of the Thing [...]. This is what allows Lacan to speak of science as a violent unleashing, a lethal process. There are elements that come from the imaginary. This is where Lacan inscribes the objects of sublimation, like art objects for example [...] and then there are terms that we could say qualify being without any having. And Lacan used the example of the simple interjection of love, the « You ! ». It is the example of You ! that aims at the being of the Other beyond any qualifications that these manifestations might cause [...] But it is also the Mother as proscribed enjoyment [...], the Father as sublimation [...], the Lady of courtly love as an inhuman partner. It is finally the Sadean object itself, the work of Sade, says Jacques-Alain Miller, being here an example of the finagling that must be done to pass this barrier that isolates the place of enjoyment ».[5]

In the recent Parisian exhibit that rather confusingly presented Sade's works but that well underscored the frenetic character that so pleased the curator who conceived it. In this ordering, the ninth term is the void that is the figure of the Thing, when considered from the perspective of the signifier.[6]

This series is then used by Jacques-Alain Miller to bring out what he calls the « structure of beyond » in the progression of Lacan's teaching, as put in place in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. « That represents for us a beyond that is encircled. It is not the open ended beyond of love where the request, that by its proper dynamic tends towards the said love, towards the opening of love. Here on the contrary, we have a beyond that is closed, proscribed, a beyond limit that can only be reached by forcing, transgression, even traversing [...] So, on the one hand we have transgression and on the other, the defence ». Among the objects that can occupy the place of enjoyment, there is the sexual partner of courtly love and the one Sade aims at.

This structure of beyond, that radicalizes the perspective of Freudian sublimation, locates a moment of Lacan's teaching where the articulation between the place of enjoyment and language poses a problem. Jacques-Alain Miller points out that at the time when he was editing the lessons of *The Ethic of Psychoanalysis* that deal with sublimation, he gave as a title for these lessons « The Problem of Sublimation ». But later, with the *Seminar Encore*, sublimation was no longer a problem because « From the moment when on the contrary language and enjoyment go together, where the signifier is the cause of enjoyment, we can say that sublimation ceases to be a problem: it is an enjoyment in full power [...] Failing the enjoyment of the sexual relation that does not exist, we have the enjoyment of communication, the enjoyment of communitarianism, what holds us together, that is, everything that occupies our figuring out how to place ourselves next to the Other, in the Other, what rules we will obey, how we will give orders, how we will make an effect, how we ourselves will obey orders, etc. [...] ». From this perspective, he notes; « Encore, that is no longer the insurmountable, the inaccessible barrier: it's the impossible.

We pass from the inaccessible, the insurmountable of the barrier that we break through at the price of a forcing, that costs you the skin off your nose; we move from that to the impossible that allows us to define the sexual relation that does not exist and its logic. [7]»

It is this orientation, if we want to follow the Sadean metaphor of logical apathy, of the imperturbable logic in relation to this furious unleashing, that will take us from the idea of forcing to that of manipulation. Manipulation is an aspect of dealing with the impossible sexual partner. Fine, there is the sexual relation that does not exist. Perfect, there is the impossible. For as much, we manipulate. We don't need to make any implausible break through anymore. Well, what's left now is Fifty Shades of Grey of this Mr. Grey, with his sex toys that are developed like products that will fill the shelves of every shop once the film comes out, like Star Wars figurines as soon as Star Wars hit the big screen. It's a little tedious. We really feel that it's along the line of a manipulation. Done is the heroism of breaking through the barrier.

It is this orientation that will take us from the paradigm of transgression, of breaking through, to that of manipulation, of the image of the sexual partner as we saw last time. Manipulation is the opposite of transgression and of breaking through a barrier.

The Crossroads with Narcissism

In his presentation, after having introduced the relationship of the stepladder with narcissism, Jacques-Alain Miller immediately added that this sublimation is at the crossroads with narcissism ». It is a modified narcissism as regards the Freudian myth in that it's not only about the image but also about the belief that ties the speaking-being to the body. It's a narcissism where the body is idolized in a relationship of particular ignorance that makes us take a step, have a look at, Freudian narcissism.

The announcement of the teaching from the pass, held on January 13th of last year, brought closer two well chosen sayings of Lacan's where one answers the other and enlightens both. In this announcement, we could see an extract from the Seminar The Sinthome, where Lacan declares: « The speaking-being adores its body because it believes it has one [8]». If we continue three lines further, we read: « In reality, it doesn't, but its body is its only consistency – mental consistency of course, because its body is bugging off at every instant.» It was the symptom; it is « the sinthome », page 66. And a year before, in a seminar in Nice, Lacan states: « Man loves his image like what is closest to him, that is, his body. Only, his body, he has no idea of it. He thinks it's me. Everybody thinks it's them. It's a hole. And on the outside, there is the image. And with this image, he makes a world[9] ». You notice the homology of the two phrases. In the Seminar, The Sinthome, we have « the speaking-being adores its body because it believes it has one. In reality, it doesn't, but its body is its only consistency – mental consistency of course, because its body buggers off at every instant. » and in Nice, « Man loves his image like what is closest to him, that is, his body. Only, his body, he has no idea of it. He thinks it's

me. Everybody thinks its them. It's a hole. And on the outside, there is the image. And with this image, he makes a world. »

This declaration, with this image « he makes a world », this image-world comes as an echo of Heidegger's paper of 1938 on The Age of the World Picture[10]that is ours, that is that of science. I quote an excerpt from this paper where Heidegger talks about the world picture, Weltbild,

« [...] the world commensurate with a 'conception' does not signify therefore an idea of the world, but the world itself, seized as that of which we can 'have an idea'. Beingness in its totality is therefore now held in such a manner that it is truly and only beingness for as much as it is stopped and fixed by Man in representation and production. With the advent of the Weltbild a decisive attribution comes about concerning beingness in its totality. The being of beingness is henceforth looked for and found in the represented-being of beingness ».[11]

That is what Lacan condenses: it suffices to have an image that is the foundation of a representation, and with this image, we create a world.

For Lacan, contrary to Heidegger, it is not the representation as such; it is the body and not the representation-image. That's why he says: « Man loves his image like...his body » – his body as first. That is constant throughout the lecture of the texts we are reading this year. It is the body as marked by the trauma. Lacan can say it in a series of ways. There, he says it by saying hole. The body, « It's a hole ». And the speaking-being attempts to fill this hole with a belief. Lacan was installing enjoyment as a hole, surrounded by a barrier, and was interested in the objects that came to populate this hole. There, it is first the hole and what becomes inscribed there, not from the inside, but as an outside. It is the image that is the first representation or first barrier before this hole; this image with which he makes the world.

From then on, you need to fasten your seatbelts.

« The S.K.beau (homophonous with escabeau – stepladder) is what conditions in man the fact that he lives from being, that he empties being » (TN: play on the homophony between 'il vit de l'être / il vide l'être). That is the hole at the start, the hole-trauma (trou-ma) – the body is the hole-trauma. We don't begin with the manifestations of being à la Heidegger. We begin first by making a big hole. Therefore, we have the fact that « he lives from being (or that he empties being), as much as he has a body, moreover, he only has it from that point onwards ». The speaking-being is a being of emptiness, it is the hole of the seminar in Nice, as much as it is the having [avoir] or, to use Lacan's expression, the « haveness » [avoisement], according to a primary haveness.

The belief in the body, in the stepladder that precedes the sphere, is also ignorance – and that is a decisive perspective that Jacques-Alain Miller brings out in his presentation, one that allows us to decipher the passage we are going to read. Jacques-Alain Miller ties it to its « being founded on the primordial I do not think of the speaking-being – this I don't think is also a way of translating the « lives from being ». What is this I don't think?, he asks. « It is the negation of the unconscious by which the speaking-being believes it is the master of its being. » There is, in this stepladder and in sublimation a mode of error, of forgetting that calls again on the forgetting in the Seminar IV, but completely transformed so that, in leaning on that first refusal of the fabric of equivocations of the unconscious and, in leaning on and believing in one's stepladder, the speaking-being forgets itself to find and think itself master of itself, master of its body. This perspective is a decisive one because we see that he is linking the narcissism of belief to the bodily idol, to the adoration of the body as the surface of the trauma's inscription and a refusal to « speak without knowing it », to go on believing to be the master of one's being. It is in this way and through this belief that with « I speak with my body, and do so without knowing it, I always say more than I know ».[12] This is an unbearable point. Whence « the negation of the unconscious » that Jacques-Alain Miller's perspective enlightens. Therefore it is in the place of the first « I don't think » that the adhesion, the belief, in cultural ideals, « the stepladder reserve », lies.

Lacan considers his substitution of the speaking-being that we find here: « Whence my expression of speaking-being that will be substituted for Freud's UCS (unconscious, as we read it): so, out of my way, that's my seat. To say that the unconscious in Freud when he discovers it (what is discovered is all at once, but once invented still needs an inventory taken of it) » Lacan considers his substitution of the speaking-being for the Freudian unconscious in an ironic and singular usage of the opposition, dear to logical empiricists and to Karl Popper, between the context of discovery and the context of justification. This epistemological opposition was introduced by Hans Reichenbach, a logical empiricist, in a well know paper from 1938, « The Three Tasks of Epistemology ».[13] The context of the discovery was not considered by Reichenbach as bearing on the philosophy of the sciences, but rather on psychology and social circumstances; with the context of justification alone bearing on arguments used to gain the discovery's acceptance. What's important is that, once discovered, it's a matter of knowing what arguments were used to get it accepted by others. That is the context of justification: how do we justify what we discovered with motives that depend on social circumstances, the psychology of the researcher, or what you will. This is of no importance from the point of view of logical empiricism of course. It is quite the contrary for Lacan, who takes this opposition from a neo-Heideggerian standpoint when he remarks that when something is discovered, it's all at once, in one go. It's about the unveiling, and it's in a single stroke. It wasn't there, it's there. It's a stroke for Freud. Blink!, as the amateurs of neuronal processes would say. Then, it takes a longer time for the inventory to happen. What did we find? Lacan makes use of the opposition in the following way: « To say that the unconscious in Freud when he discovers it (what is discovered is all at once, but once invented still needs an inventory taken of it) ' and so he considers that the only acceptable way to talk about this discovered unconscious is to say, to justify the unconscious as: « knowledge in that it is spoken as constituting LOM

(homophonous with l'homme = man) ».

This succession, this scansion is in conformity with what preceded. Firstly, the constituent of LOM, which is the trauma outside of meaning, that provokes a speaking without knowing it; then knowledge deposits the equivocations of the spoken – that's spoken, in the past tense. The connection of being to meaning is confirmed by this new definition of speaking. This is speaking according to the seminar *Encore* that is tied to enjoyment; a speaking no longer filled with truth like in Lacan's first teaching, but filled with enjoyment. Whence the fact that Lacan, in the text we are reading, says « speaking is of course defined as the only place where being has a meaning ». This « of course » (*bien entendu lit.: well heard*) has a double connotation. Firstly, it comes as an antiphrasis because Lacan is introducing what is in fact a new definition of speaking. And then, because speaking is « well heard » and for as much the voice is involved. This, after the emphasis put on the gaze and the look, cross-eyedness, the blunder [*la bévue*], all that preceded it, that put the accent on the gaze, comes as a split.

The stepladder and the speaking-being

For the fine details on speaking as the only place where being has meaning, I refer you to Jacques-Alain Miller's course, « *The Being and The One* », entirely devoted to the tension between the being that is found in the place of the Other, and the One that is elsewhere. Let's note also that the place is no longer only the place « of the Other », but the place « of speaking ». The paragraph ends with the reaffirmation of the Lacanian ontology. Being is not first: what is, is having. Yet, their shared ontological twist – according to which being comes first – is authorized by « the meaning of being ». It's because there is a place where this meaning is introduced that in hindsight it appears as being first. Lacan's saying that « the meaning of being, being to preside over having, that excuses the epistemological gibberish », is a remarkable one, especially built to retain our attention. The first part particularly. In ten words, Lacan articulates five of them, which are the most fundamental of Western discourse: being, beingness, having, the master (what presides over). And to this philosophical device that he is questioning, answers the second half of the phrase that includes the reference to the fundamental failure (*ratage*) and to the bungled act, and to knowledge as always tied to the equivocation that is masked by epistemological gibberish. The meaning of being, far from Heideggerian reveries, is also enjoy-meant, and that really is what determines and presides over, to use Lacan's term, what is master of everything that has to do with the realm of having, of the possessive, of « my » body or « my image ». We must well distinguish then the fundamental level where « the body, we have it », which supposes no possible possession, and then a second level of having, one where I can think, for example, of objects of representation, because I have a form, a sphere, that presides over the I (*Moi*).

Whence the following paragraph, that begs even more attention to detail, that develops this point and begins by situating the first having of the body, before having in its second sense as « my » body comes into play. « What's important to discuss is from what point is

‘of view’ said? What matters then without clarifying from where, is realizing that of LOM has a body – and that this expression is correct. »

Lacan sets off from a level where there is no I, he uses a partitive Case: « of LOM has a body ». It is an attribution that precedes any having. Lacan wants to define this attribution as prior to the mirror stage, prior to the relationship with the gaze, prior to the relationship with the point of view, the point from which one is seen. Philippe Lacadée did quite a bit with the point of view from which, etc, but here, there is none left. So, it matters with out specifying from where. It’s the same point Lacan aims at in « Radiophonie » with the object a as the incorporeal that founds the corporal, and in the following text which we have read, with « it can be felt » [ça s’y sent]. No matter from where. Before any coming into play of the gaze and of the « point of view », the body is the product of an operation of the impact of the utterance. Lacan’s choice is underscored by the equivocation in the word « point ». The French expression « point de vue », if it is split, exposes the equivocation of « point » between the point as a place « a little piece of » and the word point used in the second element of a negation [meaning none or not at all]. This is where Jacques-Alain Miller’s perspective is crucial. « The stepladder is sublimation, inasmuch as it is founded on the first I don’t think of the speaking-being ».

Lacan emphasizes that his partitive « of LOM has a body », is an expression that remains correct. We must hear that in the strongest sense, in all the equivocations of the expression, of the Expressionist expression, but above all, of the logical formula expression, underscored by the adjective correct, used to qualify it. « The expression remains correct ». A way of getting us to hear that, in the last two paragraphs, he is reformulating the logic from his first teaching about the judgment of attribution and the judgment of existence he had taken from Freud. I refer you to the familiar pages of the Ecrits where Lacan used Hippolyte to get at the epistemological gibberish about being and having in the form left to us by Freud through the philosophy of Brentano. The fundamental point at the time was the abolition of the symbolic, caused by the Verwerfung and its consequences on the judgment of attribution of a having, the Bejahung. I quote these pages to remind you of the music of Lacan’s first teaching that sets an almost Wagnerian melody in comparison to the condensation we read where the relationship of being to having is tied together in phrases that are ten words long. This is not Wagnerian, it’s Debussy. It’s French. Very French. « The Verwerfung thus cuts short any manifestation of the symbolic order, that is, the Bejahung that Freud posits as the primary process where attributive judgment takes root and that is nothing other than the primordial condition of something coming from the Real into the revelation of being, or in the language of Heidegger, that is let to be. Because it is to this remote place that Freud brings us, since it is only after that anything will be able to be again found as beingness. Such is the inaugural affirmation that can never be renewed save through the veiled forms of unconscious speaking. [...] For this is how the Einbeziehung ins Ich, the introduction into the subject, is to be understood, and the Ausstossung aus dem Ich, the expulsion from the subject. It is the latter instance that constitutes the Real, [...] because the Real does not wait, namely not for the subject, since it awaits nothing from speaking. But it is there,

identical to its existence; sound where we can hear everything, and ready to submerge with its shards what the 'reality-principle' constructs there, known as the outside world. [14]» Lacan brilliantly founds on these lines his theory of hallucination: what was not admitted into the Symbolic returns in the Real, and he powerfully illustrates it with a magnificent development of the Rat Man's hallucination. But it is a moment in his teaching where the three consistencies are not equivalent and where the Symbolic/Real fastening is not ascertained as being accessible to the analytical process through the Imaginary and its root of the body.

I would like to draw your attention to this phrase which ends the paragraph I read you and that remains there for Lacan as if in anticipation of things to come, this Real beyond reality, where we can hear « everything ». « The Real is there, identical to its existence, sound where we can hear everything, and ready to submerge us with its shards what the 'reality-principle' constructs there, known as the outside world. » [15] We find here again the same mechanisms of construction that Lacan noted in the Seminar *The Sinthome*: there is the hole, and then there is the image that comes as though from the outside, and with this image he builds himself a world. It is this structuring of the constitution of the world with regard to being and having that he grasped by means of the logic of *Bejahung-Ausstossung* in 1955 and that he now takes up again differently. If we have to establish a parallel between it and the phrase chosen by the Analysts of the School for their seminar: « Man loves his image like what is closest to him, that is, his body. Only, his body, he has no idea of it. He thinks it's me. » That is the mechanism of the *Ich*, of the *Lust-Ich*, how it's made up, etc. It's not a preliminary idea; they are operations that rely on what is pushed away and what is admitted.

« Everybody thinks it's them. It's a hole. And on the outside, there is the image. And with this image, he makes a world. »[16]

The text published in 1956 also underscores the two moments of having, or of representation, and the question of inside and outside. « First there was the primal expulsion, that is, the real as outside the subject. Then, with representation (*Vorstellung*), constituted by the (imaginary) reproduction of the original perception, there was the discrimination of reality [...]. But in this reality, which the subject must compose according to the well-tempered scale of its objects, the real - as that which is excised from the primordial symbolization - is already there. We might even say that it talks all by itself [*cause tout seul*]. »[17] Here we have a homology between the hole, the image, the constitution of the world starting with the representation-image, and that then permits the subject to determine the objects that it can call its own using a register of having which is absolutely separate from it: this first haveness. It would be necessary to take up point by point the homology and the differences between the text in the *Ecrits* and the one in the *Autres Ecrits*, and by starting with enjoyment as what changes everything and determines the swing towards the « Other Lacan ». As Jacques-Alain Miller remarked, Enjoyment does not figure in the reasoned index of the *Ecrits* except inasmuch as it is linked to castration[18], and that it's later that enjoyment will appear in its non-negatable

dimension – precisely, not marked by the minus phi of castration, occupying the place of an affirmation prior to the Bejahung. We have to make this effort in reading in order to follow Lacan's rethinking the constitution of the world of those he calls by three letters, LOM [homophonic spelling of « l'Homme » Man], using the three consistencies that have become equivalent: R, S, and I. It is his epigraph to the development we have been following: « He has (even his body) given that he belongs simultaneously to three... let's call them orders »[19]. But this detailed reading of the textual homology of the *Écrits* and the *Autres écrits* no doubt assumed devoting our Lacanian readings to the text Joyce *The Symptom* alone. I chose rather the transversal, to highlight the transversal of the concepts that Jacques-Alain Miller underscores, so that in contrast the unity is given in his *Presentation*.

Body and LAM [lam is homophonous with l'âme - the soul]. A Critique of the stepladder

Let's continue reading what Man has: "LOM has a body [...] even though from there LOM deduced that he was a soul – which, « seeing » his crosseyedness of course [bien entendu, literally « well heard »], he translated from that this soul, he had it too ». This sequence that, here also, requires all our attention implies what proceeds. It is the point where are joined, the refusal to know about the sundered experience of equivocal enjoyment and the belief in the unity of the body, in its primordial form, that since Aristotle, bears the name of soul. Here again, Lacan names the two objects that are the heard – the voice, and the gaze – with what he calls crosseyedness, another name for the *bévue* [TN: term meaning slip or blunder that plays on the German, *Unbewusste*, unconscious]. We have the same redoubling included here, the same « two times » that were at work from a different perspective in 1956. You are sensitive to the partitive case of course. Lacan does not say « he translated that this soul, he had it ». Lacan says that he translated of what is this soul, he had it too. Why say translation? This may be the point that uncovers why Lacan begins with LOM in three letters. It is to create the assonance, the resonance, of the primordial translation between LAM and LOM. Lacan's ambition is to help us find again, short of any translation, the metaphor of LAM/LOM. LAM has overcome the foundation of LOM, where the constitution of LOM must be put back in its logical place, one that escapes any sexualization.

Jacques-Alain Miller's commentary on this moment of translation – which is always treason – noted by Lacan, is decisive: « It is the negation of the unconscious by which the speaking-being believes it is master of its being. And with its stepladder, it adds to this that it believes itself to be a beautiful master ».

Lacan approaches this mastery by means of « doing with », which concerns the second moment of having. « Having is to do something with ». This phrase rings with, distances itself from, subverts, a forgone conclusion of structuralism at one point: « Knowledge empowers ». Consistently, for Lacan, knowledge empowers blundering right to the hilt.

Knowledge is not empowering. The only power knowledge has is the power to finally be mistaken. You see, if you said that to Foucault, he wouldn't have... Well, it wasn't his point of departure. There is first having as the power to « do with ». This is why the expression « Knowing how to do with the symptom », that we use without thinking, deserves au contraire, to hold us in its labyrinth. The « know how » doesn't come right from the start. There first must be an articulation with the modality of the possible.

This is what we get later on. But first, let's unfold the Lacanian condensation. The soul, according to Aristotle, was the point where the body and the intellect tied together. The noumena, which are ideas, that intelligence, nous, – a sort of supplementary organ à la Chomsky – allow us to see. It sees ideas, seizes them, whereas sight can only reach visible things, the oromena. The noumena are the ideas we cannot perceive with the senses, but with the intellect alone. [20] This tie between vision and intellect that Lacan undoes, once again underscoring that the world as an ensemble of possibilities is not a perception, not a vision of ideas thanks to the instrument of superior vision that is the soul. As a French Platonician, quoted by Lacan a little further on, put it: « God created reason to perceive truth as he did the eye to see and the ear to hear. [21] »

Lacan invents for us the term « avisiont » in order to distance himself from any perception of ideas. The term condenses a verb, aviser, which has a double meaning in French. First, it is used to underscore a moment of discovery by vision, a life well advised [la vie avisée]; it is the instant of truly seeing. It's more about catching sight of, than it is of seeing; a « beginning to see » as it is defined by the French dictionary, Le Robert. For us, it is the instant of seeing. Next, aviser is also to reflect on. « We must reflect on what is most urgent », says Proust. That is the time for understanding, and Heaven knows he took his time. Lacan's avisiont, with a final « t », well that's refinement, is homophonic with avision that does not have a « t », but an « s », and which is already a new word. It's avision, with a privative « a ». An absence of vision. And if we add the final « t » as Lacan writes it, a pure, muted letter, we grasp that this absence of vision is also determined by an absence of reflection; it happens without our aiming anything at all (the homophonic verb of avisiont). In the same way that it is the absence of an idea of the body that results in our believing in a body that is I [Moi], just as we do not perceive ideas in the world, which renders the constitution of the world as possible based on a « not ». We believe in a body that would be Me: it's because there is a hole, there is no idea of the body, and so we have to believe in it. Well then, same thing here, it's because we have no vision of this ensemble of possibilities, but on the contrary as Lacan says, we must first define the possible based on a « not ». « The only definition of the possible being that it could not happen: what we take from the opposite end, given the general inversion of what we call thought ». And here, Lacan links Francis Bacon, opposing Plato and Bacon. Whence the amusing phrase: « Aristotle, Pacon [pas con: no jerk], unlike the B it rhymes with ». This also reminds us of a quatrain he was fond of: « Of Malbranche or Locke, which is savvier, which is zanier? » It's some very funny and very powerful philosophy. Why consider that Plato is not a jerk [Pacon], if we compare him to Bacon? The fault Lacan finds with him is no doubt his Novum Organum where he founds his approach of the sciences and of the world. Lacan's guide here is undoubtedly Koyré. On questions of science, he trusted Koyré. At

the opening of his Galilean Studies, Alexandre Koyré declares: « Bacon, originator of modern science », – as a syntagma – is a joke, and a very bad one for which manuals still often express regret. In fact, Bacon never really understood anything about science. I'll leave that to Koyré's responsibility. The English of course, the English epistemologists, have already added a few library volumes to explain that Koyré in some sense is correct but that in others he is still wrong and that it really was Bacon who founded modern science, and with it, all of England. Koyré based himself on that because other authors – in particular those who did the French translation of *Novum Organum* that was published relatively recently, about fifteen years ago – insisted on how his natural philosophy led him to prefer metaphysics to mathematics in his discourse on personal method. « Of course Bacon rejected Copernicus, distained Gilbert, who was an experimental physicist, mathematician and critic of Galileo. »[22]

Rather than Plato's *voûç* that supposes combining the perception of the senses – a compendium of sense data from the experience –, and the vision of superior truths by the body, Lacan prefers a three way knot. Moreover, he observes something else that merits our attention: « The knot of what with what, I don't say for lack of knowing ». It's surprising really. From the outset, he tells us he's making a three-way knot with R, S and I; why does he brutally tell us there: « The knot of what with what, I don't say »? Fortunately, he continues: « But I use the trinity, LOM cannot stop writing it ever since he un-worlds himself [TN: *immonde*, as an adjective means vile or filthy. Used here as a verb, it is a neologism, literally, 'to un-world']. Without Victor Cousin's preference for triplicity adding to it: but tending toward it, if he likes, since the sense there is three; the good sense, I mean[23] ». So what does that mean? Why say « of what with what, I don't say for lack of knowing », when he hammers that it's about R, S, I, that tie together? In order to see, we must read further. He underscores the three way knot, the trinity, which he distinguishes from the triplicity dear to Victor Cousin. The trinity, Lacan places it outside of meaning. From LOM to RSI, it's outside of meaning. They are Names. We saw this last time. Pure names that in the last instance rest on the final proper name, so outside of meaning. On the contrary, triplicity is full of meaning: the True, the Beautiful and the Good. This triplicity comes from the esthetics of Victor Cousin[24], presented for the first time in 1818 and where this brilliant pupil of the lycée Charlemagne, and pure product of the Napoleonic National Education system launches his method that created such a great sensation. To found the true on a non-Hegelian, non-dialectical method, qualified as eclectic, where it is finally by means of good sense that he takes his orientation[25]. Pierre Macherey, an excellent professor who I was fortunate enough to have, explains this very well in the review, « *Corpus* », that accompanied the corpus of the edition on French philosophers. Bakounine, a critical thinker, anarchist, and against any official thinking, says it backwards. He speaks of Cousin saying:

«A superficial and pedantic talker, innocent of any original conception, any thinking of his own, but very adept at platitude that he wrongly confused with good sense, this illustrious philosopher skillfully prepared for the use of France's student youths a metaphysical dish of his making, and the consumption of which, rendered mandatory in every school of the State, under the authority of the University, condemned more than one generation to an

indigestion of the brain[26] ». That, is for the neurosciences, the positive effects on neurons. Obviously, Bakounine is an anarchist, he makes fun of everything and he must have had to swallow Cousin's teachings. But at the beginning, when Cousin was giving his seminars, he had Balzac as one of his students. On the other hand, Balzac really liked his teachings that he followed from 1816 to 1819. Balzac was very impressed by Cousin, he had a good impression. So, it does all end by creating dishes that are hard to swallow. But when Lacan, with irony, takes a helping of « good sense » à la Victor Cousin, it is to introduce the Lacanian sense, the enjoy-meant, enjoyment. This is what Jacques-Alain Miller illustrates remarkably in his Presentation. After having introduced the stepladder as well as the sinthome as concepts belonging to the epoch of the speaking-being, he separates them using the register of the enjoyment of speech that characterizes them. The stepladder, « is the speaking-being apprehended from the side of the enjoyment of speech. It is this enjoyment of speech that breeds the great ideals of the Good, the True and the Beautiful. » It's by dizzying (s'étourdissant) oneself with words à la Bakounine, or if we re-read Macherey who so well explains how he constructed his anti-skeptic system. That means by pinching the access to any skeptic reflection. But what's essential is that, it is through the enjoyment of speech, of bla bla, that we get to the great ideals: « The stepladder is on the side of enjoyment of speech that includes meaning. On the other hand, the enjoyment of the sinthome excludes meaning ». Here, we find a criticism directed at the new form of sublimation that the stepladder implies. It implies the enjoyment tied to meaning ; what we have to go through before getting to the outside of meaning. And that's why Lacan can say at once that he uses the knot that is composed of the three orders, R, S, I, but I doesn't say from what to what the knot is tied. That's why he can say « a knot from what to what, I can't say given that I don't know ». But it is because it is this knot that allows the production of enjoyment in its articulation.

So then, to speak with one's body stepladder, is to pass through the streams of speech that are supported by the dimension of meaning. Meaning here is to be understood according to the last teaching of Lacan as speech of enjoyment and enjoyment of speech that will engender the universals. No sublime visions à la Plato, or of neuro-Darwinism à la Jean-Pierre Changeux who wants to create, by the means of biology, the pure subject of the Beautiful, the True and the Good, defined and guaranteed by the simple matching of thought with the world. That too is a contra-skeptic argument. From Changeux's perspective, that wants to make it so that representations are the guarantees, which inescapably lead us to the Beautiful, the True and the Good, they are guaranteed not by imprints, but by biological selection in its interaction with the world. « When it interacts with the outside world, our brain develops and functions according to a variation-selection model, sometimes called 'Darwinian'. According to this pattern [...] the variation, the genesis of a diversity of internal forms precedes the selection of the adequate form. The 'representations establish themselves in our brain, not simply by 'imprint', like on a wax sheet, but indirectly, following a process of selection[27] ». From this perspective, the laws of reason coincide with the world by a long process of selection that could have made it so that the laws would have been different if the world had been different.

Neither one, nor the other; neither visio, nor neuro: to speak with one's body stepladder

supposes a particular enjoyment that is felt with the body. The enjoyment of speech.

Translated by Julia Richards

- [1] Freud, S., *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Standard Edition, vol 14.
- [2] Freud, S., "Civilised" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness, SE, vol 9.
- [3] Miller, J.-A., « From Symptom to the Phantasy », Lesson of January 12, 1983, unpublished.
- [4] Miller, J.-A., « The 6 Paradigms of Jouissance », lessons of March 24, 31 and April 7, 1999, in *La Cause freudienne* #43, October, 1999.
- [5] Miller, J.-A., Course « Le partenaire symptôme », lesson of March 4th 1998, unpublished.
- [6] Ibidem.
- [7] Miller, J.-A. with P.G. Gueguen, *Fictions and the Partner-Symptom*, Course 1997-1998, lesson 17.Dec.1997, in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 9, London Society 2002 (out of print).
- [8] Lacan, J., Seminar XXIII, *The Sinthome*, p. 66: « The speaking-being adores its body because it believes it has one. In reality, it doesn't, but its body is its only consistency – mental consistency of course, because its body buggers off at every instant. » (not translated)
- [9] Lacan, J., *The Lacanian Phenomenon*, seminar of November 30th, 1974, in *Cahiers Cliniques de Nice*, juin 1998, offprint, 2011. (not translated)
- [10] Heidegger, M., « The Age of the World Picture » (1963), in *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York, Harper and Row, 1977.
- [11] ibidem
- [12] Lacan, J., *Encore*, Ch. X, Norton, 1999, p. 119
- [13] Hans Reichenbach, 1938, *Les trois tâches de l'épistémologie*, in *Philosophie des sciences - Théories, expériences et méthodes*, textes réunis par S. Laugier et P. Wagner, Vrin, 2004, p.307.
- [14] Lacan J., *Ecrits*, « In Response to Jean Hippolite's Commentary (1954) », Norton, London 2006, p. 323-325.
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Lacan, J., *The Lacanian Phenomenon*, seminar of November 30th, 1974, Op. cit.
- [17] Lacan, J., *Ecrits*, *Response to Jean Hyppolite's Commentary on Freud's "Verneinung"*, Norton, London, 2006, p. 324
- [18] Ibid.
- [19] Lacan, J., « Joyce le symptôme », in *Autres Ecrits*, p. 565. (not translated)
- [20] Article « Noumène » in *Les Notions philosophiques*, dictionnaire 2, PUF, 1990, p.1772.
- [21] Cousin V., *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, (1853).
- [22] Introduction de Michel Malherbe et Jean-Marie Pousseur à Bacon, *Novum Organum*, PUF, 1986, p.32.
- [23] Lacan, J., *Autres écrits*, p. 566 (not translated)
- [24] *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* [On the True, the Beautiful and the Good (Philosophy course taught at the Faculté des Lettres during the year 1818 by Victor Cousin on the foundation of the absolute ideas of the true, the beautiful and the good, published by Adolphe Garnier, original: *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, Paris 1836]
- [25] Macherey Pierre, in *Corpus* n° 18-19, « On Victor Cousin », p. 29-49, available on the site stt.recherche.univ-lille3.fr: "Cousin then reaffirmed, always following Royer-Collard, the necessity of trusting in common sense: « Modern philosophy was sceptical from the moment it did not admit

other natural evidence than that of consciousness and reasoning. The hypothesis of ideas is not a machine imagined to attack and topple the world, but on the contrary to elevate and defend it; it was not destined to destroy perception, but to supplement it, when perception had been destroyed, and to serve as a rampart against scepticism, a powerless rampart that does not replace the veritable, that which nature itself placed in the understanding of all men, that cannot be weakened by the sophism and which, when falling, necessarily carries with it all exterior realities". Here, we find again the echo of Reid's critics against the intellectual doctrine of representation and its "ideism" that he reproached for its subordinating the existence of the exterior world to rational criteria, and for thereby leading to a universal doubt: and to escape this risk, Reid had recommended re-establishing other forms of certitude, prerational in their principle. Cousin was using this argument again without adding anything. At most, did he complete it in this passage from his lesson, with a brief allusion to a "contemporary French metaphysicist". Maine de Biran, no doubt, whose conceptions, then still unknown to the general public, were then, for the first time made mention of in an official setting".

[26] Bakounine M., Dieu et l'Etat, 1882.

[27] Paul Ricœur, Jean-Pierre Changeux, Ce qui nous fait penser [What Makes Us Think], p.109, quoted in Catherine Malabou, Epigénèse et rationalité [Epigenesis and Rationality], PUF, 2014, p. 259.