

*Preface to the work of Robert Georgan* [Préface à l'ouvrage de Robert Georgan], Cahiers Cistre, 1977, Lacan, 2<sup>me</sup> Edition, Paris, *l'Age d'homme*, coll. « Cistre-essai », 1984, pp. 9-17.

Translated by Jack W. Stone

<sup>(9)</sup>It is on the reading of Freud that currently hangs the question of knowing if psychoanalysis is a science – or, let us be modest, can bring to science a contribution – or else if its praxis has none of the privileges of rigor it boasts of to pretend to lift the bad note of empiricism which has always discredited [*déconsidéré*] its givens as the results of psychotherapies. To justify also the very heavy apparatus it employs, in defiance it seems at times, and by its own admission, of the measurable yield.

One might assuredly from this point of view consider incredible the favor that it conserves, if precisely this was not there what no doubt translates that it is to be judged on other scales. Still these practitioners would have to know themselves of what it is a question, otherwise they cannot fail to succumb to the fate destined to any abusive privilege. If the question is not already decided, it is because effectively the domain they indicate, these practitioners, is that of the veritable source of effects called psychic, which is not at all that to which remain attached an academic teaching and a world of prejudices. The term psychology appears to us the most conducive to piling up all these mirages. Psychoanalysis survives from still holding back the promise of consigning its end.

What the psychoanalytic praxis preserves, what it involves by nature in changing the fundamentals of what is put in the capacity of the universal, is the unconscious. This unconscious which one speaks of without doing more than confiding in an imagery as ancient as it is crude, but which through Freud surged forth to designate something never said until him. What is suitable to articulate as being its structure is language. It is there that is the heart of what I teach. There also, in the most temperate form, which I maintain with that low voice where Freud signals the tone of reason, is what I <sup>(10)</sup> found at the departure of this return to Freud. It suffices to open Freud at no matter what page to be struck by the fact that it is only a question of language in what he discovers for us of the unconscious. We must depart from there to revise all that he advances in the progress of an experience of which he cannot, it is a sign, render account in a discourse marked by a veritable stylistic, which is to say all the registers more or less manhandled and devalued in the account that the psychoanalyst renders to himself of his practice, his theory of resistances or of the transference. He engenders for himself some incalculable consequences, which go from the ethics to politics, from the theory of science to the logic that sustains it.

If psychoanalysts show themselves so unequal to this problematic where however the paths are traced as if by themselves, it seems this is because of what they have to do on their strong terrain. It is remarkable that on this Freud had given proof of a lack of *naïvety* quite remarkable for a *savant*. The unconscious, from having been forced by us, he announced, is not going to delay re-closing itself. He meant something altogether precise there and this soon became all the worry of psychoanalysts. The unconscious no longer lets itself do as in Freud's time and it is there that is the great turning, the agonizing revision to what, in the thirties, had to bind their technique. What does this mean? It would be fun [*un jeu*] to evoke here one of those returns we know in different domains, think of antibiotics. But it is obvious that this would be to content ourselves with the sort of summary recourse to an immanent equilibrium which is at the root [*au principe*] of all obscurantism. Manifestly, Freud, in thinking of this, found no pretext to

go back to sleep. Let us recall that the style of Freud's interpretations, in the treatments he reports to us, dazzles. What they contain remains the material which for the psychoanalyst in a way attests to what he truly has business with, that which animates from having become almost familiar is as if perfused into common consciousness, but which also masks for him the unthinkable of what he aims for. That there is a relationship between the new resistance he encounters and the fact that the patient he has in his charge comes himself to propose to him the keys now found in the public domain, he does not doubt. If from then on he no longer tries to imitate Freud, he has reason [*il a raison*]. And even *raisin* [grapes], *raisin* that is too green, but not sufficient reason in hissing through his teeth set-on-edge "wild psychoanalysis." For it is little conformed to the inequality of what must be called information in the vulgar sense among those that he is going quickly, following this path, to re-objectivize, that he might have to oblige himself to uniformly convert his position toward the so-called analysis of resistances.

<sup>(11)</sup>I indicate in my *Écrits* what this comment signifies and in terms where certain psychoanalysts, who moreover do it knowing what they do, proclaim it a reintegration of psychoanalysis into the categories of general psychology. But faced with the swerving in its entirety of a field of observation, the question will pose itself everywhere where reigns the method called experimental of sheltering oneself from what one calls the subjective error. It is also that this expression would have here a whole other value. Do not ignore that he must have his own unconscious in order to be able not mistakenly to locate it operating in the weave of what the patient furnishes in the analytic artifice. It could be that the psychoanalyst would not be so unequal to the road he has taken of concentrating his fire on the resistances if he were not to misrecognize that it does not suffice to acquit oneself of this requirement by a didactic analysis, that the main resistance is manifested perhaps in his refusal to push the examination of the question of the unconscious beyond what one illuminates of the cavern by dropping a torch into it. This is not how you learn geology. Now, there is in Freud all we need to see that what he speaks of really are the walls of the cavern, it suffices not to remain at the descriptive level. This is all the more easy in that here the structure is integrated from the description itself since what the description serves are the effects of structure inasmuch as these effects pertain to language. In brief, for Freud, as for all those who had in thought a function of founders, reading him by itself has training value. The resistance that has made it so psychoanalysts have refused until me to glimpse this path, which however sticks as it were to the skin of his text, is sufficiently indicated in the anger this provokes since one cannot ignore that certain of them have entered there. Neither mental laziness nor sclerosis suffice to account for the ostracism brought to bear on what no doubt requires a new effort, but an effort also how very renovating. Psychoanalysis in France preferred breaking itself into several segments to taking its chance in a teaching that, in view of certain requirements of philosophical polishing classical instruction distributes there to school-children, has surely permitted psychoanalysis to breathe in this country. A trait reveals that it is indeed a question there of something linked to the refusal of the unconscious, it is that the didactic kinship, if I can say, the didactician who trained the psychoanalyst, remains perceptible there.

The grave theoretical degradation that marks the whole of the psychoanalytic movement, for one to know it, the institution is very useful, the psychoanalytic institution it is understood. It is a question there of its function of expression. Without the means it disposes of, the institution, one could not know how far that goes. The account rendered of the <sup>(12)</sup>international congresses, read that, I pray you. You will render yourselves an account in reading what one communicates there on Freud, for example. It is what I call anafreudianism, or Freudianism in Anna's usage of

it. You know what *anas* are, little histories that a proper name groups. For the profane, it is what will give him most nearly the level where the practice is also taken. Let us say that this practice [*elle*] does not manifest in the institution any disquieting sign of progress. My students are very kind, they conceal their laughter [*ils en rient sous cape*]. But they take comfort in testifying to the very open character of the discussion they have had, with such or such – a private discussion naturally. I engender benevolent spirits.

If it was not a question of the international association in the sense in which it would also group gastro-enterologists or psychologists, the question would not even pose itself. The question of the institution poses itself on another ladder, not that of the trade fair, but rather that of the family tree. And there, it is not performed, not on the stage of the world, but in the bosom of groupuscles made of knots where the branches of this tree are intertwined. It is a question of the transmission of psychoanalysis itself, from a psychoanalyst who is one, a psychoanalyst, to another, who becomes one or is introduced to being one. These groups still called "societies," which abound in the world, have the character in common of pretending to insure this transmission and of showing the most patent inadequacy in defining this psychoanalysis called didactic as to the modifications one expects for the subject. One knows that Freud posed this psychoanalysis as necessary, but in saying the result, one champs at the bit. For the didactician psychoanalyst, in the sense of authorized to do the didactics, it is useless even to hope to know what qualifies him. I say these things out loud, now that have I brought some solutions there ready to be put to work to make them change. For it is out of respect for this hidden poverty that I have shown so much obstinacy in slowing down the appearance of my labors, until their assemblage was sufficient. Perhaps this is still too much to presume for what of my teaching has passed into the common domain. But then, it is for it not to drown that I have devoted all of my patience. I must indeed make so long an effort. A proven group – that's the word – now assists me. The price I have paid for this is light, which does not mean that I have taken it lightly. Simply, I have paid the most extravagant of notes to not let myself be distracted by the peripeteias that one quite intentionally wanted to make me live through – let us say on the side of anafreudianism. These peripeteias, I have left them to those whom they distracted. Let us take this word in the heavy sense, where it means that they have had a need to distract themselves, to distract themselves from what they were called upon to do by me. I will perhaps one day bring <sup>(13)</sup> my testimony to that, not so much for history, in which I confide for its past, as for what the historiole, as Spinoza says, has of the instructive on the weave where it might have embroidered itself. On the sorts of holes to which this action among all the things called psychoanalysis predestine those who practice it. A game of snakes and ladders, if one can say so, where a sort of exploitation is supported that, from being usual for all the groups, takes on here a particular rule. I notice, it is curious, in speaking to you of it, that I would begin by an evocation of an odor, by what escapes from analysis, you see, for of course, that exists, the skirts of anafreudianism. Unless I would be writing of the man who had a rat for a head – for I have seen this, and not just me, in Stockholm.

Something is lacking in the analytic city. It has not reconstituted the order of virtues that would be necessitated by the status of the subject that it installs at its base. Freud wanted to make it on the model of the church, but the result is that everyone there is now in the state where Christian sculpture presents to us the synagogue, a blindfold over its eyes. Which, of course, is still an ecclesiastical perspective. One cannot aim at remaking the structure without continuing to have difficulty founding a collective there, since this is what hides it from common mortals.

The structure, yes, of which psychoanalysis imposes the recognition, is the unconscious. It seems stupid to remind oneself of it, but it is a lot less so, when one notices that no one knows what this is. This should not give us pause. We know no more of what nature is, which does not prevent us from having a physics, and of a reach without precedent, for it is called science. A chance however offered to us for what there is of the unconscious is that the science from which it emerges is certainly linguistics, first fact of structure. Let us say rather that it is structured because it is made like a language, because it is deployed in the effects of language. Useless to ask why, for it will answer you: it is to make you speak. Just as it happens that one uses it with children, in lodging oneself at its sign [*enseigne*], but without knowing how far the reach goes of what one believes only to be a perfectly good trick for getting oneself out of trouble. For one forgets that speech is not language and that language makes drolly speak the being that from then is specified by this distribution. It is obvious that my dog can speak and even that in doing so she addresses herself to me. But her lacking language changes everything. In other words, language is not reducible to communication.

One can start no doubt with one having to be a subject to make use of language. But this is to cross first what complicates the thing, to wit, that the subject cannot despite Descartes be <sup>(14)</sup>thought, if not as structured by language. Descartes deduces precisely that the subject is, just from the fact it thinks, but he omits that thinking is a logical operation from which he does not at all succeed in purifying the terms only for having evacuated from it any idea of knowledge. He elides that what is as subject is what thinks, open the quotation marks "therefore I am." But it happens that that [*ça*] thinks there where it is impossible that the subject articulate this "therefore I am." Because there it is excluded that it accede to what since Descartes has become its status under the term of consciousness of self. What is the status of the subject there where that thinks without knowing, not only what that thinks but even that that thinks? Without ever being able to know it, understand. What this suggests to everyone is that there, that *is* still more strongly, on the condition that someone other might know something of it. And as this is done since Freud, since that is what the unconscious is [*depuis c'est ça l'inconscient*], everyone is quite content. There is only one thing that goes wrong, it is that that cannot say in any fashion "therefore I am," which is to say name itself as being what speaks. A lover on the way back to philosophy – at least this is how he announces himself – leads the intuition of being back to, without finding anything better now than to attribute it to Bergson, who would have gotten the wrong sign, but not the wrong door – as however Bergson himself [*le même*] had once signified to him. We do not believe ourselves to have done with the intuition of being, it is never its last gasp [*couac*]. We might only establish here, with a tone that is not our own, but of he who evokes a Doctor Pantalon in the avatar that retains us, the whole procession of manifest impasses that are developed, with a conserved coherence, it must be said. One can count them if one refers oneself to it. This comedy simply recovers for us an absence still in logic of an adequate negation. I mean of those that would be proper to command a *vel*, I am choosing *vel* and not *aut* in Latin, a *vel* in posing the structure in these terms: either I am not, or I do not think [*ou je ne suis pas, ou je ne pense pas*] – of which the Cartesian cogito would give the intersection. I think logicians understand me and the equivoke on the word "ou" in French is by itself conducive to stitching there the structure of this topological indication: I think *where* [*où*], *there where* [*là où*] I cannot say that I am. *Where, there where* I must pose in every statement the subject of the enunciation as separated from being by a bar. More than ever, obviously, resurges there not the intuition, but the requirement of being. And this is what contents those who see no farther than the ends of their noses.

The unconscious remains the heart of being for some, and others believe themselves to follow me in making it the other of reality. The only way to get out of this is to pose that it is the real, which does not mean any reality, the real inasmuch as impossible to say, that is to say inasmuch as <sup>(15)</sup>the real is the impossible, quite simply. But impossible that one still be mistaken about what I am saying here. Can there be constituted in psychoanalysis the science of the impossible as such? It is in these terms that the question ought to be posed, since from its origin, Freud did not define psychoanalysis otherwise. This is also why after fifteen years to adapt this question for a certainly ungrateful audience, but because of this quite deserving, I come to articulate it by the function of the signifier in the unconscious. What I do however has the pretension of setting up a barrage, not to the Pacific, but to the guano which cannot fail with very little delay to cover over, as it always does, the fulgurant writing where the truth originates in its structure of fiction. I say that being is succeeded by the letter, which explains to us many more things, but that this will not last for long, if we are not careful. I abridge a lot in such words as these, one feels it.

My final words will serve me as a short-circuit for centering my response on literary criticism, for it is motivated that as such, this criticism be interested in the promotion of the structure of language, such as it is performed [*se joue*] in this time in science. But there is no chance that it will profit from it if it does not school itself in this extendable logic that I am trying to found. A logic such as might cover over this new subject to be produced, not inasmuch as it would be doubled as [a] being [*étant*] – a double subject is worth no more than the subject that believes itself to have the power to answer to everything, it is just as stupid and just as deceptive – but as a subject divided in its being [*être*]. Criticism, and literature as well, will find occasion to stumble there into the structure itself. It is because the unconscious necessitates the primacy of a writing that the critiques will slip into treating the written work as the unconscious is treated. It is impossible that the written work not offer at every instant what it takes to interpret it, in the psychoanalytic sense. But to offer oneself to this however little is to suppose it the act of a counterfeiter, since inasmuch as it is written, it does not imitate the effect of the unconscious. It poses its equivalent, no less real than it, in forging<sup>1</sup> it in its curvature [*courbure*]. And for the work the one who fabricates it is also a counterfeiter, from the act even of understanding it in the process of being made, like Valéry in addressing the new sophisticates of between-the-wars. Treating the symptom as a palimpsest is in psychoanalysis a condition of efficacy. But this does not say that the signifier that lacks for giving the trait of truth has been effaced, since we start when we know what Freud says, from its having been repressed and it is there that is the point of call of the inexhaustible flow of significations precipitated into the hole it produces. Interpreting consists certainly in, this hole, closing it. But the interpretation no<sup>(16)</sup> more has to be true than false. It has to be exact [*juste*], which in the final analysis is going to silence this call of sense, contrary to the appearance of it seeming to be whipped in the contrary direction. I just said it, the literary work succeeds or fails, but not in imitating the effects of structure. It only exists in the curvature which is that itself of the structure. This is not there an analogy. The curvature in question is no more a metaphor of the structure than the structure is the metaphor of the reality of the unconscious. It is the real of it and it is in this sense that the work does not imitate anything. It is, as fiction, a truthful structure. Read what I put at the head of my volume on Edgar Poe's "The Purloined Letter." Let us clarify this with what I articulate there of the effect that a letter

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<sup>1</sup> The French verb used here, *forger*, does not have the connotation of falsification that "forging" sometimes has in English – the French verb for forging in the sense of producing a forgery would be *contrefaire*. *Forger* means forging in the sense of forging or forming an object in a foundry, for example. [translator].

owes to its trajectory alone from making veer into its shadow the faces even of its detainers. This without anyone, one can say, having an idea of what it envelopes of sense, since no one worries about that. The person herself from whom it has been stolen not having had time to read it, as is indicated for probable. What would it add to the tale to imagine its tenor? Remember also the fashion in which I designated in my analysis of the first scene of *Athalie* what is still recognized in my school under the term *point de capiton*. The line of my analysis was not to search the recesses of the heart of Abner, or of Joad, no more than of Racine, but to demonstrate the effects of a discourse whereby a resistance fighter, who knows his politics, succeeds in hooking a collaborator in the mood to make up for his past deeds, to the point of leading him himself to make his great patroness fall into the trap, with in sum exactly the same effect on the audience no doubt as the play where Sartre makes spout as far as the portrait of Pétain the insults of his own militiamen, before an audience who still blessed the aforesaid in their heart of hearts for having spared them the spectacle of these things while they happened. It is a question there of course of the modern tragedy that wields [*joue de*] the same purge of horror and pity as the ancient, of course, but in turning them away from the victim onto the executioner – as much as to say to insure the sleep of the just. This to say that both Racine and Sartre are exceeded no doubt in their intention, but as to what exceeds it, they do not have to answer, but only this genre which is called the theater, and is quite truthful in that it demonstrates to the audience, and quite crudely, how one plays it [*la joue*<sup>2</sup>]. Me also, I am exceeded by my intention when I write. But if it is legitimate to interrogate me as an analyst, when one is in analysis with me, on my teaching effort from which all of them as many<sup>(17)</sup> as they are scratch their heads, it is for none a critique, none a legitimate mode of approach to my statements nor to my style, except from situating if they are in the genre from which they emerge. Perhaps in hearing me they might gain some rigor – with my esteem [*considération*].

Jacques LACAN

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<sup>2</sup> The verb *jouer* has multiple context-dependent usages and meanings in French, and it seems to me that Lacan's usage of it here is equivocal. The feminine article *la* – used here as a pronoun – could take as its antecedent either *assistance* [audience] or *intention*. It could mean either "perform" or "dupe," among other possibilities [translator].