

THE CARTEL AND THE DESIRE OF THE SCHOOL¹

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The relation between the *experience* of the cartel and the *experience* of the School continues to be a red thread that orients me as delegate for cartels for the NLS. It is a question that has undergone various twists and turns as my own experience of the cartel and the School continues.

Presently I am caught up in desire so to speak, captured by a statement of Daniel Roy, that : *Desire is explosive matter*. It is an evocative and enigmatic signifier that warrants interrogation and for my part, I will attempt to say something about the *matter* in terms of the *Cartel and the Desire of the School*.

In considering the *matter of desire* and a link with the cartel and School, it immediately suggested what I term here as Lacan's explosive desire. We could say that it was his "explosive desire" that, not only cemented his fate in the IPA which ended with his Excommunication as he termed it in 1963, but from that same incendiary desire sprang the creation of the School and the device of the cartel in 1964. Can we say *The Founding Act* is a testimony of a singular desire in action, in act, the artefact of an explosive desire, both in its intension and its extension?

Lacan says something very particular in the opening of *The Founding Act* and I quote, "As alone as I have always been in my relation to the psychoanalytic cause [...]"². I want to emphasize this, as it is crucial with respect to what kind of desire is at stake in respect of the cartel and the School.

In founding the School, Lacan accomplished something quite paradoxical : he created a community. Via his invention, Lacan institutes "a collective formation"³ that paradoxically operates, as Miller names it, as a "lonely crowd"⁴ of solitudes, a new form of social bond⁵. One by one ... but one by one

*with others wheresoever and whensoever the cartel is invoked and inscribed. Eric Laurent, in his paper *The Real and the Group*, specifies that if the School is the "base of operations against the discontents of civilisation", the cartel is the "base of an institution for psychoanalysis"⁶. In other words, there is no School without the cartel. The life of the School passes via the cartel, which is why it is considered one of the organs of the School : it aspirates desire.*

This juxtaposition of the singular and the collective, the community of solitudes that constitutes

the School, operates at the very heart of the cartel itself. What creates and animates the cartel is the task and object of work. As Laurent specifies, the cartel "[...] is an instrument in the struggle against blind universalism."⁷ In other words, the cartel must both operate to support the singular desire of each cartel and one-by-one in their dedicated work whilst at the same time uphold and mobilise the coming together of a group under a common cause, that of psychoanalysis. Quite a feat, and clearly here we can find the echoes of what is at stake in the founding of the School itself that puts psychoanalysis as its cause.

As with the School, the cartel is not grouped around a "for all" but rather a *not-all*. This is a crucial

point. The cartel circulates around a void, a hole in knowledge, a lack which evokes paradoxically a presence, that is desire. But as Lacan specifies, the desire at stake in psychoanalysis is not a pure desire. Desire is not democratic. So how to work with such explosive matter via the cartel ? Can we say that there are multifarious forms of desire at stake here?

This is perhaps where we encounter another signifier, that of *consent*. We know that in a psychoanalysis or indeed any treatment, showing up



and speaking does not by necessity equate either to a treatment being carried out nor even to a consent for treatment. There must be a demand, so how to produce a demand? What kind of consent may be said to operate in a psychoanalytic treatment? Can we say it is a consent to encounter one's own unconscious? Transference contorts and transforms subjective demand, in the direction of the *subject-supposed-to-know*, to one which takes the unconscious as its object: transference moves from the subject supposed to knowledge to the unconscious knowledge that inhabits the subject.

Might we say that it is this consent that operates at the heart of the cartel? I think it is an important question. Does one *consent* to be a part of a cartel, to be a cartelisand amongst others and consent to the possibility of an encounter with one's own unconscious via the object of the cartel? It is via the pathway of this consent perhaps that the formative effects of the cartel can emerge for each one. The cartel, let us not forget, is one of the pillars of formation in our school. It is in part via the ingenuity of the structure of the cartel that the desire for psychoanalysis may be subjectivised.

But let us not get lost in the delusion of the ideal here with respect to the cartel. Of course, such encounters do not always occur. There is another presence that the hole of the cartel evokes, and this pertains to *jouissance*. I will refer once more to Laurent's text entitled *The Real and the Group*. As he points out, the cartel "[...] is an instrument in the struggle against blind universalism". What this implies is a dismantling of or separation from the master discourse. This is in part the cause of psychoanalysis and its direction in the treatment itself, but it paradoxically implies that each one must encounter and pass through the master signifiers that attach or fixate each one to those singular S_1 s that designate them and through which *jouissance* operates. This is also the case in the *experience* of the cartel.

Laurent says it very well in terms of the cartel and the master discourse; "[...] these small groups, which through their work will have to struggle against the malaise of an identification with the master. They will have to remedy this malaise of 'having to go through his signifiers'"⁸

It is this "going through" that is supported by the function of the *Plus one*, which is not the function

of the leader, but rather an analytic one. The *Plus one* occupies the position of one who interprets, that is interprets the inevitable group effects that will materialise. The place of interpretation here is in terms of mobilising the work of the cartel, supporting cartelisands to focus on the work of the cartel rather than its dynamic⁹.

I want to attempt to align this point, if I can, with something Miller says in his seminal text *The Turin Theory of the Subject of the School* regarding interpretation. Miller specifies that Lacan's founding of the School is itself an interpretation. Desire is interpretation. Miller also evokes Lacan's opening declaration in *The Founding Act*¹⁰ "[...] as alone as I have always been in my relation to the psychoanalytic cause [...]". Here, says Miller, Lacan places centre stage the solitude "[...] of a subject in relation to a cause to be defended and promoted"¹¹. Miller points out that via his founding act, Lacan institutes a "collective formation" and at the moment of so doing, he aims at the subjective solitude of all those gathered to form the community of the School. He does so with these first words: "as alone as I have always been [...]". In other words, this is not the founding of a community of *like-minded* individuals with the same desire, gathered together by an ideal directed toward a leader. Rather what is founded is a collective formation of solitudes, whose singular desires revolve around and have a relation to an ideal, an ideal that is the psychoanalytic cause. Miller is clear that this ideal must operate in order to sustain the community of the School. However Lacan's interpretation in respect of subjective solitude and the analytic cause, "sends each one back to the relation that each one has with the Master signifier of the Ideal beneath which he situates himself"¹². This interpretation, of Miller makes manifest the way in which the structure of the cartel and the function of the *Plus One* was there from the very first. There from the moment of the founding of the School via Lacan's Act, and one is inextricably knotted to the other.

So can we say then that an *experience* of the cartel is an *experience* of the School? Maybe that is something we can speak about together today.

In closing, I would like to refer to a particular statement of Miller's in the same text. Miller formulates that the School is a subject that can and must be interpreted. He also states that "[a] School in formation is a dynamic unit [...]"¹³ These two phrases struck me when considered together: a

school as a subject in formation. A school founded by the enactment of singular desire as oriented by the psychoanalytic cause will never, by the very definition of Lacanian desire, reach its end point. In other words, *the School does not exist*, but rather comes into being each time the “lonely crowd” : the *ones* of the collective formation, the *dedicated workers* mobilise their singular desires as oriented by the psychoanalytic cause. The School as a subject in formation then is a subject borne from desire, and remains so on the basis of “sustained elaboration in small groups”¹⁴. In this way, the desire of the School is at the centre of the cartel. *Desire is explosive matter.* So I would like to add, I if may, that if this is the case, may we say then that the cartel is its incendiary device ?

1. This text was presented at the cartel day of the London Society, on 2nd of October 2021.
2. Lacan, J. (1964). “The Founding Act”. Available at <https://www.amp-nls.org/orientation/founding-act-1964/>. See also « Acte de fondation » (1965 [juin 1964]), *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris 2001, p. 229.
3. Miller, J.-A. (2010/2019). “The Turin theory of the subject of the School”, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks n° 33, The real and the social bond*, p. 96.
4. Miller, J.-A. (2010/2019), “The Turin theory ...”, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
5. Cf. Frank Rollier’s text in 4+one : The formula of a new mode of social bond. *4+One The NLS Cartels’ Newsletter n° 16*. Also Laurent, É., “The real and the group”, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks n° 33, The real and the social bond*, p. 65.
6. Laurent, É. “The real and the group”, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 69.
8. *Ibidem*, p. 76.
9. *Ibidem*.
10. Lacan, “The Founding Act”, *op.cit.*
11. Miller, J.-A. (May 2000), “The Turin theory ...”, *op. cit.*, 33, p. 96.
12. *Ibidem*.
13. *Ibidem*, p. 89.
14. Lacan, “The Founding Act”, *op.cit.*