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Double negation: Sexuation, Truth and the Real : 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 : Yaron Gilat

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Towards the XXIV NLS Congress, Varité, Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis, in Paris on June 27-28, 2026.

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From: NLS Messenger [New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis /Messenger]

Subject: Varité / Variety #8

Date: 28 January 2026 at 08:06:44 GMT

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Mistake, Lie and Evasion

# Double negation: Sexuation, Truth and the Real

By Yaron Gilat

"There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie. But one runs after it all the same,"<sup>[1]</sup> is a phrase by Jacques Lacan, from the preface to the English language edition of seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, written in 1976. Formulated via the logical device of double negation, this sentence corresponds with one of the formulas of sexuation, on the feminine side: "There exists no x that is not under the phallic function," or in other words "there is no one who is not castrated." Once more: double negation.

Instead of stating the proposition in a positive form (every x is y), Lacan adopts a different formulation (there is no x that is not y), in order, not to support the universal and to present it as merely possible, [but] not necessary.<sup>[2]</sup> Lacan could have said that every x falls under the phallic function, but he rather chose to phrase it using the

device double negation. At first glance, there seems to be no difference in meaning between the two formulations, but this is deceptive. Double negation makes it possible to extricate from the universal in favour of something open, not whole. Feminine sexuality, in containing a double negation, opens onto the contradictory logic of the impossible real.<sup>[3]</sup> Thus, women dwell closer to the real of the drives because they are not defined as being wholly in the symbolic order of the group(s).<sup>[4]</sup>

By means of double negation, we approach the edge of what can be said about x, the limit; this limit is the boundary of language. Double negation touches the edge of what can be said in language; it reaches the limit of what can be expressed, approaching the place where one can say no more, where language begins to fail – the real. And it is no coincidence that Lacan defined this same real as something that never ceases not to be written<sup>[5]</sup> and as the lack of the lack<sup>[6]</sup> – both being forms of double negation.

Double negation positions woman in the “pas tout” – not whole, beyond the phallic function. Hence, their proximity to the impossible real. And, in the same way, double negation leaves truth itself as incomplete, not encompassed by the universal. In this sense, “no truth that [...] does not lie”<sup>[7]</sup> does not merely mean that every truth lies, but that truth is not whole – that she remains open, not final, perhaps even extending toward the infinite – yet with a proximity to the impossible real, without being identical to or equated with it.

1. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, New York: Norton & Company, 1978, p. vii. ↑

Gilat, “There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie. But one runs after it all the same,”

Preface to the English-language edition of Seminar XI : 17<sup>th</sup> May 1976 : Jacques Lacan, see [www.LacanianWorks.org](http://www.LacanianWorks.org) /4 Jacques Lacan (19760517 or Index of Jacques Lacan’s texts). P.vii of Alan Sheridan’s translation, When the space of a lapsus no longer carries any meaning (or interpretation), then only is one sure that one is in the unconscious. One knows. But one has only to be aware of the fact to find oneself outside it. There is no friendship there, in that space that supports this unconscious. All I can do is tell the truth. No, that isn’t so—I have missed it. There is no truth that, in passing through awareness, does not lie. But one runs after it all the same.

2. Ragland, E., *The Logic of Sexuation*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.61. ↑
3. *Ibid.* ↑
4. Ragland, E., *The Logic of Sexuation*, *op. cit.*, p.86. ↑
5. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. B. Fink, New York: Norton, 1998, p. 59. ↑

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Session of Seminar XX Aristotle and Freud-the other satisfaction : 13<sup>th</sup> February 1973 : Jacques Lacan, [www.LacanianWorks.org](http://www.LacanianWorks.org) /4 Jacques Lacan (19730213 or Index of Jacques Lacan's texts), pVI 12-13 of Cormac Gallagher's translation, Yes, I am teaching here something positive, as they say. Except that it is expressed by a negation. And why would that not be as positive as anything else? The necessary, what I propose stress for you in this style, that which does not cease to what? Well then precisely, to be written. It is a very good way to distribute at least four modal categories. I will explain that to you another time, but I am giving a little bit more of it this time. What does not cease not being written, is a modal category which is precisely not the one that you would have expected to be opposed to the necessary. Which would have been rather the contingent: but picture to yourselves that the necessary is conjugated to the impossible. And this *does not cease not to be written*, is the articulation of it. But let's leave it.

The necessary in so far as it does not cease to be written, the fact is that what is produced, is the enjoyment that is not required/failed. This is the correlate of the fact that there is no sexual relationship. And it is the substantial of the phallic function.

6. Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: op. cit.*, p, ix. ↑

Gilat, And it is no coincidence that Lacan defined this same real as something that never ceases not to be written<sup>[5]</sup> and as the lack of the lack<sup>[6]</sup> – both being forms of double negation.

Preface to the English-language edition of Seminar XI : 17<sup>th</sup> May 1976 : Jacques Lacan, see [www.LacanianWorks.org](http://www.LacanianWorks.org) /4 Jacques Lacan (19760517 or Index of Jacques Lacan's texts). Pix of Alan Sheridan's translation, I have done so by virtue of having produced the only conceivable idea of the object, that of the object as cause of desire, of that which is lacking.

The lack of the lack makes the real, which emerges only there, as a cork. This cork is supported by the term of the impossible—and the little we know about the real shows its antinomy to all verisimilitude.

7. *Ibid*, p, vii. ↑

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