

The Actual Cause of Psychical Reality

Today, I will try to illustrate a change in Lacan's teaching, a change which I think has consequences in the very practice of analytic experience. It concerns the passage from the Other of the signifier, as the determining factor for the subject, to the body as the Other of the subject. Another way to illustrate this passage is to say that in his last teaching Lacan abandons the *two* in favour of the *One*.

It is with the Seminar entitled, ...or Worse and the jaculation *Y a de l'Un*, [which has been translated into English as either "There is something of the One" or "There's such a thing as One"], that the last period of Lacan's teaching begins. In the course of this Seminar, he will ask what One means, where it comes from, and how and why there is the One. To begin with, he compares the One to the signifier and the master signifier, but then, in a second moment, he asserts that the One has to do with something else. He clarifies that he is talking about the One as real. For Lacan, the One is the basis of repetition. Thus, he distinguishes the One of S1 from the One of repetition: "~~The One at issue, which the subject produces—an ideal point, let's say—in analysis, is, contrary to what is at issue in repetition, the One as One by itself.~~"⁴

The One has no relation to Being. When it's expressed, what stands out is that there is no two, in other words, there is no sexual relation. What Lacan finally comes to state is: "Il n'existe que de l'Un"—" Only the One exists ".² In this seminar, he points out that the signifier is cut off from the signified. He says precisely that "the signifier is distinguished in this, that it has no signification".³ This is the end of determination and the beginning of contingency. S1 is cut off from S2: S1 // S2.

Indeed, Lacan will evoke the S1 all alone, caught up in repetition—constitutive of the sinthome—and no longer connected to S2. He rejects [récuse] the two of the signifying chain in favour of the One of jouissance, the One All alone. Jacques-Alain Miller illustrates this change, in the blurb on the Seminar's back cover in a very pertinent way. I quote: "Lacan had taught the primacy of the Other in the order of truth and the order of desire. Here he teaches the primacy of the One in its real dimension. He rejects the Two of sexual relation and that of signifying articulation. He rejects the Big Other, the fulcrum of the dialectic of the subject, disputing its existence, which he consigns to fiction. He deprecates desire and promotes jouissance."

In his last teaching, Lacan's focus goes to this side before the Other, the hither side, in French *en deçà de l'Autre*. He is more interested in the sinthome, which he lodges in the One, than in the discourse of the Other. Initially, what governs the determining effects for the subject is the symbolic, the law of the symbolic chain. Causality and determination are on the side of the symbolic. But this symbolic determination is shaken by contingency. Lacan's *imprudence*, according to Miller, was "to make the subject the variable of the signifier, of a signifier which

¹ LACAN Jacques, ...or Worse, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XIX*, Cambridge: Polity, 2018), p.145

² *Ibid.*, p. 176

³ *Ibid.* p. 201.

pulls its strings, in fact, to the point that, depending on the way the signifiers are arranged, the state of the subject is determined".⁴

Lacan's very last teaching is a subversion of the dictum that *a signifier represents a subject for another signifier*. We cannot assert that the subject is represented by the signifier because in order to assert this we need two signifiers and between these two, S1 and S2, there is a gap. Between S1 and S2, there is no longer an arrow but a bar. The signifier is no longer the determining mainspring, it is chance that pushes us this way or that.

In fact, Lacan approached the category of contingency as early as Seminar XI. It was through Aristotle's *tuché* and *automaton* that he first tried to approach the traumatic encounter with the real. If the *automaton* constitutes the network of signifiers, the *tuché* is the encounter with the real. Lacan situates the real beyond the automaton. Thus, as he says in his seminar: "what is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs—~~the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to tuché—as if by chance.~~"⁵

He specifies that the function of the *tuché*, the encounter with the real, an encounter always missed, was first presented in the history of psychoanalysis in the form of trauma. Trauma is an absence of meaning, a hole in language, an unassimilable real. The encounter with the real is outside meaning and it is precisely this lack of meaning, this hole in the signifier that constitutes trauma. ~~In this seminar, he distinguishes the cause from the law and believes that when we speak of the cause, there is something that is anti-conceptual and undefined.~~

With *tuché* and *automaton* we distinguish two different modes of repetition. That of the *automaton* where what is repeated is the same and that of *tuché* where there is no law. *Automaton* incarnates the symbolic order, while *tuché* relates to the real, to the real without law. What we are dealing with with *tuché* is a repetition or rather an *iteration*, which punctures the homeostasis of the symbolic order.

Miller offers us three instances of the cause: the imaginary cause, the symbolic cause and the real cause. Lacan abandoned imaginary causality for symbolic causality, until he caught sight of real causality. Imaginary causality, where the image is the cause, has as its pivot the text "Remarks on psychic causality". At the heart of imaginary causality is the image as an imago, identification, and the ego. As Miller states: "The imago is the image as charged with causality and the name of imaginary causality is identification. The image as imago has the power to capture, to capture the psyche which, at that time, is what Freud calls the ego, and that Lacan precisely accounts for with "The Mirror Stage", that is to say by a construction which sets out on the basis of the image".⁶

In symbolic causality, Miller articulates the signifier, the words which marked the subject with the contingency both of the signifying event and of the meaning attributed to this event by the subject: "Symbolic causality shows how the succession or accumulation of speech events as accidents, that is to say as arising from contingency, crystallize and articulate in a structure of truthful fictions or lying truths".⁷

⁴ MILLER Jacques-Alain, *Le tout dernier Lacan* (2006-2007), enseignement prononcé dans le cadre du département de psychanalyse de l'Université Paris VIII, cours inédits, cours du 16 mai 2007

⁵ Lacan, Jacques, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London, Penguin, 1977), p. 54

⁶ MILLER Jacques-Alain, *L'Être et l'Un* (2011), enseignement prononcé dans le cadre du département de psychanalyse de l'Université Paris VIII, cours inédits, cours du 18 mai 2011

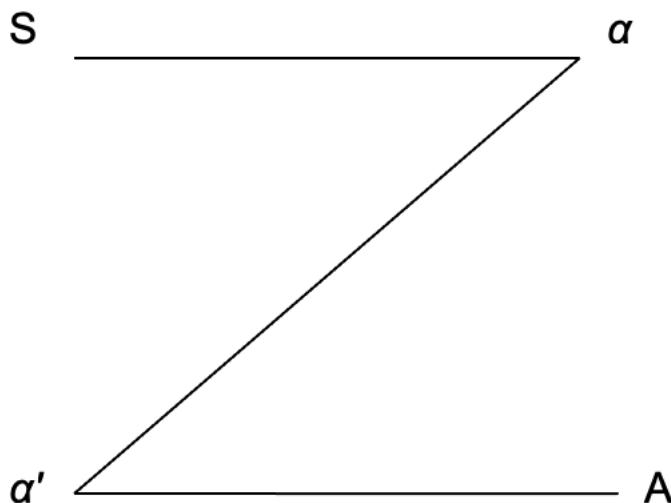
⁷ *Ibid.*

Thus, if imaginary causality has the imago for its effect, the result of symbolic causality is the fantasy. Following this construction, Miller asserts that the central effect of real causation is the sinthome. At the centre of real causality we find the formulation '*il y a de l'Un*', [translated variously as: *there is something of the One*; *there's such a thing as One*]. This is what Miller says about it in his seminar *Being and the One*: "Lacan's last teaching is precisely ordered by the pure datum that either *there is* or *there is not* and above all by this *there is such a thing as One* - which constitutes a sensational reduction of the symbolic, and in particular of articulation in order to distinguish, [...] iteration: iteration as the kernel, as the core, as what remains of articulation".⁸

It is this causality that relates to the striking of the body by the signifier and what Miller calls the initial shock which is in fact an event of the body. It concerns the contingent encounter with jouissance, an encounter which is always traumatic and which involves the body. But before approaching this initial shock, a shock around which the fantasy is woven as a defence, I will say a few words about causality in Lacan's previous teaching.

In Lacan's teaching, we move from the Other as prerequisite to the primacy of jouissance. Which is not without consequences. Jacques-Alain Miller maintains that the seminar, *The Sinthome*, illustrates the primacy of the real. It is not the signifier that comes first but the real, to which the signifier is added.⁹

But let's start with Lacan's first teaching. In *The Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis*, the condition of the subject is determined. Through Schema L, Lacan tries to demonstrate that "the condition of the subject, S (neurosis or psychosis), depends on what unfolds in the Other, A."¹⁰



In this diagram which inscribes the relation of the subject to the Other, the position S is what he calls the ineffable and stupid existence of the subject; a is his objects; a' [prime] is his ego;

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, cours du 25 mai 2011

¹⁰ Lacan, Jacques, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis", *Écrits* (London: Norton, 2006), p. 458.

while capital A is the place in which the question of the subject's existence arises. The question of the subject's existence is therefore articulated in the Other.

In his "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom", Lacan indicates that the way in which a subject has been desired is decisive. He then asserts that there are subjects who were unwanted and that the effects of this, last a long time in their lives. Even if a subject was not desired to begin with but was accepted afterwards, he or she will keep the mark of not having been desired until a certain date. ~~Thus, he asserts, I quote: "Parents model the subject in this function which I call symbolism. Which means strictly, not that the child is in any way the principle of a symbol, but that the way in which a mode of speaking has been instilled in him can only bear the mark of the mode under which the parents have accepted him".~~¹¹

Lacan considers the desire of the Other as determining for the subject's future. Ever since his "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation", he had opened the question of the determination of desire by the effects, on the subject, of the signifier. In this text, he says: "His existence is already pleaded innocent or guilty before he comes into the world, and the thin thread of his truth cannot help but have him already weave a fabric of lies".¹² The desire of the Other is of crucial importance for the future of the child. His or her existence is even determined before its birth.

In fact, this place of the object is the initial position of any subject. As Lacan specifies in 1970, "each one of us is initially determined as object small a".¹³ Whether he moves from this position or not depends upon the unfathomable decision of the subject. Lacan posits that the cause is subjective, as he affirms that "all causality evinces the subject's involvement".¹⁴ The subject takes a stand. But signifying causality does not depend on the subject. The subject does not choose the Other, he encounters the Other and like any encounter, it is contingent.

It is important to emphasise the subject's consent with regard to their position. "One is always responsible for one's position as a subject",¹⁵ says Lacan. But it should be noted that in his last teaching Lacan adds a limit to this responsibility: the know-how or *savoir-faire* that each of us has. As he states in *The Sinthome*: "One is only responsible within the limits of one's *savoir-faire*".¹⁶ Which implies that in this responsibility, there is another subjective factor which is involved—the know-how of each one.

At the end of his teaching, the dimension of the desire of the Other is also decisive. But here, Lacan links this desire with trauma and misunderstanding, that is to say with language itself. A few months before his death, he announces: "Concerning trauma, there is no other: Man is born of misunderstanding". And he adds, "There is no other birth trauma than being born as desired. Desired, or not - it is more of the same, since it is through the parlêtre." ¹⁷ In his last teaching, the desire of parents is decisive because it is itself connected with language and the trauma it provokes.

¹¹ LACAN Jacques, "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom", *Analysis*, 1 (1989), p. 13.

« Conférence à Genève sur le symptôme » (1975), *Le bloc-notes de la psychanalyse*, n° 5, 1985, p.11

¹² Lacan Jacques, "Remark on Daniel Lagache's Presentation", *Écrits*, (London, Norton, 2006), p. 547 .

¹³ LACAN Jacques, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII, London: Norton, 2007, p. 160.

¹⁴ Lacan, Jacques, "The Freudian Thing", *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 346

¹⁵ Lacan, Jacques, "Science and Truth", *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 729.

¹⁶ LACAN Jacques, Le séminaire livre XXIII (1975-1976), *Le sinthome*, Paris, Seuil, 2005, p.61

¹⁷ LACAN Jacques, « Le malentendu » (1980), *Ornicar ?, Revue du champ freudien*, n° 20/21, 1980, p.12

In his very last teaching, Lacan brings out the trauma of language. In his seminar on the One-blunder, *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, he considers lalangue to be obscenity and assures us that when an analysand talks about his parents, what he really talks about is lalangue. So he says, I quote: "What the analyst knows is that he [the analysand] only speaks at one remove from the truth, because the truth is what he does not know. Here, Freud is just delusional enough, because he imagines that the true is what he calls the traumatic kernel."¹⁸ As the subject approaches their traumatic kernel, as they evoke something close to their traumatic kernel, what is in question is lalangue. And this is exactly where the trauma is located: the little subject's encounter with lalangue.

It is in this sense that Lacan evokes, in his seminar *The Non-Dupes Err*, what he calls "troumatism", *trou* as in *hole* and so: "*holematism*". In the real, there is nothing to discover. The unconscious invents precisely because, in the real, there is a hole. And each parlêtre invents what they can to fill this hole. "Where there is no sexual relationship, that creates *holematism/troumatism*"¹⁹ says Lacan.

The very fact that one speaks leaves traces, the fact that one speaks has consequences. This is what the sinthome is: the consequence of man speaking. The unconscious is also a consequence of the fact that we speak. The problem is that language is a bad tool. The symbolic is an insufficient and inadequate means of grasping the real. It is from this symbolic deficiency that the speaking being suffers.

*

At the end of his teaching, Lacan no longer speaks of the pre-existence of the Other. From now on the Other emerges. What is already there is the One which has precisely no Other, the S1 all by itself. What fulfills the function of S2 is the body. In place of the Other, we have the body, the One-body. What was invested in the relationship to the Other is reduced to the original function of the relation to the body itself. As Miller tells us, "That there is no sexual relation is the consequence of the primacy of the One as it marks the body with an event of jouissance".²⁰

In fact, in Lacan's last teaching, what determines the parlêtre is jouissance. It is no longer a question of the signifier, but of the way in which language emerges and bites into the body of the parlêtre. What determines the parlêtre lies rather in a contingent encounter with jouissance. Thus, Lacan argues that "what creates the structure is the way in which language initially emerges in a human being. This is, in the final analysis, what allows us to speak of structure".²¹

In fact, the symptom of the parlêtre is an event of the body, an emergence of jouissance. Miller explains to us that the sinthome is linked to the body of the parlêtre: "The symptom emerges from the mark hollowed out by speech when it veers towards *saying* and becomes a body event".²² Thus he reminds us that the speaking body is at the juncture between the unconscious and the id, which means that the signifying chains are connected to the body and

¹⁸ LACAN Jacques, séminaire XXIV (1976-1977), *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, inédit, séance du 19 avril 1977

¹⁹ LACAN Jacques, séminaire XXI (1972-1973), *Les non-dupes errent*, inédit, séance du 19 février 1974

²⁰ MILLER Jacques-Alain, *L'Être et l'Un* (2011), *op.cit.*, cours du 4 mai 2011

²¹ LACAN Jacques, « Conférences et entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines » (1975), *Scilicet*, n° 6/7, Paris, Seuil, 1976, p.13

²² MILLER Jacques-Alain, « L'inconscient et le corps parlant », *La Cause freudienne*, n°88, p.111

are made of enjoying substance. In this sense, interpretation is a *saying* that targets the speaking body. "All analysts can do is attune themselves to the pulsation of the speaking body and insinuate themselves into the symptom."²³

There is therefore a side of the symptom, the *sinthome* which is detached from the unconscious and from the Other and which concerns the *jouissance* of the body. The *sinthome*, as "what is [most] singular to each individual",²⁴ is not a formation of the unconscious.

*

This shift in Lacan's teaching did not leave the *pass* untouched. The invention of the *pass* vectorized much of his teaching. Miller emphasises the growing insistence and urgency he felt to provide a doctrine for the end of analysis. But, at the end of his teaching, even the *pass* runs up against the wall of the real. Truth can only be half-spoken and tells us nothing of the real. And even if the fantasy is crossed, the symptom persists.

The 1967 *pass* gives the key to the deflation of desire, that is, it reveals that this desire was the desire of the Other. When the Other is left behind, desire loses its consistency. But there is an after. Once the subject has finished with the Other, he finds himself with what Freud called symptomatic remainders. What is in question here is the One of *jouissance*, *jouissance* as an event of the body and it is this that constitutes the *actual* cause, the *true* cause, the *real* cause of psychic reality—*la véritable cause*. What presented itself to Freud as a remainder is in fact what Miller calls the initial shock that lies at the very origin of the subject: "It is, in a way, the original event and, at the same time, a permanent event, one that is ceaselessly reiterated."²⁵

The *jouissance* of the symptom testifies to the fact that there was an event of the body after which the so called "natural *jouissance*" gets disturbed and deviated. "This *jouissance* is not primary" says Miller, "but it is primary with regard to the meaning the subject gives it, and gives it through his symptom in as much as it can be interpreted".²⁶

The root of the symptom is addiction. It is in fact the reiteration of the same One. It is the return of the same event. It would therefore be a question of aiming at the fixity of *jouissance*. In this sense, analytic interpretation would reduce the symptom to its initial formula, in other words "the material encounter between a signifier and the body, the pure shock of language on the body".²⁷ It is in this sense, it seems to me, that Lacan said during Seminar 23 that "the drives are the echo in the body of a fact of saying".²⁸

In the *pass* there is a conversion. We go from a being of desire to a being of knowledge. But beyond this conversion, *jouissance* remains. Even if the fantasy can reveal and cross the cause of desire, the being of *jouissance* remains rebellious to knowledge. That is to say that crossing the screen on which the phallic semblance was drawn does not resolve the question of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is indifferent to truth—it is attached to the body. Miller asserts that: "Jouissance is not articulated to the law of desire, it is of the order of trauma, shock,

²³ *Ibid.*, p.114

²⁴ LACAN Jacques, "Joyce the Symptom", *The Sinthome, the Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXIII* (1975-1976), *op.cit.*, p.147

²⁵ Miller, J. "Reading a Symptom", TLR 6 (2011), p. 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 152

²⁸ Lacan, J. *The Sinthome, Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXIII*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 9.

contingency, pure chance. It opposes itself term by term to the law of desire. Jouissance is not caught in a dialectic, it is the object of a fixation".²⁹

The revelation of the truth therefore leaves the real untouched. Beyond the crossing of the fantasy, and even after the fall of the object *a*, something of jouissance still remains and the subject must find a way to come to terms with it. In the end, fantasy is only a meaning given to jouissance by way of a scenario. And even when that meaning has dried up, jouissance remains. It is an opaque jouissance in a way that has nothing to do with the object *a*. What is at stake is a jouissance attached to the body.

Beyond the pass then, we are confronted with the pure reiteration of the One of jouissance in the real, which is precisely beyond the semantics of symptoms. "Our experience," Miller tells us, "now gets the analysand to grips with what of his jouissance does not make sense. It gets him to grips with what remains beyond the fall of the object *a*. It gets him to grips with the One of jouissance".³⁰ In the beyond-pass, we are dealing with the body event, that is to say with the jouissance that persists after the resolution of desire. We are now invited to circumscribe beyond the crossing of the fantasy, the trauma which is the encounter with jouissance. This side *before* [the *en deçà de*] repression is the domain of the *outre-passe*.

After crossing the fantasy what remains is the symptom, that is to say something irreducible that the subject knows-how-to-do with. As Lacan put it in 1976, "The end of analysis is finding a know-how-to-do with your sinthome [a *savoir y faire avec son sinthome*]".³¹ In this sense what it is at stake at the end of the analysis is to identify a certain number of points that are impossible for the subject.³² It seems to me that this is what Lacan speaks about in *The Moment to Conclude*, when he says: "The end of analysis, we can define it. The end of the analysis is when one has gone around twice, in other words, when one has discovered what one's trapped in. Going round twice may not be necessary. It is enough to see what one is the prisoner of".³³

In his "Preface to the English edition of Seminar XI", Lacan no longer speaks of truth and knowledge but of a satisfaction which marks the end of the analysis. The word satisfaction refers to jouissance. This jouissance is the conjunction of the One and the body. The *outre-passe* has to do with jouissance as a body event, with jouissance that persists beyond the resolution of desire. It is a matter of a remainder outside sense that the subject has to accommodate.

In the beyond-pass [*outre passe*] we are confronted with the hole and we thus operate in a field of language purged of meaning and signification. The real of the sinthome which it is a question of attaining is "the pure impact of the signifier on the body" [*la pure percussion du corps par le signifiant*].³⁴ Miller explains that rediscovering the initial impact/percussion implies a logical use capable of making meaning dry up.

²⁹ Miller, J.-A., *Being and the One*, *op. cit.*, 9 February 2011.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, cours du 30 mars 2011

³¹ LACAN Jacques, *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, *op.cit.*, séance du 16 novembre 1976

³² MILLER Jacques-Alain, *L'Être et l'Un*, *op.cit.*, cours du 2 mars 2011

³³ LACAN Jacques, *Le moment de conclure*, *op.cit.*, séance du 10 janvier 1978

³⁴ MILLER Jacques-Alain, *L'Être et l'Un*, *op.cit.*, cours du 25 mai 2011