

One plus One plus One plus One and one Plus-One

By Laurent Dupont

What distinguishes cartel production with its effect of meaning from other instances of teaching? Why does Lacan put it in the centre of his school?

There is, in symposiums, study days, seminars, lessons, a mass effect. A necessary, inevitable effect, addressed to the greatest number, that supports psychoanalysis, that makes it known, that makes it resonate, that diffuses it – but it is a mass effect all the same. If the One detaches itself from it, it is in the polling booth [*l'isoloir*] of his personal understanding – a word, a sentence, a moment strikes his body, there is an effect of meaning. He leaves happy again.

The cartel is profoundly different in that it calls for something: “Those who enter this School will undertake to fulfil a task that is subject to both internal and external supervision. In exchange they are assured that nothing will be spared in order that anything valuable they do gets the attention it deserves and in the appropriate place.”¹ The specificity is thus multiple, the work, the task is substituted for the effect, not without effect, but above all in so far as it supports the personal stake of each person. “The ethical, epistemological, alethic and praxeological requirement that Lacan makes us hear is supposedly fulfilled by a work, which is the work of the School, and this work goes via the cartel – not via the seminar, the lecture or the course.”²

Another difference refers to time. Compared with the seminar, the lecture or the course, the cartel takes place over a long time, working over two years (even if there are flash cartels, but that's something else). The group is restricted to 4 people at most, plus one.

What really makes 4 people different from 100 at a conference or over 3,000 at the ECF Study Days? Nothing, absolutely nothing, if the cartelisands passively receive from the plus one, the teaching they expect the cartel to provide.

So where is the specificity? “The plus-one of the cartel, who is the functional leader of a minimal group, does not entirely fulfill the demand for charisma. The plus-one is a leader, but a modest leader, a poor leader. The *agalma* that supports the plus-one is not dense. It is weakly invested.”³ The speaker at a seminar, a lecture, a class, at a study day is asked ... to put his body and his jouissance there. There is something of a plus there, a surplus enjoyment, *plus de jouir*, which must be felt and heard in order to make an impression on the listener. For the cartel, there is none of this; the plus-one must be *weakly invested*, he produces a minus, a lack, a certain function of desire.

But then, what good is a cartel if it is not a question of receiving the knowledge from the Other, the plus-one, of being nourished? “A careful reading of the Founding Act should leave no doubt: as Lacan intends it, the work of the School ‘restoring the truth ..., returning the

¹ Jacques Lacan, Founding Act, 21 June 1964, available online. Lacan presents here for the first time the principles of the cartel.

² Jacques-Alain Miller, “Le cartel au centre d’une école de psychanalyse”, intervention at the Study Days of the Cartels, 8 October 1994, ECF; transcribed Catherine Bonningue, first published in *La Lettre mensuelle*, No. 134.

³ *Ibid.*

praxis... to duty ... denouncing deviations and compromises...’ passes via the cartel.”⁴ And Lacan added, “No progress can be expected, other than by periodically bringing the results of the work to light as well as its moments of crisis.”⁵ It is not progress that is to be expected, but the results of the work and its moments of crisis. Thus, the production of the cartel is not a looped knowledge that would turn on itself like a Moebius strip, it is more modest: results and crises. In this sense, the cartel is close to the pass, in that it is at the foundation of the work of the School, as is also said of the Analyst of the School. “The pass, like the cartel, is, from the institutional point of view, an anti-didactic device. The School, with its cartel and its pass, is an organisation that aims to wrest psychoanalysis from didacticians.”⁶ The cartel refers to a singular production, it is a work which is not the work of many, the number is counted in relation to the One, each has their subject, the plus-one too, everyone has their topic of research. The number is there to make a counterpoint, to return the ball, to play ping-pong, but is neither communal nor sharing. It is only from this space of the One at work in one’s question that *deviations and compromises* can be identified and denounced.⁷ It is therefore with the other side of the plus-one that the cartelist engages, he goes there with his body to know something about *his* question – a practice likely to keep him at a distance from the group effect [*l’effet de masse*], with its *de facto* submission to the master’s discourse, exposing him to deviance and compromises.

The cartel remains an experience, an experience of the body, each One engaged with his own personal stake and something always emerges whose echo can be heard years later. For my first cartel, I had chosen as a subject a sentence from *Seminar XI*: “Rupture, split, the stroke of the opening, makes absence emerge – just as the cry does not stand out against a background of silence, but on the contrary makes silence emerge as silence.”⁸ Many years later, as I finish my work as an Analyst of the School (AS), I testified to speech as forcing an entry into silence [*effraction du silence*], reinterpreting the initial question after the event.

Translated by Janet Haney and John Haney

⁴ Jacques-Alain Miller, “L’Ecole à l’envers”, first published in *L’Envers de Paris*, No. 1.

⁵ Jacques Lacan, “D’écologie”, 11 March 1980. A text read by Lacan during his Seminar, available online at <http://www.causefreudienne.net/cartels-dans-les-textes/>

⁶ Jacques-Alain Miller, “Le cartel au centre d’une école de psychanalyse”, *op. cit.*

⁷ Jacques-Alain Miller, “L’Ecole à l’envers”, *op. cit.*

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Hogarth Press, London 1977, p. 26.