

Provoking the Crisis

By *Gil Caroz*

“No progress is to be expected, other than from periodically bringing the results to light as [...] crises in the work,”¹ says Lacan of cartels. That is to say, the results of a cartel have nothing in common with a dead knowledge, without a subject, that would make it part of the accumulations of academia. Indeed, a crisis has a fundamental relationship to knowledge. While it testifies to an impotence of the symbolic to temper a real, it periodically reminds “the human species [...] of its precariousness, its basic feeble-mindedness.”² The appearance of a hole in an already-constituted knowledge necessarily summons the subject. Driven to new elaborations, the cartel member surpasses himself and gains ground on his “not wanting to know”. Thus, the cartel, as the nuclear structure of the School, carries within it the initial trauma that led to its creation on the basis of a subjective crisis, namely, Lacan’s excommunication from the IPA. Since then, the School “progresses” from crisis to crisis, taking up the intimation of Jacques-Alain Miller that the psychoanalyst is “a friend to crisis.”³ If the crisis is occasionally a source of tears and pain, it is also a necessary step towards any new development, whether at an institutional, political, theoretical or subjective level.

An orientation towards the real in so far as it is without law, cannot do without a “periodic” crisis of the truth to make this real emerge. The series of “work crises” within the cartel allows the psychoanalyst in progress to practise being on the alert, ready to catch the ball when the cause appears as something that doesn’t work, that is outside the programme. It is here that, going hand in hand with the pass, the cartel participates in the formation of the psychoanalyst. If the end of analysis, the moment of the act, involves a crisis, it is already there from the very beginning, in the moment of urgency that pushes the subject towards an encounter with a psychoanalyst to say what he has never said before. “Nothing created appears without urgency; nothing in urgency fails to surpass itself in speech.”⁴

This formation by way of crisis is a necessity because it responds to a series of clinical phenomena. Triggering, decompensation and disconnection are three modes of crisis, if we consider they involve a vacillation of the symbolic, an emergence of a real, and then a restoration of a new symbolic form. Likewise, the tearing of the veil of fantasy is a moment of crisis that can lead the subject to the psychoanalyst. But once the subject enters analysis, the analyst will take responsibility for the crisis,

¹ Jacques Lacan, “D’écolage”, *Ornicar?*, 20-21, 1980. A text read by Lacan during his Seminar, available online at <http://www.londonsociety-nls.org.uk/index.php?file=Cartels.html>. [Despite the ellipsis in square brackets, this is one possible translation of Lacan’s sentence “*Aucun progrès n’est à attendre, sinon d’une mise à ciel ouvert périodique des résultats comme des crises du travail*”. Here “*comme*” is translated with the single word “as”, but it could equally be translated with the words “as well as”. Elsewhere, we have chosen to privilege the latter, but here we make an exception for Gil Caroz’s preferred translation, which corresponds to the reading he provides. The ambiguity is clear, the question is whether to privilege the one or the other, our solution was to translate the sentence in a way that could easily switch between the two by means of a simple use of ellipsis. TN]

² Jacques-Alain Miller, “La crise financière vue par Jacques-Alain Miller”, *Marianne*, 10 October 2008.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”, *Écrits*, Norton, NY/London, 2006, p. 201.

according to the case and the different circumstances of the cure. At times he will apply himself to mitigating the crisis as much as possible. At others, he will try to provoke it, through interpretation, especially if it might disturb or disarm the defence, taking great care that anxiety does not exceed the threshold of the unbearable. In our discussions and clinical research, we have a whole terminology to designate these intersecting moments in a cure: subjective rectification, crossing of the fantasy, subjective destitution, the fall of identifications, of ideals, of a phallic position, of the subject supposed to know ...

If the cartel is punctuated by periodic moments of crisis, it is because the crisis presents itself as a dialectic between routine and events that break the time line. Moreover, according to Deleuze, “time puts truth in crisis.”⁵ But in this way of thinking, the time in question is that of the Oedipus. After Oedipus, the simple dialectical model between routine and event is no longer sufficient for us to read the phenomena of crisis. In the era of hypermodernity, the precipitation of events is not limited to a simple acceleration on a timeline. Advanced technologies produce a kind of contraction of time and space. Duration is reduced to immediacy. Barely has an event appeared than another one already crops up. The routine-crisis-routine pattern is replaced by the crisis-crisis-crisis series ... which stretches to infinity. The passage between the instant of seeing and the moment to conclude is often immediate, crushing altogether the time to understand.

Thus, the cartel, like analysis, prepares [*forme*] the subject for the encounter with the city dweller of our time, constantly confronted with news of catastrophe and with highly seductive waste-objects titillating his polymorphously perverse impulses. Anxieties and excess consumption intertwine. This permanent jogging of the subject from crisis to crisis, from contingency to contingency, puts him in the position of a mouse in a labyrinth, an object immersed in reality rather than a subject, in a mad rush between electric shock and reward. While the speech of the master once ordered a “March or croak!” the capitalist discourse is more demanding, imposing a “Sprint or croak!” The flip side of this infinite acceleration is the weakening of the social bond and the consignment to the scrapheap of all who fail to keep up with this infernal rhythm. So, beyond the psychic structures, the duplicity of the subject as the one who sprints and the one who “croaks” echoes the clinical binary of mania and melancholy. Mania as a flight forward, through the acceleration of the signifier not ballasted by the object. Melancholy, in subjects who, not being able to take any more this mad running, abandon everything and begin to incarnate the fallen object of the Other.

Such destinies bear witness to a falling of the subject into the hole of knowledge that provokes a crisis. By contrast, if the cartel provokes crises, it is equally a device that can transform these moments of awakening into an opportunity for the extraction and development of new knowledge. The act is then on the horizon.

Translated by Jo Rostron

⁵ Jacques-Alain Miller, “Introduction à l'érotique du temps”, *La Cause freudienne*, No. 56.