

THE PASS BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

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Among the responsibilities which fall to the analyst, there is a special one which falls to the School and its analysts: that of keeping the pass alive, and making of it something which is lived [*faire vivre la passe*]. Lacan's wish, as formulated explicitly in *Note italienne*, was that analysts should testify to the importance they attach to their belief in the unconscious, and that they should be recruited on that basis. Under the impulsion of Jacques-Alain Miller, we have hence created the School of the Pass.

This responsibility, once formulated, has appeared in our orientation as an ethical duty. I will choose to comment upon this duty from two practices: that of the passant who strives towards a speaking well [*bien dire*] that conforms to (this) ethics, and that of the analyst of the cartel of the pass, who searches to discern in the testimony the right angle under which the articulation of the discourse of the patient to the experience of the real manifests itself. To tell the truth, this is not limiting, for each one of us who claims to analyse themselves, is concerned with the belief in the unconscious linked to one's practical experience of it.

Let us begin with the analysand in the procedure of the pass. He testifies to a relation with what we call an 'unconscious knowledge'. It is even on the basis of this knowledge, acquired from one's own analysis, that he attempts to make the Cartel perceive the trajectory of his treatment, and how he has been able to touch the real. As always, in analysis, two points are essential in this testimony: the beginning and the end of the analysis. They determine a course in which the history of the analysand, in its signifying determinations, has been taken up and reshaped.

For him, it thus concerns: firstly, saying what his analysis has been; and secondly, indicating how the trajectory of his analysis has come to an end. In itself this constitutes a practical experience of knowledge, since it is a question of a symbolic chain created in and through the analysis. The knowledge that is born there was not perceived by the patient before the experience of the couch: an unconscious knowledge "which does not calculate, but nonetheless works for *jouissance*".¹

If it is an experience of knowledge, analysis is also an experience of belief, since one must be the dupe of the axiomatic Other scene of Freud so that an other knowledge (and one which is not a metalanguage) inserts itself into common language, surfacing from the poverty of everyday words. The pass is the enactment of this belief in the effort of transmitting a subjective experience of knowledge.

This unprecedented subjective experience necessitates what we often call 'the authenticity' of the subject. This term, although it is inadequate, calls forth a relation to the truth of the experience transmitted. Indeed, truth is in question, in effect as cause. This is precisely what Lacan began by recalling, asserting it with force, only then to signal² that truth is suspect from a certain angle in so far as it can just as well be entirely reclaimed by religion. He will even end up demonstrating the relations of sorority between truth and *jouissance*. For truth cannot be all spoken, and is even the sister of *jouissance* when given as absolute. Nevertheless the experience of the pass is not thinkable without the half-saying of truth, without it being brought to the point at which truth is 'put on her guard in the moment of the cause of desire'.

Thus the accent of truth cannot be ignored in the experience of the pass.

From another perspective, knowledge drawn from the unconscious is a semblant: it is created from nothing and woven out of language (this is what Lacan designates with his 'Nihil' from which the fiction of language [*fiction langagière*] originates in his account of *The Logic of Fantasy*).³ Expressed in language, this knowledge drawn from nothing nevertheless makes a social bond, and Lacan even hoped that from this knowledge a new form of social bond would be created. Lastly, unconscious knowledge, as in science, is correlated to a real upon which it has effects. This is why Lacan could invoke 'psychoanalytic science' at the end of his *Ecrits* and, even as late as 1973, again speak of 'our science' in order to designate analytic practice.

In presenting his 'triangle of knowledges'⁴ (science, semblant, truth), Jacques-Alain Miller signalled that for Lacan scientific exigency has to do with the clinic as such, while rhetorical exigency manifests itself in relation to the 'well spoken' of ethics. And indeed, the pass certainly presents itself as a clinical experience, but it is one in which the manner of speaking is essential. This manner nevertheless proves insufficient, for one must succeed in making the real in question pass into speech, the real in which the symptom is entangled.

Thus the psychoanalytic experience begins with a response of the real caught in the initial symptom, the symptom from which the subject suffers and which pushes him to articulate it in the form of a complaint addressed to the Other. It ends with another response of the real, accompanied by a consent of the subject, what we call the final identification with the symptom. This identification with the fundamental symptom is what the subject has a very particular responsibility for when he is an analyst, since he must know how to *make do* with it, which is to say he must know how to make it serve the analytic cause (an eminently political position).

If transmission through the pass is so difficult, it is because, as in science, it necessitates the fabrication of a knowledge that rests on reason, a coherent, logical knowledge: 'The unconscious has to do with pure logic'.⁵ But it is also because the pass cannot take place without, as in religion, putting a belief into play. There is no doubt that in analysis belief concerns the unconscious and not the father, but nonetheless it obliges us to situate this latter.

It may be appropriate to situate between science and religion the walls of this narrow and profound pass which Lacan evokes in Seminar XI as 'the two walls of the impossible': the testimony is certainly not all scientific, but neither is it made entirely out of a belief in truth.

The surprising thing is that this passage between belief and knowledge permits the subject to constitute a certainty. Nor is it less surprising that this makes for transmission. And I will distinguish between transmission and teaching with regard to this point. It is not certain that the pass as such is, properly speaking, a teaching when it is reported to the passer, in the sense that it does not aim at delivering a knowledge which is integrally (transmissible) to the greatest number. It aims, on the contrary, to produce a knowledge which surprises, which rings true, while leaving it to the cartel of the pass and to the future AE to teach it if they can: testimony and transmission falls to the *passant*, while the task of trying to teach what has been transmitted falls to the cartel and the AE. This distinction, which may seem very formal, is in fact crucial. In the pass there must be not only a demonstration but also an enunciation, not only a truth but also a drive, what one likes to call an 'encounter with the real': a transmission is thus more than a teaching.

The relation of the pass to the impossible of the real, and to what approximates to it through its rim-like structure, in itself contains a difficulty that is often remarked upon: for what is at stake is precisely

the saying of that which cannot be said, namely the impossible: as in science, what is at stake in the pass is to introduce some symbolic in the real, and, as in belief, what is at stake is to raise to the level of truth, i.e. to that of the universal, that which can only be contingent and therefore singular.

To believe in the unconscious:

For Freud, the unconscious was, first of all, the instrument for the proof of truth in reality. And, more specifically, the Freudian investigation brought to light, first of all, the truth of an event which has had an impact on the body and the mind, a brutal encounter, too brutal, with the real of the sexual, in the form of the trauma. In the early years of psychoanalysis, this real was essentially attributed to the father. This deductive sequence seems very archaic with regard to ulterior elaborations.

Let us nevertheless note that it brings to light:

1. a *jouissance* which was misrecognised [*méconnue*] and which is a *jouissance* of the body of the subject.
2. that this *jouissance* is then inscribed in the form of a symptom (in the event, hysterical).
3. that the said *jouissance* is manifested as a rupture of the homeostasis of sense in which the subject basked until then, 'happy'.
4. that this effraction is attributed to the Other.

We do not need anything else in order to characterise the unconscious as the operator which allows for a new distribution of *jouissance* on the basis of a sexual knowledge, and for the emergence of a sexual sense, of a new semblant each time that a rupture of sense becomes present for the analysand, a non-sense, a gap in the signifying chain which governs the homeostasis of the body.

The result of this approach is that to believe in the unconscious is not so much to believe in the existence of a reservoir of buried thoughts, as, to quote Lacan, 'to believe in an operator of the cut'.

The unconscious is not to be substantivised, it is not a metalanguage, it is not buried in any depths, it is 'outside'.⁶

But how are we to believe in an operator of the cut? Let us note, first of all, that it is verified, like science, through its effects on the real. Each treatment, one by one, testifies to the effects of unconscious interpretation on symptoms (for example, on the manner in which the libido relocalised itself on the body under the influence of the signifier). There is also an empiricism, a realism of the belief in the unconscious which results from these effects. In passing, this is the method used for the ontological proof of the existence of God.⁷ Let us recognise, nevertheless, that to believe in the unconscious is closer to believing in a mathematical mode of proof or the theory of relativity than to believe in God.

Belief in the unconscious and religious belief

One does not demonstrate the unconscious, any more than, in religion, one demonstrates God; at most we assent to it. One must, first of all, believe in the Freudian gesture. Let us be clear on this point: psychoanalysis is not the religion of Freud, although he had his idolatrous followers - so did Lacan.

Psychoanalysis mobilises a whole belief in a unique gesture which only finds its equivalent in Descartes' *Cogito*. All the same, one does not believe the unconscious, one believes in it, and this is why the fragment of truth that it delivers through interpretation calls for free association and repetition, which end up by pointing to the *tuché*.

Let us say that in any case, the *passant* as well as the members of the Cartel of the *pass*, will tend to rely more on formations of the unconscious than on the purely declarative effects of the *passant*. Let's take, for example, the *passant* who may be declaring an effect of the loss of the object: one will tend to rely on the dream which indicates it and which he has himself considered as such, in the light of a gesture of his analyst, rather than on a declaration, however 'sincere' it may be. Thus the following dream — "she was advancing on the floor of the attic. I wanted to tell her that it was fragile. The words stuck in my throat, and I could not speak them until the point at which the floor gave way and she disappeared. I knew her fall was deadly" — tells us more about the relation of this analysand to his daughter, the apple of his eye and witness of his failures, and about his relation to women in general, than any long discourse. It is however necessary that the analysand himself (and sometimes also his analyst) punctuates the 'thus' that imposes itself, and which allows for a passage into an explicit knowledge of what was until then kept in reserve.

To the contrary, religious belief places the burden of the cause in the hands of the ONE, unique God in truth, creator and master of all things. From then on, the subject of religion places himself in a relation of dependency on the Other and his 'mysteries', and does all he can to respond to His demand. Religion believes it can inscribe the being of the speaking being in this status of dependency on the ONE. It is this very type of identification that an analysis must make fall, the type which allows for the private religion of the subject.

This is why we can say that religion offers to its believers a figure of the dead father, the one who reigns and demands. In so doing, it does away with the live father, the one of desire, who has an effect on the subject through the unary trait, which inscribes the first rupture of homeostasis - *jouissance* - through the introduction of language in the body. For this, it is necessary that 'Logos, deposed from being the spermatic reason of the world, be revealed as the knife which introduces difference into it'.⁸

Thus the unconscious, far from sending the question of the final cause back to the Other, and thereby contributing to making this Other consist, as religion does, sends us, on the contrary, back to the incommensurable of the difference between the sexes and to the Other which does not exist.

Lacan indicated it expressly in his *Subversion of the Subject*, it is not enough that the father be dead (gone to heaven), his grave must also be empty. Periodically, psychoanalysis is threatened by its becoming the religion of the dead father; we have lived through the most recent of such a vicissitude to date at the last College of the *pass*; but one could make a reasoned inventory of such occurrences. In this case, the treatment tends to reabsorb the *jouissance* of the subject under the influence of the S_1 , and to make it work for the demand of the Other, that is to say to mortify it and normalise it.

Unconscious knowledge and science

Descartes' gesture, founding the modern episteme, installs on the scene of the world a different means from that of religion of ensuring the extension of the empire of the symbolic on *jouissance*.⁹

Descartes' inaugural experience, the one he describes in his *Meditations*, and which he illustrates with his famous piece of wax, allows him to deduce the primacy of thought over the sensible and thus over being. The understanding of thought is thus necessary in order to grasp the order of the world, an order which is present under the diversity of sensible, irrational perceptions. *Cogito ergo sum*.

This implies that thought comprehends the universe of being and that it has universal value, i.e. that it ignores the Freudian Other scene. As we have learnt from Lacan, it forecloses the subject as divided by his *jouissance*. Thought, on the contrary, wants to be the guide of *jouissance*. And as Martial Guérault, the great commentator of Descartes, has grasped, it does not exclude in the least that God be included in knowledge, for the *tabula rasa* of Descartes in his *Discourse of Method* re-introduces the belief in God through the artifice of the reflexivity of thought.¹⁰

For us, after Freud, Lacan has renewed this exigency. The analytic discourse is intimately interwoven with that of Science, and as a recent chronicle of Gérard Miller reminds us,¹¹ psychoanalysis does not fear the development of science, on the contrary it is in solidarity with it, and offers to re-open what Science forecloses: the subject understood as the subject of the unconscious who suffers. The knowledge extracted from the unconscious is not irrational in the least, quite the opposite: it is to be understood on the basis of the type of rationality devised by Descartes, while giving it another import, another form, by modifying the point of application.

Lacan, indeed, took up Descartes' *Cogito*, inscribing it with a very small personal touch which, as we know, through the mere use of punctuation, renders apparent the effect of the subversion of language on thought, and the subject in his lack-of-being, the subject without substance.

The actual sense of the correction that Lacan brings to bear on the *Cogito* is that it brings to light the fact that as soon as I think, I imagine that I am, or again that thought makes me believe in my being.

And, on this point, we must note the importance of two variants which Lacan brought successively to the commentary of Descartes, with respect to the definition of unconscious knowledge. One dates back to 1964, the other to 1969.

In *Seminar XI*, indeed, the main part of the demonstration bears upon the fact that the Cartesian 'I think' is extremely fragile in its status. The question is to know what this 'I' which thinks is. Lacan considers it to be the homunculus, that is, the ego of psychology. Far from being 'master of himself as of the universe', the subject of psychoanalysis only partakes of the radical doubt instituted by the *Cogito*, by being deposed from this 'I' which is thought by the Other much more than it thinks. Nonetheless - and this will be the object of numerous developments by Lacan on alienation and separation - there is thought, there where I am, not as I, and this thought responds to a logic instituted by the Cartesian epistemological cut. The pass will have to report on the logic of this thought which was there where the ego of the subject was not.

All the same, this first mode of treating the *Cogito* is correlative to the point reached by Lacan's teaching at the time. Indeed, at this time in his teaching, he presents the symbolic as neutral with regard to *jouissance*.¹² To believe in the unconscious, in this perspective, consists in extracting some unconscious knowledge from the analysis in order to modify the mode of division of the subject, and to introduce him more to desire. We are close to the effect sought in an analysis of the type that Serge Leclaire carried out in his case of the man with the Unicorn, and which aims at opening the subject to desire.

Here, as Jacques-Alain Miller underlines it, the barred subject 'is conceived by Lacan as the non-libidinal effect of the signifier...what is in question is the dead subject'.¹³ This is the reason why Lacan finds himself having to oppose to this dead subject an effect invested by the signified, that which precisely he called object *a* and which, while not being substantial, nevertheless has all the value of the partial drive. There is a contradiction here in the definition of object *a*, a contradiction recently remarked upon by J.-A. Miller. This contradiction in effect amounted to the fact that the pass must testify to a loss of *jouissance* of the subject, a loss which would have to be situated as an abandonment of *jouissance* after the traversal of fantasy.¹⁴ Thus, in such a reading, to believe in the unconscious and its analytic effects would amount to believing in a destitution of the subject, and an effect of loss of *jouissance* which can and must be demonstrated.

But the second advance of Lacan in relation to the *Cogito*, effected in his *Seminar XVII*, contributes something different about what 'belief in the unconscious' might mean in Lacanian theory.

The merit that Lacan recognises in the *Cogito* is that it permitted a 'sweeping away of mythical knowledges',¹⁵ and hence that it allowed the analytic discourse to place the castration complex where the ONE father was. And he already formulates in these essential pages what his point of reliance will be in *Seminar XX*: 'The beyond of the Oedipus.' "There is no possible place in a mythical union which would be defined as sexual between man and woman."

It is on the basis of this statement that he situates the analytic discourse, starting from the discourse that Descartes inaugurated without being able fully to do away with the divine, unifying ONE. "The unifying ONE", says Lacan, "the ONE-all is not what is at stake in identification. The pivotal identification, the main identification, is the unary trait, it is being marked as one". This distinction is capital and coherent with the theory of the Other which does not exist.¹⁶

It also implies a certain number of consequences for the pass and in particular, it leads us to emphasise consent in the analytic experience. The passant will have to reveal the marks he bears and which are absolutely singular, that is to say he will have to reveal that which for him is irreducible, and of which Lacan speaks in these pages of *Seminar XVII* when he presents the analytic *Cogito* in the form of a series of Fibonacci, i.e. as a series converging towards a negative limit that will never be reached.

He then proposes another writing of the Cartesian *Cogito* by modifying the incidence of the punctuation he had added in 1964. He now writes it as follows: *Cogito ergo: sum*. In this formula, he takes account of the fact that the *appensé*¹⁷ is a means of *joui-sense*, in other words a means for the subject to imagine himself, leaning on Being.

By taking this new perspective into account, the passant could realise at the end of an analysis that his whole trajectory through the unconscious has been a means of enjoying the drive object. This could also be said in the following form: "at the end of this trajectory under transference [*sous transfert*] through the signifier, I can at last know what my partner-symptom is".¹⁸

We are now left with the question of how to determine how this fundamental *sinthome* will be put to work in each case in the service of the analytic cause... or not. And this cannot be known in advance.

Translated by Philip Dravers and Véronique Voruz

1. J. Lacan, *Introduction à l'édition allemande des Ecrits* in *Scilicet* No 5, p.17.

2. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, p.876.
3. *Ornicar* ? No 29 p.14.
4. *Cahier* No 7, Autumn 1996.
5. *Ecrits*, *op.cit.*
6. Subtitle given by Jacques-Alain Miller to chapter 10 of *Seminar XI*, p.123.
7. This is why, if one is to follow Lacan, it is not correct to say of God that he doesn't exist but rather that he is unconscious in the sense that if one believes in it, if one adopts the religious point of view, one then believes in a whole mode of distribution of *jouissances* and of the permitted use of bodies. On this point see the excellent book of François Régault: *Dieu est inconscient*, (Paris: Navarin).
8. J. Lacan, *La psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité* in *Scilicet* No 1, p.57.
9. The effect of science on the real by means of technique has sufficiently been evoked for me not to have to return to it here; but it is noticeable that by this means another mode of feeding off the demand of the subject is produced, this time following the hysterical mode of nonsatisfaction. This mode is always propagated further by what, in his *Seminar XVIII*, Lacan called *lathouses*, a word he used to designate objects, sticky like suction pads, offered to our concupiscence and which have no other use value than to *faire jouir*.
10. It is indeed thanks to God that I can know that I think, and if I think... then I am. It is thus that Guérault qualifies the enterprise of the great philosopher in terms of a rational positivism which, above the world of created things, reduced to the reality of their essential nature, admits to nothing other than the infinite power of God the creator. *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Aubier, 1986), p.384.
11. Gérard Miller, chronicle in the weekly 'L'évènement'.
12. Here we are referring to the indications given by Jacques-Alain Miller in his work *El hueso de un analisis*. p.52.
13. *Ibid.*
14. On this point see Jacques-Alain Miller's article entitled 'C.S.T', *Ornicar?* 29.
15. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XVII*, 1970-71, p.179-80.
16. Eric Laurent has extensively studied the consequences of this distinction for Lacanian politics, in particular in the editorials of *Ornicar digital* of the year 1998-9.
17. T.N.: *appensé* is a term used by Lacan in order to indicate that thought [*pensée*] needs to lean [*appui*] on something of the real in order to gain consistency. See *Seminar XXIII*.
18. On condition that one takes this term partner-symptom as a concept-status, as defined by Jacques-Alain Miller in his seminar *La fuite du sens*.

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