

RESPONSIBILITY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

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The theme of the Journée,¹ 'Responsibility in Psychoanalysis', has led me to consider whether or not a distinction should be made between the notions of responsibility and duty in the teaching of Lacan. To have a responsibility and to have a duty are, perhaps, distinct notions. A binary suggests itself: duty and responsibility.

Kantian duty is defined as an act undertaken by a subject which gives the symbolic statement of his or her maxim a universal value. Such a definition is already a problem for the subject who in psychoanalysis is accepted as particular. Kant's duty is universal. It is for each and every subject. We could leave responsibility in the hands of a particular subject who will carry it out in his or her way.

Lacan² sends us straight to chapter and verse in the second *Critique* where the moral law in setting itself against our inclinations must produce a feeling of pain. It demands renunciation like a superego and turns enjoyment against the self, hence, the experience of pain. He says that the morbid command of the superego is experienced as a duty, and that the subject's true duty is to oppose this command.³

The term duty is being used in two different ways. Under the imperative of the superego the subject experiences its duty as a universal, but the subject has its own duty which is to oppose the universal. The subject's duty is being taken as correlative to the particular. Could one not say from the beginning that the subject has a responsibility to oppose its superego duty?

In Lacan's *Kant with Sade*, Kant represents duty and Sade right.⁴ Lacan makes the point that *La philosophie dans le boudoir* adds the dimension of truth to the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The truth of the former is that the subject has the right to enjoyment, no holds barred, as it were. The title could be translated as 'Duty with Right'. The moral law exercises a right to enjoyment. Duty becomes confused with a right to enjoyment.

Lacan comes back to this many years later in *Seminar XX*,⁵ and asserts that right is not duty. Right is correlative to the superego's will of enjoyment. Duty is no longer to be confused with this. The subject's duty is to oppose the will of enjoyment, that is, to evacuate it.

Then, one reads in a brief passage in Eric Laurent's editorial in *Mental* No 4⁶: "In that other method of evaluating psychoanalysis we can grasp the passing from guilt in regard to the symptom to responsibility. It is what we call identification with the symptom". He is referring to evaluation by the pass in which the subject passes from guilt in regard to the symptom. Guilt is correlative to the will of the superego. If we should make that the cause of duty, then the subject is passing from it to responsibility. However, Lacan says that we should not confuse duty with the will to enjoyment. The symptom with guilt is bound up with the will to enjoyment. The symptom without guilt leads to an identification with the symptom. It cannot be without guilt unless the enjoyment is extracted. One's duty is to renounce this will to enjoyment. That puts duty and responsibility on the same side.

Identification with the symptom is a notion that evolves in the seminar called *Le sinthome*.⁷ A symptom emerges at the point of sin where it is called sinthome. It belongs to *Lalangue* of Lacan. He found its old orthography which injects Greek into French, and Lacan is also injecting English into it. In

the preceding *Seminar R.S.I.*, it is defined according to Freud's doctrine in which the symptom is a drive-satisfaction. Or, as he puts it on the 18th of Feb. 1975, the symptom is the way each one has of enjoying the unconscious in so far as the unconscious determines it.⁸ This would be a *sinthome* in so far as enjoyment is a sin. There is a prohibited enjoyment in the symptom. In sin itself a will to enjoyment makes itself felt, and because it is a sin, it is turned against the self. The law for the sake of the law of the symptom becomes itself a satisfaction. Lacan no longer seems to make this correlative to duty but to right or to will. However, this is not the symptom that the subject identifies with in the course of analysis. It is the symptom that the subject sets out on.

The concept of a *sinthome* reaches back to *Seminar II*,⁹ where each time a chain of symbols reaches its terminal point, our actions come to seek us out. There we have to account for our crimes and pay in full, he says. Of course, this will soon become a chain of signifiers. It does not seem to me that our actions come to seek us out at the point the chain stops but that our actions attack the chain, stopping it. What do we discover at this terminal point but a signifier plus a crime, or a signifier plus sin. It is a terminal signifier not correlative to another signifier but correlative to sin. Crime, too, is a satisfaction in the classical doctrine, and this satisfaction is now written by us as little *a*, the object that brings a satisfaction that destroys. The silence that ensues on the stopping of the chain is the sign of the death drive. This symptom has been formalised by Jacques-Alain Miller as a function from the symbolic into the real.

The logical use of the *sinthome*, says Lacan on the 18th of Nov. 1975,¹⁰ is to reach the real at the end of which it has not thirst, which is to be a heretic in the good way. This is clearer in *Seminar II*¹¹: at the terminal point of a chain of signifiers we have to account for our crimes, but, he continues, if we know how to account for them we won't be punished. At this terminal point there is a know-how. The subject has a responsibility to develop a know-how in the psychoanalytical process in which the subject accounts for its sins without punishment. It is the artifice of the analysis. The know-how of the psychoanalytical process is Crime without Punishment, or sin without the negative therapeutic reaction. But that will not work unless enjoyment is evacuated from the system. We might say that the subject has a responsibility to acquire this know-how.

Lacan says on the 13 of Jan. 1976 that one's responsibility goes as far as one's know-how.¹² The more know-how the subject acquires, the more responsibility it has and the less sin. Knowing how in analysis to account for one's crimes is a responsibility the analysand assumes. In this process the subject becomes a *sinthome*. But know-how is an artifice which in the case of Joyce is the form of his art. His art, says Lacan, corresponds to the phallus which makes up for his missing Oedipus. Artifice in this seminar seems to be an indication of a foreclosure. For Joyce the father is an artificer: 'Old father, old artificer, stand now and ever in good state'. It is one of the names of the father that is a stabilising factor in Joyce's structure. The artifice in the case of Joyce orients him towards the symbolic: to make himself into a book. Know-how in the case of the neurotic orients the subject on the real of his or her crimes. One's responsibility goes as far as the real.

Still in the same lesson he says that the sexual does not found a relation in any way and that there is only sexual responsibility. The real that one reaches with know-how is a trace of the impossibility in the sexual relation. Responsibility as non-response or as response that goes astray is a sign of this impossibility. Nevertheless, there is sexual responsibility, and it is juxtaposed to the sexual nonrelation. What further responsibility could there be but the responsibility to support the Other sex with a relation that makes up for the absent one?

The three-ring Borromean knot has an effect of nonrelation and of an equivalence between the sexes. Equivalence is correlative to nonrelation. It seems that the sinthome names them man and woman, creates gender, as it were, by creating non-equivalence, and as the fourth ring makes up for the absent relation. Responsibility as non-response or as response that goes astray is a trace of the impossibility of the sexual relation in the *sinthome*.

1. Presented at the Study Day of the ACF-VLB, Nantes, September, 1999.
2. J. Lacan, *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Potter, Routledge, 1992, p.80.
3. *Ibid.*, p.7.
4. J. Lacan, *Kant avec Sade*, 1962, in *Ecrits*, Seuil, 1966, Paris.
5. J. Lacan, *Seminar XX, Encore*, trans. B. Fink, Norton, 1998, p.3.
6. E. Laurent, *Mental*/No 4, 4 December 1997, p.8.
7. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXIII, Le Sinthome, 1975-76*, in *Ornicar?* No 10.
8. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XXII, R.S.I., 1974-75*, in *Ornicar?* No 5.
9. J. Lacan, *Seminar II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1954-5, S. Tomaselli, C. U. P., 1988. p.205.
10. *Le Sinthome, op.cit.*
11. *op.cit.*, p.205.
12. *Le Sinthome, op. cit.*

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