

ON THE NATURE OF THE ANALYSAND'S CONSENT TO SHORT SESSIONS

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Like everyone else, every day I wonder why and in what way analysands accept short sessions, when short sessions go against the grain of modern demands which require one to take the time to listen to what people have to say.¹

Of course, none of us can forget that this question played a major role at the beginning of the split of the 1950s. Lacan explained himself at length in his *Rome Discourse* by denouncing the detrimental effects of interrupting sessions according to the clock: "What I want to do is to touch on another aspect of analysis that is particularly ticklish at the moment, that of the function of time in the technique of analysis. I wish to say something about the duration of the session... The indifference with which the cutting up of the 'timing' interrupts the moments of haste within the subject can be fatal to the conclusion towards which his discourse was being precipitated, or can even fix a misunderstanding or misreading in it, if not furnish a pretext for a retaliatory ruse".²

The recent story of an analysand struck me, not for the caricatural dimension of what he confided in me but for its demonstrative aspect: this man, who is still young, came to see me after three years of treatment with a well-known colleague. He told me the contractual rules his analyst had fixed: because of his work, this analysand lives overseas one month out of two. For three years, his analyst required that all the sessions which should have taken place when he was absent from France be paid. Each time that this analysand expressed his disagreement, his analyst replied with the following words, which I reproduce textually: "When you are not in Paris, you continue to pay your rent. You have to consider that my fees correspond to the rental time of my couch, which is reserved for you, and you have to pay for it".

This story, or rather this anecdote, should not scandalise us. It clarifies the structure of this drift. In 1964, Lacan identified the religious dimension of the measures that the IPA attempted to impose on him: "So, what it amounts to is something strictly comparable to what is elsewhere called major excommunication... the question indubitably does arise — what is it in that community that is so reminiscent of religious practice?"³ As early as 1953, Lacan noted that this disagreement concerning the length of session was situated by his adversaries on holy ground: "the 'taboo' nature that has recently characterised discussion of this time limit proves well enough that the subjectivity of the psychoanalytic group is not at all entirely free in this respect, and... they realise to what extent it would entail a putting into question of the function of the analyst".⁴ After the 1997 Congress of the IPA in Barcelona, Jacques-Alain Miller cited an *ukase* uttered by the American Kernberg which proved that the anathema pronounced against any challenge to the well founded nature of the fixed session retains its currency: nearly half a century later, the affair remains canonical.

That the length of a session is sometimes approached in religious terms, and sometimes in the terms of the contractual sale of listening-time, cannot fail to strike those who remember Karl Marx's developments on "the fetishistic character of merchandise and its secret: a commodity appears at first sight to be something trivial... but on the contrary, it is a very complex thing, pregnant with metaphysical subtleties and theological quibbling. As for its use-value, there is nothing mysterious... Where, then, does the enigmatic character of the work-product come from when it is dressed up in the form of merchandise? Evidently from that form itself... the measure of individual work on the basis of the time of production acquires the form of the value of work-products. . . It is only a determined social relation between men, which takes on the fantastic form of a relation of things between themselves. In order to find an analogy for this phenomenon, one has to look in the nebulous region of the religious world".⁵

Resituating the notion of length from its use-value to its exchange-value is tied up with the attempt of introducing symmetry in the analyst-analysand relation by projecting it onto a transference/ counter-transference axis. Jacques-Alain Miller, in the very title of this year's course, *Les us du laps*, and in the commentary he has just made on Lacan's *Logical Time*, implicitly addresses what is at stake: in what way, then, can we restore its use-value to the length of the session without lapsing into the kind of 'theology' which tries to make one believe that it has an exchange-value?

The raising of duration to the hieratic place of a temporal function dictated by the clock reduces time to chronology, and encloses it in what the novelist André Maurois called the 'frames of time' by showing that their principle rests on the forgetting of the significant value of childhood memories.⁶ Chronological time is that of the discourse of the master, and is characterised by its refusal of all reversibility: "Irreversible time is the time of the ruler; and dynasties are its prime measure."⁷ It is a time of notification that the IPA analyst could not assume without renouncing his function, and which, for this reason, he delegates undauntedly to the impassability of the hand of the clock. Infatuated by the conviction of his

honesty, he forgets what founds his delegation: “every well formed duration must have a clearly distinguishable beginning... Here, the supremacy of the desired time is marked over lived time. In order to emphasise the casual and temporal isolation of the initial act, may we be allowed to express ourselves in a paradoxical manner: it is the stationmaster’s whistle that activates the engine. Conscious life is, likewise, an activity of signals. It is an activity of the leader. A clear intuition is a commandment”.⁸ We know all that, and Lacan summarises it in *Position of the Unconscious* when he knots, by means of the notions of ‘edge’ and ‘cut’, the notion of a “geometry in which space is reduced to a combinatory”, to a closing of the unconscious “which demonstrates the core of a reversible time”... whereby “*Nachträglichkeit* or deferred action reveals a temporal structure of a higher order”.⁹

This ‘temporal structure of a higher order’ implies that the analyst must assume that “transference is a relationship that is essentially tied to time and its handling”.¹⁰ This temporal structure does not require that the analyst should ignore the duration of the session, but on the contrary that he should have a just perception of it. The ‘handling of time’, according to Lacan, depends just as well on what Valéry names, with his *Monsieur Teste*, ‘the delicate art of duration’.¹¹ In his course *Les us du laps*, Jacques-Alain Miller displaces an accent which is secularly associated with the notion of duration whose use (or... ‘delicate art’) does not depend on its proportion in a universe of precision, but on its ‘evaluation’ in the logic of a calculus which a subjective position signs.¹²

An ethics of time

Are the ‘handling of time’ and ‘evaluation of duration’ in our practice the fruit of our experience and of our way of progressively getting those who come to speak to us used to tolerating the relative shortness of the encounters that we choose to arrange for them? This is how it seems to happen, and one cannot avoid considering that it is a technical matter, a matter of know-how when one pretends to reduce the stakes of a desire to the polemics which are opposed to it. Moreover, to pretend that the short session is accepted by the patient because, thanks to the authority of implicit suggestion, we have acclimatised him to this method, seems to correspond to a reality afforded to contemporary ideals of efficiency and profitability. The prodigious progress in scientific, medical and surgical therapeutics that Eric Laurent mentioned at the WAP Congress could provide us with some arguments. When, only a few years ago, it took so many hours of treatment, and one had to run the risk, with each supplementary duration, of a body which exhausted itself, of a dwindling life, the man of the art today, who is, *volens-nolens*, a man of science, settles the affair in a few minutes, avoiding spilt blood, sparing us pain on a pallet, more often than not curing everyone even before the return of the memory of the invalids of yore.

Concerning medical treatments, the duration of the treatment is an index of a not yet accomplished progress, of a body that resists, and of a resistance of the pathology that has to be overcome: duration must be overcome, and it will be overcome in a struggle where causality is effaced by the quest for determinism. It is a fact, indeed an epistemological ‘truth’ that we must be aware of even if it is not ours: “There is no need to account for duration in the cause, nor in the effect, in order to link them temporally... Physical causality is not quantified by duration. One must always come to pose the cause-phenomenon and the effect-phenomenon as two separate states, and since their particular duration is inefficient, it is apt to empty them temporally in some way... At every appearance of an emergence, of a phenomenon that goes beyond its given, one can grasp an ever clearer determination of evolution through probability and no longer only through causality”.¹³

To stay with the idea that the short analytical session is merely a technical matter would therefore constitute a paradoxical alignment, a suspect allegiance to the scientific ideals of our time. In the course he gave in 1996-97 with Eric Laurent, Jacques-Alain Miller¹⁴ was able to show that the outcome of these ideals amounts to a ‘dematerialisation of the real’ through technique and that, unlike the causes of the ‘Discontents’ discovered by Freud, this effect of science was the source of the contemporary ‘Discontents of Civilisation’.

This effect of ‘dematerialisation of the real’ can surely not be the design of an analytical session which takes as its task to close in on the real, the one that plagues the subject, to make the real emerge from speech, to carefully confront the analysand with it so that he may acquire, at the apposite moment, the means of knowing how the pain of his division, the intolerable state of his lack are attached to this real in order to complain of it.

Another objection, which is more trivial but omnipresent, prevents us from reducing the short session to a mere affair of technique. This objection arises from what comes spontaneously, from a resentment situated somewhere between refusal and indignation. This objection brings together the legitimate cohort of those that are offended by the minute space accorded to human suffering, and by the impression that the rhythms of efficiency no longer afford the subject the time to deploy the reasons for his sense of oppression. Everywhere in the world, care professionals and administrators are reproached for working too fast, a reproach that glosses over the fact that the benefits lavished on some goes hand in hand with the increase in profit realised by others.

This reproach is the offspring of an alliance between technique and humanism in a market-place where the hint of an appetite for *jouissance* sometimes puts a strain on the quest for the improvement of action. In the practice of demand that, according to Lacan, the analyst shares with the doctor, we are more often than others confronted with this criticism, because a technical preoccupation soon appears to be devious and can seem to smack of the cynicism of the scoundrel faced with the urgencies of sentiment. In the extreme, this criticism seems to rejoin what, in another context Lacan, along with Freud, reviled: “The monopolisation of *jouissance* by those who load the burdens of need on to others’ shoulders”.¹⁵

These reasons explain why we are treating the short session as an ethical affair. But what a worthless magical trick it would be if we were to leave it at that, since ethics, in our way of speaking, acts too often in the manner of a little motto of recognition, ‘a word of the tribe’. I can be ironic here, for the point is not to interrogate ethics but to show on the basis of what articulation we authorise ourselves to contend that what we are doing proceeds from an ethics of time.

We are neither the first nor the only ones to interrogate ourselves as to the deep rationale of the question of time. One of the best known psychiatrists of the twentieth century, a consummate psychopathologist and friend of Lacan, Henri Ey, when he borrowed from the English neurologist Jackson his theory of the destructurations of consciousness, named the first stage of the illness as follows: ethico-temporal destructure. For him, this simply amounted to emphasising that the first position of the subject of consciousness corresponds to the fact that his will, his intentionality, the sense of his action, his tension towards movement or towards a speech that changes, has no other reality than that of being inscribed in time, and that there is an organic and epistemic solidarity between ethics — that is to say the value of the intentions which lead to action — and the inscription, the immersion of being in temporality, thanks to the mediation that this action offers between mind and time.

This is not the way in which we will seek to inform ourselves on this knot, on this terrain formed by the conjunction of ethics, the length of the session and the desire of the analyst which joins together the stakes of both.

I will go about it in three ways: the first will consist of a memory — not really a personal memory for there are undoubtedly hundreds of us here at the XIth International Encounter of the Freudian Field who can share this memory. My second way will involve the idea that we can have of tact and the relation that this tact entertains, not with time but with duration. The third path I will follow will consist of a short review of a few analytical sessions recounted in an article entitled *Two Notes on Silence*, whose author is one of the most outstanding of post-Freudians, the Englishman Winnicott.

The memory goes back exactly sixteen years. It happened in Buenos Aires at the San Martin Centre in 1984 in the plenary session of the IIIrd International Encounter of the Freudian Field. On the platform Jacques-Alain Miller had just broached the question of short sessions. In the audience, our senior Paul Lemoine, whose demise we were to regret six years later, asked to speak in order to say what I will summarise here from memory: “When I was in analysis with Dr. Lacan, I was obviously surprised that he had changed the length of sessions and that we moved on to shorter sessions. As he was leading me to the door one day, I questioned him: why are sessions shorter now? He replied: “It is because I want to make things more solid.” Let us not linger here on the further intervention of Paul Lemoine, in which he modestly but with great precision exposed his experience of the nature and effectiveness of that solidity, resulting in the disappearance of anxiety.

This word, this adjective, is striking, for it evokes — and one cannot imagine that Lacan was not perfectly aware of it — a conception of ‘coherent time, organised by duration’,¹⁶ developed at the beginning of the 1930s by a ‘theory of consolidation’.¹⁷ Beginning with the notion that ‘the decisive centres of time are its discontinuities’,¹⁸ a continuity would then be re-established by the ‘solidity’¹⁹ of an external action adapted to the capacities of the mind. Thus, going from the whole to the part, ‘from a state of dispersion towards a final state of continuity’,²⁰ ‘a coherent activity’... (can) constitute a ‘defined, temporal’ reality... “The constitution of a consolidation of succession (would lead) to a veritable temporal object”.²¹

We do not have to dedicate ourselves to this thesis which is very probably dated, except in order to use it as a pretext to see Lacan’s opposite position: when he seeks a greater ‘solidity’ for his action in the compression of the duration, it is on discontinuity that he leans in order to reach a certain level of subjective realisation. It is “because the time in question in this affair has the same status as the subject... time is itself an effect of the signifying structure... This is what one can call temporal structures. It signifies that a signifying structure determines a subjective position... (and) the signifying structures also determine a temporal modulation. In this respect one must say that time is the effect of the signifier. And when we get to that point, we can breathe more freely”.²²

As early as his *Rome Discourse* Lacan proposed a concept, a practical operator with the aim of producing what he defined as ‘the lasting word’²³, it is “punctuation: the suspension of a session cannot *not* be experienced by the subject as a punctuation in his progress”.²⁴ Here, the standard length, the

measured duration gives way to punctuation; on this point the analyst's desire smacks of the Lacanian schema of metaphor:

Punctuation

Measured Duration

Is it not, in the metaphor of transference, one of the first reasons for the analysand's consent to undertake the work by making us into the subject supposed to know how to punctuate? The meaning of his consent indicates an acceptance of his being in the place which is his in the analytical discourse.

Is this 'solidity' not an equally good metaphor for the real, for what we knock up against from time to time, for the stone that makes us stumble, for this beam that can fall on our head, like on that of the wretched Cyrano, as the final ransom of his unaccomplished dreams?

This solidity, which was sought by Lacan in the production of the result of his operation, is in the direct line of the title of the interview given by Eric Laurent to Silvia Baudini in the second volume of *Sig-nos 2000*, and which was published last May in number 188 of *La lettre mensuelle* of the ECF. This title is: *A Session Oriented by the Real*.

How can we not be reminded of the phrase with which Lacan, in his *Rome Discourse*, concludes the example that accounts for his decision to introduce short sessions? Amongst us the example is notorious, and Lacan sums it up as follows: "with what have been called my short sessions, I was able to bring to light in a certain male subject fantasies of anal pregnancy as well as the dream of its resolution by Caesarean section, in a delaying of the end of the session where I would otherwise have had to go on listening to his speculations on the art of Dostoievsky".²⁵

In order to counterbalance the impossible avowal of the fantasy, Lacan evokes a certain, not brutality, but at least a certain abruptness in the sense in which one says in French: *brusquer les choses* [speed things up]. I would like to show how this *brusquer les choses* is a question of tact.

A few lines further on Lacan concludes the clinical vignette by saying: "for this technique only breaks the discourse in order to deliver speech [*accoucher la parole*]"²⁶ Let us note that Lacan writes 'to deliver speech', and not to deliver some speech. It is very precise. One says that a woman delivers a baby [*une femme accouche d'un enfant*], but that a doctor or midwife delivers a woman [*le medecin ou sage-femme accouche une femme*]. It is a question of pulling something out, of extracting something which is in speech. It is an obstetric matter, and every session is an obstetric matter, not for its anaesthetic ideal (which is, in any case, a legitimate one) of the painless birth, but for the image of a successful extraction.

It is on this point that tact intervenes. It is necessary in order to carry out the next operation successfully, which is a subtraction in the arithmetical sense of the term. If time is a signifying function, time is not duration. But what is duration?

Time and duration

'What is duration within us?'²⁷ It is a question which Bergson is familiar with, Bergson whose thesis on time has marked French thought, more no doubt through the stubbornness with which it has been repeated in the same way for half a century than for the perspectives it opened. Duration is essentially "a continuation of what no longer is in what is. This is real time, I mean perceived and lived. This is also any conceived time, for one cannot conceive time without representing it to oneself as perceived and lived".²⁸ According to this psychology of consciousness, duration is succession and not simultaneity; duration is a succession which is intrinsically lived and perceived by living man. The time of measure, that of simultaneity, is spatialisation of time, non-essential time, 'time which is projected into space... through the intermediary of movement',²⁹ time of a 'coarse psychology, duped by language',³⁰ time whose reality is confused with 'its symbolic representation'.³¹

This time of measure, this quantity-time, is opposed to the 'essential and qualitative element of time',³² 'pure duration which cannot be measured'³³ because this 'quality-duration, the one which consciousness reaches immediately',³⁴ is a 'real thing for the consciousness which conserves its trace'.³⁵ This consciousness-duration, identified with the 'continuous and living activity of the ego',³⁶ becomes a choice medium for the study of 'the influence of sentiment on the whole of a history',³⁷ 'temporal flux',³⁸ 'real' because 'experienced',³⁹ 'considered... as operative',⁴⁰ this duration according to the exaltation of the ego is 'the fabric of our being'⁴¹ at the same time as it is the 'uninterrupted murmur of our profound life'.⁴² This is a discreet glimpse of the Bergsonian thesis, which he will uphold even in his dialogue with Einstein.

His tone accounts for the content of Lacan's first written critique, as early as the end of the second war: "Bergson's work is the dilettante synthesis which satisfied the spiritual needs of a generation... and is a rather curious collection of exercises in metaphysical ventriloquy".⁴³ The criticism was renewed two years later: the 'naturalistic inadequacy' of this conception of the 'temporal dimension'.⁴⁴ Duration is

not the fabric of being, because if “the unconscious is articulated on the basis of what of being comes into speech... what of time lends it its fabric is not of imaginary stock”.⁴⁵

This duration is imaginary; it is merely the image of time, of the symbolic time which the subject of the want-to-be/lack-of-being really experiences, “a textile where the knots would speak of nothing but the holes that are found therein”.⁴⁵ It is in the highest tradition of thought that Lacan found here his inspiration, which we know, since our last school year, to be Augustinian, because with time the subject experiences the word that lacks: “What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If someone raises the question and I want to explain it, I no longer know... We can only speak of the being of time because it makes its way towards non-being”.⁴⁶

Duration is merely this ‘lived time’ which was used as a title by the French phenomenological psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski, colleague of Jacques Lacan and of Henri Ey at *Evolution psychiatrique*.⁴⁷ Interweaving his Bergsonian allegiance with his phenomenological ambitions, Minkowski illustrates very well what Jean-Toussaint Desanti demonstrates in his commentaries on Husserl: the failure of transcendental egology in proving the sound basis of an ontological dialectic through a temporal problematic.⁴⁸ It is probably not by accident that in the same Seminar, the one devoted to the psychoses, Lacan refutes both one and the other: one “thinks it necessary to totally restore the undifferentiated experience of the subject, as a succession of images projected onto a screen in order to grasp it totally in his duration, in the manner of Bergson. What we touch upon clinically is never like that. The continuity of everything that the subject has experienced from birth never tends to emerge, and it absolutely does not interest us”.⁴⁹ And: “all of this is to be taken literally. The point is not to understand what is happening there we are not. It is not phenomenology which is in question. What matters is to conceive, and not to imagine”.⁵⁰

The duration which the IPA standards try to neutralise in a regulated exchange where transference and counter-transference are equilibrated is nothing else than this duration *à la* Bergson. This is the duration which we isolated at the beginning through the ‘evaluation of duration’ which Jacques-Alain Miller refers to in his commentary on *Logical Time* of May 2000 by showing what it reveals in making the subject pass from one position to another between the seeing and the knowing, by indicating that its value is a value of a waiting in the time which precedes the act, by demonstrating how haste is in some way the *Aufhebung*. The values of ‘evaluation’ of this duration are not those that we are reproached with ‘offending’, and analysts nevertheless accept them by taking their place in our conception of the sessions, which is also that of ‘a tough temporal asceticism’.⁵¹

The emphasis which needs correcting in the session bears upon this ‘Bergsonian duration’, a duration which masks what its consideration displaces by fogging up the transference stakes. But on this point we should be attentive: if one of Lacan’s *Witz* underlines that the *senti-ment* [what is felt lies], it is nevertheless with this lie of what is felt of duration, and against this lie, that tact intervenes, not in order to neutralise it, but in order to make use of it: not to neutralise it by a benevolent neutrality which is but a degradation, a falsification of the ancient virtue of patience, amounting to a patience which is bastardised by what Lacan sometimes called a ‘discreet fraternity’.⁵²

Duration as an affect of time in the session is treated in the opposite manner to what it is in the love relation, where what matters is to give what one does not have, in other words a duration which does not spare its time — ‘*Venus otia amat*’ — a duration which no longer turns time into an instance where the care of being can be deployed. This is a proof for him that his desire goes some way beyond the cause “of the conscientious objection made by one of the two sexed beings to the service to be rendered to the other”,⁵³ and a means for her to be returned what goes ‘beyond’⁵⁴ her, which Freud, in his 1931 article on feminine sexuality, qualified as ‘incommensurable’, means of a time subtracted from the duration necessary for her consent to love becoming something else than an elaborate pretence, acting as a screen erected against the crudeness of flesh. In an inverse manner to the supposed ‘immediate facts of consciousness’, the subjective strategies in action in the love relation show that duration without time is not the sense of time but, for each partner, a most immediate mediation destined to render less improbable the neighbourhood of two incomparable *jouissances*.

“That the psychoanalytical act and the sexual act are opposites”⁵⁵ will allow us, in a little while, to reverse our formula and to indicate that if what matters in love is to subtract time from duration, in the session what matters is to subtract duration from time. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to appreciate what the feeling of duration is for each analysand. This is where tact intervenes, since it is the way in which the analyst does things in order to respect the subject’s affects; in order to respect them, that is, in order to hold them in respect so that they do not feed the diversion of the ego.

Whether heavy or light, duration is loquacious, whereas time originates in the cut which is always a dazzling flash of silence, in the cut which is silence in act, as is demonstrated by the fascination which unfailingly sanctions the great events of the history of the world or of the history of the subject, and which is consecrated by the universal and sacred custom of the minute of silence.

On Schema L, Bergsonian duration is to be placed on the imaginary axis; this duration is a sentiment of time which nourishes the passion for ignorance of what time makes of us; that is to say, igno-

rance of the effects of discontinuity which time is. With duration one resists time, just like one protects oneself from its value as deadline. Duration is deceiving as soon as one pretends to make it into the index of the endurance of being and of the strength of desire. The famous 'I have lived' of the abbé de Siéyès does not reveal the cipher of destiny, nor does the more poetic 'days go by, and I remain' of Apollinaire. We have known, in France, a movement of historical doctrine which celebrated duration, 'the long duration' even, in order to try to counter the value of dates and of the event in history. It is Fernand Braudel's theory of long duration (he played a little role in the teaching life of Lacan): this theory shows quite well that with duration promoted to concept, we may hope that things will sort themselves out, that with duration and its fetishisation we can hope not to take any notice of the subject-effect of time.

This is where tact intervene, for this duration is a modern claim, in a world which reduces time to its syncope and history to actuality, as is signified by this expression of a journalist well named Lacouture [the stitch], this invention of the almost comic formula of 'immediate history'. Duration is a claim of suffering man, time pressurises him from every angle, this time which has become his enemy, the time which is, today, in everyone's professional life, the weapon of exclusion and segregation, transforming experience into a handicap. Duration as sentiment of the temporal flux claims that time must become a friend again, the asexual rest of the warrior — this rest which Bachelard identified as the limit of temporalisation — that the time accorded to the speech which runs on freely be an occasion for appeasement and relaxation, that in the overpopulated desert of the modern rush, in the frenzy of imperious and illusory modes, duration be the oasis of elementary salubrity, of the modesties of calmed initiative.

"In our Western civilisation, marked by the acceleration of production and consumption, the psychoanalytical session is a break and a haven. The patient can take his/her time there... for this time is given to him/her... the time to be truer. During this same time the analyst reciprocally gives his sustained attention, not only to what the patient says — and does not say — but also to his/her being. The analyst thereby shows his/her respect for the person of the patient by affording the latter the time to deploy, within the framework of the session, the modalities of his or her own psychical functioning".⁵⁶ It is certainly worthwhile meditating on this citation of Didier Anzieu for other reasons than those which would allow us to pick out the unlikely inadaptation of each of these terms with what happens in the analytical experience. Indeed, it shows how an affectation of meaning well, with which one can approach this question of the relations of time and duration, prunes our fundamental concepts one by one and leaves us with an ecclesiastical vocabulary.

At the antipodes of prudery of the beautiful soul, tact serves to go against, whilst respecting it, the subject's natural and pathetic demand. A French government, which was not without its merits, made a fool of itself by creating a Ministry of free time and leisure. If Chateaubriand thought that there were two ways to cope with time, either challenge it, that is, kill it, by creating an imperishable work, or spend it in our daily diversions, we have invented a third one: to recuperate this time by transforming it into duration, in order to be able to waste [*le perdre*] it with impunity.

But to subtract duration from time is to demonstrate that to extract the signified from the signifier, to remove all pretensions of signification from the signifying chain, is not an operation without a remainder. It is my third and last point, which will be brief.

When tact becomes an act

Time minus duration is not equal to zero. Time minus duration makes the question emerge of what the object is for the subject. When one takes away duration from time, the perspective of an object appears, in a moment where tact becomes an act.

In a book which was published in France less than three months ago, entitled *The Fear of Breaking Down and Other Clinical Situations*, Winnicott publishes an article whose title is: *Two Notes on Silence*. In this paper, he relates some of the analytical sessions of a woman who, probably tired of Winnicott's perorations, orders him to shut up. He remarks: 'the treatment rests on my silence'. Quite instructively, Winnicott picks up that the analyst's silence feminises him, that his interpretation is no longer single because it takes both analysand and analyst along in the current which leads to the assumption of the failing of the Other. Let us leave this goldmine of a half-dozen pages to extract the following: "I had to accept occupying the position of someone who says absolutely nothing... The effect on me was a tickle in the throat that I was able nevertheless to hide, but I knew that to say three words would have been enough to relieve the tickle. Not being able to speak has a curious effect: it demanded of me a way of listening that was different from my usual one. To a certain extent I always listen with my throat, and my larynx accompanies the noises of the world, in particular the voice of someone who is speaking to me".⁵⁷ One has to praise both the naivety of Winnicott and what his frank honesty teaches, as well as the value of this surprising 'fall': he shuts up but the time of the session becomes a duration in which a real itch is installed. Never mind any consideration of the semblant! The British analyst identifies his act and its atemporality with his own 'psychosomatisation'.

The act of the analyst, which subtracts duration from time, is the engagement of his or her silence in the treatment. This silence, which is the operator of the subtraction of duration from time, of the signified from the signifier, makes an object emerge which the very presence of the analyst evokes, and this is what the analysand consents to. This is what Winnicott engages in, to his detriment, when beyond what is nearly a 'body-event', he dedicates himself to becoming the effect of his act in a confusion between his silence and a non-action without limits. 'Silence corresponds to the semblant of waste'⁵⁸, Lacan teaches, and one has to articulate what is at stake with a rigorous 'handling of time', with a meticulous 'evaluation of duration' in order not to "make of silence a full presence, transposing silence into being, falling into an ontology of presence".⁵⁹ Because the 'analyst's being is in action even in his silence',⁶⁰ an 'evaluation of duration' in the 'handling of time', impassioned by its application to the most particular of each case, although probably accessory, takes on, beyond tact, the allure of an elementary caution.

A silence in act, which very often knots what interpretation unknots, demands from the analyst a concern, a vigilance that is constantly indexed on the time-line, on the axis of a vanishing presence where, thanks to Lacan, we see the question of the object outline itself. In the act which subtracts duration from time, which evaluates the former in order to handle the latter, this question can be transformed into haste, or a mixture of obdurate impatience and decided patience.

Translated by Richard Klein

1. I am developing here an intervention made in July 2000 at the XIth International Encounter of the Freudian Field in Buenos Aires, which focused on the 'analytical session' and the 'ethical stakes of the clinic'.
2. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, Seuil, Paris, 1966, pp. 312 and 314 (Routledge, New York & London, 2002, pp. 106 and 108). On this point, *nihil novi sub sole*: thus this is what Jean Cournut writes in the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* (NRP) in 1990: "the framework... is more than a device and more than a container; it is not a strategy and even less a technique; it is a third party which both the analysand and analyst revere because it ensures a faceless eternity, a law without revelation, a passion without madness. . . The framework is the bilateral and reciprocal investment of a device which takes time into account". (NRP, No 41, Gallimard, 1990, p. 227).
3. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Seuil, Paris, 1973, pp. 9-10 (Penguin, New York & London, 1977, pp. 3-4). One could also point out that the religious dimension noted by Lacan cohabits with the certainty of a sense of concrete realities. The triviality of the analyst's reply, evoked in the preceding paragraph, can be published with a slightly stiffer tone. Thus, and to quote Didier Anzieu: "The missed session must be paid: no one is obliged to live in his property; but the charges continue to run up. As well as the analytic hour which is reserved for him, the patient remunerates the free floating but exclusive attention that the analyst undertakes, *ipso facto*, to consecrate to him". (NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 235.)
4. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 312; 106-7. I emphasise the word 'taboo': thus, "I sometimes wonder what I would do in my practice if I did not have a watch..." Conrad Stein asked himself ingenuously, (NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 252).
5. K. Marx, *Le caractère fétiche de la marchandise et son secret*, Editions Allia, 1999, pp. 9-12. The exchange value taken on by time is naturally inspired from ideals of intersubjectivity: "whether the length is short, long, fixed or variable, at one point or another, it is desirable for it to be usable by the two subjectivities present..." (Radmilla Zygouris, NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 234). Less naively, the logic of this exchange value is naturally taken up by the very highest sources: "Freud equated, on the one hand, [the payment of fees] with the value of a working-time which the analyst had paid to himself. The whole symbolism of payment and the logic of exchange thus instituted were destined to be inscribed in the social value of time", (Patrick Guyomard, NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 246).
6. Those are the first lines of a novel by A. Maurois, *Le cercle de famille* which, for reasons that are probably understandable, has not left a strong imprint on literary history. I remembered these lines for the clarity of the choice that they outline, even for an adolescent reading: either chronology, or the logic of the signifier. "Childhood memories, unlike those of middle age, are not classified in the frames of time. They are isolated images surrounded on all sides by a forgetting. . . [of which some] have left on our personality traces which are so permanent that we recognise their past truth in the present force of their effects."
7. G. Debord, *La société du spectacle*, Folio, 1992, p. 130.
8. G. Bachelard, *La dialectique de la durée*, PUF, 1950/1993, pp. 41-2.
9. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, pp. 838-9; *Reading Seminar XI*, SUNY, 1995, p. 267-8.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 844; p. 272.
11. P. Valéry, *La soirée avec Monsieur Teste*, *Oeuvres*, Tome II, La Pléiade. p. 17; also in *Paul Valéry – An Anthology. The Evening with Monsieur Teste*, Ed. J. R. Lawler, Routledge & Kegan, London, 1977, pp. 3-16.

12. J.-A. Miller, *L'orientation lacanienne: Les us du laps*, course 1999-2000, Department of Psychoanalysis, Paris VIII, session of 3 May 2000.
13. G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
14. J.-A. Miller, *L'orientation lacanienne: The Other that Does Not Exist and its Ethical Committees*, course 1996-97, Department of Psychoanalysis, Paris VIII.
15. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, p. 642; p. 306.
16. G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
17. *Ibid.*, chap.V, *La consolidation temporelle*, pp. 78 -89.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
22. J.-A. Miller, *Les us du laps*, session of 17 May 2000.
23. J. Lacan, *Ecrits, op. cit.*, p. 313; p. 107.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 313; p. 108.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 315-6; p. 110.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 316, p. 110.
27. H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, PUF, 1997, p. 170.
28. H. Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité*, PUF, 1992, pp. 46-47.
29. H. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience, op. cit.*, p. 93.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 133. When Didier Anzieu argues that "the length of the session is the inheritance in the treatment of fundamental biological rhythms and of the periodic return of the drive" (NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 236), one sees that what underlies all defences and illustrations of the fixed duration rests on a conception of the philosophy of consciousness which has little to do with what is at stake in the *Unbewußt*.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
38. Bergson, H., *Durée et simultanéité, op. cit.*, p. 63.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
43. J. Lacan, *Ecrits, op. cit.* p. 163.
44. J. Lacan, *Ecrits, op. cit.* p. 123; p. 31.
45. J. Lacan, *Radiophonie in Scilicet 2-3*, Seuil, Paris, 1970, p. 79.
46. Saint Augustin, *Les Confessions, Oeuvre*, tome I, La Pléiade, p. 1041.
47. Published one year after Lacan's thesis, *Lived Time [Le temps vécu]* is hardly practised any longer. The audience of Jacque-Alain Miller's course will reread no doubt with interest the second paragraph of chapter IV (pp. 72-84 in the 1968 Delachaux et Niestlé edition) which deals with 'activity and waiting': the contrast with the May 2000 sessions of *Les us du laps* is striking, and allows us to grasp the logical contradictions which partly explain the regrettable demise of psychopathology.
48. J.-T. Desanti, *Réflexions sur le temps*, Grasset, 1992, and *Introduction à la phénoménologie*, Gallimard, 1994 edition, chap. III which focuses on the fourth *Cartesian Meditation*.
49. J. Lacan, *Seminar III: The Psychoses*, trans. R. Grigg, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 111.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
51. J.-A. Miller, *Les us du laps, op. cit.*, session of 17 May 2000.
52. J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, p. 124, p. 32.
53. J. Lacan, *Seminar XX: Encore*, trans. B. Fink, Seuil, Paris, 1975, p. 13.
54. J. Lacan, *L'Étourdit in Scilicet No 4*, Seuil, Paris, 1973, p. 23.
55. S. Cottet, *Ejaculation praecox in Actes de la Cause freudienne*, Volume II, 1982, p. 74.
56. D. Anzieu, *Le temps d'être plus vrai, L'épreuve du temps in Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse No 41*, Gallimard, Paris, 1990, p. 236.
57. D.W. Winnicott, *Deux notes sur l'usage du silence* (1963) in *La crainte de l'effondrement psychique et autres situations cliniques*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000, pp. 60 to 67. This preoccupation of the analyst with the experience of his own sensations is of course not unique. In a less illuminating way than with Winnicott, but more grotesquely, Radmilla Zygouris proposes that this preoccupation is guided

at the level of one of the principles of the direction of the treatment: "for each analysand I try to see what time is necessary for me to listen to him or her in order that a contact is established... within a time span ranging from a half-hour to an hour and a half, moment in which I become tired or which is my limit of what I can say to the patient" (NRP, *op. cit.*, p. 230).

58. J. Lacan, *Conférences et entretiens dans des universités nord-américaines* in *Scilicet* No 6-7, Paris, Seuil, 1976, p. 63.
59. F. Fonteneau, *L'éthique du silence*, Paris, Seuil, 1999, p. 201.
60. J. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 359. I am indebted, for this quote and the one referenced in footnote 58, to F. Fonteneau, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 and 150.

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