

# THE ANALYTIC SESSION

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## I - THE ANALYTIC SESSION FROM THE OUTSIDE

The analytic session looks like an appointment, and I hope you will indulge me by allowing me to consider the analytic session from the outside.

Two bodies occupy the same space during a period of time; they are close to each other in space for a certain length of time. We could say that when one of these bodies defaults on the appointment, there is no analytic session, but this would only be an approximation. When it is the analysand that defaults, there is a session, since he pays for it.

This appointment involves two mobiles in so far as the analyst can also move, come and go, not be there. Yet the two mobiles are not activated by a reciprocal movement.

A dissymmetry seems necessary in this appointment since it is always the one that goes to see the other, and this other, the analyst, thereby figures as an immobile driving force: for it is he that moves the other to come and see him.

### *The imperative 'Come'*

An imperative is at work, preliminary to any other, and it is the imperative to 'come'. When one does not come, when one apologises for not having come, the blahblah of the analyst is always reduced to: 'come', 'when will you be coming?'. This imperative to 'come' is a preliminary to: 'speak', 'tell me everything', 'tell me everything that goes through your head', 'tell me what you want', 'tell me the truth and everything else'. All these imperatives only make sense against the backdrop of a response to the imperative 'come', 'come to me'.

If we wanted to do a genealogy of what is called the analytic position, we would have to look to the tree or the stone, to the sacred

place which initiates a ceremony that must take place there, and nowhere else, by the tree, by the stone, within this perimeter.

It can of course also happen that the analyst goes to the analysand — if the analysand is unwell, suffers in his body, is in the hands of doctors, cannot move. It can happen for the analyst to show that he also is a mobile, and to go to the other. This is exceptional and is evidently charged with a signification of compassion whose incidence in the treatment must be measured. Compassion, as we know, can turn to persecution.

As a rule, the analyst is immobilised at the very place of the analytic session. This is the spirit in which a certain number of prohibitions were invented, prohibitions which the standard — as it was called in psychoanalysis — imposes on the mobility of the analyst. The prohibition 'the analysand will never see you outside of your consulting room' could not be formulated. It is supposedly an obstacle to the pursuit of the treatment to encounter the analyst outside of his place, to verify that he is a mobile who has his own interests, who comes to life outside of the place where he plays the role of the tree or the stone.

This is the spirit in which it was possible for some to develop an ideal of immobility for the analyst, one which has spread to his person, his very facial features, as if what essentially mattered was to withdraw the analyst from movement. In this spirit, the analyst was made into an impassable being. This is the vegetal model of the analyst, and it can go so far as his mineralisation, the progress of which is sometimes perceptible in his very person.

### *The Lacanian phenomenon*

The analytic session lends itself to a physical description. What could we say? That the analyst has a power of attraction, that he makes bodies gravitate to him. This nearly amounts to saying that the analyst is an attraction. I suppose that this is what had led Lacan to accept to produce himself as the 'Lacanian phenomenon'.

The Lacanian phenomenon was a phenomenon of attraction. People came to see him and to listen to him as what one calls an attraction in show-business. Someone is an attraction in so far as he

draws a great number of bodies into his perimeter. This, in particular, is what characterises singers. People come in their thousands to witness their being in the world, in proportions that far exceed those of the University when it draws people to someone.

If we were to describe the analytic session entirely from the outside, we can see that the course of someone's life is periodically interrupted by this displacement towards someone. This displacement in itself implies a renunciation of other activities, it introduces some disruption into everyday life, and thereby attributes a certain value to this encounter.

If we were to represent time with a vector, one could situate there a number of successive periods that are dedicated to this appointment.



## 2 - THE SESSION FROM WITHIN

### *A temporal division*

Let us now try our hands at a more internal description of the analytic session. The two people who are there in the presence of each other do not respond to the same temporality. The session is the place of a temporal division.

The analysand is prey to a subjective time, a wholly affective time, which is his singular time, whereas the analyst — and in this definition it is obvious — is outside of this particular time.

The analyst remains in the objective time, the common time. This is what is prescribed to him by the standard which provides that the analyst is the one that says once the 55, 50, 45, 35 minutes are over: 'the time has passed', 'your time is up'. He is not captive to the subjective time of the analysand. In a way, he is the voice of the clock. The analyst does not live by the time of the analysand. He is coordinated to common time, from which the analysand is withdrawn during the time of his session.

Winnicott said this with the healthy cynicism of the empiricist: 'why does one interrupt a session?' He replied 'in order to bring in the following patient'. This is an impeccable answer, and we can debate it with the help of metapsychology, which would allow us to distinguish the time that obeys the pleasure principle and that which responds to the reality principle.

It is evident that we cannot be satisfied with this summary difference between the subjective and the objective; we nevertheless use it in order to introduce the notion that time is no simple thing, and that it is liable to divide itself. But there, we learn this on the basis of an elementary description if we had not already learnt it from the impasses and paradoxes of philosophy concerning time.

Let us now consider more closely what is at stake in what we have summarily called the subjective time of the analysand.

The analytic session is organised so as to cut out a very special period of time for the analysand in the temporal continuum. It is a special period in that nothing happens, it is a period without any external event.

There always are external events: a siren can be heard, the phone can ring, but these external events are, in a way, placed in brackets. The time of the session is, on the side of the analysand, a time in which nothing should happen.

Usually the subject is busy, he goes about his business. He is a mobile, and as he is mobile, he must orient himself, conduct himself in the common reality — be on guard, not be run over when he crosses the road...

### *A neutralisation of the field of perception*

I will continue in the descriptive spirit that is mine today, and talk of the analysand's field of consciousness. Normally, a certain number of perceptive inputs will penetrate his field of consciousness; inputs which will determine, on his side, a series of outputs: movements, actions.

If we adopt this drastic viewpoint on psychological reality, the session is organised so as to produce a reduction of all these inputs, to ensure a neutralisation of the perceptive field.

I say neutralisation so as not to say annulment of the perceptive field. We could talk of an annulment of the perceptive field if we were to put the body of the subject in a dark box and leave him to stew there by taking him away from numerous perceptive data. The subject would then be subjected to as total a sensorial deprivation as possible. When we get close to this kind of state, which can be organised, we introduce such an upheaval in the phenomenology of perception that the result is an intensification of all corporeal sensations, an important variation of these sensations, and an uncanny feeling concerning the relation to the body.

This is not at all what we seek to achieve in the analytic session. We do not use this kind of box in psychoanalysis, but the couch, which comes to us from the nineteenth century, but which we happily carry on using in the 21<sup>st</sup>. The point is not to annul the perceptive field, but to neutralise it, in the sense of rendering it banal. It is obviously more equivocal, it is not of the order of the total. To render it banal means that there is nothing that attracts the attention.

### *An akinetic position*

Attention is an essential psychological function. The point is to obtain a reduction of the perceptive input, but we must be careful not to overdo things. This is the sense of the standard that brings analysts to respect an absolute sameness of the environment and their persons, the person of the analyst. It is excessive to demand absolute sameness because from then on the analysand will precisely be on guard, checking whether something, anything, would have changed.

It all is a question of measure, tact. In this dimension, what matters is to obtain an effect of banality — which will obviously never prevent the hysteric subject from being alerted by what you may have left lying around, and was not there the previous time. This is what can lead the hysteric subject to deny the banalisation of the world and

to seek the signs of desire, however minute, which always lie here and there.

The analytic session reduces this perceptive input and is an obstacle to the mobile issue of the input.



Fundamentally, it places the subject in a position that Aristotle termed 'akinetik'. Aristotle was not speaking about psychoanalysis but about sleep, and this is where I get this adjective from.

Usually, the analysand-mobile is reduced to the immobility of the dorsal decubitus. The fact that you may have him sitting in front of you, in a chair, does not fundamentally modify this akinesis.

### 3 - AN OPERATION ON ATTENTION

#### *Thought events*

If one is to consider and describe the analytic session in this psychological mode, it is an operation on the perceptive field, on the field of consciousness, and precisely it is an operation on attention. In the analytic session we find ways to prevent the subject's field of consciousness from being solicited by the outside world, to plunge him into a non-eventful world, so that his attention is brought to bear on the internal world.

Everything that is said about the analytic framework is, in the last analysis, reducible to the means that one uses in order to make attention shift from the external world onto the internal world. A surprising fact then emerges — except that one has long ceased to marvel at it — namely that there are thought events. Once the perceptive inputs have been reduced, rendered less important, one can witness the automatic appearance of inputs of another type, which usually go unnoticed. These are thoughts that are not provoked by the external world — where there is nothing deserving attention occurring —,

thoughts which manifest themselves to the subject. This is the conception that organises the way in which Freud presents the analytic session: it is the place where psychological reality can manifest itself as such and through the thoughts which enter the field of consciousness.

For Freud, the analytic rule consisted in nothing other than advising the subject to let his thoughts come forth, and to convert them immediately into statements, messages addressed to the analyst. These thoughts which then come forth, or fall, as Freud said in his language, are doubtless intimate since they do not come from external reality. They come from within, but at the same time they have an oddity about them that indicates that they are motivated by something else.

### *An experience of extimacy*

This is why, in what the analytic session disposes, thoughts — these inputs that differ from what the subject receives in his activity — appear as messages received from within, as if the subject was inhabited by an emitter of thought-messages.

If one were to give a phenomenological description of the experience of the analysand, one would end up formulating what Lacan enunciates at one point in his *Instance of the Letter*; namely that there is the experience of an other that “moves me at the heart of my utmost self-identity”. I am there, nothing of what I perceive can hold me back, there is only me, and yet there are thoughts which occur to me, thoughts of which I am the seat, the transmitter, and which are motivated solely by this psychological reality itself.

The analytic session, when it is considered in this very basic way, induces an experience of extimacy. In other words, within what is most interior to me, there appear elements that I cannot answer for and which are there, they sometimes link up, lack to me, or on the contrary flood in, and dispossess me of my initiative.

It is this experience, which is in a way primary, of extimacy that led Freud to resort to Fechner’s metaphor, ‘the other scene’, where Lacan saw the foregrounding of his big Other. This is also what induces the position of the unconscious and also that of the superego. The superego is the unconscious considered on its imperative side: ‘it

makes me do this', 'it makes me say this'. This imperative side can present itself in its aspect of prohibition, 'not to', which has been — one wonders why — especially valorised, in its *pericoloso sporgesi* dimension, or in its positive, injunctive dimension: 'do this'.

There have been questions concerning the articulation of this imperative aspect with the drive imperative, which in the end led to the hypothesis that there was an evident affinity between the superego and the drive, highlighted by the constraining aspect of action: impediment as propulsion to act.

### *A locus of subjection*

It is in this respect that the analytic session induces an experience that repeats that of sleep.

Aristotle produced a treatise on wakefulness and sleep. In itself it is already quite remarkable to have dedicated a treatise to sleep. If we were to know of the human condition solely through the works of many of the philosophers that one can read, we would not even guess that one sleeps. He calls sleep *desmos*, which Heidegger aptly translates as a locus of subjection. I regret that Heidegger, after having made this remarkable comment in the 20s concerning the fact "that there are some that talk of an unconscious", renounced a phenomenology of sleep.

In any case, the analytic session is itself also a *desmos*, a locus of subjection. Psychoanalysis privileged the link of the *desmos* of the analytic session with the *desmos* of sleep — to say it otherwise, at the beginning the dream was given an eminent value. It was given the value of a message of extimacy. What was called the interpretation of dreams was an exploration of this extimacy, the method to find one's way in this extimacy, make it one's own, re-appropriate it as a means of expression, and find a way so that the *Ich* could nevertheless come into being in the domain of the *Es*, this locus of subjection.

If the analytic session is a *desmos* where external reality is taken away as much as is possible so that psychical reality may manifest itself, we understand why it is necessarily limited in time, and not only limited by the pressure of the following patient. One cannot live in a

state of analytic session. I do not know if you have ever dreamt of that, an analytic session that would last forever. An analytic session that would last forever would lead to death.

The analytic session is necessarily sporadic. One could formulate the end of the session as an imperative: 'repress', "start to repress again so that you may be able to attend to your affairs". Sometimes, certain subjects find it difficult to leave psychical reality for external reality. This is why we tell them: 'be very careful' when we can feel a certain slowness in emerging from what was installed by the analytic session, where a certain number of phenomena relating to balance manifest themselves at the point of leaving psychical reality — vertigo, continued adherence to the space of the session. For the analyst, the end of the session consists in leading the subject back to common reality.

### *An operation of retemporalisation*

Essentially, the analytic session is a transitory putting into touch of the subject with what Freud called psychical reality. That is why analysts often express a certain fatigue when faced with objections made to the unconscious or to the analytical practice: "why don't you try it out for yourself and then you can speak about it". This can pass for obscurantism and comes from the evidence induced by the analytic session: this extimate emitter has a reality, a reality which can be measured, appreciated with the yardstick of its consistency, of the permanence of its messages. This is what Lacan called the disk, the 'discourse current' [*discourcourant*].

One listens to a disk in time — therefore, there must be a succession of moments, but at the same time, everything is there, everything is inscribed there. The disk appears to be outside of time. It is a phenomenon to which subjects testify from one session to the other. It is as if the time that passed between sessions did not exist. On occasion one is amazed that the next session should resume precisely at the point where the previous session was stopped. This is striking enough when the next session takes place the following day, but when a month, two months, six months pass between sessions and

the same occurs, then the notion that there is a disk and that there is an objective reality become very difficult to refuse.

The disk-unconscious manifests itself as detemporalised. What one calls the unconscious is a set of detemporalised elements, statements, images, situations, typical actions, elements which are conditioned in the subject's life, they are events that are always untimely, that is to say out of tune. What Freud taught us to recognise, and what Lacan inscribed under the rubric of the formations of the unconscious, are always untimely events when they manifest themselves. The analytic session, while it puts the subject in touch with this detemporalised set, also constitutes an operation of retemporalisation, because there, one listens to the disk.

#### 4. THE PARADOXES OF TIME

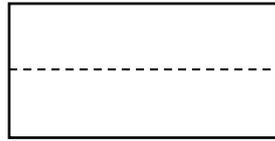
It is very difficult to give a status to what I have just introduced here as being outside time. This introduces us to what has been commented on repetitively, sometimes passionately, as the paradoxes of time.

Time is a very difficult object to think. It is a thought object that always appeared to those who have made a profession of thinking as particularly rebellious to the concept. Time has often been experienced as a failure of thought. There is indeed something in the being of time that is non graspable.

##### *Time — the universal container of being*

How can I make you understand something of it without resorting to an erudition for which there is no need here? Perhaps by first grasping time as the universal container of being. This has been formulated in diverse ways by philosophers: that what is, is in time. Time was thematised in Aristotle, e.g. τὸ νῶ — that in which everything that is, is.

One can represent time as the container of all that is and which is bound to unfold itself there, to become there.



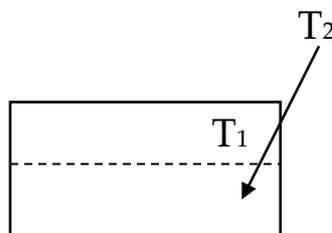
Hence the profound reflections on the fact that outside time all are annulled, that no time is outside time. But this axiom, which makes of all being a being in time, leaves one impoverished or embarrassed when it comes to think time as such, the being of time.

You cannot imagine the headache that such a reflection can give: is time in time? Is time itself temporal? Is it intra-temporal? It is the very problem of the framework within which that which is in time is inscribed.

In some philosophies of time, this leads to a strict distinction between what is in time and time itself. This is what animated the whole critique made of empiricists. They were accused of confusing time with what is in time.

### *The dividing of time*

Philosophy made a problem of time by trying to think time outside time, that is to say that it led to the dividing of time. One is led to distinguish the intra-temporal,  $T_1$ , and time itself,  $T_2$ .



If time is a being, it must itself be in time, whereas  $T_2$  is always susceptible, and suspected, of being a nonbeing, of only being nothingness. In other words, the discourses of philosophy can be divided according to whether they pose a self-inclusion of time or try to elaborate a special mode of a being for time as such.

There are a certain number of philosophers who did not hesitate to consider  $T_2$  as a nonbeing. For Parmenides or Spinoza, time as such does not exist. Kant found another solution — he eminently divided time. He thought of  $T_2$  as the condition of possibility of phenomena, as the condition of possibility of the intra-temporal, especially in his polemic with the empiricists. For him the idea of time does not come from what is in time; rather, one can only have a perception of time because one has it *a priori*, that is to say as the foundation of all temporal intuitions. Kant conceptualised the outside-time of  $T_2$  as a condition of possibility for the temporal unfolding, as a pure form of phenomena.

This notion of a pure, *a priori* form of time — in the two centuries which have passed since this elaboration — has lent itself to two readings. Time has either been read as a pure *a priori* rule — that is to say as a knowledge that one already has before any perception that all that will manifest itself will be temporal, as a knowledge anticipating that every phenomenon will manifest itself in a temporal form — or seen in terms of an originary consciousness of temporality.

In other words, Kant, on time as on all its elaborations, has been read either logically — it is an *a priori* rule, a fundamental anticipation, prior to any particular phenomenon, we know it will unfold in time — or phenomenologically: namely, there is an originary consciousness of temporality that predates anything which manifests itself as being in time.

### *A Russellian structure*

The logic of such an approach, what of it is logical, is speaking for us. Plato had encountered the paradoxes of time as early as in *Parmenides* — the paradox that time as such is not temporal. Aristotle, in his treatise on time, Book IV of *The Physics*, focuses all the paradoxes of time on the equivocation of the now. He discovers that the now, the pure instantaneous present, is simultaneously always the same and, at the same time, always other, identical and different, and that it therefore has a very singular mode of being. Aristotle thinks the singularity of the being of time on the basis of the paradox of the now, that is to say the paradox of the shifter 'now' (which expression he did not use). He

hesitates to make an *hypokeimenon* of it, that is to say a physical substratum, a logical subject. For him the 'now' is a pseudo-being.

I move on, because I cannot do anything about the fact that this is not a literature with which the majority of my listeners are familiar, nor that these are problems that do not make their heart race. I am merely giving you the essential articulations of the question, and even the means to find a way out of your — at best potential — troubles on that question.

What would emerge from a relatively profound enquiry on the torments of thought concerning time could be pacified by considering that time has a Russellian structure, that is to say that time is equivalent to the structure of a Russellian set, that is to say, that it is neither included in itself nor excluded from itself, and that it is both at the same time. There is not a philosopher who has never tried simultaneously to reunify time and to stratify it.

There are philosophies that stratify it, that divide it, and this calls for the elaboration of an entirely singular mode of being for  $T_2$ ; and there are philosophies which unify these two species of time, which then engenders a paradoxical being of which they only speak in contradictory terms, including Heidegger. Heidegger, when he is really on to time, says at the same time, in a Kantian language, that time is a condition for the possibility of there to be something like being, and then he says at the same time, which is contradictory, that time is properly speaking *Dasein* itself. In other words, either one divides it, or one creates a being contradictory in itself.

What remains is that there is nothing to demonstrate that one ever thought actual time, *wirklich*, other than as succession. It is a fact that for succession there is no co-ordinate that would be superior to that of the signifying chain itself.

This is in fact what led the philosopher Derrida, in his reading of Book IV of *The Physics*, to remark that Aristotle, starting from the paradox of the 'now', did nothing other than to describe the signifying chain and the paradox which is intrinsic to the signifier. Derrida was guided by his approach of Lacan. What he highlighted in the Aristotelian theory of time was the instance of the operating letter.

### *The time of the big Other*

It is a fact — in any case, this is how we [analysts] proceed — that time is always articulated to the signifier. That is why we can organise philosophies by means of a paradox like that of Russell's. The paradoxes of time lend themselves to be organised by a purely signifying paradox and by a purely signifying disposition like that which produces Russell's paradox.

This is how we can complete Lacan's demonstration concerning space by transposing it onto time. What does Lacan demonstrate? He demonstrates that speaking generates the Other as a locus. Speaking supposes a position of speech. Speaking always poses itself as truth and, in posing itself as truth, speech moves away from itself and towards another locus, the locus of the Other, which is at the same time the locus of its address and the locus of its inscription.

The very concept of the Other in Lacan supposes a dividing of space, and supposes the position of another locus. If we wanted to express this in philosophical terms, it is a pure effect of the signifying chain insofar as it is articulated in speech. In Lacan's demonstration, the signifying chain poses an exteriority, an 'elsewhere', it makes the Other exist as locus of speech. I am only returning you to what we all repeat over and over again on the basis of *The Function and Field of Speech and Language*. The function of language is deduced from the field of language, and this field has the value of locus of the Other. It is a locus that is materialised by writing in so far as it requires a surface for inscription whereas, conversely, the address of speech fades away in writing — hence the delocalisation of address it entails.

With respect to time, we can take the same starting point as the one indicated by Lacan concerning space. Just as there is the locus of the Other, there is the time of the Other.

### *Stratified time*

This is what was approached in the standard when the emphasis was laid on the fact that the time of the analytic session was the time of the Other, and the independence of the duration of the session in relation

to your time as subject was highlighted. The alterity of time was emphasised, and the blind, absolute regularity of time, of the Turing type, was underlined. The succession of sessions could be presented as a Turing strip where the central unit would be always forced to go ahead, and to mark + 1.

There is a perspective in which analysis indeed unfolds as a Turing strip. This is what justifies that a missed session is considered as a session that took place. It is more often than not true. The time of the session you miss is devoted, as if by a miracle, at some point or other, to thinking about this psychical reality to which you would have devoted yourself with the analyst. But if a missed session is considered as a session that took place, it is because of the dividing of time, because one completely distinguishes empirical time, in which one either comes or not, and the time as such of the analysis, where a little square inscribed on the Turing strip remains there, whether you have inscribed signifiers there or not. The strip has its own objectivity and analysis consists in deploying this Turing strip.

It happens for a patient to wait and then become impatient, which runs contrary to his definition, and then he goes. But at this moment he leaves the void of his presence after him, just as a burglar leaves his trace after breaking in. There are subjects who love making themselves seen and then disappear. It is entirely indicative of their mode of being in analysis.

The dividing of time is a constant philosophical operation throughout centuries. The whole of Bergson's theory consists in dividing time, in showing that there is a time modelled on space and a pure time. We also encounter this dividing of time in Lacan. He introduced a mode of time that is specific to him, which he called logical time and which differs from empirical time. It is the Lacanian version of  $T_2$ . Lacan, too, stratified time.

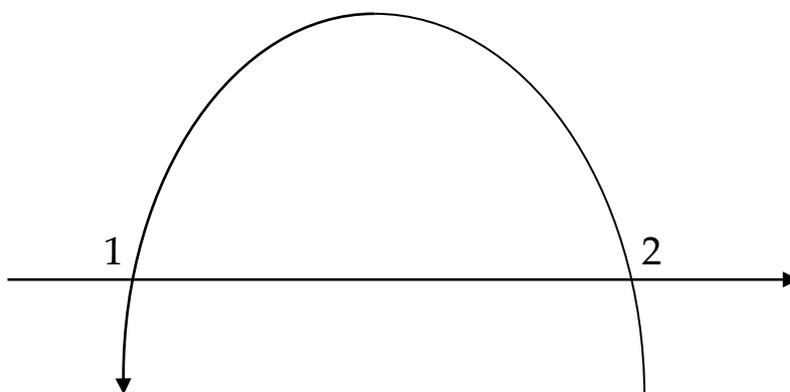
### *A subject of pure logic*

This may seem to be a psychologisation of time insofar as one could think that waiting, hurrying, are values which can only be inscribed in relation to objective time, and which inscribe the affectivity of the

subject in relation to objective time. Yet Lacan claims that the subject which he stages is a subject of pure logic and that this logic integrates time. It is clear that logic only integrates time on condition that it integrates the Other. In so doing, Lacan introduces a new type of logical conclusion which is neither a-temporal nor non-temporal, and which is not articulated to the simultaneous vision of elements — as he says to characterise what he calls classical logic — but to an intrinsically temporal conclusion, linked to an act.

This already allows us to show that Lacan implements a suspension of time in what we call classical logic. The attraction specific to logic comes from the fact that it has always been situated outside of time. Mathematics has been presented as the way in which we could experience truth outside of time. This is what is singularly refuted, by Lacan and by the analytic experience, and what already obeys, even if it is not apparent, the singular temporality included in Lacan's retroactive schema which is the guide for any reading of *Logical Time*.

If one agrees to situate here the arrow of time, it is clear that the retroaction schema includes a re-election of the relations of the 'before' and the 'after'. This schema is inscribed against the univocal nomination of succession. What appears as before and after on the first vector can be found in reverse order on the second vector.



On this schema, we already have a topologisation of time, which implies that we move away from what has circulated for centuries as psychological evidence, in order to introduce a signifying formalisation of the real which highlights the value for us of the relations that give the lie to the simple evidence of succession.

Translated by Véronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf

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