

## THE LOGIC OF THE SCANSION OR WHY A SESSION CAN BE SHORT

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Enabling the analysand to know something about what the unconscious wants of him; seizing the instant of the opening of the unconscious, putting it back to work in the treatment; precipitating and accommodating the moments of concluding: these are the ethical stakes of each analytic session. I shall attempt here to specify in this regard the function of scansion, from the perspective of the structure upon which it is founded and the temporal logic in which it is inscribed.

### ***The status of the unconscious is ethical***

"The unconscious is that which is at the subject's interior, but which is only realised outside, in this locus of the Other"<sup>1</sup>: the unconscious, extracted from the field of the Other, knowledge inscribed in the Other, only has meaning in this field, and on the condition that the subject be engaged in a truthful realisation, that is to say, that the subject's speech be affirmed in truth, that the subject be engaged in a procedure of verification, of 'making true'.

For the unconscious, Lacan reminds us elsewhere of what Freud had always maintained, namely that its reality is sexual reality. "The unconscious is the fact that the being, by speaking, enjoys, and wants to know nothing more about it at all", says Lacan in *Encore*.<sup>2</sup> This *jouissance* rigged up to language [*appareillée au langage*], phallic *jouissance*, the sole possible path to sexual *jouissance*, has the impossibility of the sexual relation as such as its correlate.

The unconscious is thus an affair of knowledge and *jouissance*, it is not of the register of substance: the unconscious is what is elusive, the pulsation of a border, it is this fragility of its ontic status that Lacan conjures up with the term *moirés*, 'shimmerings'.<sup>3</sup> What then is the status of this unconscious that cannot be substantialised? Lacan tells us: the status of the unconscious is ethical.

This ethical status of the unconscious is given it, says Lacan, by the step of its discoverer, Freud: a Cartesian step that parts from the foundation of the subject of certainty and draws on doubt.

In point of fact it is here, in the wavering, in the interval, here where Freud doubts, because it is a question of his own dreams, but also where there is deception [*où ça trompe*], since it is the hysterics that show him the way, here is the sign that something resists, that there is something to be preserved: Freud is assured that there is a thought here, which is unconscious.

Doubt, says Lacan, is the support of certainty. This Freudian certainty is constructed in three moments [*trois temps*].

First, under the guise of a wager of certainty, which comes to Freud from the fact that he recognises the law of his own desire, through his self-analysis. It is sustained by his desire that he goes forward.

In a second moment, in the form of confirmation, in a movement of verification; it is to recognise that what he ascertains adds up [*se recoupe*], in the sense of a causality, it is in the return, in the function of the *Wiederkehr*, that Freud assures his certainty: there where there is something to be preserved, where doubt hovers, it insists; there is cross-checking [*recoupe ment*], overdetermination, indication therefore of this field of the unconscious where the subject is at home.

A moment of concluding may then be precipitated.

What is such a possibility founded on? Can doubt and the terms of *Willkür*, chance, and *Zufall*, the arbitrary, linked equally to the function of repetition where the *automaton* and the *tuchè* may also be recognised, effectively permit Freud to posit a certainty as such?

Given that the unconscious's structure of language was recognised by Freud, given that his approach passed through this reduction to the functioning [*mise en fonction*] of pure signifiers, it is operative, and is able to make a moment of concluding appear: "a moment when he feels he has the courage to judge and to conclude. This is part of what I have called his ethical witness",<sup>4</sup> says Lacan.

It is this act, this judgement, which gives, in its very invention, its ethical status to the unconscious.

### ***Logical time***

On account of Freud's affirmation of this certainty, this field of the unconscious where the subject is at home, the status of the subject changes, is displaced in relation to the Cartesian cogito: "The subject of the unconscious manifests itself, it thinks even before it enters into certainty".<sup>5</sup> Freud's step, no matter how Cartesian its articulation may be, fundamentally subverts the subject.

The recognition of the signifier as already there, as functioning in a structure, is what founds this logical time that precisely articulates Freud's inaugural step, as Lacan shows. Logical time is nothing other than the corollary of a shaping of the real by the signifier.<sup>6</sup>

How can the function of this logical time in the unconscious, this other mode of time that would permit of 'circumscribing the unconscious in a temporal structure' be understood?

Just as desire is said by Freud to be indestructible, 'the unconscious does not know time': the time to which Freud is referring here is on the side of duration, of temporal continuity, in other words, chronological time.

The logical time perceptible in the unconscious, which permits of its circumscription, presents itself on the contrary as a time of the discontinuous: a moment [*un temps*] of opening and closing, a fluttering of a slit, a vacillation in a gap where something of the order of the unborn allows itself to be seen for a moment, something of the order of the unrealised, the 'zone of shades',<sup>7</sup> a pulsation, a cut where a conjecturable subject appears — a subject subverted by the signifier, suspended between signifiers, itself caught in this fluttering, itself waiting.

This time is the time of the elusive, of what is brought into the light of day only to disappear immediately, "between this instant of seeing, when something of the intuition itself is always elided, not to say lost, and that elusive moment when the apprehension of the unconscious does not, in fact, conclude, when it is always a question of an illusory recuperation"<sup>8</sup>: a moment [*un temps*] of scansion that is equally the correlate of the fragility of the unconscious's ontic status.

At this location, logic is necessary: the ethics of psychoanalysis, 'is based on a logic'. A logic where time is singularly present, and in particular in the function of haste that Lacan advances in *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty*. Here Lacan retroactively gives a new view of the temporal range of the Freudian discovery.

### **Scansion and act**

Freud's act, what Lacan calls the '*événement Freud*', the event constituted by Freud's writings in so far as they produce a truth, in so far as they are themselves a truthful fiction of the real, this event brings a reformulation of the ethical question: what is at issue is a locating of the subject in relation to the real and in relation to *jouissance*, there where repetition dominates, where the impossible is encountered.

In the analytic experience, the act aims precisely at an access to the real; the subject will on occasion be produced as a response of the real, according to Lacan's terms.

But so that there may be an act, in its ethical dimension, there needs to be the 'body to body', as Lacan said, of the preliminary interviews, there needs to be the *hic et nunc* of the treatment. Real presence is necessary to sustain desire, to presentify the real cause, it is necessary in order to make the unconscious emerge — "the presence of the unconscious is to be searched for, in any discourse, in its enunciation", says Lacan — and to precipitate the act — "The interpretation must be prompt in order to meet the terms of the interloan [*entreprêt*]",<sup>9</sup> Lacan reminds us in *Télévision*.

In this respect, the presence of the analyst is first the presence of the desire of the analyst. It is the desire of the analyst that enables him to reduce himself to making himself the semblant of the object cause of the subject's desire.

It is this desire of the analyst which enables him, *hic et nunc*, to cut in, in the analytic act, when the analysand-subject shows his face; which enables him to support the emergence of this subject, in the singularity of his desire, in the particularity of his relation to *jouissance*, in aiming at this absolute difference of each analysand-subject, one by one.

The scansion and everything that is covered by this term — interpretation, punctuation, cutting, pointed equivocation, sending the subject back to the enigma of its desire, to the anticipation of its choice, an act occasioned by what the subject says [*acte pris de son dire*] ('you said it') — are together a host of modalities of the analytic act which are due only to the presence of the analyst, in the field of the unconscious; the unconscious is of the field of the Other. It is seized in the haste, the precipitation, the surprise and the astonishment, in the instant that should not be missed. The act consists in not missing it.

The scansion, as act, as at least this minimal act attached to each session and which asserts its terminal point, is a product of the logic of the act, which is a logic of two dimensions:

— the structural dimension: the scansion involves recognising structure, the real that insists in repetition, that is always lying behind the *automaton*, for "an act, a true act, always has an element of structure, by the fact of concerning a real that is not self-evidently caught up in it", as Lacan notes in *Seminar XI*.<sup>10</sup>

— the temporal dimension, that of logical time and that of the instant of the encounter that should not be missed, that of the *tuchè*.

### **A scansion**

Thus, the act partakes of haste, but in so far as the act produces an interpretation [*fait interpretation*], it is a product of a calculation of structure and conjuncture: the interpretation occurs on account of the encounter not to be missed between an enunciation that produces the *tuchè* [*qui fait tuchè*] and the structure which insists.

I should like to present a short clinical sequence here, to illustrate in this regard the function of the scansion.

It is a scansion that produced an interpretation [*qui a fait interpretation*], but this is not an interpretation in the register of meaning, nor the emergence of a master signifier, rather it is an interpretation that seized the subject of enunciation and sent it back to the enigma of its Being.

It was during the second interview with a subject who had come to request an analysis and who was confiding what manifested itself for him as the essential difficulty of his existence, the point of his history that encumbered him.

He used to have a brother, younger than himself, who was autistic and handicapped by a cardiac malformation. A very strong bond, both ambiguous and ambivalent, had united him to this brother, going as far as constituting a particular form of communication that puzzles him. This brother, having reached adolescence, had now been dead for two years. This drama had led the whole family, the patient, his sister and the two parents, to a work of mourning, which would thereby prolong the psychotherapy undertaken by the mother and father during their child's illness.

"After his death, all three of us were really able to speak about it", says the patient.

'All three?', I ask.

"Yes", he says surprised, "my mum, my dad, my sister and... I forgot to count myself!", he adds astonished.

The 'There!' that I then pronounce closes the session, by taking note [*en prenant acte*] of this mistake in counting and the enunciation that brings it.

This session had lasted but a few minutes, but what was to be said was there [*le dire était là*], caught, sent back and inscribed.

The subject emerges here correlative to the counting mistake, as a one-less, as *manque-à-être*, want-of-being, where the very structure of the subject — of any subject — can be recognised. But the particular subject in question here presented itself as having disappeared,<sup>11</sup> just like the dead brother to whom this subject is linked by a pact that the work of the analysis would later bring to light.

The two dimensions of the scansion are clearly distinguishable here:

— the dimension that is a product of the logic of interpretation as a calculation, as a calculated risk, and which comes to underline and inscribe what has been grasped of the structure of the subject: a one-less, and heavy with a particular *jouissance* in an identification with the dead brother.

— the dimension that takes note [*prend acte*] of a stumbling in the subject's speech, that recognises its value and by this very fact recognises the subject of enunciation, instituting the transference by putting the subject to work in the seizure without risk of an instant of seeing.

It is this articulation of these two dimensions, structure and *tuchè*, that ought to be underlined. The instant of their encounter should not be missed: the ethical status of the unconscious is inscribed on the basis of their seizure in the act. Such is the stake, it seems to me, of each scansion.

Translated by Adrian Price

1. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, Hogarth, 1977, p. 147.
2. J. Lacan, *Seminar XX: Encore*, trans. B. Fink, Norton, New York, 1998, pp. 104-5.
3. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI*, *op. cit.* p. 34, where Sheridan renders *moires* by 'veils', [TN].
4. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 32, where Sheridan translates *une récupération leurrée* as "an 'absorption' fraught with false trails" [TN].
9. J. Lacan, *Television*, Norton, New York, 1990, p. 46, *entreprêt*, here being a play on the French *interprète*, 'interpreter' [TN].
10. J. Lacan, *Seminar XI*, *op. cit.* p. 50.
11. The French *disparu* also carries the signification 'dead' [TN.]

This text was published in *La Cause Freudienne* No 46, Paris, 2000

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