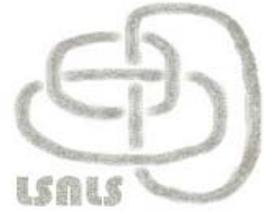


Man's approach to woman: A logical pathway

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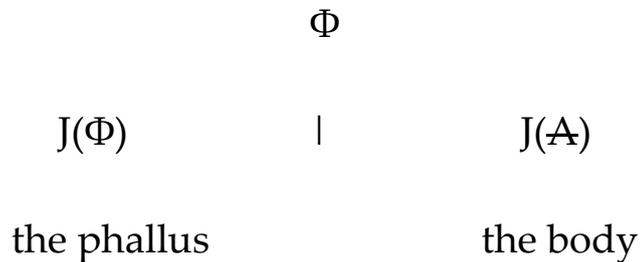


There is no sexual relation, but there is *jouissance*. From this perspective the proposition stated by Lacan on page 59 of *Seminar XX* — “Were there another *jouissance* than phallic *jouissance*, it should not be/could never fail to be that one” — implies an assertion and a question. First, an assertion: there is phallic *jouissance*. Then, a question: is there another *jouissance*? That there might be another *jouissance*, this possibility is evoked by Lacan from the fourth page of *Seminar XX*. In fact, an opposition is brought out between the phallus and the body of the Other and, from this, between the *jouissance* of the phallus and the *jouissance* of the body of the Other. From this perspective, at the start of *Seminar XX*, Lacan wrote: “The *jouissance*... of the body of the Other... is not the sign of love”. Another opposition thus appears between love and sexual *jouissance*.

First remark: the opposition between the phallus and the body of the Other is articulated by means of the following proposition: “Phallic *jouissance* is the obstacle owing to which man does not come, I would say, to enjoy woman's body” [page 7]. Lacan makes it clear: what man enjoys is not the body of the woman, but the phallic organ, in other words, as Freud indicated, a part of his own body. In other words, the phallus is the obstacle which separates the *jouissance* of the One and the *jouissance* of the Other. A division thus opens between the One as a part of the body proper and the Other of the body of the Other. This part of the body proper plays, as it were, its part all alone. This is why phallic *jouissance* is considered as the *jouissance* of the One which has no relation to the Other. The One thus goes along its path without the Other. As far as the One is concerned, there is a way of turning around itself which does not account for the Other. The phal-

lus thus constitutes a barrier which creates a divergence between two modes of *jouissance*.

This could be written:



In fact, relative to this barrier, there is what lies before it and what lies beyond it. As Lacan says on page 74 of *Seminar XX*, “there is a *jouissance*... a *jouissance* of the body that is... ‘beyond the phallus’”. Consequently, on this side of the phallic barrier there is the *jouissance* of the phallus, $J(\Phi)$, and, beyond the phallus, there is a *jouissance* of the body of the Other, $J(\mathbb{A})$.

Lacan introduces a further opposition at the bottom of page 7: the “*jouissance* of the Other, of the body of the Other, is promoted only on the basis of infinity”. In other words, the *jouissance* of the body of the Other is infinite. On the other hand, the *jouissance* of the phallus is limited. If one situates oneself according to the perspective offered by this opposition between the finite and the infinite, the divergence which is thus evoked is the following: in terms of *jouissance*, the more a man approaches a woman the more she distances herself from him, even when she, for her part, also stretches towards him.

Second remark: Lacan poses the question of knowing if *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of the body of the Other, is a sign of love. To this question he replies no. Lacan thus emphasises the disjunction between love and *jouissance*. But, if there were to be a conjunction, Lacan indicates that it would be through the *sign*. From this perspective Lacan remarks on page 50 of *Seminar XX* that there is a disjunction between the subject and *jouissance*. “The subject, as such, doesn’t have much to do with *jouissance*”, he says. On the other hand, the subject has something to do with desire: “his sign”, Lacan underlines, “is capable of arousing desire”. And he concludes, “Therein lies the mainspring of love”. Consequently, on the one side there is the subject and love and

on the other there is the object and *jouissance*. As to the sign, it is a point of articulation that can be situated at the level of a conjunction or a disjunction.

Here we can distinguish four moments.

1. The truth value of a propositional function

If there is no sexual relation, there is a relation to sex which supplements this absence of the sexual relation. The relation to sex is written in the form of the function $\Phi(x)$. The phallic function is a propositional function, in other words, as Lacan indicates, "a function (which articulates itself) as (a) proposition".¹ In fact, for the variable x , there are various modes of constructing the argument for the function $\Phi(x)$, in such a way that the truth values of the differently articulated propositions vary.

Lacan puts the phallic function $\Phi(x)$ in relation to phallic *jouissance* $J(\Phi)$:

Let us take a subject x . If, for the subject x , the function $\Phi(x)$ is satisfied, then the truth value of the proposition *There is phallic jouissance* is true: **T**

There is $J(\Phi) \leftrightarrow \underline{\mathbf{T}} \mid \mathbf{F}$

On page 56 of *Seminar XX* Lacan proposes that "It is false that there is another *jouissance*" than phallic *jouissance*. In other words, the truth value of the proposition: *There is another jouissance than phallic jouissance* is false: **F**

There is another J than $J(\Phi) \rightarrow \mathbf{T} \mid \underline{\mathbf{F}}$

But Lacan also adds: "except the one concerning which woman doesn't breathe a word". In other words, when this happens, there is another *jouissance* than phallic *jouissance*.

It is thus possible to write:

There is another J than $J(\Phi) \rightarrow \underline{\mathbf{T}} \mid \mathbf{F}$

The only thing that a woman knows about it, says Lacan, is that, when it happens, well, it just happens. For it is something which she experiences. But, of this *jouissance* itself, Lacan remarks, she knows nothing and can say nothing. Consequently, on the one hand, she knows (that it happens, that she experiences it) but, on the other hand, she does not know (what it is). There is a contradiction. It is thus on the basis of contradiction that one can approach this other *jouissance*.

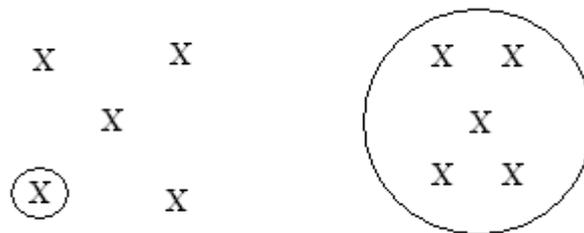
This contradiction can be written in a condensed form:

There is another J than $J(\Phi) \rightarrow \mathbf{T} \mid \underline{\mathbf{F}}$ and $\underline{\mathbf{T}} \mid \mathbf{F}$

2. Logical Quantifiers

The logical quantifiers of totality \forall and existence \exists allow us to approach the dialectic of the one and the multiple.

Consider a series of points x capable of either abiding or not abiding by the function $\Phi(x)$. Concerning this series of points, either I designate one of them or I designate all of them, either I privilege the one, or emphasise the multiple:



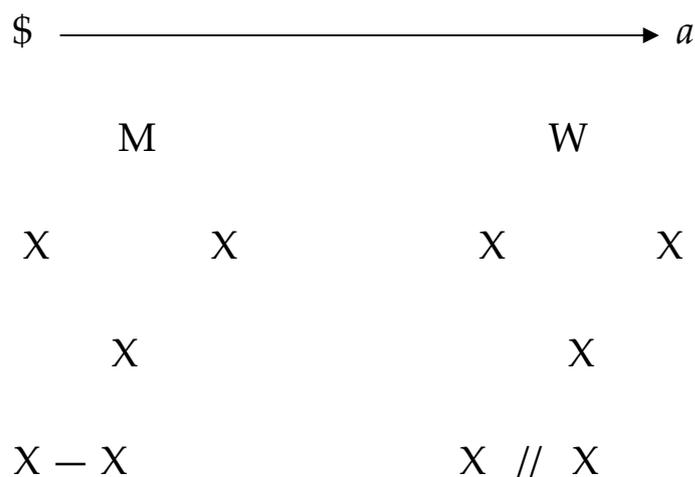
If I encircle a point, I write $\exists x$ by means of the quantifier of existence and by this I mean that there is an x which abides by the function $\Phi(x)$. If I encircle all the points, I write $\forall x$ with the help of the quantifier of totality and I mean, this time, that all x abide by the function $\Phi(x)$. When no quantifier bears upon the variable x , this variable is then considered to be free. When, by contrast, a quantifier,

whether it be that of existence \exists or that of totality \forall , bears on the variable x , then this variable is defined as being bound. In this second case, the variable x is a bound variable to the extent that, because of the operation of quantifiers, and as has already been underlined, there are different modes of constructing the argument for the function in question — the function $\Phi(x)$.

3. The phallic function $\Phi(x)$ and castration as a logical operation

The formulas of what is called 'sexuation' were invented by Lacan in order to highlight the different modes according to which the variable x , here considered as a variable bound by a quantifier, constructs the argument for the function $\Phi(x)$.

Here we see a certain distribution between men (M) and women (W):



A determined orientation is defined, here from the left to right, in relation to this distribution. This orientation is that of *desire*. As Lacan declares: "It is Man... who approaches woman" [*Encore*, p.72]. From this perspective, the function $\Phi(x)$ is readable according to whether the variable x designates a man or a woman in the following manner: a man approaches a woman or a woman is approached by a man. As Lacan indicates on page 94 of *Seminar XX*, this way of reading the function $\Phi(x)$ places it under the sign of the contingency of the encounter. As the table on page 73 of *Seminar XX* shows, woman is

situated on the side of the cause (*a*) and man on the side of the effect (\$).

The important thing is that the man is confronted with an impossibility. He can only approach women one by one. Let us say *x* is a man. Then, for this man *x*, the 'all' of women is impossible. If one encircles an element on the side of man (M) then it is impossible to encircle all the elements on the side of the woman (W). All women — this does not exist. From this perspective a certain reading of the formula of sexuation can be proposed. That *x* abides by $\Phi(x)$, this implies that, if the man approaches *a woman*, he finds himself precisely in the position of being turned towards this '*a woman*'. If he wants to approach another, the relations to phallic *jouissance* $J(\Phi)$ requires that he turn away from the *one woman* in question and leave her. Castration is a logical operation which can be formulated thus: for there to be Plus One, there must be Minus-One. This is the case for all men: $\forall x \Phi x$. this is, incidentally, what establishes the link between one man and another: $x - x$, in the sense that it is the same deal for each 'one man' among all men. Consequently, for a man *x*, and concerning women, there is no possible 'all'. This means that there is only one. In short, no 'all', but one. For, when it concerns women, if one takes into consideration the fact that there is, for example, one woman and another woman, well, between the one and the other there is no relation. There is an unbridgeable gulf between the one and the other. There is no bond, there is a fault: $x // x$. This unbridgeable gulf signifies that, on the side of women, each *x* is all alone, each point is separated from the other points in an irreducible way. Each point thus counts as an exception; which entails that on the side of women, as Jacques-Alain Miller has emphasised, on the side of women, there are only exceptions. In this respect if it is true that the sexual relation cannot be written, solitude, that is to say a certain type of non-relation, can be written under the form of the not-all.² If the variable *x* designates a woman and if the function $\Phi(x)$ is readable in the sense that '*a woman is approached by a man*', the variable *x* in question is then marked by the *not all*: $\overline{\forall} x \Phi x$.

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On the side of men, the *all* signifies that the trait of the bond [*le trait du lien*] is inscribed both at the level of the all and, when it concerns two men, in the relation between one and the other. On the side of women, conversely, the *not all* means that it is impossible to inscribe the trait of the bond both at the level of the all and, concerning two women, at the level of a relation between the one and the other. The impossibility is thus situated at two distinct levels. Each point belonging to a series of points on the side of women is thus marked by this double impossibility. The non-relation is not only the mark of sex, it is also the mark of the Other sex, the feminine sex.

4. *Two Women and Two Jouissances*

What makes the exile of each '*one*' woman is the powerful contradiction between two *jouissances*, the phallic one and the other than phallic one. Man is divided by woman, he is between two women. Woman is divided by *jouissance*, she is between two *jouissances*.

In relation to masculine *jouissance* we must acknowledge the difference between the masculine myth of the obsessional neurotic (evoked by Lacan in his 1953 text *The Neurotic's Individual Myth*) and the feminine myth of Don Juan. Concerning two women, it has been said that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the one and the other. It is impossible to approach the other without leaving the one. For there to be Plus-One on the one hand, there must be a Minus-One on the other. The list of Don Juan's conquests seems to put the operation of the Plus-One in play: plus-one, plus-one, plus-one, etc. Yet Lacan, for his part, puts the emphasis not on addition, but on subtraction, not on the plus, but on the minus, and thereby indicates that subtraction is the principle of this list. He thus opposes Don Juan's passion for the Minus-One to the neurotic's interest for negotiation which makes him want to exchange the one for the other. As Mozart's Donna Elvira knows only too well, Don Juan leaves one for the other. This is why she accuses him of treachery. The neurotic, on the other hand, deceives the one with the other. He is — Lacan used this term himself — 'unfaithful'. These are two different things. The neurotic denies the abyss of castration, he circumvents it, avoids it. For exam-

ple, he will try to build a bridge across the abyss, but it is a bridge that cannot but break. The neurotic turns away from the logical requirement of the Minus-One. He wants one and one to make two. He is not with the one because he would like to be with the other. He is in the anticipation that this expectation entails. A temporal incongruity is inevitable. Debasement, says Freud, is put in play for the value of each *one*. One is over-valued for love, the other is devalued for desire, a divergence emphasised by Lacan. Don Juan, on the other hand, does not negotiate: he does not fear the abyss. He confronts it and ends up falling into it. This does not elude Molière. In fact, the abyss is what there is between the two *jouissances*.

Phallic *jouissance* is defined by Lacan as the *jouissance* of the phallic organ. The man enjoys through the organ and at the same time the organ enjoys all by itself. It can happen that he has no need of anyone else in order to obtain *jouissance*. The phallus poses an obstacle. In the event, the obstacle is what prevents the relation to the Other. And what poses an obstacle for access to the Other is the One insofar as it is One. The One is thus separated from the Other. The One is characterised by the non-relation with the Other. If Lacan calls the *jouissance* of the One 'the *jouissance* of the idiot' on page 81, it is because he considers that idiocy comes from the fact that the One is turned towards itself. It is as idiotic as speaking to oneself. For the One there is precisely a compulsion to make itself One [*se faire Un*]. The eroticism in question is auto-, not hetero. The term 'idiocy' that Lacan uses denounces the fact that *jouissance* is auto-erotic. In other words, what is idiotic is that the masculine subject, at the very level of his division, satisfies himself in being completed by the *jouissance* of a part of his own body. Auto-eroticism thus turns into tauto-eroticism, that is to say it reproduces the same yield of *jouissance*. The fact that man's partner is the reproduction of this yield of *jouissance* lends a homosexual connotation to masculine *jouissance*. In short, there is, Lacan seems to say, a *jouissance* proper to him which goes no further than this limit. From then on, the question becomes one of determining the conditions under which man turns to the beyond of the phallus. The question is posed by Lacan in *L'Étourdit* on page 23: And if a

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man were a man only in so far as he is the means for a woman to reach this Other *jouissance*, the *jouissance* beyond [the phallus], the one which separates her from him, which makes her not-all his, and which means that she ends up being alone?³

Jouissance is what separates woman from man. To the complementary *jouissance* of man, Lacan thus opposes the supplementary *jouissance* of woman. In this respect, the decisive page of *Seminar XX* is page 74. Let us take a woman x ; Lacan says that one could say of this woman, in relation to the phallic function $\Phi(x)$, both that she is there and that she is not there. Once again we encounter a contradictory proposition. The paradox of the feminine position is that she is *all* there and that she is *not-all* there. Lacan asserts on page 74 of *Seminar XX*: "There is a *jouissance* that is hers", that belongs to woman. The question is to know to what degree it is possible to speak about this other *jouissance*. The essential thing relative to this question is that in order to speak of it Lacan makes use of a proposition that implies a contradiction. How can one speak about something that woman herself cannot say anything about? In relation to this *jouissance*, as has already been indicated above, Lacan asserts that woman knows nothing about it, but also that, at the same time, she knows that she experiences it when it happens. She knows and she does not know — it is a contradictory statement. When speaking about the subject of woman, is it not the case that the condition for a statement not to be defamatory is that it be contradictory?

Translated by Philip Dravers

1. J. Lacan, *L'Étourdit* in *Scilicet* No 4, Seuil, Paris, 1973, p.14.
2. J. Lacan, *Seminar XX: Encore*, trans. B. Fink, Norton, London/New York, 1998, p. 120.
3. L. Naveau, 'La fille unique' *L'Autre sexe* in *La Cause freudienne* No 24, Seuil, Paris, 1993.

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