

# The Drive as a Fundamental Concept of Psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup>

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Who, upon reading chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13, 14 of this Seminar XI, does not sense the advantage of not translating *Trieb* by instinct, of keeping close to this drive by calling it drift, of dismantling and then reassembling its oddity, sticking, all the while to Freud?<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

As Freud declared in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the drive is “at once the most important and the most obscure element of psychological research”.<sup>3</sup> In his “New Introductory Lectures”, he describes it as part of the mythology of psychoanalysis, even referring to the drives as “mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness”.<sup>4</sup> With his evocation of the two opposing forces of Eros and Thanatos at play in civilisation, one can see why Freud might be led to speak of the drive in terms of myth. Yet, in his paper on “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes”, Freud identifies the drive, perhaps more precisely, as a *Grundbegriff*, or “fundamental concept”, insofar as it serves to ground the conceptual and methodological framework that establishes psychoanalysis within the ambit of science and gives it its operational purchase on the real. It is thus not surprising that, when he comes to speak of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis himself, Lacan should class the drive among them.

However, the importance of Freud’s essay for Lacan’s seminar is not simply that this is where Freud names the drive as a “fundamental concept” or even because it is here that he lays out many of its essential features. Something that struck me when re-reading this essay is that its importance also turns on the way Freud speaks of these “fundamental concepts” themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an extended version of a short presentation given at the London Society’s seminar preparing for the NLS Congress, held in London in April 2011 on the theme of “How Psychoanalysis Works”. It was published in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 23 (2011), pp.117-149 and appears here in a slightly modified form. The paper aims not only to give an account of the drive, but also to explore its place within the development of Lacan’s seminar as a whole. Section headings have been introduced to help orient the reader and allow those wishing simply for an account of the drive to skip to the section that deals with “The Drive” properly speaking. In writing it up for publication I have chosen to keep the oral style of its original delivery. The paper can also be considered as the product of a Cartel on Seminar XI that was set up to prepare for the Congress. I thank the other cartel members: Penny Georgiou, Peggy Papada, Maia Kirchkheli and Gabriela van den Hoven (plus one), for the lively and convivial discussions that served as a backdrop for the writing. Towards the end of this paper, I take the opportunity, afforded by hindsight, to refer to the theme of the next Congress even though it was announced after the initial paper was given.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Television*, trans. Hollier, Krauss and Michelson, (London: Norton, 1990), p. 24

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Penguin Freud Library (volume 11), p. 306

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933a) S.E. XXII, 95

For as he sets out in the opening lines of his essay, although it is commonly assumed that a science must begin by establishing its ‘basic concepts’, in reality this is never the case. Such fundamental concepts emerge only retroactively, once a few of the ‘abstract ideas’ or ‘conventions’ it establishes to orient itself within the phenomena it has to deal with, prove to be indispensable in this regard; but even then the definitions attached to them are subject to change. “The advance of knowledge” says Freud, “does not tolerate any rigidity even in definitions (...) even ‘basic concepts’ [‘fundamental concepts’] that have been established in the form of definitions are constantly being altered in their content.” And, of course, it is precisely here that Freud goes on to say: “A conventional basic concept of this kind, which at the moment is still somewhat obscure but which is indispensable to us in psychology, is that of an instinct”.<sup>5</sup>

When we read such lines, which come from the first of Freud’s *Papers on Metapsychology*, where his own discussion of fundamental concepts takes place, how can we avoid being struck by the profound resonance they establish with the entire orientation of Lacan’s seminar? For it is here, at a crucial moment in his teaching and, given the context of this seminar, in the history of psychoanalysis itself, that Lacan returns to its fundamental concepts in order to radically redefine them, at the level of their content, by fundamentally rearticulating the way they gather their consistency in relation to... what?

Well, we could say “in relation to the real”, but even though I think this would be undeniably true, I also feel that it would be a bit of a short-cut here. So let’s not avoid the task of going *the whole way round*, so to speak, and say instead: “in relation to the *object* that they concern”. For as Lacan says at the beginning of his seminar, taking up the themes of Freud’s introduction in his own terms: “What specifies a science is having an object”.<sup>6</sup> And of course it is here, in the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, at this crucial moment of *separation* from the International Psychoanalytic Association and of the *founding* of his own school, that Lacan first introduces what he calls the ‘object little *a*’ into his teaching in a fully constructed way. We could say that, for us, Lacan thereby gives psychoanalysis the object that defines it and that henceforth determines its operational parameters.

From this perspective, the most significant aspect of Lacan’s seminar is thus, undoubtedly, the way he introduces this new object into psychoanalysis as what he will later refer to as a ‘purely logical consistency’ operating at the heart of all its conceptual structures. In fact, we could even say that it is on the basis of this object, and by making use of a mode of repetition indexed more on the transformative value of an encounter than on the repetitive insistence of a series of signifiers, that Lacan comes to reconfigure the unconscious as a temporal pulsation of opening and closing modulated on the transference and its relation to the drive. Here in this formulation, which I hope nobody will take exception to, we find all the fundamental concepts linked up in relation to an

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<sup>5</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, Penguin Freud Library (volume 11), p.113-114.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977) p.8. All subsequent references to this text will be given in brackets in the main text. Where page numbers are not provided refer to the previous reference.

object oscillating in the interval between them. Indeed, as Jacques-Alain Miller indicates in an article published in the last edition of our journal, each of the fundamental concepts that Lacan selects for his elaboration is chosen to demonstrate that there is a *single structure* at work in Freud, a structure that is ultimately indexed on: “the conjunction and disjunction between the subject of the unconscious and the object *a*”.<sup>7</sup>

This alternation of conjunction and disjunction, between the subject of the unconscious and what is essentially the object of the drive, is what gives the unconscious its pulsating structure, while at the same time determining this pulse as a “palpitation of life” (as Miller puts it elsewhere), emerging “between a moment of expansion and that of its reduction”.<sup>8</sup> If you like, we could say that it is the beating heart of Lacan’s seminar and in this way we see that Lacan’s return to “fundamental concepts” is not merely the unctuous repetition of a series of signifiers extracted from Freud (which is something that he had always criticised the IPA for doing), but instead establishes itself at the level of a vital encounter with what we might call: the psychoanalytic *cause*. And, of course, it is the transformative effects of such an encounter that we are studying this year, with reference to Seminar XI, under the title: *How Psychoanalysis Works!*

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This leads me to finally state my aim for today. My aim is to illustrate, how the drive serves as a privileged reference point for Lacan in that it is from Freud’s concept of the drive that he comes to extract the object which he installs, not only at the core of the drive’s functioning, but also at the heart of all his conceptual structures. It will perhaps come as no surprise that this *aim* will lead me to return once more to the schema that Lacan uses to illustrate the circuit of the drive as it turns around its object. For after he has dismantled the drive and examined the different components identified by Freud (in his chapter on “The Deconstruction of the Drive”), he then comes to reassemble it again (in “The Partial Drive and its Circuit”) in a way that is designed to expose how the drive derives its consistency from the place of the object *a* lodged at its core. And if I think that this will help me to illustrate the way Lacan reworks each of the four concepts in his seminar – well, I’ll lay my cards down in advance and say that it is because, in his paper, “Transference, Repetition and the Sexual Real”, which I referred to earlier, Jacques-Alain Miller indicates (with a directness that took me quite by surprise) that this schema “is where the entire *Seminar* is headed”.<sup>9</sup>

What does Miller mean by this? Well, if you will forgive the pun, I think he means that it is precisely in relation to this schema, designed to demonstrate the outward and backward movement of the drive, as it circles around its object, that the *single* structure at work in Freud finally comes to the *fore*. Indeed, as Miller’s analysis demonstrates, it is only after he has drawn out this

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, “Transference, Repetition and the Sexual Real”, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 22 (2011), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> I draw this quotation from “Clinique du singulier”, the forth lecture in the series given by Marie-Hélène Roch at the ECF under the title: “Du littoral en psychanalyse” (16 February 2010).

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 14

essential structure through his discussion of the drive, that Lacan is able to go on to explore how the drive operates in the alternation between *alienation* and *separation* that provides the underlying logic for his redefinition of the unconscious in this seminar.<sup>10</sup>

This gives me the itinerary that I intend to follow this afternoon, but in order to pick up our thread, let's start by returning to the point at which we left our elaboration last time. In this way, we will begin to see something of the new consistency that Lacan is attempting to forge between each of the four fundamental concepts in his seminar.

## Context

### From transference to the drive

In our last session, our guest speaker, Geert Hoornaert, reminded us that in Seminar XI Lacan introduces a conception of the unconscious that is not entirely dominated by the network of signifiers, but includes a gap in causality, a hole; and he emphasised that this is what gives it its pulsating structure. For, as Lacan says early on in his seminar, when discussing the relationship between repetition, the unconscious and the concept of the cause: "Cause is to be distinguished from that which is determinate in a chain (...) there is a hole, and something that oscillates in the interval" (p.22). Our guest then went on to distinguish what is operative in transference from a simple mode of signifying repetition, while exploring the conundrum of Lacan's definition of transference both as the *closure* of the unconscious and as the *enactment* of the reality of the unconscious insofar as it is sexual. In the course of this elaboration it was indicated that in his or her position within the transference the analyst comes to occupy the place of *tuché* (in other words, the place of the 'missed' encounter with the real at stake in repetition) and it was emphasised that, through the new place given to the real in this seminar, each of the four fundamental concepts comes to be pierced by a hole – a hole that, we might say, appears at the level of their 'content' and serves to outline the place of the object *a* that lodges itself there.

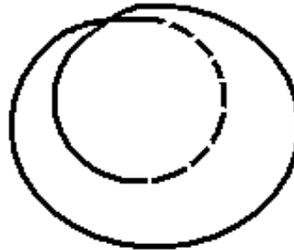
As for the customary contribution from a London Society member, for his part, Roger Litten, explored the intricate connection between repetition, transference and the desire of the analyst, before ending his presentation with the following remark (and here I am quoting from the useful little encapsulation circulated by our society secretary, Betty Bertrand): "only transference... can stage the missed encounter with the real, with the desire of the analyst as operator, articulated around a void".

This remark, made towards the end of our last seminar, takes us on towards the discussion of the drive here today, as it refers to the schema of the interior eight used by Lacan to bring his discussion of transference to a limit point at which an elaboration of the drive becomes necessary. This limit is

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<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, it is by introducing these two essential schemas that Lacan is able to demonstrate the alternating structure of conjunction and disjunction between the subject of the unconscious and the object *a* in its most succinct form.

figured on the schema itself as an edge which, in closing upon itself, reveals “the nodal point by which the pulsation of the unconscious is linked to sexual reality” (p.154). As Lacan indicates, “This nodal point is called desire”. However, it is not quite desire as we know it, but desire defined with a supplementary twist in order to account for one of the many paradoxes thrown up by Lacan’s topological reworking of transference and other fundamental concepts in this seminar.



Here is the schema of the interior 8 which Lacan uses at several moments in his teaching to outline what he refers to as “the topology of the subject” (p.155). In Seminar XI, it is used, above all, to further our understanding of transference and to “figure desire as a locus of junction between the field of demand, in which the syncopes [in other words, the gaps] of the unconscious are made present, and sexual reality” (p.156). As Lacan is quick to point out, “all this depends on a line that I will call the line of desire, linked to demand, and by which the effects of sexuality are made present in experience”. However, as I have already indicated, there is a crucial *twist* in this conception of desire (a twist that will have a precise bearing on the topology of the subject as it manifests itself in the opening and closing of the unconscious) and this is that the desire in question, the desire that operates within the dynamics of transference and that serves to articulate these two fields, is not the desire of the analysand, as one might expect, but that of the analyst. As for the paradox that necessitates this twist, it is that there is a disjunction between the unconscious as a network of signifiers and the sexual reality it is bound up with. How is this paradox expressed on the figure of the interior 8? Well, as Lacan underlines, at the very point on the schema where you expect to be able to grasp the libido as a point of intersection between the unconscious and the field of sexual reality what emerges instead is a void. In other words, as far as the real of the structure is concerned, any representation that could articulate these two fields is radically lacking. This is how Lacan puts it in his chapter on “sexuality” and it is worth noting how the language of this passage already anticipates the logic of alienation and separation that he will go on to introduce later in his seminar.

This drawing, seen from a certain perspective, may seem to represent two intersecting fields. I have placed the libido at the point at which the lobe defined as field of the development of the unconscious covers and conceals the other lobe, that of sexual reality. The libido, then, would be that which belongs to both – the point of intersection, as one says in logic. But this is precisely what it does not mean. For this sector at which the

fields appear to overlap is, if you see the true profile of the surface, a void (p.155-156).

So, in the temporal pulsation outlined here as a circuit traced between the subject and the Other, there where you expect to find it as a point of intersection between the unconscious and the field of sexual reality, the libido emerges only as a void. This definition of libido will later have a bearing on the way Lacan develops the concept of “aphanisis”, introduced by Ernest Jones, and also explains his recourse to the myth of the lamella in order to portray the libido as an organ that is nowhere present on the body. No doubt this is also why, when referring to the sexual colouring of the libido in his short essay “On Freud’s *Trieb*”, Lacan describes it, quite poetically, as “the colour of emptiness, suspended in the light of a gap”.<sup>11</sup> Yet if the libido is the colour of emptiness, we can legitimately ask: what is it, then, that causes human sexuality to take on, its own particular colouring for each individual, while at the same time painting our relation to the Other in such distinct and often quite lurid tones? The answer, of course, as Pierre-Gilles Gueguen has shown us just now, is the drive; and, as we shall see, the place occupied by the drive (and even its object) has a very strict relation to the border outlined here in the figure of the interior 8.

This topological detour, which takes us from transference to the drive, clearly throws into relief the way Lacan’s elaboration of fundamental concepts does not seek to reify them or put them to sleep, but rather seeks to take them up at the most acute angle in order to allow us to get a better grasp of *how psychoanalysis works*. Its importance is underscored by Lacan at the beginning of the first of the two chapters exclusively devoted to Freud’s account of the drive in his seminar.

I ended my last talk by pointing out the place where I had taken you with the topological schematisation of a certain division, and of a perimeter involuted upon itself, which is that constituted by what is usually called, quite incorrectly, the analytic situation. This topology is intended to give you some notion of the location of the point of disjuncture and conjuncture, of union and frontier, that can be occupied only by the desire of the analyst. To go further, to show you how this mapping is necessitated by all the deviations, of concept and of practice, that a long experience of analysis and of its doctrinal statements enables one to accumulate, I must (...) put forward the fourth concept that I have proposed as essential to the analytic experience – that of drive (p.161).

So after having briefly reviewed the pathway that has led us to this point, we can now finally pick up our discussion of the fourth fundamental concept introduced by Lacan in his seminar. And in this way we will see that what emerges in the gap between the subject and the Other has a profound bearing on the way Lacan reworks the consistency of psychoanalysis.

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<sup>11</sup> Jacques Lacan, “On Freud’s *Trieb* and the Psychoanalyst’s Desire”, *Écrits*, p. 722. As its footnotes explain, this text is a summary of comments that Lacan made at a colloquium several days before the start of his seminar.

## The Drive

### Drive is not Instinct

Despite the word that Strachey chose to translate *Trieb*, the drive is not an “instinct”. As Lacan underlines earlier in his seminar “*Trieb* and *instinct* have nothing in common” (p.49). An instinct provides an animal with the information necessary for its survival. It is, in a sense, as Jacques-Alain Miller has noted, a kind of programme operating in the real according to which the vital forces of the animal are distributed to ensure that it achieves its goal, and once this goal has been achieved the level of tension drops back to zero. The animal is identical to the instinctual forces that rise up within it and the satisfaction that appeases the tension provoked in the organism. The drive, on the other hand, is not something that arises at the level of a biological need; it is not of the order of hunger or thirst, appearing on the basis of the natural rhythms of the body. It has no ‘natural’ object that could appease its tension, but emerges as a constant force, a *konstante Kraft* to use Freud’s term, that expresses itself as a continual demand for satisfaction. Arising from the impact of language on the body, the drive marks a rupture with the instinctual organisation of the natural world, invalidating all naïve psychologisms, while at the time dividing human experience from the prescribed rhythms of the natural order as well as from the phantasmagorias that might be supposed for Mankind’s so-called pre-historical past. Indeed, as Lacan underlines in the opening lines of his short article on the drive in the *Écrits*, “The drive, as it is constructed by Freud on the basis of the experience of the unconscious, prohibits psychologising thought from resorting to ‘instinct’ by which it masks its ignorance through the supposition of morals in nature”.<sup>12</sup> It is the drive that propels man forward into history and civilisation. In fact, it is the drive that opens man’s being to a dimension which is properly speaking historical. After all, what is civilisation, if not an organised means of obtaining enjoyment through the various vicissitudes of the drive?<sup>13</sup>

### The drive and its objects

The drive, then, marks a rupture with the natural order. It installs itself in the living being through the effect that language has on the body. Emerging from the cut that the signifier introduces into the real, it constructs itself as a kind of ‘fictional’ apparatus in relation to an impossibility that remains lodged at its core. This impossibility, linked closely to the loss of the primary object and the initial experience of satisfaction attached to it (to say nothing of the attempt to recover this again through the representations associated with it and the repetition that ensues), permanently establishes the working of this apparatus in relation to the real, while at the same time determining it as a drift, and even a cultural drift, for lack of an object that would otherwise determine its natural goal.

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<sup>12</sup> Jacques Lacan, “On Freud’s *Trieb* and the Psychoanalyst’s Desire”, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 2006), p. 722

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jacques-Alain Miller and Eric Laurent, “The Other which does not Exist and its Ethical Committees”, *Almanac of Psychoanalysis* 1 (1998), pp. 15-35.

Through its constant demand for satisfaction, the drive links the libido to the orifices of the body and the partial objects associated with them. If we say that a drive is defined by its object, we can say that Freud names two main drives, the oral and the anal, to which Lacan adds the scopical and the invocatory, by defining their objects respectively as the gaze and the voice. The four fundamental concepts of Lacan's seminar thus find an echo in what he refers to as the four "fundamental drives" (p.89). Through the experience of the drives the body is reduced, not to its organs, but to its erogenous zones and the objects associated with them. It is important to understand that the objects of these drives each play a particular role in mediating the subject's relation to the Other and can be conceived as separable from the body and as belonging either to the subject or to the Other.<sup>14</sup> To state this more forcefully, we could say that they can be conceived as either *part* of the subject or *part* of the Other, and even a *missing part*. Indeed, as Pierre Skriabine remarks in his invaluable study "Drive and Fantasy", through the drive, the subject aims at the Other precisely at the point at which it is lacking.<sup>15</sup>

This ambiguous status of the object and the place it occupies between the subject and the Other can be illustrated quite simply with reference to Freud's assertion that the child initially understands the mother's breast as being part of itself and experiences its withdrawal as a rupture at the level of its own being. In this way the drive establishes itself within the field of demand, where the subject's relation to the objects of drive satisfaction undergoes some determination by the signification attached to them in the Other. Here in the initial knotting of drive satisfaction that first links the subject to the Other we can already observe a conjunction between repetition and a retroactive effect which marks the subject's division and that is clearly motivated by the loss of the primary object and the attempt to recover it again in the field of the Other. Yet, it must be stressed that even the breast can be conceived as separable from the Other, not only through the series of substitutions that it becomes susceptible to in the dialectic of demand, but also, quite simply, because of the place that it occupies within the circuit traced by the drive. As Lacan specifies in the "Position of the Unconscious" with reference to Melanie Klein, "the plane of separation, which makes the breast the lost object involved [*en cause*] in desire, passes between the breast and the mother".<sup>16</sup> In this sense the subject mutilates the Other in order to extract the object through which it obtains drive satisfaction. This dynamic becomes a permanent feature of the subject's relation to the Other and leads to the many paradoxes of love and desire. As Lacan puts it in the final session of his seminar: "*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you – the objet petit a – I mutilate you*" (p.268).

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<sup>14</sup> When I say that each drive plays a particular role in mediating the subject's relation to the Other I do not mean to suggest that this role is set with fixed parameters. On the contrary, the particularity pertains to the singularity of each subject's experience and the vicissitudes undergone by each drive.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Skriabine, "the drive aims at the Other, at the point where the Other is lacking. By means of the object *a*, the drive serves as a movement that calls to the Other" *JCFAR* 8/9 (1997), p. 34 (also available online).

<sup>16</sup> *Écrits*, p. 719

Yet, as we have already seen with the example of the breast, the subject does not only mutilate the Other, at the origin of the drive there is also an effect of auto-mutilation as the subject mutilates itself at the approach of the real in an act of separation in which it finds itself implicated in its own causation as a subject. This is what gives weight to the equivocations sounded out by Lacan in his seminar (p.214) and also in the “Position of the Unconscious” between *separer* (to separate) and *se parere* (to engender oneself – via the Latin). “*Separere*, separating, ends here in *se parere*, engendering oneself”.<sup>17</sup> Here is a logic that moves us beyond the Oedipus by resituating the real agency operating in castration. For as Lacan indicates in his article “On Freud’s *Trieb*”, “here it is the real which creates desire by reproducing in it the relationship between the subject and the lost object”.<sup>18</sup>

The drive, then, becomes a permanent feature of the subject’s relation to the Other where it becomes subject to a series of transformations and reversals and this brings about several paradoxes at the level of *jouissance* which are answered by a series of concepts going from the symptom to the superego. The essential point here is that the drive brings a paradoxical form of satisfaction that shows a blithe disregard for the suffering that it brings to the subject. The repetition that ensues reveals that it remains bound up with a cause, a ‘missed’ encounter with a real, that remains traumatic [*tuché*]. And as Lacan indicates “[i]t is precisely through this that the real finds itself, in the subject, to a very great degree the accomplice of the drive” (p.69).

Lacan underlines that, through this, the drive “constitutes the clinical weight of each of the cases we have to deal with” (p.162) and even states quite categorically that “the function of the drive has for me no other purpose than to put in question what is meant by satisfaction” (p.166). Here the paradox is that although the subject may complain that he is burdened by a terrible suffering, at the level of the drive the subject is always happy. This is underscored by the fact that the subject can only appear at the level of the drive by taking himself as its object. Indeed, as Lacan indicates, if the subject complains (for example about his symptom and the suffering it causes him), it is only because the way he obtains satisfaction gives him “*too much trouble*”. For, as we shall see, the pathways to the drive’s satisfaction necessarily pass by way of the Other and this has a massive impact on all of the subject’s relationships. Here Lacan really spells it out for us by saying: “if I refer to the drive, it is insofar as it is at the level of the drive that the state of satisfaction is to be rectified”.

With this short statement we can measure something of the seismic shift brought about by the sudden resurgence of the drive in Lacan’s teaching. From this point on, it will no longer be possible to assume that the analyst can have an effect on the signifiers of the unconscious without at the same time taking account of its relation to the drive and its object. To begin to approach the question of what is at stake in this relationship we must start by considering the body as an apparatus.

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<sup>17</sup> “Position of the Unconscious”, *Écrits* p. 715.

<sup>18</sup> “On Freud’s *Trieb*” *Écrits*, p. 724.

### **The body as an apparatus**

Through the operation of the signifier, the body of the subject acquires holes, where jouissance retreats by remaining attached to the partial objects of the drive's satisfaction. In Seminar XI, the object *a* designates this remainder of jouissance left over from the impact of the signifier on the body and this reduction of the body to its erogenous zones leads to a conception of the body as primarily fragmented at the level of its jouissance. However, this is not the whole story, for in Seminar XI the body acquires a new kind of consistency, one that is brought about precisely *through* the agency of the drives and the way they interact. This opens up a totally new perspective in Lacan's teaching: on the one hand, the body is reduced to its erogenous zones and becomes fragmented at the level of its jouissance, but on the other hand a new consistency is forged as the body constructs itself as an apparatus through the regular, run of the mill workings of the drive.

This marked shift in Lacan's approach to the problematic of jouissance is highlighted by Miller in his essay on "The Six Paradigms of Jouissance". Here Miller contrasts the new paradigm introduced in Seminar XI with the one that had dominated Lacan's thinking since his Seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. For as Miller observes, while in the *Ethics* jouissance emerges in the form of a massive primordial excess, a kind of 'total' satisfaction which, if approached, would threaten to annihilate the subject and destroy the narcissistic integrity of the body, in Seminar XI, this problematic is reversed so that (at least at the level of its enjoyment) the consistency of the body is seen to derive from the use made of the partial objects of the drive's satisfaction.

In Seminar XI, one begins with the fragmented body of partial drives and then, on the contrary, there is an integration which is brought about thanks to the drive jouissance which is an automatic jouissance attained by following the normal path of the drive, with its outward and backward movement, without transgression.<sup>19</sup>

This allows Miller to play between the idea of a "fragmented jouissance" and a "normal jouissance" in order to designate the mode of jouissance introduced by this seminar.<sup>20</sup> However, it must be stressed that this reference to "normal jouissance" and the "integration" of the drives in no way implies that Lacan agrees with the post-Freudian emphasis on a sequence of stages that the drive moves through in the subject's journey from polymorphous perversity to genital normality, where the partial drives supposedly fall into line under the rule of the phallus. On the contrary, the permanence of the drives testify to the singularity of each subject's relation to jouissance, a singularity that is intimately bound up with the particularity of each subject's history and the unique ways in which, on the basis of a series of encounters, jouissance has inscribed itself on the body. These inscriptions lay down the pathways to drive satisfaction and the formation of symptoms. Thus,

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, "Les Paradigmes de la Jouissance" *La Cause Freudienne* 43 (1999) p.15.

<sup>20</sup> It is notable that when Miller initially gave his paper as a presentation in Los Angeles he referred to "fragmented jouissance", but when he returned to Paris to give it as part of his *Course*, he decided that he could go as far as calling it "normal jouissance" (*ibid.* p.14).

far from being organised by the primacy of the phallus, Lacan stays true to the original Freudian perspective by arguing that, in order to express itself, human sexuality must pass through the partial drives with all that this entails regarding the particularity of each subject's solution to the enigma of sexuality.

Lacan underlines the obstacles to any notion of libidinal normalisation in his response to a question posed by the celebrated child analyst Françoise Dolto, in the session on "Tuché and Automaton", by insisting that the "description of stages, *which go to form the libido*, must not be referred to some natural process of pseudo-maturation, which always remains opaque (...) The copulatory fact of the introduction of sexuality is a snag of some size – and it has an organising function for development" (p.64). This insistence on how the organisation of the drives bears the mark of a traumatic encounter with a real, bound up with sexuality, that is impossible to master is repeated in the following session, where Lacan asserts that "the supposed maturation of the pseudo-instincts [is] shot through, transfixed with *tychic*, I would say – from the word *tuché*" (p.70).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, there is a strong sense that Lacan is still answering Dolto's question when, at the end of his discussion of anamorphosis, he insists that: "the *minus phi* of castration (...) for us, centres the whole organisation of the desires through the framework of the fundamental drives" (p.89).

So to sum up, in Seminar XI, it is not only that the fragmentation of *jouissance* becomes the norm, but that the body constructs itself as an apparatus on the basis of the regular, run of the mill workings of the drives – and this according to the singular ways in which their development has been marked by the particular 'events' or 'encounters' that make up the subject's history. Through the experience of the drives, the body thus appears as an apparatus that has a very individual relation to *jouissance* and it is through the working of this apparatus and the transformations that it supports that the extraordinary plasticity of the drives becomes apparent. Indeed, as Lacan notes: "The integration of sexuality into the dialectic of desire passes through the bringing into play of what, in the body, deserves to be designated by the term apparatus" (p.177).

How is this apparatus constructed?

### **Dismantling the Drive**

In chapter thirteen, "The Deconstruction of the Drive", Lacan sets out to dismantle "the quadruple agency by which each drive is sustained through coexistence with three others",<sup>22</sup> by examining each of the four elements of the drive enumerated by Freud in his essay. These four elements are: *Drang* (pressure or thrust); *Quelle* (source); *Objekt* (object); and *Ziel* (aim). When

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<sup>21</sup> Here Lacan is referring to the distinction he makes in his fifth chapter between two modes of repetition: *tuché* and *automaton*. In Seminar XI repetition is reworked in relation to the real as a point of trauma impossible to integrate within the symbolic structure, but causing the signifying repetition. Here *automaton* is on the side of the signifying repetition, while *tuché* is on the side of the object *a*, a little piece of the real caught within the structure.

<sup>22</sup> This quotation is taken from *Television*, where Lacan explicitly refers to his elaboration of the drive in Seminar XI when answering a question posed by Jacques-Alain Miller (*Television*, p. 25).

Lacan first introduces them, he immediately stresses that “these four terms cannot but appear disjointed” in order to stress that Freud’s conception of the drive is more mechanistic than organic and thus “not as natural as that” (p.162). In fact, his main concern in this chapter is to extract the drive from any biological considerations, while at the same time demonstrating that his own approach is entirely consistent with that of Freud.

Let us note in passing that a lot is at stake here. For if the drive did turn out to be an entirely organic process or part of our phylogenetic inheritance as some psychoanalysts maintain, it would be impossible to integrate into his conception of the unconscious as structured like a language; and of course this is exactly what he is trying to achieve in this seminar by giving his conception of the unconscious a new topological consistency – one that allows for the place and function of the drive object within it.

So, for Lacan, the drive must be considered as a fourfold agency, the elements of which have a logical, but not necessarily organic or even intuitive relation to each other. The apparatus of the drive thus presents itself as something that needs to be articulated: on a personal level, each according to his own, and also on a theoretical level. I do not wish to explore the drive’s individual elements in any great depth here. However, I will make the following comments.

### **The Quadruple Agency of the Drives**

In his examination, Lacan explores each of the four elements in turn, but not in the order he first introduces them. Like Freud he reserves his discussion of the drive’s *source* till the end. And here we can note that with this sequence (*Drang*; *Ziel*; *Objekt*; *Quelle*) while staying entirely in line with the Freudian text, he is already preparing his audience for his developments on the drive in the following chapter by sketching out the itinerary it will trace.<sup>23</sup>

#### **i) Thrust**

First comes *Drang*, the pressure or *thrust* of the drive. Stripping it down, Lacan notes that, in Freud’s essay, “*thrust* will be identified with a mere tendency to discharge” a “tendency (...) produced by the fact of a stimulus” (p.163). Referring to the *Entwurf*, he indicates that the crucial difference between a stimulus coming from outside and the one associated with the drive is that the subject cannot erect a barrier against a stimulus coming from within. Moreover, Lacan insists that the stimulus in question is not something that emerges at the same level of hunger or thirst, which engages the *whole* of the organism and is easily sated. It is not “something whose agency is exercised at the level of the organism in its totality” (p.164). On the contrary, the drive only ever exercises its agency *partially*. In fact, Lacan underlines that, at the level of the *Drang*, we are not even concerned with “the living organism” as such, but rather with what Freud refers to as the “*Real-Ich*”. In Freud’s work the *Real-Ich* is something that is “conceived as supported, not by the organism as a whole, but by the

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<sup>23</sup> It is quite noticeable that both Lacan and Freud, begin with the “thrust” (*Drang*) of the drive, but reserve a discussion of the drive’s “source” (*Quelle*) until the end.

nervous system” (p.164). For Lacan, the important point about this conception is that it immediately lends itself to a topological model, since it already “has the character of a planned, objectified subject” and because “taking it in the form of a surface responds to all the needs of its handling”.

What is essential here is that the drive’s stimulus is constituted by the way “certain elements of this field”, conceived of as a surface, “are invested as drive”. It is worth noting that this account provides key indications for the development to follow, as it anticipates what Lacan will later define as the drive’s dependence on the topological function of the rim and if this is not mentioned here it is because a discussion of this function is reserved for an analysis of the drive’s *source*. The connection between these two elements of the drive is underlined by Lacan, in response to a question posed by André Green on the economic perspective, when he states that “the *Drang* of the drive is something that is, and is only, connotable in the relation to the *Quelle*, in so far as the *Quelle* inscribes in the economy of the drive this rim-like structure” (p.171). Lacan finally concludes his discussion of *thrust* by saying that this “investment places us on the terrain of an energy... the characteristic of which is to be a *konstante Kraft*” (p.164).

## ii) Aim

Lacan then moves on to discuss the *aim* of the drive and instead of using it to target the relation between the aim and the object, as you might expect, he chooses to speak of the paradoxical form of satisfaction that it brings. Thus, in introducing this second element of the drive, Lacan explicitly *aims*, not at the *object* of drive, but at the whole question of drive satisfaction as such. In so doing he consolidates his anti-essentialist stance by separating the *object* from the *aim* and thereby rescues the drive from its reduction to the reflex arc model privileged in biology and zoology.

This should give us pause for thought: while the *thrust* and *source* of the drive are knotted together in Lacan’s analysis through the topological function of the rim, the *aim* and the *object* are separated. Indeed, as Lacan points out, it may seem self-evident that the satisfaction of the drive lies in reaching its *goal*, but what *goal* is it aiming at? This split between the ‘aim’ and the ‘goal’ will be consolidated in the following chapter where it becomes the basis for the circuit traced by the drive.

## iii) Object

Of course, all this has a direct bearing on the *object* of the drive. Here Lacan stresses that “no object of any (...) need, can satisfy the drive (...) This is what Freud tells us (...) *As far as the object in the drive is concerned, let it be clear that it is strictly speaking of no importance. It is a matter of total indifference*” (p.167-168). This indifference of the drive with regard to its object is absolutely crucial to Lacan’s developments on the drive in Seminar XI as it allows him to draw a clear distinction between the object that happens to find itself within the circuit of the drive and the object *a* (the lost object and object cause) through which the drives derive their consistency and their essential unity becomes apparent.

It is notable that in his account of each of the drive's elements, Lacan offers us something that anticipates the developments of the next chapter and this is no less true when he speaks of the object. In fact, it is precisely here that Lacan offers us a striking image of the drive's functioning. Underlining that the object of the oral drive is not to be confused with the original food, Lacan remarks:

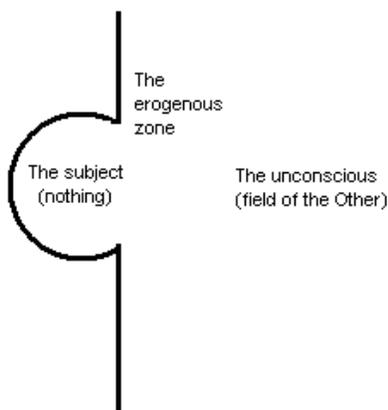
To this breast in its function as object, *objet a*, cause of desire, in the sense that I understand the term, we must give a function that will explain its place in the satisfaction of the drive. The best formula seems to me to be the following – that *la pulsion en fait le tour*. I shall find other opportunities of applying it to other objects. *Tour* is to be understood here with the ambiguity it possesses in French, both *turn*, the limit around which one turns, and *trick* (p.168).

Here we can note that the function of the object is defined purely on the basis of the drives movement around it. However, the ambiguity of the French, stresses not only the movement of the drive as it turns around its object, but also the trick that the drive plays on the object in turning around it in this way. What is this trick?

Let us leave this question hanging for the moment in order to complete our enumeration of the drive's four elements.

#### iv) Source

This finally brings us to consider the drive's *source*, where Lacan is led to draw out the rim-like structure that characterises the erogenous zones of the body. These zones play a decisive role in organising the economy of the drives and their relation to the unconscious.



This diagram, which can be found on page 187, shows how literally we can take Lacan's reference to the topological function of the rim and the way it relates to the erogenous zones of the body. It is clear that these zones have a privileged role in mediating the subject's relation to the Other in the field of sexuality, but what is remarkable about this diagram is the way that it anticipates the schemas of alienation and separation that Lacan is leading up to here. As we shall see, in this respect everything will turn on the topological

community that exists between the structure of the unconscious and the apparatus of the body on the basis of the gaps in play between them.

### **Montage**

These are the four elements of the drive. Together they connect up a series of imaginary and symbolic elements that assemble themselves according to the grammatical artifice of language, while at the same time reducing the body to the level of an apparatus of interconnecting parts. No wonder then that Lacan should describe it in terms of a montage, for as he puts it, “if there is anything resembling a drive it is a *montage*”; not one “conceived in a perspective referring to finality”, but one “with neither head nor tail” in the manner of a “surrealist collage” (p.169). Thus, as Lacan observes, it is not the kind of montage modelled on the reflex arc that characterises an animal instinct; it is not organised according to the end in view, but rather susceptible to an almost infinite number of transformations and reversals.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Lacan arrives at a definition of the drive grasped on the basis of its representations: “The drive is precisely that montage by which sexuality participates in psychical life in a way that must conform to the gap-like structure of the unconscious” (p.176).

### **A topological community**

This reference to this gap-like structure is key to the elaboration that Lacan constructs in Seminar XI, as its whole purpose is to demonstrate the structural homology that exists between the structure of the unconscious and the apparatus of the body. Through this homology, which maps the gaps emerging in the network of signifiers invested by the subject onto the gaps in the body that renders it erotic, Lacan seeks to account for the way the drive functions in the unconscious. This is what Lacan describes as the “topological unity of the gaps in play” and this is what he says about it on page 181 of his seminar:

I have been able to articulate the unconscious for you as being situated in the gaps that the distribution of the signifying investments sets up in the subject, and which figure in the algorithm in the form of a losange [ $\langle \rangle$ ], which I place at the centre of any relation of the unconscious between reality and the subject. Well! It is in so far as something in the apparatus of the body is structured in the same way, it is because of the topological unity of the gaps in play, that the drive assumes its role in the functioning of the unconscious.

### **A frontier concept**

This passage goes right to the heart of Lacan’s seminar and arguably provides the basis for all of the major advances made within it. Yet, at the same time, we also find in it an echo of one of the most celebrated passages from “Instincts

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<sup>24</sup> In this respect, it is perhaps no surprise that in his commentary on Lacan’s short text on the drive in the *Écrits*, Jacques-Alain Miller should refer to Duchamp’s well known glass-mounted work, “The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even”, where what is being staged and even stripped bare before us, I would suggest, is above all the function of the gaze as it operates within a work of art. (See Jacques-Alain Miller, “Commentary on Lacan’s Text”, *Reading Seminar I and II*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: SUNY, 1996) p. 426)

and their Vicissitudes”, where Freud provides his own brilliantly succinct definition of the drive.

...an ‘instinct’ appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body.<sup>25</sup>

This is a beautiful definition of the drive and the language that Freud uses here is very susceptible to a Lacanian reading. This notion of frontier concept, or drive-border, already evokes the rim-like structures in the body that defines the drive’s relationship to its partial objects, but at the same time we could say that it also indicates that the drive is forged as a limit concept in relation to the real. We can read this frontier between the psychical and the somatic as, by extension, one between meaning and jouissance or even, to evoke the theme of Seminar XVIII, between semblance and the real. After all, as Pierre Skriabine reminds us in his paper “Drive and Fantasy”, the drive is where the signifying chain encounters a jouissance that cannot be said.<sup>26</sup> This links up with Freud’s evocation of the silence of the drives, while at the same time pointing towards the notion of the drive as a pure ciphering outside signification.

Freud’s description of the drive as a psychical representative of the energy arising from within the organism touches upon the whole problematic of representation raised by Lacan in this seminar with his introduction of the object *a*. The object *a* is what ultimately marks the agency of the drive as it operates within the structure of the unconscious, while indexing the fact that, as far as human sexuality is concerned, the drive only ever appears as partial. Indeed, as Lacan states in his seminar: “The whole point of [Freud’s] article is to show us that with regard to the biological finality of sexuality, namely, reproduction, the drives, as they present themselves in the process of psychical reality, are partial drives” (p.175). This is restated in an even more succinct form in his paper on the “Position of the Unconscious” as follows: “A drive, insofar as it represents sexuality in the unconscious, is never anything but a partial drive”.<sup>27</sup>

### **The partial drive and its circuit**

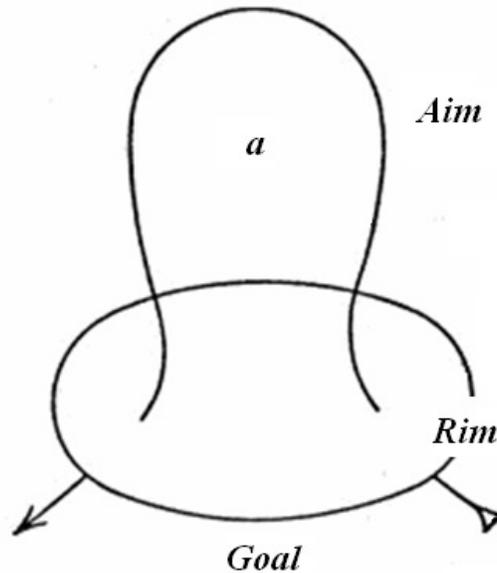
This finally brings us to the development that Lacan brings in the fourteenth chapter of his seminar with his discussion of “the partial drive and its circuit”.

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<sup>25</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, *op. cit.* p. 108.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Skriabine, “Drive and Fantasy” *op. cit.* p. 31

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious”, *Écrits*, p. 720



Here is the schema of the partial drive and its circuit. It is this schema that, according to Jacques-Alain Miller's analysis, the entire seminar has been heading towards in order to grasp something of the single structure at work in Freud. We can thus assume that the schema will not only reveal the unity that emerges at the level of the drive, but also something of the unity of the four fundamental concepts that Lacan has selected to demonstrate the single structure at work in Freud's thought. However, let us stick with the drive for the moment.

By first stripping it down and then reassembling it in this way, Lacan provides a new articulation for the drive that clearly outlines the way it derives its consistency from the function of the object *a* lodged at its core. As the diagram makes clear, the thrust of the drive arises from the erogenous zone, defined here according to the topological function of the rim, and traces a circuit around the object, only to return to its source in the erogenous zone, from where it can set out on its path once more. The schema thus makes it very clear that the drive's *goal*<sup>28</sup> does not lie in the attainment of the object as such, but rather purely in the return to the circuit. The drive is thus something that continues to revolve around the object *a*, which can be considered as the lost object, still present in the circuit of the drive. Indeed, as Lacan underlines, "nothing else ensures the consistency [of the drive] except the object, as something that must be circumvented" (p.181).

The drive thus aims at satisfaction and yet there is something in the very organisation of the drive that prevents it from achieving its goal, insofar as this goal is conceived as a *total* consummation of the drive with its object. The satisfaction that the drive achieves from its objects remains only *partial*, it is never enough, the drive always wants more. However, the drive's satisfaction

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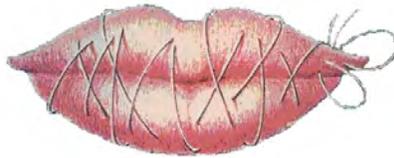
<sup>28</sup> In order to make this distinction Lacan takes a detour through the English language. These two English words appear in the French text and also in the diagram printed in the French version of Seminar XI, along with the word "bord" for rim.

derives precisely from this failure and becomes in this process the very ‘drift’ of the movement implied by the lack of an object which would otherwise designate its terminal point. Hence Lacan’s frequently expressed preference for translating *Trieb*, with the French word “*derive*” [drift], which clearly also nods in the direction of the English term, *drive*.

### **A mouth sewn up upon its own pleasure**

In his seminar, Lacan deploys a striking image to help us understand the circular path of the drive and it is one that finds its basis in the oral drive. Referring to Freud’s beautiful illustration of auto-eroticism as a single mouth kissing itself, Lacan sketches out his own portrait of “a mouth in the form of an arrow (...) a mouth sewn up (...), closing upon its own satisfaction” (p.179).

For Lacan this image of a mouth sewn up evokes “the pure agency of the oral drive” and in 1977 this somewhat surreal extension of Freudian imagery became the centrepiece for a celebrated piece of promotional art advertising Luis Bunuel’s film “*Cet Obscur Objet du Desire*”.<sup>29</sup>



This image certainly brings out the autoeroticism of the drive, but the film’s title also reminds us of the place of the object enclosed within its circuit. Indeed, as Lacan is quick to clarify, what “distinguishes this satisfaction” of the drive “from the mere auto-eroticism of the erogenous zone is the object that we confuse all too often with that upon which the drive closes” (p.179-180). And he continues by evoking, not only the place and function of the object *a* within the circuit of the drive, but also the agency that must be attributed to it:

    this object (...) is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and (...) [its] agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the *petit a*. The *objet petit a* is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object (p.180).

These remarks have extremely pertinent clinical consequences and can be developed in many directions. In his discussion, Lacan highlights the way this illustration throws light on the silences that emerge within the analytic session, but it seems inevitable that one should also think about anorexia in this context. The image not only provides a stark representation of the refusal of food, it also reveals the complicity of the drive operating within the anorexic symptom and the central place of the object within it. For as Lacan indicates elsewhere, the clinic of anorexia reveals the object as an “object nothing” and

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<sup>29</sup> Bunuel thus repays the compliment to his films made by Lacan in this Seminar when he evokes the famous “last supper” scene from *Viridiana* to poke fun at Freud’s own “apostles and epigones” (p. 159-160).

we can assume that it is upon this that the drive closes with such ferocity. As Lacan underlines, the intractability of anorexia nervosa does not find its clinical basis in the fact that the young girl does not eat anything, but in the fact that she eats precisely *nothing*. Lacan even goes so far as to say that “In anorexia nervosa, what the child eats is the nothing”, adding the definite article to bring out its objectal status.<sup>30</sup> The clinic of anorexia is thus very much a clinic of the object in the sense that Lacan defines it here.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the clinic of anorexia is well placed to indicate why Lacan rejects the Freudian dichotomy between the life drive and the death drive in order to state that, on the basis of its structure, “every drive is virtually a death drive”.<sup>32</sup>

### **The reversibility of the drive**

Of course, the structure outlined in Lacan’s schema does not just apply to the oral drive, but shows the structure of the drive *per se*. Indeed, when Lacan goes on to speak about the scopic drive, he indicates that, when it is presented in its most elementary form, namely voyeurism, what the subject is straining to see is not the object before him, but “the object as absence” (p.182). This absence strips the structure bare, so to speak, and makes the object appear in its purest form, for, as the schema clearly shows, the object as absence always remains present within the circuit of the drive and sustains its interminable search for satisfaction. In fact, Lacan brings the paradox of the scopic drive to light by stating that “What one looks at cannot be seen” and in developing this point he throws light on another key feature of the drive.

If thanks to the introduction of the other, the structure of the drive appears, it is really completed only in its reversed form, in its return form, which is the true active drive (p.182-183).

We have already encountered something of this logic in Lacan’s earlier elaboration of the function of the gaze, where he highlighted the kind of inversion that occurs when the subject is surprised by his own gaze emerging in the Other in the form of the object *a*. What Lacan stressed back then, was the inversion that reduces the subject to being nothing more than a stain within a visual field previously commanded (or so one might have thought) by the eye. Here we can understand something of what is at stake in the split between the eye and gaze and why Lacan should have devoted such a large part of his seminar to it.<sup>33</sup>

However, at this point in his elaboration, Lacan’s principle concern is to show how such developments are indexed on Freud’s account of the reversibility of the drive. In his essay, Freud speaks of this fundamental reversibility in terms of the active, passive and reflexive forms of grammar, but

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<sup>30</sup> “In anorexia nervosa, what the child eats is the nothing” (p. 104). Elsewhere Lacan adds that the anorexic eats “the nothing of the mother’s love”, an expression that should be read in the context of another of Lacan’s formulations, namely that “love is giving what you do not have”.

<sup>31</sup> For further information about the clinic of anorexia as a clinic of the object, see Carole Dewambrechies-La-Sagna’s paper, “True Anorexia”, in this issue.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious”, *op. cit.*, p. 719

<sup>33</sup> In fact, in the final instalment of his seminar Lacan indicates that “the gaze [is] the most characteristic term for apprehending the proper function of the *objet a*” (p. 270).

Lacan stresses that these grammatical forms are “merely just an envelope” and insists that “this signifying reversion is something other, something other than what it dresses in. What is fundamental at the level of each drive is the movement outward and back in which it is structured” (p.177).

So, what Freud expresses in terms of grammar is, for Lacan, merely a means of accounting for something more fundamental at the level of the drive’s structure. This can be expressed through the fact that, on the schema, “no part of this distance covered can be separated from its outwards-and-back movement, from its fundamental reversion, from the circular character of the path of the drive” (p.178). For, as Lacan explains in crystal clear language: “the arrow that sets out towards the target fulfils its function only by really reemerging from it, and returning on to the subject” (p.206).

### **The intervention of the other & the emergence of a new subject**

In emphasising the fundamental structure of the out and back movement of the drive, Lacan reminds us that Freud’s constructions of the drive involve not two, but three stages and he emphasises the importance of distinguishing what appears, in third stage, when the drive returns to the circuit. This is the moment when Freud’s *ein neues Subjekt* appears. As Lacan underlines, this is not “the subject of the drive”, on the contrary, this stage of the drive’s functioning is indicated when a completely new subject emerges on the scene.

This subject, which is properly speaking the other, appears in so far as the drive has been able to show its circular course. It is only with its appearance at the level of the other that what there is of the function of the drive may be realised (p.178-179).

In this way, the schema also illustrates what Freud describes as the drive’s “turning around on the subject’s own self”.<sup>34</sup> Lacan even goes so far as to modify the grammatical constructions that Freud uses to account for this fundamental reversion of the drive by saying that “what is involved in the drive is *making oneself*” seen, heard, shitted etc. and he emphasises that “[t]he activity of the drive is concentrated in this *making oneself (se faire)*” (p.195). In fact, for Lacan this is the only truly active form of the drive.

Lacan then goes on to examine how various forms of perversion reveal something essential about the structure of the drive and also how they can also be clarified by the schema. For as he indicates, the subjective strategy of perversion operates a kind of short cut in the circuit of the drive and in so doing reveals, in particularly clear way, that “the course of the drive is the only form of transgression that is permitted to the subject in relation to the pleasure principle” (p.183).

### **The heterogeneity of the movement and the gap in the interval**

These developments reveal that, despite the auto-eroticism that characterises it, the drive is unthinkable without the relation to the Other.

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<sup>34</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, *op. cit.* p. 123

Everything Freud spells out about the partial drive shows us the movement that I outlined for you on the blackboard last time, that circular movement of the thrust that emerges through the erogenous rim only to return to it as its target, after having encircled something I call the *objet a*. I suggest (...) that it is in this way that the subject attains what is, strictly speaking, the dimension of the capital Other (p.194).

Here Lacan insists that the heterogeneity of the outward and backward movement of the drive “shows a gap in the interval” and this gap frustrates any reciprocity that might otherwise be thought to exist between the subject and the Other. Thus, the schema of the partial drive shows the return movement of the drive as it revolves around the object and returns to the circuit; but, at the same time, it also highlights the fact that this outward and backward movement necessarily presupposes a relation to the Other.

### **Turning tricks with the drive**

We are now in a position to answer the question we posed earlier in relation to Lacan’s expression “*la pulsion en fait le tour*” (p.168), which we see clearly represented on the schema. If we remember, the ambiguity of the French refers not only to the fact that the circuit of the drive turns around the object, but also that in doing so it plays a trick on this object. What then is this trick and what can we say about it?

Well, following Marie-Hélène Brousse, in her discussion of the drive in *Reading Seminar XI*, we could say that in turning around the object “the drive tricks the real because, as you revolve around the object, you make it your prisoner, that is, you bring a little bit of it inside the symbolic structure”.<sup>35</sup> The drive thus captures a little piece of the real within the structure of the symbolic in the form of the object *a*.

This is an extremely important aspect of Lacan’s development of the drive in Seminar XI and it clearly entails a marked shift in his conception of the way the imaginary, the symbolic and the real all derive their consistency within the confines of the clinic and elsewhere. For now, let me simply point out that what this insight shows us is that it is only by working with the drive that psychoanalysis is able to obtain some purchase on the real. The ‘trick’ that the drive plays on its object is thus a trick that the analyst must also take advantage of in order to have an effect on the real at stake in the subject’s suffering. Of course, this can only be done through a careful handling of transference.

We now begin to understand why Lacan has left his elaboration of the drive till last, as it starts to become clear that it is only through the drive that psychoanalysis can have an effect on the real. This has a consequence at the level of technique, for it indicates that, from his position within the transference, the analyst must engage in a game of double bluff with the drive by lending himself and his body to the trick that it plays on its object. In other words, it is only by turning tricks with the drive, so to speak, that the analyst can hope to have an impact on the real at stake within the transference.

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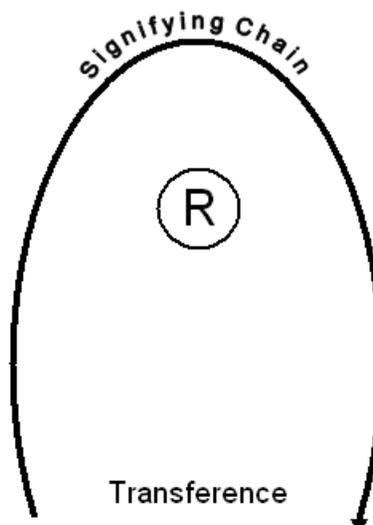
<sup>35</sup> Marie Hélène Brousse, “The Drive (II)”, *Reading Seminar XI*, edited by Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, Marie Jaanus, (New York: Suny, 1995) p. 113

As we have seen throughout, the real at stake within the transference is a sexual real. Indeed, as Marie Hélène Brousse remarks in the same revealing passage: “The drive is thus, as Lacan says, an apparatus by which to bring some sexuality as real into the field of the imaginary and the symbolic (...) That’s what the drive is made for, and this is the kind of link it makes with sexuality as defined in terms of the real”.<sup>36</sup> We can now understand why Lacan begins his elaboration of the partial drive and its circuit by reminding his audience that his reason for introducing the drive in the first place was because he had defined the transference as “what manifests in experience the enacting of the reality of the unconscious, in so far as that reality is sexuality” (p.174).

## Reintegrating the drive into the logic of Lacan’s seminar

### The four fundamental concepts

This returns us to Miller’s paper, “Transference, Repetition and the Sexual Real” and his assertion that, although the differences between each of the four fundamental concepts must be respected, Lacan’s schema nevertheless demonstrates something of the single structure that links them in Freud’s work. Miller thus argues that the schema in question exposes something essential, not just about the structure of the drive, but about the structure of each of the fundamental concepts selected by Lacan for his Seminar. In order to illustrate this, Miller reworks Lacan’s schema as follows.



According to Miller, this modification of the schema shows a correlation between repetition and transference insofar as, in Lacan’s seminar, repetition appears as a symbolic function that avoids the traumatic encounter with the sexual real, while transference acts as a kind of short-circuit that presents the sexual reality at stake for the subject. Miller then goes on to deduce that, within

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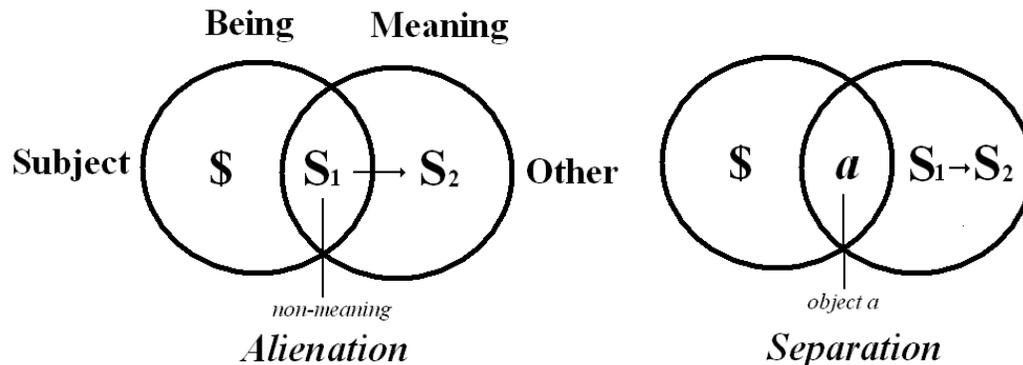
<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the terms of this correlation, “The drive appears as the articulation of repetition with the transference, that is, as a signifying repetition the product of which is *jouissance*”.<sup>37</sup>

Here, I can finally lay down the four card trick that I referred to at the beginning of my paper, for as Miller goes on to say: in Seminar XI, “the four concepts, which Lacan presents in an aligned manner (...) are, in the end, made to be linked together all on the one schema. And the schema that binds them together is apt to translate the concept of the unconscious insofar as it is animated by the pulsation that is linked to sexual reality”.<sup>38</sup> Miller then explains that the single structure exposed here with the schema of the partial drive is then developed later in Lacan’s seminar when he presents his developments on *alienation* and *separation*, where this logic is brought out in all its clarity.

If you read the *Four Fundamental Concepts* you will see that this Freudian series of four concepts is designed in the end to culminate with the schema of alienation and separation, that is, with a presentation of psychoanalysis on the basis of the subject of the unconscious and the object *a*.<sup>39</sup>

### **Alienation and Separation**



Here are two schemas developed by Jacques-Alain Miller<sup>40</sup> to account for the logical operations of alienation and separation that Lacan introduces in Seminar XI and also refers to in the “Position of the Unconscious”, where he defines them as “the two fundamental operations” that go to constitute the

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 14. The logic that Miller outlines here chimes with a comment made by Pierre Skriabine in his concluding remarks on the drive in his presentation on “Drive and Fantasy” and here Skriabine refers them to a previous development by Miller: “on the schema of the loop of the drive, the object *a* surrounded by a circuit serves as the constant product of the drive as signifying chain; the drive is the effect of the signifying chain conceived of in its materiality, outside signification. We could say therefore that the drive is the signifying chain considered in its production of *jouissance* – inasmuch as it is articulated to the body and its orifices; this is the “drift” of *jouissance* of the signifying chain” (Skriabine, *op. cit.* p. 35)

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 14

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 15

<sup>40</sup> I use them here as they are presented by Eric Laurent in “Alienation and Separation I”, *Reading Seminar XI*, ed. Feldstein, Fink and Jaanus (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 24-25.

topology of the subject and “with which [its] causation should be formulated”.<sup>41</sup> As we have already noted, the alternation between these two positions is the basis for the way Lacan reconceives the unconscious as a temporal pulsation of *opening* and *closing* modulated on the transference and its relation to the drive; and, as can easily be seen in the two figures, this alternation is brought about, as Miller indicates, through “the conjunction and disjunction between the subject of the unconscious and the object *a*”.<sup>42</sup> This clearly situates the function of the drive within the structure of the unconscious as part of the mechanism that gives it its temporal pulsation. This is indicated by Lacan in his own commentary when he states that “in the subject who, alternatively, reveals himself and conceals himself by means of the pulsation of the unconscious, we apprehend only partial drives” (p.188).

The logic outlined above begins in a movement of repetition in which the subject (nothing) attempts to grasp his being in language, but discovers that, in so doing, he surrenders himself to the structure of the signifier and thus to his determination in the field of the Other. According to Lacan, this first moment shows how the subject, divided in his initial articulation of language, “translates a signifying synchrony into the primordial temporal pulsation” as he fades beneath his identification.<sup>43</sup> This is followed by a second moment, which “not only closes the effect of the first by projecting the topology of the subject into the instant of fantasy; it seals it” in a way that prevents the subject from realising that he is “an effect of speech”; in other words, it prevents him from realising “what he is in the Other’s desire”.<sup>44</sup> This is the double-triggered mechanism that constitutes the topology of the subject and that also institutes the unconscious as a temporal pulsation of opening and closing linked to the drive and its object.

In fact, since they are based on the overlapping of two lacks (one indexed on the structure of the signifier and one on the object), the schemas show very well the kind of relationship that we saw Lacan outlining earlier between the structure of the unconscious and the apparatus of the body on the basis of “the topological unity of the gaps in play” (p.181) between them. They also demonstrate very clearly that, at the level of sexuality, not all of the subject can be represented in the field of the Other. It can only be represented partially, there is always a remainder and this remainder insists within the structure in the form of the object *a*.<sup>45</sup> We thus see that, as Lacan insists, “Psycho-analysis touches on sexuality only in as much as, in the form of the drive, it manifests itself in the defile of the signifier, in which is constituted the dialectic of the subject in the double stage of alienation and separation” (p.266).

All this begs the question of how the opening and closing of the unconscious is represented in the schemas. Although there are a number of

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<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 712.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Alain Miller, “Transference, Repetition and the Sexual Real”, *Psychoanalytical Notebooks* 22, p. 15

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious”, *Écrits, op. cit.* p.708-9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p.709.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Eric Laurent, *op. cit.* p. 24.

qualifications that one might want to adduce here, it is nevertheless extremely useful to consider the two above schemas as presenting a simple and straightforward opposition between the *opening* of the unconscious, on the one hand, and the *closing* of the unconscious, on the other. In such a reading, which of course is only provisional (and even, under certain conditions, admits the possibility of a reversal),<sup>46</sup> alienation would present the ‘opening’ of the unconscious and separation, its ‘closure’. After all, the schema of alienation clearly marks the production or emergence of the S1 (which we can read as the return of the repressed, the signifier of transference, various master signifiers of the subject’s unconscious, a nonsensical signifier, etc...) within the zone of intersection and its articulation with the field of the Other, marked S2. The schema is thus clearly based on the fact that “a signifier represents a subject for another signifier” and as such bears out “the structure of all unconscious formations: dreams, slips of the tongue, and witticisms”.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, the subject’s alienation in the field of the Other could be said to account for all the signifying material produced within the analytic scenario, especially if we consider it according to what Jacques-Alain Miller has referred to as the alienating slope of transference which “puts into play a supposition of knowledge which only has to do with the signifier”.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, the schema of separation clearly shows what happens when the opening of the unconscious is brought to a close with the appearance of the object *a*. As Lacan puts it, this object gets sucked into the opening and stops it up. The most obvious way that this occurs in the analytic scenario is when the analysand suddenly becomes aware of “the presence of the analyst”, whether it be his gaze, the clearing of his throat, his silence, etc. This is the moment that the transference appears in its double valence as both the *closure* of the unconscious and as the *enactment* of the reality of the unconscious. It is a moment that, within the context of the analysis and what has been unfolding in the subject’s speech, brings out the sexual real that cannot be grasped within the structure of the signifier, but involves the partial objects of the drive’s satisfaction. We thus begin to understand why the enactment of the reality of the unconscious should be linked to the moment of its closure on the basis of the temporal pulsation that animates it.

The schemas of alienation and separation thus appear to present us with a very efficient means of grasping what is at stake in the opening and closing of the unconscious. However, now that we have this reading behind us, we can account for one of the qualifications I mentioned earlier and hopefully open up a more subtle reading by playing devil’s advocate and asking whether or not we have been correct in identifying the opening of the unconscious with alienation.

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<sup>46</sup> In fact, this interpretation of the schemas would perhaps be more appropriate if reserved for what Miller later calls the “transferential-unconscious” as opposed to the unconscious as real. It is in considering the question from the perspective of real that a potential reversal comes into view.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 713

<sup>48</sup> Pierre Skriabine, “Clinic and Topology I”, *Lacan: Topologically Speaking*, edd. Ellie Ragland and Dragan Milovanovic, (New York: Other Press, 2004), p. 94, who bases his remarks on a distinction made by Miller between “alienation-transference” and “separation-transference” in his Course, *Réponses du Réel*, 1983-84 (11/01/84).

In order to answer this objection I want to recall a joke that Lacan makes in the “Position of the Unconscious” when he is outlining these two operations that go on to constitute the subject: the first, alienation, opening the scansion and the second, separation, closing it.<sup>49</sup> Lacan’s joke is that the unconscious is not a destination that would be very popular with tourists because whenever you get there you find it is closing time. You only ever reach its entrance just as its door is closing and what’s more “the only way to open it up a little is by calling from the inside”.<sup>50</sup> What this joke brings out is that, in truth, it is impossible to represent the actual “opening” of the unconscious in either of the schemas. In this sense, alienation can be understood as what occurs just after the unconscious has opened, where the subject fades beneath the signifier in the moments after his division has been realised. Indeed, as Lacan indicates in the “Position of the Unconscious”, with regard to the subject and the Other: “The unconscious is, between the two of them, their cut in action”.<sup>51</sup>

The consequences of this statement are far reaching for it implies that, at this moment in Lacan’s teaching, the unconscious is no longer conceived solely on the basis of its formations, but is grasped, more fundamentally, through the pulsation that animates it, as a punctual and fleeting instance of subjective division marked by the production of nonsense.<sup>52</sup> It is thus reduced to this temporal pulsation that occurs in the gap between the subject and the Other, realised in the oscillation between  $S_1$  and  $a$ . This allows us to grasp the distinction that Jacques-Alain Miller will go on to make between the transferential unconscious and the unconscious as real – and it is above all the latter that Lacan is at pains to introduce here, for as he says in his 1976 preface to the English Language Edition: “When the space of a lapsus no longer carries any meaning (or interpretation), then only is one sure that one is in the unconscious (...) the unconscious, I would say, is real” (p. vii).<sup>53</sup>

What is it then that provokes the opening of the unconscious in this sense? No doubt, one could answer this question in a number of ways, but

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<sup>49</sup> See Jacques Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious”, *op. cit.* p. 711-716

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 711

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 712.

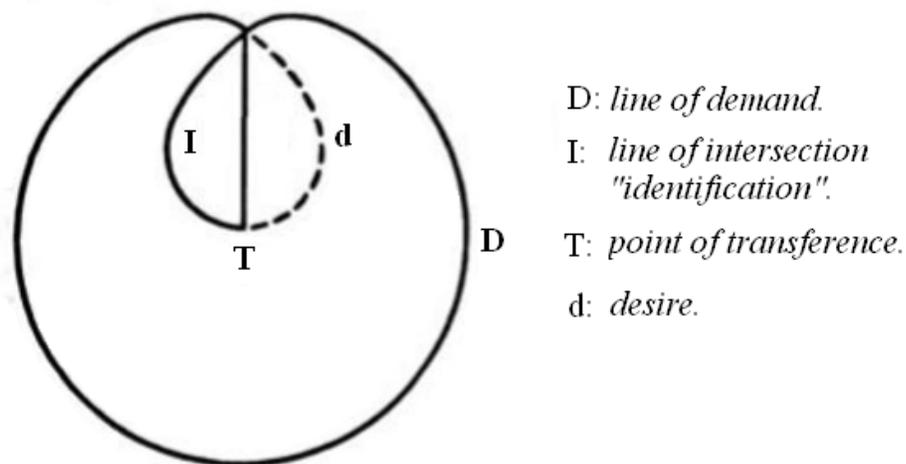
<sup>52</sup> This was illustrated very clearly by Pierre-Gilles Gueguen in his opening remarks to the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the NLS held in Athens in 2007, on “The Births of Transference”, where he used Freud’s “Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis” to show how the unconscious emerges in moments of encounter that surprise and disturb us and that we only subsequently return to meaning by taking the alienating slope of transference to a point where our most fundamental unconscious identifications are both affirmed and concealed by the structure of the fantasy (See Pierre-Gilles Gueguen, “Paradoxes of the Births of Transference”, trans. Natalie Wulfing – currently available online at The University of Jacques Lacan: [www.freeencyclopediaofpsychoanalysis.com/pt/articulo/pdf/71](http://www.freeencyclopediaofpsychoanalysis.com/pt/articulo/pdf/71)). In his paper, Gueguen shows how the unconscious emerges as a disturbance at the level of meaning that marks an effect of subjective division and how, after experiencing such a moment on the Acropolis, Freud then “interpreted and sealed off this short opening onto the real by re-inserting this moment of disorder into an oedipal framework.” To this we only have to add that (as Jacques-Alain Miller has indicated) this moment of disturbance is provoked by the encounter with the Acropolis as object gaze. This now gives us both sides of the object  $a$  as both cork and cause (both stop and drop), of the subject’s division.

<sup>53</sup> In her talk at the ECF, Marie-Hélène Roch puts this same point slightly differently by noting that, after Seminar XI: “The unconscious is no longer just articulated, it surges forth in the mistake at the moment that it closes with the cut, in a topology of the edge which needs a sexuated body to localise jouissance on the erogenous zones of the body”. This remark helps us to understand how the logic at stake here links the unconscious and the drive body through the “topology of the edge”.

insofar as it is drawn from within the dynamic of the analytic setting, I would suggest that it comes from the way that the analyst is able to index himself on the closure of the unconscious through the position that he or she occupies within the transference. Indeed, it is only in this way that he can “call from the inside” so to speak. This finally returns us to the desire of the analyst, for it is ultimately the analyst’s desire that makes the unconscious surge forth from the moment of its closure by reducing interpretation to the function of the cut. In this way the dimension of the analytic act emerges as that which realises the unconscious in its function as edge. We thus see how Lacan resolves the paradox that one must wait for the transference to appear before an interpretation can be given, for it is only in this second moment, that of the closure of the unconscious, that “the structure of the edge in its function as (...) limit” is realised “in the twist that motivates the encroachment of the unconscious”.<sup>54</sup> We can thus deduce that it is only by indexing his intervention on the closure of the unconscious in this way that the analyst is able to establish the dimension of the “analytic act” properly speaking.<sup>55</sup>

### The desire of the analyst

This returns us to the schema of the interior eight we referred to earlier. By taking it up again, we will be able to grasp a little more of what is at stake in Lacan’s logification of the analytical process on the basis of the two fundamental operations of alienation and separation. For the logic that they outline not only supports the opening and closing of the unconscious as it operates within the scansion of a single analytical session, it also concerns the transformation of the subject’s position in the course of the entire analytical process, particularly in relation to the drive.



Here is the annotated version of the schema that Lacan presents in his concluding chapter. In it, we clearly see what we observed earlier as “the line

<sup>54</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Position of the Unconscious”, *op. cit.* p. 714.

<sup>55</sup> In Seminar XVII, this dimension is expressed in the discourse of the analyst, which indicates that the analytic act aims not only to produce the S<sub>1</sub>, but also to isolate it from field of the S<sub>2</sub>.

of desire, linked to demand, (...) by which the effects of sexuality are made present in experience” (p.156) and, as we noted before, as far as the analytical process is concerned, this desire must be conceived as “the desire of the analyst”. In this version, we see that the demand addressed to the analyst by the analysand goes in the direction of an idealising identification, precipitated in the dimension of transference love. This dimension brings the function of the object *a* into play and with it comes the closing up of the unconscious. But there is a beyond to this closure, which implicates the desire of the analyst and this is embodied in the twist through which the line turns back upon itself and returns to its circuit in a way that exposes the unconscious’s dependence on the topological function of the rim. The “structure of the edge in its function as (...) limit” is thus put to the test in the subject’s experience and by repeatedly tracing out this spiral in the course of an analysis, the analysand goes through a form of separation that transforms his or her relation to the unconscious and the drive.

According to Lacan, this is only possible if, through a careful handling of transference, the analyst “maintains a distance between the point at which the subject sees himself as loveable and that other point where the subject sees himself caused by a lack by *a*, and where *a* fills the gap constituted by the inaugural division of the subject” (p.270). Here we see the two aspects of the object *a*, as both stop and drop, cork and cause, and by coming to embody this object the analyst is able play between the two and thereby support the separating function of *a*.

We thus see the importance of the desire of the analyst as it operates within the transference, for as Lacan goes on to explain “[i]f transference is what separates demand from drive, the desire of the analyst is that which brings it back again”. In this way, “[t]he experience of the subject is (...) brought back to the plane at which, from the reality of the unconscious, the drive may be made present” (p.274). What is at stake here is a crossing of the plane of identification which allows the subject to come to the place of the *a*, the place of the object cause, and thus in turn to occupy the empty place in the Other.<sup>56</sup> There are thus two phases in the analysis which can also be referred to the logic of alienation and separation, a first phase in which the subject elaborates his relation to the signifiers of the unconscious and then another phase in which he maps his relation to the object *a*.<sup>57</sup> Through this mapping “the experience of the fantasy becomes the drive” and the desire of the analyst is born.

Thus we see that there are two possible significations for the “desire of the analyst”. First, it refers to the desire of the person responsible for the direction of the treatment, the handling of transference, giving interpretations etc., but it also refers to a transformation in the analysand’s position at the end of analysis that allows him or her to take up the position of analyst. This is why Lacan is able to say in the final chapter of his seminar that “[t]here is only one

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<sup>56</sup> This statement should be read in conjunction with the comment from Pierre Skriabine’s paper on “Drive and Fantasy”, quoted earlier, according to which “the drive aims at the Other at the point where the Other is lacking”. For more information on what is at stake in crossing the plane of identification, see Pierre Skriabine, “Clinic and Topology 1”, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>57</sup> See Eric Laurent, “Alienation and Separation I”, *Reading Seminar XI, op. cit.* p. 26

kind of psycho-analysis, the training analysis – which means a psycho-analysis that has looped this loop to its end”. And as Lacan adds this “loop must be run through several times” (p.274), before it reaches a definitive conclusion.<sup>58</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This brings me to the end of my elaboration of the drive in Seminar XI. In the course of this paper I have tried to demonstrate the importance of the drive in establishing the entire orientation of Lacan’s seminar. After all, it is from the drive that Lacan extracts the object that he henceforth places at the heart of his teaching. With this new definition of the object, Lacan successfully integrates the drive into his conception of the unconscious, while at the same time providing psychoanalysis with a new way of establishing the consistency of its fundamental concepts. The production of the object *a*, which Lacan later describes as his only invention, marks a moment of separation from Freud that brings the scansion of his early teaching to a close. Here ends the period of Lacan’s celebrated “return to Freud” in which each seminar derives its consistency from a reading of a key Freudian text. Seminar XI thus marks a point at which Lacan’s structuralist period comes to a close by reworking its consistency in relation to the object *a*. Yet, of course, the introduction of this object and the separation that it entails not only brings one elaboration to a close, it also marks the point at which a whole new development in Lacan’s teaching begins. Lacan’s seminar thus continues to loop its loop towards its final separation.

By the same token, as one NLS Seminar draws to a close another one will open with the start of the new academic year, when we will return to prepare for our next Congress on the theme “Reading a Symptom”.<sup>59</sup> And here let us note that between the close of this year’s seminar and the opening of the next there is, appropriately enough, the PULSE.<sup>60</sup> This finally returns me to the quotation from Jacques-Alain Miller that I referred to earlier, where he speaks of the logic of alienation and separation as “a palpitation of life between a moment of expansion and that of its reduction”.<sup>61</sup> For, although I have used these words to frame my discussion of the drive and its relation to the other fundamental concepts at stake in Seminar XI, when Miller actually pronounces them himself he indexes his remarks on a later moment of Lacan’s teaching, so that what is at stake in this “palpitation of life” concerns not only “the conjunction and disjunction between the subject of the unconscious and the object *a*”, but also, beyond that, the expansion and reduction of the symptom in the course of an analysis. It thus concerns, according to the gloss provided by

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<sup>58</sup> In 1967 Lacan invented the procedure of the “Pass” in order to verify that this process has been run through to its end. Jacques Lacan, “Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School” (<http://www.londonsociety-nls.org.uk/pdfs/Propositionof9October1967.pdf>)

<sup>59</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller announced the title for next years Congress in his closing address to this years Congress on “How Psychoanalysis Works”. Although this theme had not yet been announced at the time I gave this paper, I have chosen to take the liberty of referring to it here in order to look forward to next year and also to emphasise that the work we have done this year will inevitably contribute to it.

<sup>60</sup> The PULSE (Paris-USA Lacan Seminar) will take place in New York between the 30<sup>th</sup> of September and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2011 and will mark the 30 anniversary of Lacan’s death.

<sup>61</sup> Cited by Marie-Hélène Roch, “Clinique du singulier”, *Op. cit.*

Roch, the “expansion of the symptom and its reduction to an incurable kernel”.<sup>62</sup> This opens a whole new perspective for us as we look forward to the year ahead.

So, as one scansion closes another one opens, but lest we forget to mark the difference between them let us hope that, when we meet up again in what our American colleagues call “the fall”, we feel, along with this “palpitation of life” that animates our community, a “twist in the return” (p.215) and thus also perhaps something of the quickening at stake in the realisation of the unconscious in its function as edge.

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