Cartel Dossier

March 2020
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In the midst of the Coronavirus crisis which testifies to “the Great Disorder in the Real”¹ and disrupts our fictions of reality, we each have to find a way to make do with what we encounter including the hole in the Other. Recourse to the laws of science to track and order this real is inevitable and necessary. Yet the discourse of science introduces its own impassess. Today, as Jacques-Alain Miller indicated in his course, back in 1996, “the subject is confronted with the Other in its ruination”².

We, in turn, have access to a psychoanalytic orientation which affirms that there is no knowledge in this real “without law”, no regularity that allows for predictions. Perhaps Freud’s impossible professions of teaching, politics and analysis are impossible because, there is an encounter with a real which cannot be domesticated via laws and regulations. We see, nevertheless, in the current extraordinary moment when the real has imposed itself, the extraordinary measures governments have take to defend against it³.

Yet those of us with a transference to the Lacanian School and its orientation towards the Real, choose to make use of its priceless resources - analysis, supervision and the cartel – the gem-tools that we use “so that we do not fall asleep⁴ as we continue our singular paths against our not wanting to know. The Cartel, Lacan’s original mechanism to study psychoanalysis, with its results as well as its crises, allows each person to find a way with the hole in knowledge, the hole at the heart of the analytic experience, the hole at the heart of the School.

It brings together analysis, theory and practice and allows for a special knotting with one’s own questions.

The reader can find here a number of interesting and highly heterogeneous texts, presented in recent events dedicated to cartels, attesting to a production of knowledge as well as to the singularity in style and voice. It is the work done in and around cartels. Personal elaborations which contribute to bordering the hole of the School. As we continue to navigate the evolving Covid-19 situation, the urgency is now felt perhaps more than ever to stay connected, to read, to write.

Peggy Papada
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Secretary of the London Society & Cartel Coordinator

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² Miller, J.-A., “The Other which does not exist and its Ethical Committees”, as quoted by Eric Laurent in his recent article “The Other which does not Exist and its Scientific Committees”, Lacanian Review Online, 23 March 2020, Available here: http://www.thelacanianreviews.com/the-other/
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Introduction
The Cartel and The School: Detached Parts, Scattered and Mismatched

By Peggy Papada

In his Turin Theory of the Subject of the School, which J.-A. Miller presented in 2000 on the occasion of the founding of the Italian school of psychoanalysis, Miller refers to the School in formation as “a dynamic unit; all the actions concur in the progress of the collective process which leads to its creation.” Since then 20 years have passed. The New Lacanian School with which the London Society is affiliated was created in 2003. What is it that sustains its existence? What are the actions that concur in the progress of the collective process which lead to the transmission of psychoanalysis, the development of the theory in line with what we encounter in the clinic, the capacity to respond to the vagaries of the contemporary clinic, the subjectivities of our time? These actions range from local seminars, school events such as symposiums, annual congresses, study days, the transmission we get from the testimonies of those who have ended their analyses via the dispositif of the pass and of course cartel study days like the one we organized here a month ago, an event presided by Frank Rollier, the current NLS cartel delegate. In fact we had two major School events in one day: A testimony of the Pass by Patricia Tassara and the Cartel Study Day. The pass and the cartel, the School’s basic organs.

Before I speak about the cartel and develop why it is one of the Schools “basic organs,” I will say something about the School as we are often asked what is the School? Indeed it can be confusing given the inherent difficulty in defining it insofar as there is a hole at its heart as Patricia Tassara told us, which she defined as “a central void, the absence of an answer to what the analyst is”, a void which according to her “makes us work and link to the School by the hinge of its main tool, the cartel.” I will only focus on some of the attributes of the School which I think are pertinent to the cartel and can help shed light on the logic of its operation.

The School

The moment Lacan founds his school in 1964, the moment he founds a collective formation, he writes “I hereby found”, and immediately he adds “as alone as I have always been in my relation to the psychoanalytic cause” thus bringing forward the solitude of his act, “the solitude of a subject in a relation to a cause to be defended and promoted.” So from the beginning, the school, the collective is intrinsically linked to a subjective solitude; or solitudes which come together, one by one, and form the school in relation to an ideal. I would say that this ideal is personal to each, as is their relationship to the psychoanalytic cause, dependent on what each makes of the School, how each defines and circumscribes the hole of the School.

2 Tassara, P. ”From Dreams to Body Event.” Testimony delivered on 5th October 2019, in London. Unpublished.
4 Miller, J.-A. ”The Turin Theory…”, op. cit.
So Miller writes

at the very moment when Lacan institutes a collective formation, his first words aim to dissociate, and to bring out subjective solitude...[the School, the collective], does not pretend to make subjective solitude disappear but on the contrary, it founds itself upon it, manifests it, reveals it, and this is the paradox of the school.  

Later on he writes that Lacan’s desire

went beyond Oedipus, and from it was derived, not an analytic society, but a School. In a School there is not, at least in principle, a unique exception, a solitary exception antinomic to the ensemble as the Oedipal formula requires. There is no exception, but rather an ensemble, or rather a series of exceptions, of solitudes incomparable to each other, except that they are solitudes structured as solitudes, that is, as barred subjects fastened to master signifiers and inhabited by the extirpation of a surplus enjoyment particular to each one. Within the framework of the School, these solitudes are each treated as exceptions, and they cannot be syndicated.  

So the school consists of solitudes, exceptions, detached parts, scattered and mismatched which, one by one, put their desire to work, according to their very singular trait. Lacan founded a School the aims of which were the restoration of the Freudian project of psychoanalysis, which he felt had gone amiss with the post Freidians and the training of analysts. He founded a School which he makes a place of formation and teaching, a place for psychoanalysis rather than psychoanalysts. “The school exists on the basis of desire” for psychoanalysis, the desire of analysands unburdened by rigid, organisational standards such as those found in IPA; standards which have been set by the didacticians, who mortify knowledge precisely by its guarantee and potentially stifle the voice of the younger analysts in training. (There are no teachers in the School which is organised very differently to the clinical sections.)

The Cartel

For Lacan this essential work for which he found a school would be carried out on the basis of a) transference of work and b) “the principle of sustained elaboration” in small groups, the cartels, an “anti-didactic” mechanism. So we already see that the cartel and the school are intrinsically linked.

There is no School without a cartel. In that way we can also appreciate the importance of the inscription of the cartel in the school, something that takes place by registering it in the NLS catalogue and why the cartels do not belong to the societies, in our case, the London Society, but to the School. The cartels are there to carry out work for the school. They constitute a form of transference of work to the School. There is an organising principle in this process of inscription, which I think is very important: Scattered and mismatched subjects, start with their particular theme, question, trait, insignia, their style and orient their work towards the School, a point of address; the work of everyone is vectorised by the School. Here we can add the cartel production, the written product which is not done by the cartel as whole, but by each cartelisand, one by one, who can present their work to the rest of the cartel, or to other platforms (our annual study day, other cartel events, the newsletter of the School, the annual congress). In so doing the cartelisand offers the bits of knowledge he or she acquired to the School, so that “anything valuable they do gets the attention it deserves and in the appropriate place.”

Transference of work to the School is vital for any “base of operations against the discontents of civilisation” as Lacan envisaged the psychoanalytic institution in his early text on British psychiatry and the war which is considered key text in the genealogy of the cartel⁸. When he founded his School, his ambition was to demonstrate “that the truth of psychoanalysis allows singularities to hold together, linked not through an ideal, but through a transference to psychoanalysis, a transference to the analytic discourse⁹.” The structure of the cartel fosters a social link whereby everybody works together and at the same level around a project called psychoanalysis. Through work transference it encourages each member to participate actively in thinking about psychoanalysis, its theory and practice, so as not to remain in a position of consuming texts and various teachings. While integral to his or her training, attending conferences and seminars is not enough insofar as he or she remains in a passive position of receiving the teaching from an Other. In contrast, in the cartel each member including the plus one has their subject, their topic of research, and they want to learn something about their question. It is a process of “sustained elaboration”, a personal endeavour which is also subject “to critique and supervision”¹⁰, and whereby the cartel member “surpasses himself and gains ground on his “not wanting to know.”¹¹ This process of elaboration in conjunction with the struggle against the not wanting to know is of course something played out in analysis thus pointing to a convergence between the analysis and the cartel.

In her paper “The School shaped by the cartel”, Caroline Leduc writes that “what emerges is scattered knowledge, bits and pieces that are sometimes contradictory and never conclusive.”¹² Patricia Tassara spoke of her need to consent to the fact that the knowledge she would acquire were detached pieces of knowledge. A “knowledge that is a little disappointing in fact, but that produces no disenchantment because it palpitates with desire. It is a knowledge held in suspense: something additional is there to know” writes Leduc. This is a far cry from the wholeness of knowledge and its agalmatic value or presupposed knowledge set out by the university discourse. The “obscure and humble, but crucial work of the cartel” takes into account the not all, the dimension of the impossible and this produces bits of knowledge; it generates knowledge which is subjectivized and as such includes desire insofar as there is a hole in it. We can say that the work in the cartel is crucial insofar as it includes failure as each member has to face the hole in knowledge, a hole he or she also encounters in analysis. To consent to the incompleteness of knowledge in the cartel implies treating one’s relationship to knowledge in analysis.

We see here how a vibrant working School requires a movement from love to desire. Love is not a solution to everything. There has to be a transformation of the natural tendency for transference love to work transference, with its subjective effects insofar as it passes via articulated speech. Insofar as work transference is not something natural but generated through the dispositif of the cartel (“members work from their insignia and not from their lack of being,”¹³) we can see that the cartel as the place in which this transference is generated constitutes a basic organ for the School, vital for the formation of analysts.

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11 Caroz, G. Provoking the Crisis, Cartello, No.20, May 2018, English translation available online: https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/Texts-on-Cartels/Provoking-the-crisis.pdf?w=1.02
12 Leduc, C. The School Shaped [Travaillé] by the Cartel, Cartello, No 20, May 2018, English translation available online: https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/Texts-on-Cartels/The-School-Shaped.pdf?w=1.02
What holds a Cartel together?

by Aino-Marjatta Mäki

I have to confess that the theme of the cartel is not one that I have ever felt very enthusiastic about. This regardless – or perhaps because of – I have spent a good few years of my life imagining and experimenting with variety of non-hierarchical group formations in the context of political organising and activism. So you can imagine my relief when I went back to read Jacques-Alain Miller's points on cartels in a talk he gave at the ECF long time ago: in it he announces that he himself has never been that interested on the question of the cartel1.

For me the function of the cartel has always been practical: to enable learning, a kind of singular acquisition of knowledge, in a small group. For myself I have never conceptualised the cartel beyond this rather heuristic function, regardless of being perfectly aware to what extent Lacan appreciated his new device of the small working group. As we know in 1964 Lacan announced the use of it as a part of the structure, or what he called the circular organisation, of his new school within the very first speech act that found the school. As we have heard many times, the small working group was for him essential device for de-completing or de-regulating the institutional structure of the psychoanalytic organisation of his time.

In this 1986 presentation titled in English *Five Variations on the Theme of ‘Provoked Elaboration’* Miller nevertheless takes up the theme by saying that he will not explain the concept of the cartel but instead will state the use he will make of it². For Miller the cartel interests him only for the purpose of knowledge. In her paper on the cartel, Caroline Leduc gives a beautiful description of the status of such knowledge. I quote:

> What emerges is a scattered knowledge, bits and pieces that are sometimes contradictory and never conclusive. A knowledge that is a little disappointing in fact, but that produces no disenchantment because it palpitates with desire. It is a knowledge held in suspense: something additional is there to know3.

Obviously plenty has been said in relation to and of the cartel. But to me something extremely simple is nevertheless often left unsaid. It is the elementary fact that a cartel, a Lacanian cartel, only functions as such to the extent that it is psychoanalytic.

To my view this carefully constructed device looses its function if it is removed from its connection to psychoanalytic discourse. Only then it is possible to believe in the cartel, like one believes in the real. And if the real comes with an impossibility in the singular, the psychoanalytic cartel comes with its link to failure. And yet it can succeed. But on the condition that the belief in the cartel is put to use.

Perhaps here lies my frustration with it – with its concept – that resonated on the level of the other anti-authoritarian group formations I had taken part to prior my transference to psychoanalysis. Often it was the case that these groups only produced an endless discussion on how to form such a group. With psychoanalysis we are in a better place for Lacan gives quite straightforward and practical guidelines precisely on how to put together such a group. The cartel comes with limits. And to my view, when put in practice, these limits allow the group to focus on the task at hand: make use of the cartel rather than endlessly attempt to re-formulate its concept.

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2 Ibid.
Thus I would say that the cartel holds together as anti-authoritarian but only on the condition that it be psychoanalytic. The mere device, its concept, is not enough. It is not that the mere fact of the cartel produces all these trans-structural effects. For the cartel to be what Lacan aimed it to be its use must be aligned with that of psychoanalysis. Only then can such a small group formation pertain to the power of de-regulation and de-completion all the while failing in its attempt.

I would like to finish with a quote from Éric Laurent that to my view speaks to this point. I quote:

Lacan’s ambition was to demonstrate to the analytic community, not only to that of his students, that the truth of psychoanalysis allows singularities to hold together, linked not through an ideal, but through a transference to psychoanalysis, a transference to the analytic discourse. This transference is another name for the desire of the analyst.4

The Founding Act that Puts the Subject to Work

By Evangelina Bailo

Nowadays, we have taken for granted the different dynamics between formation and psychoanalysis. However, Lacan had analysed in detail the social link that makes a collective of people become a school. School, where the members gather based on their transference with psychoanalysis and not as Freud analysed in "Totem and Taboo", as a mass which follows a master. The member of the school establishes a relationship with psychoanalysis alone, between the subjects and their truth. Lacan and Miller called this particularity of the school as a paradox. Moreover, it is within this paradox where the praxis of psychoanalysis and training are inseparable.

My experience with the formation in psychoanalysis began 20 years ago. I am coming from a country where psychoanalysis is included in several modules at the University, and the learning is under what Lacan called the University Discourse. Science located in the space of the truth (S1), guarantee knowledge with the belief that there is only one way to be, and this is the way it is.

![Discourse of the University](image)

Luckily for me, as a student, I followed the lead of the scientific discourse and I found an S1 that put me to work, to know more, to study more. Hence, I studied Freud and Lacan for several years and even when sometimes I wonder about different theoretical orientations in psychology, it was not possibility for questions, psychoanalysis was located as the discourse's truth (S2). It was the time of learning and repeating concepts and doctrines based on a categorical imperative relationship with knowledge; it was not a place for a dialectical formation, not a place for an antithesis, instead, it was a time where a student had to work and reproduce. During the time under the University Discourse, Lacan said: "The subject is guilty of giving up on his desire."

Nevertheless, I must say that I first fell in love with Freud's theories and secondly with Lacan's developments. I am using this word "love" here as it is related to the dimension of the positive transference to the work of these masters. Furthermore, it is in this dimension of the transference where my process of learning started, but it did not end there.

Years passed, knowledge grew, and I finished my career. As a student, I produced a degree. However afterwards, Could I say that I finished my relationship with the University Discourse? In my formation, no I have not. I attended different seminars of followers of Lacan and Lacanian theory, and I was part of different study groups of Psychoanalysis. Despite the diversity of options, my formation traced the same path over and over again under the same S2: learn more, know more! But, about what? Freud, Lacan and the interpretation of their texts. Therefore, my formation was a repetition of my years as a student and my truth on the science side. Lacan stated that alienation on University.
Discourse is needed during the formation, but the formation in psychoanalysis does not end there, not on Freud's concepts. In 1964, Lacan said, "in any case, the analyst's desire can in no way be left outside our question, for the simple reason that the problem of the training of the analyst poses it. And the training analysis has no other purpose than to bring the analyst to the point I designate in my algebra as the analyst's desire."

In his Founding Act of the Freudian School of Paris Lacan made an essential delimitation between the subject and the master-signifiers. He established a structure of formation not with hierarchic places that own the body of the knowledge; therefore, Lacan rotated the Discourse of the University towards the Discourse of the Analyst. Base on the transmission of psychoanalysis between subjects and the transference towards work, in his class of 6th December 1967, Lacan said that: "where the psychoanalytic act takes its Importance, namely, where for the first time in the world there are subjects whose act it is to be psychoanalysts, namely, who in this area organise, group together, pursue an experience, take their responsibilities in something which is of a different register to that of the act, namely a doing (un faire). But pay attention: this doing is not their own."

Lacan instituted a new space for training in psychoanalysis, a collective of people with a common interest but alone in their research, alone in their relationship with the cause of psychoanalysis. Lacan called this small group Cartel. In this group also will be a plus one, and Miller addressed that the function of the plus one is not the function of the father or the master-signifier. The Plus-one is a host who speaks the language of the other four members of the cartel, however, the members of the cartel authorise themselves. Miller in 2010 differentiated between school and college pointing out that in a school, the transmission of psychoanalysis does not finish with the production of a degree. Moreover, he highlighted the intention of Lacan to open the school to participants that are not only analysts but also non-analysts. The transference to the school does not rely on maintaining 'orthodox' relationship with the knowledge of Freud's or Lacan's theories; on the contrary, it is the psychoanalytic work caused by the failure of that knowledge that put the subject to work. In 1964 Lacan said "there is a cause only in something that does not work".
In the beginning, there is an act. Miller stated that Lacan found an exit because of this act. The Founding Act in 1964 was a revolutionary act that created something new — the school. Lacan returned to Freud's idea of “wo Es war, soll Ich werden,” and highlighted that the founding act of the school existed après-coup, in the desire of the members and their transference to psychoanalysis. An act is not a production of meaning or production of knowledge. Lacan in 1967 said that “the act produces work”. In analysis, this work is not the work of the analyst, it is the work of the analysand. In the dynamic of the cartel, this work is on the side of the cartelists, on the side of the subject with its own masters-signifiers. It is the subject who works under the Analyst Discourse.

References


Question of the Spirit of Psychoanalysis and the Cartel

By Dorotea Pospihalj

"Those who come to this School will commit themselves to fulfilling a task submitted to both internal and external supervision. In exchange they are assured that nothing will be spared so that everything valuable they do will have the repercussions it deserves, and in the appropriate place." (Lacan, 1964)

Is there anything I can testify to the work of the cartel so far? When I think about the School obvious questions come to mind; What is the School? How would you know that you are in a School? What makes you the Subject of the School and to complicate further, what makes a School a Subject?

In order to know something of my desire, I had to do something about it, so I joined the cartel. How do you know your place if you don't know where you are in relation to your desire. Or to put it differently, how would you know your relationship to, in our case, the analytic cause or the School. The primary aim of our cartel is to situate our relationship to the School, via fundamental texts of the School.

I could imagine Lacan at some point coming to a realisation that his texts and seminars could be at times challenging to understand. My fantasy is that Lacan invented the cartel mainly for this reason - frustration management by providing a space where his teachings can be discussed and elaborated, understood on an interpersonal level. What I am suggesting is not that the work becomes enjoyable and pleasant, on the contrary, it is still painful and often frustrating, however, I would describe it as optimal frustration, which I think is the most productive state. In this sense, I will always be sceptical of people claiming that they enjoy their work. I might enquire into the management of jouissance. Which brings me to another aspect of my question on spirit, and how do we mobilise it in work.

Why do we do the things that we do, but more importantly, what is behind the desire to do whatever we are doing. How do we relate to work as series of signifiers? Injunction to be productive, optimise performance, being present and engaged permanently, work is the space of jouissance par excellence, if there ever was one. In relation to the School, how do we know what is our driving principle in our engagement, your own cause of desire to undergo the analytic formation?

To get back to my question *(W)here is the objective spirit of psychoanalysis in the School as a Subject?*

One further step to my initial question of the Objective spirit in general, will be the task to subjectivise it, to contextualise the spirit and understanding how am I mobilising it. In order for the spirit to be objectivised, it first needs to be subjective, as well as the subjective experience needs to be objectivised in order for any intersubjective reality at all.

" Here one must be Hegelian, as Lacan himself was, as any reasonable being is, up to a point. The School is a moment in the objective Spirit of psychoanalysis. If you do not believe in it, if the hypothesis does not interest you, do not enter a School, it's no use to you. Lacan at the moment when he invited his school to pronounce itself by a vote on his <Proposition of October 9th 1967 on the psychoanalyst of the School>, wrote that it had to be supposed that the spirit of psychoanalysis was blowing among the members of this assembly." (Miller, 2000)
Something of this part of the text, caught my desire. For me the spirit of psychoanalysis is what I make of it. Journey towards knowing more of my desire, how it is constructed and what are all the components. As it were, re-inventing and altering signifiers, adding new ones, new modes of relating to the cause.

In the strict sense, we will have to suppose that the spirit of psychoanalysis is blowing among us, now here in London. How I read this is, inscribing signification-signifying determination to the School. Meaning, each of us is bringing their own signifiers that will be collected in the ballot box. We could see the notion of the spirit as objet petit a. If we understand objet petit a as constitutive lack, logical sequence would be placing the void, as the mechanism that allows us to desire in the first place. In this sense, paradoxically, object cause of desire has a quality of positive negativity. Which is precisely the nature of the Spirit. It constitutes the lack.

The objective spirit of psychoanalysis should be supposed in the relationship between the analyst and analysand. It is what enables us to embark on the journey called analysis. As Miller points out the spirit is nothing but the subject supposed to know. If we consider the School, and all its different ‘complex symbolic organizations’, to be a Subject, because we subjectivise it, because it is analysable, interpretable, it is analytically interpretable to use Millers’ words. Because we can analyse our relation to the Ideal, our master-signifiers, that are organising our subjective experience, we can do the same with the School, via the cartel we are actively analysing the School as well as our relation to it. In return, our testimony will be analysed by the School. This double function in my understanding, allows us to be separate, but still come together via interpretation, in the sense that we are aware of the predicament of our situation. Namely, that we are always alone with the Other.

What can help us here is the notion of Extimacy, that has something to do with how I see the analytic spirit. It is not something one can grasp, however, you have faith that it is always there, since you still have the ability to analyse. The Spirit is inside as well as outside. We could use the example of Möbius strip.

"There is no zero of the Ideal, but there is this, that Lacan returns each one to his loneliness as a subject, to the relation that each one has with the master-signifier of the Ideal beneath which he places himself. In the very moment when Lacan institutes a collective formation his first words are to dissociate and bring forward the subjective loneliness, because it is a question with the Freudian School of Paris of a collective formation which does not pretend to make subjective loneliness disappear, but which, on the contrary, founds itself upon it, reveals it. It is the paradox of the School." (Miller, 2000)

"As alone as I have always been in my relation to the analytic cause." (Lacan, 1964)
How should we read this statement? It is not that he was declaring the School asking others to join him, presenting himself as a master-signifier, quite the opposite. He understood that the collectivity is divided by knowing what the Ideal is and what subjective loneliness is. He was not attempting to reconcile the two, proposing a form of resolution for our lonelines.

The School being the sum of subjective lonelines, relating to our loneliness as well as the Ideal, of each one, one by one. A kind of antinomy, that is also the fundamental tension enabling the formation of the School. This is very counter-intuitive. One might ask but how is it that a community is able to sustain itself, if we do not have all the same Ideal also expressed via the same signifiers, perhaps also the same desire that becomes a sort of collective desire?

I believe that this is where the Objective spirit comes in. Subjective loneliness is sustained and accepted. We all know that we are on our own. With this in mind, we also know that there is something that will allow and even enable our subjective experience or loneliness to engage with other lonelines.

Miller speaks of the community, that understands and is able to relate as subjects, knowing the nature of semblants, acceptance of radical loneliness of one’s condition, this also becoming a subjective choice. The acceptance of alienation, sometimes even forced, implying a loss. A loss of what? Maybe the fantasy that offered to some extent functional life, striving towards something of what we have lost. I see this cut as a great example of what analysis, work in the cartel provoke. The acceptance that we have always already lost, more importantly that we never really had it. In principle, we all know that.

**The Subjective Act - Act of absolute responsibility**

What is our responsibility as subjectivities constituting the School?

Miller argues in his proposition, stating that the School is a subject; any subject, if it is to be a subject, is determined by signifiers of which it is effect. It is an act of interpretation. Lacan understood that the School needs analysts, the same way as we need analysts, that will reinstate our status as subjects. Miller’s quote that points to the urgency of this matter:

“The school needs legal statutes, perhaps, no doubt, but above all it needs interpretations of itself as a subject.”

I will endeavour to think of the Objective spirit as ‘distilled desire’. Once we have analysed our desire to the point where we can say something about it, this is where the subjective spirit can become objectivised, hence, used as one of the signifiers one is able to contribute to the subjectivation of the School. It becomes apparent, that it is the responsibility of each Subject of the School, to understand their subjective desire towards the School, it is this that will determine the School as a subject.

Finally, one of the traits of the School that is fundamental, to quote Miller;

“...the School must preserve its inconsistency as its most precious good, as its agalma.”

The inconsistency Miller speaks about is in a way the Spirit of psychoanalysis, he terms agalma, which is a Greek term, literally meaning, Statue.

**References**

Time in psychoanalysis
By Oriol Cobacho

Although Lacan in his teaching would sporadically return to the question of time, he dedicated a valuable écrit to it, "Logical time and the assertion of anticipated certainty"¹, written in 1945. With it, Lacan reorganises the Freudian problem of time as a sort of continuation and rearrangement through a logical problem. He introduces the assertion that the subject's relationship with the future is not constituted by everything possible, but that it is the result of a decision that depends on each of the other subjects around him, on a collective effect, linked to the distribution operated from the Other. In order to see how this is so, we are going to briefly unfold the problem of the three prisoners with the guidance of Jacques-Alain Miller's course from 1999-2000, which was exclusively dedicated to commenting on it².

It is presented by Lacan as follows:

A prison warden summons three prisoners and announces to them the following:

For reasons I need not make known to you now, gentlemen, I must free one of you. In order to decide which, I will entrust the outcome to a test that you will, I hope, agree to undergo.

There are three of you present. I have here five disks differing only in colour: three white and two black. Without letting you know which I choose, I will fasten one of them to each of you between the shoulders, outside, that is, your direct visual field – indirect ways of getting a look at the disk also being excluded by the absence here of any means by which to see your own reflection.

You will then be left at your leisure to consider your companions and their respective disks, without being allowed, of course, to communicate among yourselves the result of your inspection. Your own interest would, in any case, proscribe such communication, for the first to be able to deduce his own colour will be the one to benefit from the discharging measure at my disposal.

But his conclusion must be founded upon logical and not simply probabilistic grounds. Keeping this in mind, it is agreed that as soon as one of you is ready to formulate such a conclusion, he will pass through this door so that he may be judged individually on the basis of his response. This having been agreed to, each of our three subjects is adorned with a white disk, no use being made of the black ones, of which there were, let us recall, but two.

How can the subjects solve the problem?

² Miller, J-A.: Los usos del lapso, Buenos Aires, Paidos, 2004
From the outset, we can see that initially it is the instance of a glance that is involved; of glancing at what the identities of the other two are from a position of non-knowing about oneself. In other words, the others have a knowledge of me that I don't have of myself. The three prisoners have been assigned three white discs, which implies that what each one sees is compatible both with the fact of one's carrying a white disc and with one's carrying a black disc.

**Combination 1:**
Let's go step by step. There is only one combination of discs that would allow one of the prisoners to leave immediately at the first time, which we will call time 1. It would be the instance in which two of the three prisoners had a black disk each.

\[ \begin{array}{ccc} A & B & C \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ A < 111 \\ t_1: A \text{ exits} \end{array} \]

A sees (>) two blacks, and concludes immediately that he is white and exits at time 1.

**Combination 2:**
Two white and one black.

\[ \begin{array}{ccc} A & B & C \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ A, B < 1 \\ t_2: A \text{ & B exit} \\
\text{t}_3: C \text{ exits} \end{array} \]

In this combination no one can leave at time 1 and there is a suspended motion. Time 2 is needed to reason. How do they reason? A, in time 2, says to himself, “If I was black, B would have seen two blacks and would have left at time 1. Therefore, because he didn't leave, I must be white”. A goes along with B who uses the same reasoning. C can only leave at time 3 once he has seen A and B leave.

**Combination 3:**
Three whites.

\[ \begin{array}{ccc} A & B & C \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ A, B, C < 00 \\ T_1: \text{ no one exits} \\
\text{t}_2: \text{ no one exits} \\
\text{t}_3: \text{ all exit} \end{array} \]
This is what happens: when A, for example, sees two whites, he knows immediately there will not be two blacks, but it is not obvious that he himself is white in time 1. In time 2, A realises that if he were black, B would be seeing C white and A black and would thus know he himself (B) was not black because otherwise C would be seeing both A and B as blacks and would immediately leave. So because B is not leaving, A knows B is not seeing C white and himself (A) black; thus he knows himself to be white and heads for the exit. All three follow this line of thinking, after different moments of motion and non-motion, so all three rush to the door convinced they know they are white.

Here the three prisoners reason in the same way, intersubjectivity is involved. Each recognises that he is white, not by seeing that the others leave but by the way they vacillate in exiting. It is a common and simultaneous experience of insights favoured by the absorption of each time into the following one. It is at the end, when all head to the exit, when they can comprehend simultaneously that the three think and do the same thing, excluding the possibility of anyone having a black disc. Lacan talks about the 'anticipated certainty' that takes place, which means that the certainty it does not become truly certain until the very moment of exiting, only after having gone through the various vacillations. Only urgency can take the prisoners out of the loop.

Three typologies of time are involved: the instant of the glance, the time for comprehending and the moment of concluding.

-Instant of the glance: we do not take into account the movement of the others.

-Time for comprehending: we take into account the movement of the other two prisoners who are white like me. Me, being white, must meditate (like they do) what the other two are reflecting reciprocally. The exit of each of the prisoners depends on what one sees as movement or non-movement of the others. The sense of comprehending is the wait.

-Moment of concluding: The sense of time here is no longer the wait but urgency. Wait turns into haste. We could put it this way: "If the other two leave sooner than me, I cannot conclude, therefore I have to act." Still following Miller, a moment more and the other prisoners will exit before me, and if they do my reasoning collapses because there is no time barrier, there is no objective measure of time. The urgency at the moment of conclusion can only come at a given time. It is necessary to understand that the moment of concluding is not situated in the objectivity of time. If the subject misses the chance to conclude, he can no longer conclude validly. In other words, the value of the premise "they do not leave before me" depends on the completion of the conclusion, because if I do not leave, they will have left before me. The value of the premise depends on the value of the truth of the conclusion. The premise is true on condition that I leave; it is my conclusion that creates the conditions of its own truth.

The prisoner, like the subject throughout his analysis, spent his time searching for his truth, the truth of what he is, materialised by the colour of the disc. He spent his time searching for his truth from others, from what others told him, tell him, do and will do to him. Then, he never reached anything other than a trembling, faded truth. The desire that sustains the operation is that there will be a time when the walls will vanish, when the subject traverses the fantasy, once he has realized that it was his not-knowing that gave all the substance to his prison and its director.

It is the conclusion that Lacan invented and called the Pass. It is the conclusion of all conclusions.
The logic that haste determines

By Henrik E. Lynggaard

In August 2018 I joined a cartel that formed around the theme of urgency and trauma. Four of us met monthly with the Plus One. One person joined via Skype from another part of the UK. We agreed to conclude the cartel after one year in July 2019.

Two papers were important for me in helping to establish a theme for my individual work within the cartel. Some weeks before the cartel formed, I read an article by Esthela Solano-Suarez in a 2010 edition of the journal Hurly Burly entitled “Three Seconds with Lacan.” The article testifies to moments in an analysis with Lacan that had started in the mid 1970s. Solano explains that she had completed an IPA informed analysis and established a clinical practice in another country. Impasses in her work led to a decision to relocate to Paris and to embark on a further period of analysis, this time with Lacan. She eventually manages to get Lacan on the phone and reports the following exchange:

“I introduced myself and asked for an appointment.
He asked me: An appointment to do what?
I answered that I wanted to do an analysis with him.
He asked me if it was urgent. I said no, that it could wait.
He answered: Come right away.”

Suarez writes:

“I had expected the eternity of waiting, and right away he pushed me towards urgency, introducing haste. That was the first clinical lesson I learned from him.”

Encountering the words, “come right away”, also had a powerful effect on this reader, prompting me to think about my own analysis, my practice, and time. Embarking ‘late’ on a formation as an analyst, the signifiers of haste and urgency held pertinent personal resonances in terms of my own analysis and my relatively newly established practice.

The second factor influencing some of my explorations in the cartel arose from reading a number of texts that were published in The Lacanian Review (No 5 and 6) on the theme of Urgency, including the address by Bernard Seynhaeve in advance of NLS conference in Israel in June 2019. More specifically, it was in a talk given by Lacan in 1975 entitled Joyce the Symptom, that contained an intriguing phrase that established the direction for the work.

2 Ibid.
In Joyce the Symptom Lacan says:

“The function of haste in Joyce is manifest. What he doesn’t see is the logic that haste determines.”

I found the phrase ‘the logic that haste determines’, both alluring and perplexing.

My work in the cartel followed three paths which I will go on to describe briefly. Firstly, situating Lacan’s 1975 phrase (above) in his ongoing questioning of temporality as a logical structure and the temporal dimension at play in analysis. Lacan’s questioning is radical, and it is also well known that the variations in the length of the standard sessions that he introduced, brought him into conflict with the IPA.

‘The logic that haste determines’, is an expression with roots dating back at least some 30 years earlier, to Lacan’s 1945 paper Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty. In this text the reader encounters the famous prisoners’ dilemma and the coinage of three terms with enduring significance in the Lacanian orientation: ‘the instance of the glance’; ‘the time for understanding’; and ‘the moment for concluding.’ In other words, Lacan presents three modalities of time that correspond in each instance to a particular mode of the subject. To quote from Alexandre Stevens’ precise reading of the same text: “At the instant of the glance, the subject is impersonal; during the time for comprehending, the subject is taken up in the imaginary of intersubjectivity; and at the moment of concluding, the subject fades away in the haste of the act. This moment is a mode of urgency where the certainty of the act anticipates its subjective verification.”

Lacan returns to an examination of the function of haste in logic in Seminar VIII on Transference but this time in the context of a broad discussion of the constitution of the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal and the relationship between anxiety and desire. In the class of June 14, 1964, he defines the function of haste as the way that “...a man runs headlong toward his resemblance to another man” However, a little later he clarifies that there is a logical necessity to this haste and action “The subject can only fill this want-to-be (...) through an action that (...) very easily takes on, indeed perhaps always racially takes on, the quality of a headlong flight.”

Lacan’s exploration of temporality in its chronological, logical and subjective modalities, are further developed in texts such as On the Subject Who is Finally in Question and the 1966 preface to Function and Field of Language. In these texts Lacan specifies how haste and precipitation are necessary elements in the constitution of the subject. In the last published text by Lacan, the Preface to the English Edition of Seminar XI which inspired the theme of the 2019 NLS conference, urgency is viewed as something that presses the parlièr. Something of the order of the urgency of life and something to which the analysts must be alert in their practice.

7 Ibid., 368.
The effect of working in a cartel on these themes was not confined to a theoretical elaboration of knowledge but it also touched on my own analytic trajectory. In preparing for one of the last meetings I was surprised that my thoughts were preoccupied with how it would be possible to condense years of analysis into a 15-20 minutes account as we witness in pass testimonies at conferences. For a while I pondered the question of what I would foreground if I had to say something in a highly compressed moment. This thought experiment involving precipitation was not without subjective effects, and it put me in mind of an evocative phrase of Lacan’s from Function and Field in which a looping of time is evoked...‘reorder(ing) past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come’.

The third and final path of the work consisted in reflecting on aspects of my own practice, especially how I use or misuse time in work with different patients and the logic at play in such decisions and acts. A detailed examination of a moment in a treatment where my good intentions served to reinforce an image of the good Samaritan over closely attending to the patient’s speech and predicament, was painfully instructive.

In conclusion, it has been instructive to me to experience how working in a cartel has woven rich connections between theory, practice and personal analysis, while learning with and from others and through the wider links to the School.

Psychoanalysis and ‘truth’

By Nikos Skarvelis

My work in one of the society’s cartels last year was brief since it was just a cartel toward last year’s Congress—however very illuminating for my personal understanding of psychoanalysis, and for my analytic formation. Our cartel’s general theme was of course that of ‘Urgency’, and my particular line of work was the theme of truth in psychoanalysis, as related to urgency. Interestingly enough, working in the cartel and following the seminars of the society reversed completely all I initially thought psychoanalysis amounted to!

Let us start though. I will make reference to some of the texts we studied as part of our work in the cartel. All of those texts can be found in TLR6. As many of you will probably be aware, we find ourselves in a pivotal point in the history of psychoanalysis, where in view of the very last teachings of Lacan the whole analytic orientation has shifted dramatically; in fact, psychoanalysis is now orientated toward the real, instead of ‘truth’.

Starting from last year’s Congress’s argument, Bernard Seynhaeve tells us that one’s entry in psychoanalytic treatment is marked by a cut in their signifying chain that initiates a certain urgency, a haste. In other words, one’s symptom has stopped functioning, and the analyst is the one who listens to an analysand complain about this. The symptom is a subject’s personal construction of how to go about in this world, and quite naturally, when it does not function anymore, one wants to find out ‘why’; one runs after the hidden truth behind their suffering, and returns to the analytic session every time to address the analyst whom they think can help them find the answer that will terminate their suffering and troubles.

However, Seynhaeve underlines that this ‘truth’ cannot be captured by the signifier, by words. Thus, psychoanalysis will not lead to this discovery! Rather, the goal of the treatment is to provide satisfaction to these urgent cases. ‘Satis’ means ‘enough’ in Latin etymologically. What matters is that the subject in question says ‘enough!’ of this pursuit of truth, and finds a unique solution of what to do with their real; with that which lies behind their suffering but which words and analysis fail to articulate. I have to admit this caused a lot of trouble to me when I first heard it, as I felt what I wanted from my analysis was not what the analysis would provide in the end. You think you will know everything about yourself, but you won’t!

Moving to the ‘Preface of the English Translation of Seminar XI’, Lacan tells us that we find the unconscious ‘where there is no further room for any meaning, interpretation’. Lacan argues that this ‘truth’ that we find through continuous articulation of meaning and through interpretations is but a ‘lying-truth’ and that ‘the mirage of truth, from which only lies can be expected...has no other terminal point than the satisfaction that marks the end of an analysis’. He goes on to add that ‘this stopper (the real) which is supported by the term “impossible”, the little of which we know in the matter of the real shows the antinomy to all verisimilitude’. Therefore, we have a truth that lies, and a real which is opposed to everything that looks like a truth, and which is what really lies underneath one’s symptom. What a mess!

So, what are we to do with this? How can we get this satisfaction without obtaining truth, knowledge about the reason of our suffering? Why do psychoanalysis in the first place if it gives no answers?

Jacques-Alain Miller helped me approach these questions. In his text the ‘Real Unconscious’ he makes a very important distinction between the ‘transferential’ unconscious and the ‘real’ unconscious. As we said, one approaches an analyst because they want to talk about their suffering, and they think the analyst is able to understand and help them. To even begin to speak in an analysis, to even free-associate and produce some kind of meaning, you have to believe that this has a purpose toward unveiling some truth and answers – as I did of course. This transference founds the analytic operation – an operation of articulation – and in fact makes the (transferential) unconscious exist. In short, for an analysis to work, an initial necessary hypothesis of the subject-supposed-to-know (the analyst or yourself even) is required. If you did not believe you will find out ‘why’, then why you would even bother in the first place?

In his text ‘The Speaking Being and the Pass’ Jacques-Alain Miller says that initially Lacan believed in truth as knowledge at the end of an analysis; ‘The articulated signifiers thus constitute knowledge that the subject becomes: the subject who at the start is merely supposed knowledge becomes effective knowledge through the analytic experience... He is literally a “knower”, one who knows about his desire, the lack in which it is embedded as well as the surplus jouissance that fills this lack. At the end of the analysis, we have a subject who knows.’

However, as we said, the truth of the unconscious lies outside of the articulation of free-association; the moment you pay attention to a signifier and start explaining it with other signifiers and so forth, you have lost its ‘real’ truth, and have only a ‘lying-truth’.

The beginning of free-association and then the subsequent production of meaning, Jacques-Alain Miller tells us, begins with an emergence of the (real) unconscious; ‘a dream, a bungled action, a lapsus, or a word that attracts our attention... by way of free association, one transforms these moments of emergence of truth into an articulated discourse.’

Jacques-Alain Miller indicates that while at the start of his teaching Lacan believed this verbal articulation was the Truth, since the unconscious was conceived as a discourse, at the very end of his teaching Lacan puts in question everything psychoanalysis and its clinical application were founded upon! These emergences of formations of the unconscious are what is real and really ‘true’ perhaps and everything constructed upon them in order for us to make some sense of them (the symbolization), is but a ‘mirage and a lying-truth’.

What matters is that the ‘real unconscious’ (its emergences anyway... lapsus, dreams etc.) comes first! The ‘novel of truth’ follows second (S2 follows from S1). What are we to do then? Is the unconscious on the side of truth, or that of the real?

Are there different registers of truth and the unconscious (real vs. transferential, symbolic)?

How should we then practice psychoanalysis?

Jacques-Alain Miller provides some hints in his text ‘The Space of a Lapsus’. So, for instance, a lapsus occurs, and then a ‘truth effect’ follows, and then another and so forth. This multiplicity of ‘effects’ already diminishes the status of ‘truth’ in them.
This produced meaning, this constructed truth, is always variable, changeable, and meaningful only retrospectively in relation to previous and subsequent signifiers. 'Truth' is only accessible through knowledge, and as we have said, $S_2$ is a form of knowledge. Thus, we have only a mediated relationship to the truth of the real through truth effects, which are though only a semblant of what the real is; Jacques-Alain Miller insists that Lacan showed us that the function of speech (the symbolic) – through which psychoanalysis operates – never yields a totality! There will always be a residue impossible to say. Truth, meaning, and interpretation always seem to fall short in relation to something that lies beyond – the real.

In a passage from ‘Television’ Lacan tells us:

‘One never manages to say the whole truth... Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it is through this very possibility that the truth holds onto the real.’

However, psychoanalytic treatment via verbal articulation has its use, Jacques-Alain Miller argues. The emergence of the real and the cut in the function of the symptom necessitate and urge toward an articulation and a ‘making-sense’. Psychoanalysis can provide this, and very often a certain pacification will occur. We could say one would be at good terms with their symptom after all. Nevertheless, the initial astonishment that led one to the couch will be again present in the end, condensed in the residue that escaped the ‘making-sense’ of the symptom. What matters then is that the subject has been able to historicise themselves; produced a personal fiction/narrative about who they are and what is happening to them, a fiction that would have the structure of ‘truth’, even if it is a lying one.

What is then psychoanalysis after seeing the status of ‘truth’ in it? Jacques-Alain Miller notes: ‘A psychoanalysis is undoubtedly an experience that consists in constructing a fiction, but at the same time, or subsequently, it consists in undoing it. Psychoanalysis is not the triumph of fiction, since it is where the latter is actually put to the test of its impotence to resolve the opacity of the real.’

In the end, I think an analysis enables one to arrive at a point that they can be liberated from an obsession with meaning and truth, of saying indeed ‘Satis!’, and then finding a way to deal with their unique One; the real residue. But, this takes time. I think there is a time to think and make sense effortlessly and there comes a time to live!
Desire for more:  
the analytic discourse in Encore

By Nicolas Duchenne

Here we go again. For a new study year. Presumably because there's something more we want to know about psychoanalysis. Fair enough. It was the same with Lacan's seminar. Again. Every year. Lacan thought that this was worth interrogating. He did so when he started his seminar again in 1972. It was seminar 20, whose title is 'Encore', which stands in French for 'more', 'still', 'again'. Lacan pretty much started his seminar with this (Encore, p. 1 of the Fink edition, my translation):

Over time, I've realised that what constituted my own path was some 'I don't want to know anything about it'. It's probably the reason why, over time, I am still here, and that you're here too. I'm still astonished about it, again and again. What has encouraged me for a while now is that with you, too, with the large mass of those who are here, there is also an 'I don't want to know anything about it'. However, the crux of the question is: is it the same as mine?

This passage fills me with jubilation. Maybe because Lacan's words implicate the very act of reading him; and the very act of meeting with you here today. Jubilation also because this passage condenses difficult concepts in seminar in very simple words. There is enjoyment, maybe, and something of the unconscious, in this 'I don't want to know anything about it'. There is also the relationship between Lacan and the members of his audience. It is based on a certain identification and a certain interrogation: Your 'I don't want to know', is it the same as mine? Maybe this has to do with the non-rapport that Lacan will be talking about in the seminar. Jubilation, finally, because Lacan gives us a glimpse of his own enjoyment: he is 'astonished, again and again'. And so maybe there is something about love going on here, insofar as my 'I don't want to know' wants to mingle with Lacan's 'I don't want to know'.

But back to here and now, i.e. to the school and to the cartels. It pleases me to think that I'm here, again, because I want to expand or better my knowledge of psychoanalysis. However, maybe I'm here because in fact 'I don't want to know anything about it'. And maybe that's why you're here too. And maybe that's what links us today. Here we go again, but where? Well, I didn't have to go very far, because my 'I don't want to know' just took me a few lines further (Encore, p. 2):

Last year, I entitled what I believed I could say to you: ... or worse, and then: it orworses itself. That has nothing to do with I or you. I don't orwose you, you don't orworse me. Our path, the path of the analytic discourse, progresses only from this narrow limit, this knife's edge, whereby elsewhere it can only orworse itself.

I had read this passage a few years ago. At that time, I was interested in what Lacan had to say about a certain man and a certain woman. This passage had flown over my head, so to speak. However, this year it was different. I wanted to reflect upon the act of speech in analysis, and I was looking for a new way to approach Lacan's work in the early 70s. When I read this passage again, I went... ha! Here we go. The analytic discourse. I then browsed the text of the seminar and I started articulating research questions. I'll tell you more about them in a minute.
Because for now let me summarise: I started reading the seminar, again, presumably from a position of ‘I don’t want to know anything about it’. I had a jubilatory encounter with the first page of the seminar. I hooked my desire onto a couple of words, the ‘analytic discourse’. And I finally thought that I should tell you about my jubilation today. It all sounds a bit foolish, doesn’t it? or silly. Well, if it’s silly, then maybe it’s not such a bad place from which to read the seminar and the analytic discourse in it. After all, Lacan said a couple of weeks later (Encore, pp. 12-13):

In this first seminar, I talked about silliness [la bêtise]. At stake is the silliness that conditions what I named my seminar after this year, and that is pronounced ‘Encore’. [...] Doesn’t the psychoanalytic discourse hold because it is supported by the dimension of silliness? [...] There is a status to be granted to this new discourse and to its approach of silliness. It gets close to it, since in the other discourses, silliness is what one flees.

And so let me hold onto this silliness somehow as I tell you a bit about my study project, even though the research questions I’m about to share with you will not sound silly at all. The analytic discourse is a thread that runs through the seminar. Sometimes it runs under the surface, and sometimes it reappears. There are three appearances of this thread that I decided to pick at, and which I’m intending to follow.

Firstly, in the opening of the seminar, Lacan positions himself as analysand, and he explains that it is the analytic discourse that underpins his work. Does Lacan’s statement imply that the seminar is an instance of the analytic discourse? My first research question is then: In what measure is seminar 20 an instance of the analytic discourse that it posits?

Secondly, in the third session of the seminar, Lacan comes back to his concept of four discourses; of the master, the university, the hysteric, the analyst. These discourses are four modes of constitution of what we might call reality, and they also condition what we might call the social link. And Lacan says this: there is some emergence of analytic discourse at each passage from one discourse to another. This did astonish me. It would seem that Lacan didn’t theorise the four discourses for themselves, but for the passages that occur between them. So my second research question is: can passages between the four discourses be tracked in the seminar? And if so what is the effect of these passages?

Thirdly, back to the first session of the seminar, Lacan says something even more astonishing. He says that the analytic discourse demonstrates that woman’s sexual organ doesn’t tell anything to man except via the enjoyment of the body. And so my third question is: How would the analytic discourse demonstrate? Generally: how would it demonstrate anything? And more specifically: how could it demonstrate such thing as ‘a woman’s sexual organ doesn’t tell anything to man except via the enjoyment of the body’?

And I’ll eventually ask myself: how is the analytic discourse implicated in the transmission of psychoanalysis? And is there anything to learn about the knowledge of the analyst from it?
The Real and the Gaze: puzzling out virtual reality

By Jo Rostron

Between 2015 and 2017 I was one of several cartel members who were interested in, or practitioners of, the arts. One of my projects was to take up the challenge to analyse my responses while completing an online jigsaw puzzle. The scraps of knowledge I will refer to are found in Lacan’s Seminars VI, IX, XI and XXIII, and in his Ecrits. Scraps were also gleaned from A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man, by James Joyce, and from two research papers. One of these was published in 2007 by neuroscientists at UCL, and the other by contemporary Lacanian psychoanalyst Pascal le Malefan in 2011.

Today’s online puzzle consists of 60 or so virtual jigsaw pieces. In the top right hand corner of the screen is the tiny key to it, depicting a shiny red racing car, symbol of potency and completeness. I contemplate the jigsaw pieces below it that represent the scattered body of the car, and wonder how to begin reassembling them.

As I begin a timer is triggered, insisting: Best Time: Two Minutes. Immediately, each piece of the puzzle seems to stare at me from an invisible place behind the screen. I am reminded of the Wolf Man’s dream: each piece of the puzzle seems like each of the wolves in the tree, representing a precarious source of jouissance in danger of being lost, or taken away. For Freud, the dream represents the castration anxiety of the narcissistic ego. Lacan goes further: the gaze in the dream is equivalent to, and constitutes, the phallus.

I doubt I have the skill or intelligence necessary to beat the clock. Neither can the virtual puzzle pieces be touched, or turned around. On screen the programming behind the pieces tethers them to the geometrical order of the positions in which they would finally end up. Likewise, the shapes of the jigsaw pieces have a limited range of design. I have no sense of being absorbed or fascinated by vision, and begin to ignore the timer altogether.

Taking a methodical approach I clear a central space to create a frame around it. I select pieces of the puzzle with a straight edge, and a limited colour range of red and green observed in one area of the key image. Lacan has described, in Seminar XXIII, James Joyce’s framing around a ‘jouissance-impossible-to-negativise’.

what he writes always goes via a relationship with framing... which always bears at least a homonymic relationship with what he is presumed to be recounting as an image. This framing is linked to the very stuff of what he recounts. This is not without producing an evocation of my little rings, which are also the support of a framing.

At this point in the puzzle, my own framing is a play between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, containing a semblance, a virtual Real. My focus shifts to dramatic areas that provided an anchoring, guided by line, colour and tone, and according to my ‘conscious apprehension of sight by sight’. I become sidetracked by additional pieces that could fit onto the part of the frame already assembled. As I add pieces, or take them away again, chaos emerges in the space cleared for a working area.

1 Lacan Seminar XXIII p 127
My approach begins to fall apart as I become aware that the absence of a sense of touch appears to be causing an unpleasant vacillation of vision. The after-images of the complementary reds and greens distract me, and I click on white shapes between the virtual puzzle pieces, confused about positive and negative space. All three registers, RSJ, are now in action. With a migrainous sensation, I am lost in the ‘flying form of the gaze’, ‘in its pulsatile, dazzling and spread out function’⁴. Then, with an accompanying feeling of failure, I become the ‘vanishing point of being’, ‘the punctiform object’⁵.

This is how Lacan describes the fall of the objet a in S VI:

something which presents itself first in experience as a disturbance, as something which disturbs the perception of the object... This something, that the maledictions of poets and moralists show us, also degrades this object, debases it, disorganizes it, in any case shakes it, sometimes goes so far as to dissolve the very person who perceives it, namely the subject⁶.

I return now to Joyce, who has written about an experience following a vicious beating by his schoolmates, which was provoked by his refusal to renounce his favourite poet: :

He had not forgotten a whit of their cowardice and cruelty but the memory of it called forth no anger from him. As he stumbled homewards... he had felt some power was divesting him of that suddenwoven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel⁷.

A process of separation and distancing continues within my game online. The virtual puzzle pieces have now transformed into heavy furniture that I am lugging around a tiny room, located inside the screen that emits light into my eyes. I have entered a subjectivity that that experiences itself as external to the body yet continues to perceive this distant body as its own. Lacan says ‘perception is not in me, but on the objects it apprehends⁸’.

The illusion that ‘the self ‘is in the body, behind the eyes, has been explored by neuroscientists from UCL. Working in the sphere of the virtual and avatars, researchers can now provoke out of body experiences. They use virtual reality goggles to trick the brain into thinking the body is located elsewhere. The visual illusion plus the feel of their real bodies being touched makes volunteers sense that they have moved outside their physical bodies. These scientific researchers suggest that a disconnection between the brain circuits that process visual and touch sensory information may be responsible⁹.

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2 Lacan Seminar XI p 89-90
3 ibid p 83
4 Lacan Seminar VI p 312
5 Joyce, James, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man p 87
6 Lacan Seminar XI p80
Lacanian analyst Pascal Le Maléfan has observed amongst his neurotic analysands that the OBE is becoming increasingly commonplace, and he argues for a new orientation for the contemporary clinic of the body. He suggests that it is the persistence of the unary trait, the symbolic identification, which guarantees the continuity of seeing oneself as outside one’s body.

Bilocation, he says, could be a return to that moment when the connection was made between the subject and his/her image: ‘a return to the attribution in the field of the Big Other.’ He holds that the out of body experience is due to ‘a series of specular phenomena; a phenomenon which, like the double, in its own way, illustrates the possible decomposition of the co-ordinates that are necessary for the recognition of the ego image’.8

Could Lacan have anything further to offer on this topic, not having experienced life in the 21st Century? Of course! The possibility of bilocation, says Lacan in Seminar IX on Identification, was accepted in ancient myths. He illustrates it with a Celtic story, related by a farm worker who received the news that his Master had just died. At that moment, the farm worker noticed a mouse scurrying over the implements and certain areas of the farm. He assumed simply that he was again in the presence of his Master who was inspecting the property and bidding farewell.9

Further on, Lacan refers to the organism’s ‘elementary solidarity’, or ego unification. He makes an analogy between the subject and the cosmonaut, asking us to imagine Yuri Gagarin at the controls of a spacecraft.

The aforesaid motor subject is literally imprisoned by the carapace which alone guarantees the containment, at least at one or other moment of the flight, of the organism in what one could call its elementary solidarity.

therefore this body has become a sort of mollusc, but torn away from its vegetative implantation. This carapace becomes such a dominant guarantee of the maintenance of this solidarity that one is not far from grasping this unity as a veritable container of what one can call the living pulp...

The contrast between this corporeal position and this pure function of reasoning machine, this pure reason, which remains the only efficacious thing, is indeed here something exemplary. It gives all its importance to the question of spatio-temporal intuition. In the sense that I sufficiently supported it, by what I would call the false geometry of Kant’s time, is this intuition still there? I have a strong tendency to think that it is still there 10.

We have learned from Lacan that the gaze is lost to the geometrical vision of the eye. Nevertheless he manages to demonstrate the gaze in Holbein’s depiction of the distorted skull in the painting ‘The Ambassadors’. What is unreadable becomes a skull when the viewer’s body is in a place that offers a geometrical vision, ‘that is to say, vision in so far as it is situated in a space that is not in itself visual.’

For Lacan, functional or sensory integration does not proceed from the ego. He says:

“Nothing separates the ego from its ideal forms, the ideal ego of Freud... almost the entire life of the organism escapes it, and the ego needs know nothing about it for the most part.”

9 Lacan Seminar IX p 25-7
10 ibid p 94
11 Lacan Seminar XI p 94
12 Lacan Ecrits (English version trans Fink) n 146-7