

## *Habeas corpus\**

**Jacques-Alain Miller**

Two years ago in Paris, I set our compass, the compass of the World Association of Psychoanalysis, so that it would point in the direction of Lacan's late teaching. This is what has oriented our tenth Congress. Its title was inspired by the sentence that concludes one of the chapters in *Seminar XX*: 'The real [...] is the mystery of the speaking body, it is the mystery of the unconscious.'<sup>1</sup> In consequence, I then suggested the theme *The Unconscious and the Speaking Body*.

But we can observe, I think, that the radiance of the body has won out over the theme of the unconscious. The novelty, which has arisen as such, has been for us to deal with the speaking body. If I'm not mistaken, the presence of the term 'unconscious' has been pushed entirely into the background throughout this Congress. I shall say that this is all very well, because it has made us tackle the question with enthusiasm. This is also what is providing me now with the opportunity to present a few punctuations to clarify the nature of Lacan's late teaching, its place in the trajectory of the whole, and the use we can make of it in this day and age. I will stop, then, before suggesting a new title for the Barcelona Congress, since no decision has yet been made on that subject.

### **Pure logic**

Some time ago I took part in a colloquium on the relationships between Lacan and mathematics. Both psychoanalysts and mathematicians took part. I titled my contribution 'Un rêve de Lacan'<sup>2</sup>. What was the dream in question? I treated Lacan's desire to associate psychoanalysis with mathematics, especially mathematical logic, and not only with structural linguistics, as a dream. Was this dream Lacan's alone? No, it wasn't. A whole generation, the structuralist generation, mentors and pupils alike,

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This version of the text was established by Guy Briole, Hervé Damase, Pascale Fari and Ève Miller-Rose. It has not been read by the author, but is published here with his kind permission.

<sup>1</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XX, Encore, 1972-1973*, New York: Norton, 1998, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, J.-A., 'Un rêve de Lacan', in *Le réel en mathématiques : psychanalyse et mathématiques*, proceedings of the Cerisy colloquium held over 3-10 September 1999, edited by P. Cartier and N. Charraud, Paris: Agalma/Seuil, 2004, pp. 107-133.

believed in the same dream. Recall for example the hopes that the likes of Roland Barthes invested in structuralist semiology.

To bring things into focus, I'm going to single out a formula that summarises Lacan's dream. This formula has gone unnoticed because it features only in the text on the back cover of the *Écrits*. In this text, the last that Lacan wrote for the edition of his book, there is a sentence that indicates that he believed he had demonstrated that 'the unconscious arises from pure logic.'<sup>3</sup> Let's be careful with the translation. It might be easier to translate if we say that the unconscious, most closely examined, is constituted only of elements of pure logic. The adjective 'pure' is there to underscore that according to Lacan, the Lacan of the *Écrits*, the unconscious is solely a logical affair. This logic, at the end of the collection, even comes to dominate linguistics. 'Pure logic' is what explains why we speak in terms of 'subject of the unconscious' and not in terms of 'man'.

### **Ethics**

The subject of the unconscious, the subject that Lacan speaks about, the one that he inscribes with a barred letter S, strictly speaking has no body because the body does not arise from 'pure logic'. The subject has an ontological dimension, which signifies that it is not an *entity*, it has no determined physical manifestations. It does not belong to the dimension of ontics. I won't be able now to go over the essential distinction in philosophy between the ontological and the ontic, so I'll simply mention it.<sup>4</sup> The subject possesses an ontological dimension precisely because it has no physical manifestations. When an entity has a physical manifestation, it arises from ontics and not from ontology. Furthermore, it's because the subject of the unconscious has an ontological dimension that the thematic of belief can be introduced, as was shown in the sequence of presentations by Graciela Brodsky and Jorge Forbes.<sup>5</sup>

We should recall that back in *Seminar XI*, dedicated to the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, Lacan posited that the reality of the unconscious is ethical.<sup>6</sup> In other words, he was underlining that the reality of the unconscious stems from an *ought to be*. The reality of the unconscious cannot be observed in the way of a physical

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<sup>3</sup> Lacan, J., back cover of the French edition of the *Écrits*, Paris: Seuil, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. in particular Miller J.-A., *L'orientation lacanienne, L'Être et l'Un*, 2011, unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> These two presentations composed a sequence that went under the title: *Becoming a dupe of a real: what does it mean to 'believe in the sinthome'?*

<sup>6</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1964, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994, p. 33.

manifestation. We can ascertain this ethical dimension each time an analysis begins. We try to assess in the person who comes to request an analysis whether the will not to be indifferent to the Freudian phenomenon is indeed present. Anyone can easily say, 'No way... I can't hope for anything by recounting my dreams and trying to make sense of them.' That's entirely legitimate. At the origin there has to be a subject who decides, on the contrary, not to be indifferent to the Freudian phenomenon.

I consider that the formula on the back of the *Écrits* – 'the unconscious arises from pure logic,' a formula which is in some sense conclusive – governed Lacan's trajectory up until his late teaching. Then there was a caesura. I said *césure*, and not *caesure*. There's no fracture because Lacan's conceptual transformations – when he sets his gear in motion and adds on different elements – are always smoothed over, they become smooth like continuous topological warps.

### Speaking body

Lacan's late teaching begins when this formula, 'the unconscious arises from pure logic,' which seemed to be constitutive of Lacanism, is disowned, renounced, and abjured. It's replaced by another that is not uttered as such, but which I can bring out into the open: *the unconscious arises from the speaking body*.

Lacan endows the subject of the unconscious with a body, and that's why it's no longer a matter of the subject of the unconscious. Lacan says, quite simply, *l'homme*.<sup>7</sup> Spinoza, for instance, also puts it like this.<sup>8</sup> It is essential to grasp this first point: unlike the subject, man has a body. Second, this body is a speaking body. This features in the title of this Congress. Third, the body is not doing the speaking of its own initiative. It is always man who speaks *with* his body.<sup>9</sup> 'With' is one of Lacan's cherished prepositions, to which he gives its precise meaning: instrumentation. Man makes use of his body to speak. Therefore, the formula of the speaking body is not designed to open the door to the speech of the body. It opens the door to man making use of his body to speak. And, indeed, Lacan did not include this dimension in the unconscious such as it features in the *Écrits*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lacan, J., 'Joyce the Symptom' in *The Seminar Book XXIII, The Sinthome, 1975-1976*, Cambridge: Polity, 2016, p. 145, where Lacan spells it 'LOM', thus condensing the noun 'man' with its definite article. See also the written version of 'Joyce the Symptom' in *The Lacanian Review*, Issue 2, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book II, Axiom II: 'Homo cogitat'. For Miller's commentary on this passage, see 'Spare Parts' in *Psychoanalytical Notebooks*, Issue 27, September 2013, pp. 88-89.

<sup>9</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XX, Encore*, op. cit., p. 119: 'I speak with my body, and I do so unbeknownst to myself.'

Moreover, there is a Lacanian topos, a frequent reference in Lacan, to a passage from Aristotle. In *De Anima*, Aristotle underlines – and Lacan agrees – that the soul isn't what thinks, but rather it is man, who thinks *with* his soul.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, man speaks with his body. The body is his instrument for speaking.

### **The unconscious and the drive**

Speech goes via the body and, in return, it affects the body that emits it. In what way and in what form does speech affect the body that is its emitter? It affects it in the form of phenomena of resonance and echo. The resonance and echo of speech in the body<sup>11</sup> are the real, both of what Freud called the 'unconscious' and the 'drive'. In this sense, the unconscious and the speaking body are one and the same real. I'm going to say it again so that this essential punctuation doesn't elude us. There is equivalence between the unconscious and the drive insofar as both terms have a common origin which is the effect of speech in the body, the somatic affects of language, of *lalngua*.

Henceforth, the unconscious at issue is not an unconscious of pure logic but, so to speak, an unconscious of pure jouissance. To designate this new unconscious, Lacan forged a new word, a neologism that is starting to repeat, the *parlêtre*, which is altogether distinct from the Freudian unconscious that belongs to the ontological and ethical order, as we have seen. On the contrary, the *parlêtre* is an ontic entity, because this entity necessarily has a body, since there is no jouissance without a body. The concept of *parlêtre* hinges – this is what I am putting forward – on the originary equivalence between unconscious and drive.

Therefore, this involves an unconscious that is different from the Freudian unconscious, which gives Lacan occasion to make a prediction: the Lacanian *parlêtre* shall one day supersede the Freudian unconscious.<sup>12</sup> This prediction is not entirely serious. Lacan knew that the traditional names have an enduring and resistant power that it's hard to put an end to. But he is indicating here that he has crossed the limits that Freud ascribed to what is involved in the unconscious, since at the level on which Lacan places his measure, the binary difference between unconscious and drive

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, 1.4, 408b 14. In the J. A. Smith rendering: 'It is doubtless better to avoid saying that the soul pities or learns or thinks and rather to say that it is the man who does this with his soul.' The first reference to this passage in Lacan's teaching is in *The Seminar Book III, The Psychoses*, Norton/Routledge, 1993, p. 14. Among the many further occurrences, cf. *The Seminar Book XX, Encore*, op. cit., p. 110 ('man thinks with – instrument – his soul') and the written version of 'Joyce the Symptom'.

<sup>11</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XXIII, The Sinthome*, op. cit., p. 9: '[...] the drives are the echo in the body of a fact of saying.'

<sup>12</sup> Lacan, J., 'Joyce the Symptom' (written version): 'Hence my expression *parlêtre*, which will supersede Freud's UCS (unconscious: let it be read).'

disappears. It cannot be said that the late teaching prolongs Lacan's trajectory. It marks a swing, a reversal, that goes hand-in-hand with a critique of the vast architecture shaped by his previous conceptualisation.

This reversal brought about another, one that is more obvious, and which astonished the structuralist generation (at least the French generation, though it had a wider reach than that): that of Roland Barthes. The whole of Paris was stupefied by the fact that he who had been known as the promoter of a methodical semiology should become the author of a little work bearing the title *The Pleasure of the Text*.<sup>13</sup> Everyone deciphered in this a sensational reversal in the direction of a hedonism that until then had been more discreet. As one of the 'young ones' at the time of the structuralist generation, I can say that Barthes had been sensitive to the new emphasis that Lacan was putting on *jouissance*, and that for his part he had learnt lessons from it. The title of the book ought to have been *The Jouissance of the Text*, but that would have immediately flagged up the influence of Lacan under which Barthes had found his inspiration.

### **From *langage* to *langue***

Another analogy occurred to me. Two major philosophers of the twentieth century underwent reversals in their late teaching – one could even draw up a catalogue of 'reversing' thinkers – : Martin Heidegger, who speaks explicitly of the *Kehre*, the sharp turn in his thought, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. I will leave Heidegger to one side to say a word about Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein developed two very distinct philosophies. The first made Bertrand Russell's logicism the principle of a conception of the world. Adopting the Lacanian formula, we could say that the world of Wittgenstein's first philosophy arose from pure logic such as he conceived of it. This philosophy is set out in the famed *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*<sup>14</sup> – one might say that the *Écrits* are a *Tractatus Logico-Psychoanalyticus*. After the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein took a hairpin turn. Criticising and abandoning the model of pure logic, he showed that all that is logical depends upon the life and customs of a group. All that is logical is nothing more than a 'language-game'. Before the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein believed in one sole logic. After, he showed that there are as many variants of logic as there are 'language-games' and forms of life.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Barthes, R., (1973) *The Pleasure of the Text*, Hill & Wang, 1975.

<sup>14</sup> Wittgenstein, L. (1921) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Paul Keegan: 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein, L., (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, revised Hacker & Schulte edition, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the disparity is the same in Lacan between, first, ‘like a language’, and then, second, *la langue*. First, that the unconscious is structured like a language implies that the structure is the same for any language. ‘Like a language’ is actually a universal of structure. Second, on the contrary, *la langue* is always particular.<sup>16</sup> It consists only in its particularities. Consequently, there is no universal of tongues, one cannot make an *all* of tongues.

### The Lacanian reversal

Let’s try to be precise about what the Lacanian reversal was. Lacan’s initial orientation consisted in cleaving the Freudian legacy. Elsewhere, that’s what the Americans and the British were doing on their side, which the IPA were doing, too. They cleaved Freud into a first and second topology. They chose to follow the second topology, abandoning the first. Lacan’s operation was more complex, but it was also an operation of division that consisted in clearly separating the technique of deciphering the unconscious from the theory of the drives, as he puts it in his ‘Discours de Rome’.<sup>17</sup> In other words, Lacan was seeking a clear separation of the unconscious from the drives. This is spelt out in full. The orientation of his first movement is this separation. What interested Lacan was to develop this deciphering, that is, to theorise this technique with the aid of linguistics. At that time, the drives, drive satisfaction, and *jouissance*, were in his view part of the imaginary, with the symbolic intervening through speech only to master and efface.

We can take our bearings from the canonical example of the *Fort / Da*, where Lacan shows at the start how the subject of the signifier dominates *jouissance*, and becomes the master of *jouissance*. What might be said about this from the standpoint of the late teaching? Well, on the contrary, the *Fort / Da* shows us that at the very beginning of the signifying chain there is *jouis-sens*.<sup>18</sup> The *Fort / Da* pair brings about an effect of meaning and allows for a production of *jouissance*. In the end, the *Fort / Da* shows us the child acceding to the parlêtre, acceding to his ‘parlêtre by nature’<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lacan, J., ‘Radiophonie’, in *Autres écrits*, Paris: Seuil, p. 412, among other occurrences.

<sup>17</sup> Lacan, J., ‘Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse’, *Écrits*, op. cit., p. 261; & ‘Discours de Rome’, in *Autres écrits*, op. cit., pp. 137-141.

<sup>18</sup> Lacan, J., ‘Television’ in *Autres écrits*, *ibid.*, p. 517. This spelling matches the imperative *jouis* [‘enjoy’] with *sens*, which on p. 10 of the English-language edition is rendered as ‘enjoy-meant’, but consider also *j’ouï-sens* [‘I hear meaning’]. Both versions are homophonic with *jouissance*. Cf. Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XXIII, The Sinthome*, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> Lacan, J., ‘Joyce the Symptom’ (written version), op. cit.

I have set out in detail in several of my courses Lacan's efforts to model the drive on the signifying chain. I showed that the principle of Lacan's graph, the graph of desire, consisted in identifying the drive with the signifying chain on the upper level of the graph, along with its treasure of signifiers and its quilting point of a signifier of the barred Other. This is a way of writing the drive as though it were nothing but a signifying chain, as though it had the same structure as the signifying chain.

The main solution that Lacan found and used for many years was the object *a*, which he turned into his major invention. At the same time, the object *a* is part of the armature of the fantasy, it lies at the heart of the drive, and it possesses certain properties of the signifier. Notably, it presents through units. It is countable and numerable, and therefore is already a *jouissance*. If it is *surplus jouissance*, it's a surplus *jouissance* that is already a shading off of *jouissance*, a modelling of *jouissance* on the model of the signifier.

The reversal will only be brought about when Lacan throws off the straightjacket in *Seminar XX*, where we see the object *a* downgraded as a sham semblance [*un faux-semblant*].<sup>20</sup>

Translated by A. R. Price

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<sup>20</sup> Lacan, J., *The Seminar Book XX, Encore*, op. cit., pp. 90-95, in particular.