

# An Elaboration on Some Points Drawn from a Reading of Frank Rolliers’ “Le Cartel: à l’Envers de la Ségrégation”<sup>\*1</sup>

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At the *ICLO Inter-Cartel Day* in 2015, I presented a list of 20 points that I had extracted from an article by Frank Rollier published in the same year. I was encouraged to return to this list because it resonated. I decided to not repeat this list for the *ICLO Inter-Cartel Day 2022*, but to revisit 12 of these points, elaborate on them, give them a twist, and relate some of these elaborations to the internal workings of the cartel, as well as to the wider cultural/political context.

1. *A cartel is against the modern movement of segregation; everyone can speak and is given that opportunity* – What is at stake here? In our times, we are increasingly losing belief in the Other and one of the reactions to this is to find security in segregation to feel safe. When one begins to lose one’s belief in the Other, this Other threatens to become menacing and veers towards being the Other of jouissance. For example, it can be argued that this imagined threat is one of the possible causes of racism, as Lacan seems to suggest in *Television*.<sup>2</sup> Recently Douglas Rushkoff, a Marxist theorist from New York, published an article in which he describes his experience of meeting a group of ‘tech’ billionaires who had invited him to meet them at a secret place in the desert.<sup>3</sup> He thought that they wanted to consult him about how best to respond to the looming climate-change disaster and the potential societal problems associated with this. During the conversation he began to realise that their topic for the meeting was how to survive a possible catastrophic event. All they wanted, he wrote, is to escape a disaster of their own making through breaking the laws of economics and morality. They are now financing missions to Mars, AI futurism and have already built numerous island bunkers. This is a perfect example of segregation pushed to its limit, a segregation, about which Miller says, that its two breasts are suprematism and separatism.<sup>4</sup> Another possible response is the cartel. In the cartel one is given the opportunity to speak to others based on a certain kind of freedom. This brings us to the second point.
2. *In the cartel everyone takes responsibility for his or her own task* – This freedom can only be freedom if it is to some extent regulated (i.e., it is not the freedom of the free markets and neo-liberalism). For the cartel, that implies that you speak amongst other things, in relation to the task you have taken on board. This kind of regulation is not related to the restrictions on speech imposed by the woke-movement, although it must be stated that this latter is often concerned with admirable causes. The regulation in the cartels relates to the impossibility of harmonising the fact that it is the real that makes us want to speak with

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<sup>\*</sup>Presented by Rik Loose, ICLO-NLS at ICLO-NLS Inter-Cartel Day, “Cartel as a Space of (k)not Knowing,” 1 October 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Rollier. Frank., *Quart d’heur des cartels, 14 fevrier, 2015, Lausanne.*

<sup>2</sup> Lacan. J., (1973), *Television*, in *October*, no 40, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Rushkoff. D., *The super-rich “prepper” planning to save themselves from the apocalypse*, The Observer, 04/09/2022.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, J.-A., (2021), *Docile to Trans*, [www.lacan.com](http://www.lacan.com), p. 12.

the inability to absorb this real within speech. We are, as Miller says, the dupe of the real.<sup>5</sup> And thus we are not without moments of crisis. This brings us to the third point.

3. *Crises are dealt with and each desire is mobilised* – Of course, it is a crisis that often propels one to start an analysis but that does not necessarily mean that there is a desire for analysis. Indeed, this desire needs to be mobilised and then the analyst can consent to an analysis. So, what about the cartel? In the cartel no-one is meant to take up a position of mastery and it is only then, when that position of non-mastery is upheld, that members will question their desire and subjective difficulties, although not in the sense of an analysis. The cartel is concerned with the question of how each member responds to a knowledge that never really completes itself and thus also how each member responds to the difficulties of the text. In the cartel there is no-one who has no difficulties with dancing with the signifiers of Lacan. This then leads to the next point.
4. *In the cartel everyone speaks and partakes under his or her own name* – Here it may be appropriate to relate a personal experience. I participate in a cartel in which we read Lacan's *Television*, which is not an easy text. I said to the cartel that I had read the piece we were going to work on and understood little of it. However, through each speaking under his or her own name, saying what he or she had to say about the text, there was an effect on each of us in the sense that we were able to enter the text - which when reading on our own did not happen. The surprise comes with the saying rather than with what is said. This brings us to our next point.
5. *The cartel is also the place of surprise. At the heart of the cartel there is a hole, the hole in knowledge, the real, and the plus-one relates the cartel to this real* – For Lacan the advent of the subject is a matter of language, speech and discourse and thus the constitution of this subject, who has to find a place in language, is based on a lack because this place is one of representation in which this subject is represented by a signifier for other signifiers. This implies that the starting point of the subject is a lack-of-being and the implication is that this starting point concerns essentially a not-knowing what a human being (never mind a psychoanalyst) is. This is the logic that Lacan based his idea of the cartel on. What is a consequence of this? This question brings us to the sixth point.
6. *The cartel functions horizontally* – When our starting-point is a knowledge that contains an un-knowable, and this starting-point is maintained (by the plus-one) then a horizontal identification ensues. What is the implication of this? It implies equality between the various members, but the reality is also that no-one is the same in relation to this un-knowable in knowledge. Lacanian equality is when our relationship to the hole in knowledge, the real, is different for everyone. How can this kind of equality be maintained? An answer to this question brings us to the seventh point.

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<sup>5</sup> Miller, J.-A., (2016), *The Unconscious and the Speaking Body*,  
<https://wapol.org/en/articulos/Template.asp?intTipoPagina=4&intPublicacion=13&intEdicion=9&intIdiomaPublicacion=2&intArticulo=2742&intIdiomaArticulo=2>

7. *The cartel has no leader but a plus-one* – Work in cartels is crucial for a formation in psychoanalysis because it encourages a relationship to knowledge that is not the one of universities. Although the university can transmit a knowledge that may be of a not-all structure, it tends to hide this structure by the way it transmits this knowledge to the students. This implies something crucial: as a student you absorb this knowledge, but you do not experience it, like you do in the cartel. University discourse, as Miller says, concerns the subject (as teacher) who knows and as such blocks or revokes elaboration.<sup>6</sup> This experience in the cartels is not always easy, and here as we indicate before, an aspect of the function of the plus-one kicks in - which is that one way or another, the relationship to the not-all, the hole, is maintained. The plus-one, as Miller indicates, is a desiring and divided subject who animates the others to produce something, and which makes the experience of the cartel something that is akin to the structure of the discourse of hysteria.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the cartel puts you to work, provokes your enthusiasm and guarantees that the cartel experience is a lively one such that no-one is mortified by knowledge, which is what can happen as an effect of what is produced by the discourse of hysteria. The plus-one plays a crucial role here. How does the plus-one prevent this mortification from happening? By creating a whirlwind around the hole in knowledge,<sup>8</sup> and by creating “holes in heads” by provoking the point in the subject where knowledge finds its limit.<sup>9</sup> This brings us to the next point.
8. *Cartel work is not related to information. Information is potentially unlimited. In the cartel, knowledge is limited, even the cartel itself is limited* (if the cartel consists of two then the imaginary dimension will come too much to the fore and if there are more than four, leadership tendencies will manifest themselves) – For this point, I refer to an article by Geert Hoorneart called *Act for Climate – Lacan en het Flesje Pellegrino*.<sup>10</sup> For Freud we suffer from three sources: our bodies, the Other and nature. Of course, in terms of taming nature we have the natural sciences with which we have made enormous progress regarding understanding and mastering nature, but according to Freud in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, it has not made people happier, i.e., science has an impact on nature but not on the subject in the sense of tempering its discontent.<sup>11</sup> In *Lacan en Italie*,<sup>12</sup> Hoorneart says, we can read that classic epistemology accepts that science found a starting-point in calculating and measuring the stars in the sky.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, of course the mystery to be resolved was that one way or another these stars always turn up at the same place every night. The start of modern science was so successful in terms of discovering the laws of the universe that we began to turn the telescope of our knowledge-acquisition around, and low and behold, it became a microscope with which we began to study earth. In other words, the laws of science are based on the laws that apply to the stars or the universe, and these laws as we said, are based on things turning up in the same place with the regularity

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<sup>6</sup> Miller. J.-A., *Five Variations on the Theme of “Provoked Elaboration,”* NLS Cartels Newsletter, 4+one, no. 5, February 2018, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Rollier. F., (2017), *The Cartel’s Whirlwind: Affinities Between the Cartel and Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, NLS Cartels Newsletter, 4 + one.

<sup>9</sup> Miller. J.-A., *op. cit.* p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Hoorneart. G., (2020), in *Via Lacan*, no 5, p. 131-141.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Lacan. J., (1953-1978). *Lacan en Italie*, Milano: La Salamandre, p. 104-147.

<sup>13</sup> Hoorneart. G., *op. cit.* p. 132.

of day and night, but they are also based on the fact that the material and data we have access to i.e., the knowledge that we can potentially acquire that way, is unlimited because the universe is unlimited.<sup>14</sup> The question is: does all of this apply to the planet and to the speaking-beings that inhabit it? Regarding the planet we can say that it is limited, but we can also add that with the effects of science, its products, objects and gadgets, we have made this planet even more limited to the point of speaking-beings becoming overwhelmed and anxious.<sup>15</sup> For the beginning of science and for the lyricism of music devoted to love, to paraphrase a well-known musician, what may well apply is that “the stars in the sky, they never lie” (about love), but for those ‘down to earth’ speaking beings, lying is what they do and it is their truth. Moreover, these speaking-being, unlike stars commit parapraxes and errors. Basing himself on Lacan, Hoorneart makes the point that the laws of the unlimited universe do not apply to our very limited planet, but also not as Freud indicated, to speaking-beings.<sup>16</sup> Freud discovered that there is a sexual real whose dupe we are. For Lacan what is not logically written in the stars is the sexual relation. This real of the sexual relation however, is not the real of science. What is the real of science? It is a real whose dupe - science thinks - we don’t need to be. In science we think we can conquer this real as long as we have unlimited access to scientific data which is nothing more than information. It is not for nothing that one speaks in scientific circles about blue-sky-thinking as indeed all hope is staked on the clear-blue-day-sky that will throw light on earth. The real of science is not the real of the subject nor is it the real of the cartel. However, it is important to emphasise that the latter two forms of real aren’t the same either, or, as Frank Rollier said: “The cartel is a method of studying which is akin to psychoanalysis, although it isn’t the place to analyse oneself or your colleagues.”<sup>17</sup> This brings us to the next point.

9. *It is important to say that the real that operates in the cartel is not the real of the subject. This latter is for one’s own analysis. The real of the cartel is the real in knowledge –* The real of the subject concerns the radical singularity of the speaking-body but the real of the cartel concerns the real in knowledge as the limit that language inherently carries within itself. The knowledge from information technology is modelled on the knowledge gained from the night sky which concerns a knowledge that is eminently calculable and unlimited. This kind of accumulable information can have a mortifying effect on the subject. With this we have arrived at the next point.
  
10. *Lacan made the cartel the organ of the school; it’s alive and pulsates –* An organ in a living body is alive, and depending on the kind of organ it is, it can pulsate. Can we say that the school is a body? Yes, in that it collects speaking-bodies in all their diversities. What prevents this kind of body – and the bodies it collects – from being mortified? What prevents this from happening is that the school is concerned with a real; the real of the School, the real of the speaking-body and the real of the cartel, and the School will not allow this real to be pacified by the consumption of information. All life is there in the cartels and thus the cartels can cause surprise in us, it can make us laugh, it can make us

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132-133.

<sup>17</sup> Rollier, F., (2017), *op. cit.*

bored or irritable and it can invigorate us. The cartel cannot make you happy as it is an eminently psychoanalytic tool and psychoanalysis does not make you happy. Desire and happiness are incompatible because desire is based on a remainder and happiness demands precisely that there is no remainder. This demand is based on the illusion that when one gets rid of the remainder one will be happy. Desire is never comfortable. What we can experience in the cartel is something else: enthusiasm. What is enthusiasm? According to Miller it is “making something of the real resonate in the word.”<sup>18</sup> Cartels can function such that they form a hinge between knowledge and the real but also as a hinge between the cartel and the school. In cartels, above all we speak, and to allow something of the real to resonate in that speech creates the possibility for moments of enthusiasm. It is this that makes the cartel stand apart from education, and to say it again, education does not lead to work or elaboration, but as Miller says, to provocation; education produces provocateurs.<sup>19</sup> This topic of education leads us to the penultimate point.

11. *The cartel is a machine against the didactician or educationalist* – Why? You cannot teach the real and it escapes the grasp of information which will only put you to sleep. All life is in the cartel, as we said, because it’s real, if it is allowed to function by the plus-one, keeps one awake. This then brings us to the last point.
12. *One cannot parade as master because the cartel is the other side of the university discourse* – One of the functions of the plus-one is to interpret the one who is parading as master. This interpretation is not just aimed at the One but also the others, because as you know well, every master finds its students/slaves, who in a university-type structure are in the position of the *astudied* as Lacan called them in Seminar XVII.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the plus-one encourages the transference of work and thus also, to say it again, the plus-one makes the cartel function in relation to the School, a School that is not complete and whose desire puts one to work.

I will conclude by saying that, perhaps above all, the cartel is a tool to support a struggle against the death-drive in our culture and ourselves. For example, it can help us to act against our addiction to information as a manifestation of the death-drive.

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Carlo Rossi’s article for LRO, *Variations on a Concept of School (waiting for the re-encounter)*, LRO 252.

<sup>19</sup> Miller, J.-A., *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Lacan, J., (1969-1970), *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII, (trans. R. Grigg), New York Norton, 2007, p. 105.