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Experiencing the Drive, Beyond the Fantasm (Vivre la pulsion, au-delà du fantasme*)

On June 24, 1964, after six months of teaching his “four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis,” Lacan, who was addressing himself to a hypothetical subject who “has gone through this experience of the opaque relation to the origin,¹ to the drive,” wondered “how can a subject who has traversed the fundamental fantasm experience (*vivre*) the drive?”² What message was Lacan aiming to send us via the intermediary of this question, which reflected his role as the conveyor (*porteur*) of Freud, who passed psychoanalysis on to us in the first place? Might there be he wondered, with him, a previously unheard of end of analysis, and that his teaching was aimed at this “not yet?” This invocation shall guide the work that follows...

Unconscious Fantasm and the Discovery of Psychoanalysis.

The birth of psychoanalysis is usually located in the period when Freud became attuned to the unexpected things to be heard in people's dreams.³

From May to September of 1897 (letters 64 to 69 to Fliess), this ongoing discovery left him riddled with anxiety and doubt, at least until he finally accepted the fact that what he was witnessing was truly revolutionary: Neurosis and its attendant symptoms are not caused by a pathogenic nucleus of memories of real traumas (seductions by the father), but instead by a nucleus now recognized as the locus of an unconscious fantasm, the approach to which was signaled by ever-growing degrees of resistance.

From that point forward Freud's technique turned away from the use of directed associations, and instead relied instead on what the signifiers of the unconscious fantasm

¹ At issue here is a fundamental fantasm more goes beyond conscious, preconscious and unconscious fantasms in the sense of unconscious wishes signified in the formations of the unconscious.

² J. Lacan, Seminar XI, Paris, Seuil, 1973, p. 273 (translation modified slightly).

³ In Letter 64 he realized his theory was his fantasm expressed in the overly tender feelings he had for his daughter Mathilda whose first name was “Hella.”

made heard in the transference. The question is, what was it that was really *founded* by this new transferential hand that was dealt by the unconscious fantasm, what was constituted by this unexpected turn “beyond the pleasure principle?”

The Fundamental Fantasm

According to the argument begin developed here, Lacan answered this question with what he dubbed the “fundamental fantasm” in his 1958 “The Direction of the Cure and the Principles of its Power.” In it he argues “the fantasm in its fundamental usage is that by which the subject sustains himself at the level of his evanescent desire, evanescent insofar as it is the satisfaction of a demand that conceals its own object from him (when it occurs).”⁴

Thus Freud’s unconscious fantasm had a “fundamental usage,” that of delimiting the transferential field of demands that must not be satisfied because they serve as way-stations for perpetuating a desire⁵ that is “impossible” for the obsessional, “unsatisfiable” for the hysteric, and “preordained” for the phobic. And yet, is this evidently unstable and problem-laden wish-perpetuation what “its⁶ fundamental usage” truly boils down to? What triggers this hold desire has over us? [*la prise du désir*]

- In his “Proposition of October 9, 1967,” Lacan reveals the flipside of this backdrop, “in the twist and turn [*virage*] through which the subject witnesses the overturning of the assurance he was gaining through his fantasm, his and every person’s window onto the Real. What he glimpses therein is that desire’s hold on us [*la prise du désir*] is in fact being’s undoing (*désêtre*).”⁷

What is glimpsed in this “turn” serves, like the witticism (*mot d’esprit*), as a model for the experience of discourse. Even as the fantasm plays its role as guarantor against the danger of the lack in the Other, the subject is immobilized in a state of stunned stupor caused by Its persistent and total *jouissance*.⁸ How does the hold of desire then manage to take hold?

⁴ J. Lacan. *Ecrits* p.637

⁵ TR: The Standard Edition translated Freud’s “Wunsch” as “wish,” which was translated into French as “desire.”

⁶ Emphasis mine. TR: the French word for “its” is “son,” which is also “sound.”

⁷ *Scilicet* 1, Seuil, 1968 p.25.

⁸ A reserve of unconscious *jouissance* at the origin of the repetition compulsion that deprives us at the moment the call of the stunning invocation is issued.

Via an intermediary moment of being's undoing (*désêtre*), when a new transferential temporality appears, turning desire towards the experience of a transitory "jouïe-sense" ("I hear/enjoy sense") of the "*dritte Person*".⁹ But what sets this process in motion?

The best way to take a next step in this direction, I argue, is to see where these issues from 1967, (on the beyond of the *fantasm* and the hold of desire), lead when we relate them to the dialogue between the Other and the pre-subject that Alain Didier-Weill has envisioned. For Didier-Weill the beyond of the *fantasm* is a moment when a **stunning invocation** may give new impulse to a person, to the degree "*lalange*"¹⁰ transmitted to him an invocation to enter into existence as a speaking human being during his primordial *in-fans* period.

The Invocation of the Other

Relating to the Other through the intermediary of the *fantasm* enables me, as "ego," to kill time drawing borders around myself in order to prevent incursions into my inner world. However it may also occur that "an Other suddenly addresses itself to me, appealing to an unheard of inner auditor in me to whom it announces the following stunning news: "I reside in you..." [which is no surprise to me because] I also hear emanating from within myself an unheard of voice in reply: "Yes it's true, in me is where you belong." Who says this 'yes?' ...the subject of the unconscious. To whom does it say 'yes?' To that complete stranger known as *music*, (whose signifyingness transmits the stunning invocation of the Other), to which music replies, "Indeed you are no stranger to the Stranger that I represent."¹¹

This news, which stuns already-constituted knowledge, returns us to our point of departure (*case de depart*).

Real, Symbolic and Imaginary

How are we to make sense of one man's painful admission that he could no longer master time and space, could no longer, as before, put down his "personal briefcase" when he got to work and pick it up again when he left to go home? His thought could no longer be "encased" because the continuity of the borderline separating "his" person disappeared when it

⁹ Something that functions in the place of the Other that should be linked to what Lacan dubbed the Signifier of the Name-of-the-Father.

¹⁰ This was the neologism Lacan used to represent the enigma of what is transmitted by the maternal tongue.

¹¹ A. Didier-Weill, *Invocations. Dionysos, Moïse, saint Paul et Freud*. Calmann-Lévy, p. 14. Note that the structure of the message that passes between the Other and the pre-subject at the origins of the assumption of speech itself is in inverse form: "the send receives his own message from the recipient in inverse form." (Lacan).

was invaded by a “knowledge in the Real,” a unique Real that “says The Truth” and, above all, “that says it without speaking”.¹²

What did one analyzing encounter when she found out her analyst wore glasses? Why did this leave her suddenly mouth agape, unable even to think? Because she was not the one seeing anymore, because she was being gazed upon instead. What happened? By making use of Lacan’s names for things, it could be argued that the “lack of clarity” (“*pas clair*”) she unearthed in her analyst’s defective vision also confronted her with a defect in the coherency of the specular image that had instigated the transference.

Before then, she knew her analyst knew, and she also knew she would one day unearth this knowledge herself. With respect to (the domain of) need, this knowledge would always be there for her because she knew that he knew. However in the narcissistic world of the body image, all it takes is one tiny detail, “a fly buzzing around...anything that makes a sudden noise and takes us by surprise...to drag us beyond the field of the visible (we write as) $i(a)$.”¹³ This instant when the Real of the object, as an unforgettable gaze, appeared from out of a failing point in the visible field of $i(a)$ must be examined more closely in this light.

The specter of its appearance was unveiled by the disappearance of the knot Lacan wrote with letters and parentheses of $i(a)$ itself. Before then the three elements of this formula were held fast: the “i” or image in the specular Imaginary, the sound of the Symbolic written by the parentheses “()”, and the Real of the body they parenthesized, or “a.”

By making the Real of the object appear in the transference, her analyst’s presence caused this knot to disappear. She called as soon as she got home from her session – an act which was only conceivable given the recomposition of her specular image. Thus between sessions a work of re-tying the knot had occurred, testing the limits of the analytic framework as such.

Invocatory Drive and Signifyingness (*signifiance*)

After several sessions in which the transference continued to register the full weight of the Real, she began to hear something that seemed to have slipped past her ear without warning. What it was she did not know. What she did know was that she had become open to something fleetingly conveyed by her analyst’s voice. To her – and her analyst’s – surprise, this was how she came to be forgotten¹⁴ by the “blind gaze.” She could not say what she

¹² J. Lacan "Les non dupes-errent" (The Non-Dupes Err / The Names of the Father), session on 23 April 1974, and "L'insu que sait de l'une bévue s'aile à mourre," session on 15 February 1977.

¹³ J. Lacan "Le transfert", *Seuil*, p.437.

¹⁴ This is directly related to the creation of the object as lost.

heard and yet she had definitely heard something. What? Clearly something “never heard before” that came from Elsewhere.

This unforeseen moment is connected to the dawning of the eclipse of the unconscious. This “never before heard,” this Elsewhere that eludes our memory and exceeds our grasp, is related to a lacking coherence in what Lacan dubbed the voice as object. This is the moment when the transference conveys its most radical element – a secret that was kept secret until then. Indeed it was not known before Lacan that there is a fourth drive, which he qualified as “the closest possible experience to the unconscious,”¹⁵ whose invocation enables Real, Imaginary and Symbolic to be both otherwise and Elsewhere knotted.

This Elsewhere of the “never before heard” resonating in the music of the analyst’s voice was the opportunity this enigma had been waiting for, since what it needed was the sense of signification or meaning to be transcended, by the non-sense of signifyingness (*significance*), in order to turn the weight of the Real body into legerity, and to free the Imaginary from the yoke of the visible¹⁶ so that this newly formed thing might take shape. Without even knowing it, a new knot had begun to hold her tight. She began to speak again during her sessions, the Real of the presence of the “gaze” having been forgotten. Her relationship to time and space was never the same again. What could her analyst possibly have to say about all this?

The perpetual newness of the stunning that is experienced in the invocatory drive gave an ever-elusive and secretly transmitted Alterity the chance it needed. What secret did it harbor? One that appears in the plain light of day for the “good listener” (*bon entendeur*) who knows how to hear it, a secret that is not “always already there.” To “experience (*vivre*) the drive” would therefore apparently correspond with the moment in time when this good listener ‘to come’ enters into existence out of this secret knotting of the Real, Symbolic and non-specular Imaginary...

To Make the Call

A kind of hearing without knowing what was being heard functioned for her in this moment because a new transference with time had appeared. Before then she was only aware of the transference with a knowledge that she supposed was in herself or the Other. But in the blink of an eye the unexpected itself had made her feel a new impulsion.¹⁷ Movement itself

¹⁵ J. Lacan, Séminaire XI, Paris, Seuil, 1973, p.96

¹⁶ A non-specular Imaginary originating in language, distinct from the specular Imaginary related to the visible.

¹⁷ And that does not enter into the field of demand and the fantasm that delimits it. TR: ‘pulsates’ is the translation of the French ‘pulser,’ which is etymologically related to the French word for “drive,” *la pulsion*.

was then unleashed again, because the Real of the body rediscovered its lightness and new room to move, because the object of the fantasm, which previously had been boxing it in, became “lost.”

What else could this be if not the new world Lacan imagined on the horizon of interpretation, effected via the apparition of “signifiers” transmitted by analyst to analyzand, “created from irreducible non-sense?”¹⁸

* **Note: September 5th 2001.** This text was written on June 26, 2001 for a Lacano-American Conference. It lacks the element of “deferred action” that unfolded in Recife (Brazil) following its presentation on August 30, 2001, but which has become part and parcel of it, and which may be summarized thus: The disappearance of the specular image $i(a)$ caused a “knowledge in the Real” to appear that instantly froze the movement of the scopic drive (p. 4). But the alterity of the invocatory drive (p. 5), (because it was received by the analyzand via the transmitter of the analyst’s voice), set the scopic drive back in motion. A new time in the transference was thereby created in which the scopic and invocatory drives were intertwined. This creation is further proof of Freud’s contention that the unconscious does not know time in the chronological sense, because it is only an “opening,” an eclipse forever evading the grasp of the specular imaginary which the master thinker, the ego, calls home.

¹⁸ J. Lacan, Livre XI, Seuil, 1973, p.226.