

# Jacques Lacan

Seminar IV (1956 - 1957)

## **The Object Relation & Freudian Structures**

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### **Note on the translation**

This English translation has been produced from a transcription of the original stenographs of the fourth year of Lacan's public seminars. The translation proceeds from this unedited text and, as such, aims to represent Lacan's spoken French without abridgement. For reference, page numbers have been given in the left margin that correspond to the French version of the seminar, published by *Éditions du Seuil* in 2007 and edited by Jacques-Alain Miller.

It should also be noted that this will be an evolving work, not a definitive translation, and that sessions will be added to the collection as and when they are completed.

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## **Dates of the seminar**

*21st November 1956*

*28th November 1956*

*5th December 1956*

*12th December 1956*

*19th December 1956*

*9th January 1957*

*16th January 1957*

*23rd January 1957*

*30th January 1957*

*6th February 1957*

*27th February 1957*

*6th March 1957*

*13th March 1957*

*20th March 1957*

*27th March 1957*

*3rd April 1957*

*10th April 1957*

*8th May 1957*

*15th May 1957*

*22nd May 1957*

*5th June 1957*

*19th June 1957*

*26th June 1957*

*3rd July 1957*

**Session of 21st November 1956**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

21st November 1956

This year we will speak on a topic which, within what is called the historical development of psychoanalysis, can be said to occupy a quite central position in theory and practice, whether explicitly or not. This topic is the object relation.<sup>1</sup>

Why did I not choose this subject – already topical, already fundamental, already critical – when we began these seminars? Precisely for the reason which prompts the second part of my title, that is to say because it could only be treated by way of one particular idea, of a certain stepping back from the question of that which Freud has shown us as constituting the structures within which analysis moves, within which it operates, and especially the complex structure of the relation between the two subjects present in analysis – the analysand<sup>2</sup> and the analyst. It is to this that we have dedicated these three years of commentary on and critiques of Freud's text, focusing in the first year<sup>3</sup> on what might be called the basic elements of technique in practice, that is to say, the notion of transference and the notion of resistance; the second year<sup>4</sup> on what can be said to lie at the foundation of the Freudian experience and discovery, namely the notion of the unconscious in the strict sense of the term – concerning which I believe I sufficiently demonstrated in the second year that this same notion of the unconscious is what made it necessary for Freud to introduce principles which are literally paradoxical into the purely dialectical terms which Freud was led to introduce into 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'<sup>5</sup>; finally in the course of the third year's seminar<sup>6</sup>, I presented you with a clear example of the absolute necessity of isolating that essential articulation of the symbolic which is called the signifier, in order to understand, analytically speaking, something which is none other than the specifically paranoid field of the psychoses.

12 Thus here we are armed with a certain number of terms which have led us to certain schemas, the spatiality of which is absolutely not to be taken in the intuitive sense of the term 'schema,' which does not consist in localisation but, in an entirely legitimate way, a spatialisation, in the sense in which spatialisation implies a relation of place, a topological relation - interposition, for example, or succession, sequence.

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<sup>1</sup> '*la relation d'objet*' has been translated as 'object relation' throughout.

<sup>2</sup> As is conventional in English translations of Lacan's work, '*l'analysé*' (one who is being analysed) has been translated here as 'analysand'. In his later seminars, however, Lacan will use a different term - '*analysant*' (one who is analysing) - to emphasise the active role that the subject must take in his or her analysis.

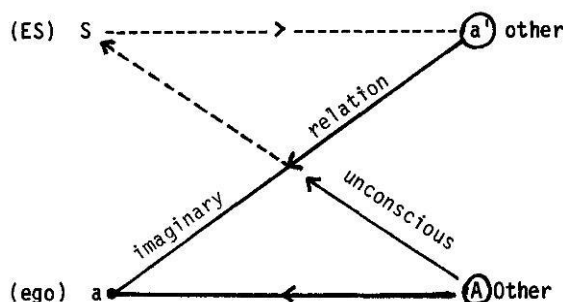
<sup>3</sup> See Lacan, J. (1953-1954). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique (Book I)*.

<sup>4</sup> See Lacan, J. (1954-1955). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis (Book II)*.

<sup>5</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (SE XVIII)*

<sup>6</sup> See Lacan, J. (1955-1956). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Psychoses (Book III)*.

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One of these schemata, which sums up the results of these years of criticism, is the schema<sup>7</sup> that we might call 'definition by opposition' – that in which we find inscribed the relation of the subject to the Other insofar as it initially falls within the natural relation such as it is constituted at the beginning of analysis, a virtual relation, a relation of virtual speech, by which it is from the Other that the subject receives, in the form of an unconscious speech, his own message. The subject's own message, which is forbidden to him, is received as distorted, interrupted, seized, profoundly misrecognised because of this interposition of the imaginary relation between the *a* and the *a'*, this relation which exists precisely between this ego and this other which is the typical object of the ego, insofar as the imaginary relation interrupts, slows, inhibits, inverts, and most often profoundly misrecognises, through an essentially alienated relationship, the relations of speech between the subject and the Other, the big Other, insofar as this is another subject, insofar as it is the subject capable of deceit *par excellence*.

Here is the schema at which we have arrived, and you will see that it is not something which is not at the core of the analysis [*à l'intérieur analytique*], the point at which we have left it, as, increasingly, a great number of analysts formulate it, whereas we will challenge this prevalence of the object relation in analytic theory, a prevalence which we might say has passed without commentary, of the relation to the primary object, the object relation as it has come to take a central place in analytic theory, as it has come to recentre the entire dialectic of the pleasure principle, of the reality principle, as it has come to ground all analytic progress in what might be called a rectification of the subject's relation to the object, considered as a dual relationship – a relationship, as we are told once again when speaking of the analytic situation, which is exceedingly simple: this relationship of the subject to the object, which tends more and more to occupy the centre of analytic theory.

13 This is exactly what we are going to put to the test. We are going to see if, starting from something which in our schema specifically concerns the line *a-a'*, one can construct in a satisfactory manner the group of phenomena which present themselves to our observation, to our analytic experience, if this sole instrument can enable us to account for the facts; if in other words the more complex schema that we have proposed must be set aside, even ruled out. As evidence that, at least on the surface, the object relation has become the first theoretical element in the explication of analysis, I think I will present you

<sup>7</sup> Lacan refers here to what is known as 'Schema L' (inset), first seen in his 1955 commentary on Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Purloined Letter' - see *Lacan, J. (1955). Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'*.

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with the following testimony – not exactly to show you how to understand what might be called a sort of collective work, recently published<sup>8</sup>, to which the term 'collective' applies particularly well.

Throughout this work, you will see the valorisation, perhaps not always very satisfactory in its mode of expression – surely it will be strikingly monotonous and repetitive – you will see promoted that relation of object which is expressly posited in the article titled '*Evolution de la psychoanalyse*'<sup>9</sup>, and as this last term of this development you will find in the article 'The Psychoanalytic Clinic'<sup>10</sup> a way of presenting clinical practice which is entirely centred on this object relation. Perhaps I will even give some of the ideas at which this presentation may arrive.

The whole picture is, certainly, quite striking: it is around the object relation that those who practice analysis are trying to order their thoughts, the understanding they might have of their own experience – shouldn't it also give them a full and complete satisfaction? On the other hand, understanding their own experience in this register will not deeply inform and guide their practice unless it has real consequences for the very modes of their intervention, for the orientation given to the analysis, and at the same time for its outcomes. It's this that one can misunderstand [*méconnaître*] in simply reading and commenting; while it has always been said that analytic theory and practice cannot be separated, that they cannot be dissociated from one another. From the moment that one conceives it in a certain sense, it's inevitable that one would lead it equally in a certain sense, if the theoretical sense and the practical results can only be glimpsed. In order to introduce the question of the object relation, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of its central position within analytic theory, I must remind you, at least briefly, of what that concept owes or does not owe to Freud himself. I will do so not just because this is, indeed, a sort of guide, almost a technical limitation which we impose on ourselves here by starting from a commentary on Freud – and this year I have even experienced some doubts, if not concerns, about starting from Freud's texts – but it is very difficult to begin with the object relation in Freud's texts themselves because it isn't there. I am speaking, of course, of something which is widely recognised here as a deviation from analytic theory. I really must begin with recent texts and, by the same token, start with a certain critique of these positions but, on the other hand, there can be no doubt that we must ultimately refer to the Freudian positions. We cannot fail to mention, however briefly, what revolves around this same notion of object in the fundamental themes of Freud's work. At the beginning, we cannot do so in a well-developed manner; I will try to do so as briefly as possible. To be clear, this means that this is precisely what we must increasingly revisit, develop, retrieve, and articulate.

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I would, therefore, simply like to briefly remind you, as would not be possible without these three years of collaboration in the analysis of texts behind us, if you had not already encountered with me, in so many different forms, the theme of the object. In Freud we speak, of course, of the object. The final

<sup>8</sup> Lacan refers to the collection of papers in the 1956 edition of '*La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*' published by the *Presses Universitaires de France* under the direction Sacha Nacht, with contributions from Maurice Bouvet, Ernest Jones, Marie Bonaparte, Maurice Bénéassy et al. For further commentary on this collection, see *Lacan, J. (1958). The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power.*

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.* – Bénéassy, M. *Evolution de la psychanalyse.*

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.* – Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d'objet.* Published in English as *Bouvet, M. (1956). Clinical Analysis, The Object Relationship.* in *Psychoanalysis of Today*, pp. 19 - 77, trans. by R.J. Hilton.

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part of ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ is called the search for or more precisely “The Finding of an Object”<sup>11</sup>, “*Die Objektfindung*”. We speak of the object implicitly each time the notion of reality comes into play. We have already spoken of it in a third way each time that the ambivalence of certain fundamental relations is involved, that is, the fact that the subject is made an object for the other, that there is a certain kind of relation in which the reciprocity for the subject of an object is patent and even constitutive. I would like to put the accent in a more pronounced way on the three modes in which these notions about the object present themselves to us. This is why I allude to one of these points in Freud to which we can refer in order to prove, to articulate the notion of object. If you refer to this chapter of ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’, you will find something which was already there from the period when this had been published by a kind of historic accident. In short, not only had Freud resisted publishing it, but it had been published against his will. Nonetheless, we find the same statement about the object in this first sketch of his psychology<sup>12</sup>.

15 Freud insists on this, that every way for man to find the object is only ever the following of a drive [*tendance*]<sup>13</sup> concerning a lost object, an object that is to be refound. The object is not considered, as in the modern theory, as being completely satisfying, the typical object, the object par excellence, the harmonious object, the object which anchors man within an adequate reality, within the reality which proves maturity, the famous genital object. It is very striking to see that at the moment when a theory of the development of instincts emerges from Freud’s first experiments in analysis, he indicates that this takes place by way of a search for the lost object. This object corresponds to a certain advanced stage in the development of instincts; it is the refound object of first weaning, precisely the object which formed the first point of attachment for the infant’s first satisfactions – it is an object to refind. It is clear that the discrepancy established by the mere fact that this element of repetition – this element of a nostalgia binding the subject to the lost object, through which all the effort of seeking it takes place, and which marks the reunion with the sign of a repetition which is impossible precisely because it is not the same object, it cannot be such – the primacy of this dialectic which places at the centre of the subject-object relation a fundamental tension in which that which is sought is not sought in the same way as that which is found, in which it is through the search for a satisfaction that is both past and surpassed that the new object is sought and found and grasped elsewhere than the point at which it is sought – the fundamental distance which is introduced by the essentially conflictual element in any search for the object: this is the first form in which this idea of the object relation appears in Freud. I would say that this would be a poor way to articulate it in philosophical terms, that we must resolve to give what I am stressing here its full accent – I do not do so intentionally; I will reserve it for our return to this term, for those for whom these terms already have a meaning in terms of certain philosophical conceptions – the disparity of the subject’s relation to the object in Freud with respect to what precedes it in a certain conception of the object as the adequate object, as the object expected in advance, adjusted to the subject’s development.

<sup>11</sup> See ‘*The Finding of an Object*’ (part III, section V). in Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII).

<sup>12</sup> See Freud, S. (1895). *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (SE I). Lacan comments on this text in Seminar II (see, for instance, the sessions of 26th January 1955, 2nd February 1955, and 9th February 1955) and extensively in Seminar VII.

<sup>13</sup> The term ‘*tendance*’ has been translated throughout as ‘drive’.



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16 This disparity is already implicated in that which opposes a Platonic perspective – that which founds all understanding, all recognition on the remembrance of a type which is somehow pre-formed – to a profoundly different idea, with all the distance there is between modern experience and ancient experience, that which Kierkegaard places under the register of repetition<sup>14</sup>, this repetition always sought after, but essentially never satisfied since it is by its nature never remembered, but always a repetition as such, thus impossible to satisfy. It is in this register that the idea of refinding the lost object is situated in Freud. We will hold on to this text [the Project] - it is essential that it survives in Freud's first account of the notion of object.

Of course, it's essentially through a notion of a deeply conflictual relation of the subject with his world that things present themselves and become clear. How can it be otherwise since, in this period, it is essentially a question of the opposition between the reality principle and the pleasure principle? If the reality principle and the pleasure principle cannot be detached from one another – I would go further: if they intertwine and include one another in a dialectical relation so much so that, as Freud has always established<sup>15</sup>, the reality principle is only constituted by that which is imposed for its satisfaction on the pleasure principle, and is in some way only the prolongation [of the pleasure principle]– and if, inversely, the reality principle implies in its dynamic and in its fundamental search the fundamental tension of the pleasure principle then the fact remains that between the two – and this is what is essential in what Freudian theory brings – there is a gap [*béance*]<sup>16</sup> that would not be discernible if the one was simply the result of the other, such that the pleasure principle tends to fulfill itself in a profoundly unrealistic formation, and the reality principle implies the existence of an organisation, a different autonomous structuration which entails that what it grasps may be precisely something fundamentally different from what is desired. It is in this relation, which itself introduces in its very dialectic of subject and object another term, a term that is here posited as irreducible, just as the earlier object was something founded in its primordial needs as something that is always dedicated to a return, and thus dedicated to an impossible return, just as in the opposition between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, we have the notion of a fundamental opposition between reality and what is sought by the drive. In other words the notion that the satisfaction of the pleasure principle, in so far as it is always latent, underlying any exercise of world creation, is something that still more or less tends to be realized in a more or less hallucinatory form, that the fundamental possibility of this organization which underlies the ego, that of the subject's drive as such, is to satisfy itself in an unreal fulfilment, in a hallucinatory fulfilment – here is another term powerfully emphasized by Freud, and this from the 'Interpretation of Dreams'<sup>17</sup>, from the *Traumdeutung*, from the first full and articulate formulation of the opposition of the reality principle and the pleasure principle.

17 These two positions are not articulated in relation to one another as such. It is precisely because they appear in Freud as distinct that we find it is not around the relation of subject to object that

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, *Kierkegaard, S. (1844). Repetition.*

<sup>15</sup> See *Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the Pleasure Principle (SE XVIII).*

<sup>16</sup> Lacan's term *béance* may also be rendered as an 'opening' and includes the sense of a gaping 'wound' or even a 'chasm'.

<sup>17</sup> See *Freud, S. (1900 [1895]). The Interpretation of Dreams (SE IV & V).* Freud speaks of this opposition extensively in Chapter VII, where the pleasure principle is still referred to as the 'unpleasure' principle.

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development is centred. Each of these terms has its place at a different point within the Freudian dialectic for the simple reason that in no event is the subject-object relationship central; it only appears in a way that makes it seem as if it were sustained directly, without a gap. It is in this relation of ambivalence, or in the type of relations that are called pregenital, which are relations of seeing/being seen, attacking/being attacked, passive/active, that the subject experiences these relations always more or less implicitly, more or less overtly, entailing his identification as partner in this relation, i.e., these relationships are experienced in terms of a reciprocity – the word applies here both to the ambivalent position of the subject and of the partner. Here it appears in the relationship between subject and object that it is not only direct and without gap, but that it is literally the equivalence of the one to the other and from this may arise the pretext for foregrounding the relation to the object as such. This relation, which in itself already announces, indicates, could be called a mirror relation, that of the reciprocity between subject and object, this something which already raises so many questions that it was in order to resolve them that I myself introduced into analytic theory the concept of the mirror stage<sup>18</sup> – which is far from being purely and simply this connotation of a phenomenon in the development of the child, i.e., when the child recognizes its own image; rather, all that the child learns in this captivation by its own image is exactly the distance between its internal tensions and those which are evoked in this relation to realisation, in the identification with this image – this however is something which served as the theme, the focal point for foregrounding this subject-object relation as being, so to speak, the phenomenal scale to which could be related in a satisfying and meaningful way what previously was related not only in pluralistic but strictly conflictual terms as introducing an essentially dialectical relation between the various terms.

18 Regarding this, it had been thought possible – and one of the first to emphasize this, but not as early on as is generally thought, was [Karl] Abraham – to try to refocus everything that had heretofore been introduced into the evolution of the subject in a way that can still be seen by retroactively reconstructing from a central experience: that of the conflictual tension between conscious and unconscious, the conflictual tension arising from the fundamental fact that what is sought by the drive is obscure, that what consciousness recognizes in it, first and foremost, is misrecognition, that it is not in the domain of consciousness that the subject recognizes itself. There is something else beyond, and at the same time and for the same reason, this beyond poses the question of its structure, its principle and its meaning, which is fundamentally misunderstood by the subject, beyond the reach of its knowledge. This is set aside, even willingly, by some, especially celebrities, along with significant currents within analysis based on an object the end point of which is not our point of departure. We go backwards to understand how this endpoint is attained, an end point which incidentally is never observed, this ideal object which is literally unthinkable. Instead, it is conceived as a sort of focal point, a point of culmination for a whole series of experiments, elements, partial concepts of the object dating

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<sup>18</sup> See Lacan's paper '*Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je*' ('The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience'). Lacan presented the paper at the 14th International Psychoanalytic Congress, held at Marienbad in August 1936 under the chairmanship of Ernest Jones, but it was not published until 1938. The outline of its argument can also be found in Lacan's article in the '*Encyclopedie Française*', 'Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual', which he presented in July 1949 at 16th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Zurich.

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from a certain era, especially from the moment in 1924 when Abraham formulated it in his theory of the development of the libido<sup>19</sup>, and which for many provides the very law of analysis, the law governing everything that takes place therein.

The coordinate system within which the entire analytic experience is situated is that of the point of completion of this fabled ideal object, final, perfect, adequate, of that which is proposed in the analysis as being what in itself marks the goal attained, the normalisation, so to speak – a term which itself already introduces a world of categories which are quite alien to this starting point of the analysis, the normalisation of the subject. To illustrate this, I think I can do no better than to point out to you that the very formulation, and at the same time, by the admission of those who have set out on this path – certainly something there has been formulated in very precise terms – what is considered to be progress in the analytic experience is to have foregrounded the relationship of the subject to its environment. This accent placed on the environment, this reduction which all analytic experience gives, has something which is a kind of return to the well and truly objectifying position which sets in the foreground the existence of a certain individual and a roughly adequate relation, roughly adapted to its environment; this is something that is articulated in these terms from page 761 to page 773 of the collection we were just talking about<sup>20</sup>. Having carefully noted that it is the emphasis on the relationship of the subject to its environment with which the progress of the analysis is concerned, we learn in passing that this is especially significant in the case of Little Hans.

19 In the case of Little Hans, we are told, the parents appear to be without a personality of their own. We are not forced to accept this view, but the important thing is what follows: this has to do with the fact that we lived, "before the 1914 war, in a period when Western society, sure of itself, did not question its own survival. If, since 1926, on the contrary, the focus is on anxiety and the interaction of the organism and the environment, this is also because the foundations of society have been shaken, and the anxiety of a changing world is experienced daily, so that individuals see themselves differently. In this period, even physics struggles to find its footing, and relativism, uncertainty, probabilism seem to deprive objective thought of its self-confidence<sup>21</sup>." This reference to modern physics as the foundation of a new rationalism seems to speak for itself. What is important is simply that there is something that is curiously confessed in an indirect way: psychoanalysis is seen as a kind of social remedy, since that is what they foreground as the characteristic driver of its progress. There is no need to determine whether or not this is well-founded; these are things that seem unimportant. It is merely the context of the things that are so casually admitted here that may be of some use to us. This is not unique, because the distinction of this book lies in communicating within itself, so it seems, in a manner characterised far more by a strange sort of homogenisation than by a real articulation; it is also one that the article to which I referred earlier deliberately marks by an express concept which in the end – this will give us the overall conception necessary to the current understanding of the structure of a personality – is the

<sup>19</sup> See Abraham, K. (1924). *Esquisse d'une histoire du développement de la libido basée sur la psychanalyse des troubles mentaux*. in *Oeuvres complètes*. Published in English as Abraham, K. (1924). *A Short Study of the Development of the Libido Viewed in the Light of Mental Disorders*. in *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*. trans. by Douglas Bryan & Alix Strachey.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* It has not been possible to confirm the paper in Nacht's collection to which these page numbers refer.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

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perspective said to be the most practical and prosaic one possible: that of *the patient's social relations*. I will pass over other terms which, regarding the nature of the admission, we will say that they conceive of analysis in a manner that we might see as unstable, artificial. But doesn't this depend on the fact that, as none will dare dispute, the very object of such a discipline is marked by changes over time? Such is indeed one explanation for the rather ineffectual character of the various modes of approach given in this line, but this is perhaps not an explanation which should fully satisfy us; I cannot imagine the objects of any other discipline which are not also subject to variation over time.

On the relation of the subject to the world, we see affirmed and accentuated a kind of parallel between the somewhat assured state of maturation of the instinctual activities and the structure of the ego in a subject at a given time. In short, from a given moment this ego structure is considered as a substitute for, and ultimately as the representative of the state of maturation of the instinctual activities. There is no difference, neither on the dynamic nor the genetic planes, between the different stages of development of the ego and the different stages of development of the instincts.

20 These are terms that some of you may not find very susceptible to criticism in themselves - no matter, this is not the issue; we shall see to what extent we may or may not retain them. What does matter is their being established at the centre of the analysis in a very precise manner which presents itself as a topology: there are the pregenitals and the genitals. The pregenitals are weak individuals, and the consistency of their ego "is closely related to the persistence of objectal relations with a significant object."<sup>22</sup> This is what has been written and articulated. Here we may begin to ask questions. Perhaps we will soon see, in passing, by reading the same texts, where this notion of the unexplained significant [object] may lead. Namely, the absolute lack of differentiation, of distinction, in this significant [object]. The technical concept which this implies is the bringing into play, and thereby the development, within the analytic relation, of pregenital relations, those which characterize the relation of this pregenital with its world, of which we are told that these relations to their object are characterized by a deficit: "the loss of these relations, or of their object, which is synonymous here, since the object only exists in relation to the subject, some suffering from serious disorders in the activity of the ego, such as phenomena of depersonalization or psychotic disorders."<sup>23</sup> Here we find the point in which is sought the test of the evidence of that profound fragility of relations of ego to its object: "the subject strives to maintain object relations at all costs, using all kinds of means to this end - a change of objects with the use of displacement or symbolization which, by choosing a symbolic object arbitrarily charged with the same emotional value as the original object, allows him not to be deprived of the objectal relation".<sup>24</sup>

For this object to which the emotional value of the original object has been displaced, the term *auxiliary* ego is fully warranted, and this explains that "on the contrary, the genitals possess an ego that does not see that its strength and the exercise of its functions depend on the possession of a significant object. While for the former, to take the simplest example, the loss of a significant person, subjectively speaking, risks [*met en jeu*] their individuality, that loss, as painful for them as it may be, in no way

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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disturbs the solidity of their personality. They are not dependent on an objectal relation [*relation objectale*]. This does not mean that they can easily do without any objectal relation, which is impracticable besides, as object relations are many and varied, but that their unity is simply not endangered by the loss of contact with a significant object. This is what, from the standpoint of the relation between the ego and object relations, radically distinguishes them from the former. "If, as in every neurosis, normal development seems to have been arrested by the subject's inability to resolve the last of the structural conflicts of childhood, the perfect liquidation of which, so to speak, results in this felicitous adaptation to the world which is called the genital object relation, which gives any observer the sense of a harmonious personality and the analyst the immediate perception of a kind of crystalline clarity of the mind, which is, I repeat, more a limit than a reality, the difficulty of resolving Oedipus is often not the only obstacle to it."<sup>25</sup> Crystalline clarity! ...and we can see where this author, with all the perfection of the object relation, can take us: regarding the drives, while the pregenital forms "mark this unbridled need for unlimited, unconditional possession with a destructive aspect, (in the genital forms), they are genuinely loving, and if the subject does not behave in an oblativ<sup>26</sup> manner, this does not signal disinterest, and if his objects are also fundamentally narcissistic objects as in the previous case, here he is capable of understanding, adapting to the situation of the other. Moreover, the intimate structure of his object relations shows that the participation of the object in his own pleasure in it is essential to the subject's happiness. The comforts, the desires, and needs of the object are given the highest consideration." This is enough to raise a highly serious problem for us which is to discern the crucial thing in the process of maturation, which is neither a path, nor a perspective, nor a plane on which we could not in fact ask the question: what is meant by the outcome of a normal childhood, a normal adolescence, and a normal maturity? But the essential distinction between the establishment of reality with all the problems it raises of how to adapt to something that resists, something that refuses, something complex, something that involves in any case that the notion of objectivity – as the most elementary experience demonstrates to us – is something different from what is described in these same texts, under the somewhat implicit and tacit concept by the different term, "objectality," as the fullness of the object. This confusion is also articulated because the term "objectivity" appears in the text as being characteristic of this form of fulfilled relation.

There is certainly a distance between what is involved in a certain construction of the world regarded as more or less satisfactory in such a period – indeed certainly determined beyond all historical relativity – and that same relation to the other as being here its affective or even its sentimental register, as in the consideration of the needs, the happiness, the pleasure of the other. Surely this takes us much further, since it is a matter of the constitution of the other as such, that is to say, as in so far as it speaks, i.e., in so far as it is a subject. We shall return to this. This is something that it is not enough to cite, even while making humorous remarks (which they suggest by themselves), without thereby having made the necessary progress. This extraordinarily primary conception of the notion of instinctual development

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Lacan may refer here to the ancient distinction between captative love and oblativ love. Captative love (from the Latin "captare": to seize, to grab) destroys the other for our own pleasure. Its opposite, oblativ love (from the Latin "oblativus": who offers himself), is that we are willing to give, to sacrifice ourselves for the other.

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22 in analysis is something that is far from universally accepted. Certainly the notion of texts like those of Glover<sup>27</sup>, for example, refer us to a very different notion of the exploration of object relations, even named and defined as such. We see Glover's texts approach essentially what seems to me to characterize the stages, the phases of the object at different periods of individual development, that is, the object conceived as having a completely different function. Analysis insists on introducing a functional concept of the object with a very different nature from that of a pure and simple correspondent, a pure and simple mutual adaptation of the object with a certain application of the subject. The object has an entirely different role: it is, so to speak, to push anxiety [*angoisse*]<sup>28</sup> into the background. Insofar as the object is a tool for masking, for deflecting into the fundamental background of anxiety, it characterizes the different stages of development of the subject, the relation of the subject to the world, which must be characterized at each stage of the subject's development.

Here I cannot, at the end of this lecture today, fail to punctuate, to illustrate with any example that throws into relief what I have to say about this conception, to point out to you that Freud's classic and fundamental conception of phobia is nothing other than this. Freud and others who have studied the phobia, both with him and after him, cannot fail to demonstrate that there is no direct connection to the "alleged fear" [*prétendue peur*] that would stain this object with its fundamental mark by constituting it as such, as primitive object. There is instead a considerable distance from the fear in question, and which in some cases may well be - and also in other cases may well not be - quite a primitive fear [*peur*], and the object which, in relation to it, is essentially constituted in order to maintain a distance, to enclose the subject in a circle, within certain ramparts, within which it takes shelter from these fears. The object here is essentially the result of an alarm signal. The object is first of all an outpost against an established fear which gives it its role, its function at a given moment, at a determined point within a certain crisis of the subject, which is not therefore fundamentally a typical crisis nor a developmental crisis. This modern concept, if you will, of the phobia is something that can be more or less legitimately asserted. We will also have to criticize from the outset the concept of the object as promoted in the works and in the mode of conducting analysis characteristic of Glover's thought and technique. That it is a matter of an anxiety [*angoisse*] which is castration anxiety, we are told, is something that has been somewhat in dispute until recently. It is nevertheless remarkable that things have come to the point that the desire for reconstruction in the genetic sense went so far as to attempt to deduce the very construction of the paternal object from something that would come as the result, the culmination, the flowering of primitive objectal phobic constructions.

23 There is a report published on phobia which goes exactly in this direction, by a sort of curious reversal of the path which, in analysis, had indeed let us trace the phobia back to the concept of a certain relation to anxiety, to a protective function that the object of the phobia plays in relation to this anxiety. It is no less remarkable in another register, to look at the notions of the fetish and of fetishism. I will also introduce it to you today to show you that, if we take it from the perspective of the object

<sup>27</sup> There are many texts by Edward Glover published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis (I. J. P.) before 1957, such as *Grades of Ego-Differentiation* (1930 [1929]), *On the Etiology of Drug-addiction* (1932), and *The relation of perversion-formation to the development of reality-sense* (1933).

<sup>28</sup> '*Angoisse*' has been translated here as 'anxiety', but can equally carry a sense of 'fear' or 'anguish' or 'angst'.

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relation, the fetish performs a function that falls well within the analytic theory we have articulated as another kind of protection against anxiety and, curiously enough, against the same anxiety, that is to say, castration anxiety. It does not appear to be by the same means that the fetish is particularly linked to castration anxiety as much as it is related to the perception of the lack of a phallic organ in the female subject, and to the negation of that absence. No matter! You cannot fail to see here that the object has a certain function of supplementation with respect to something here that appears as a hole or an abyss in reality, and that the question arises as to whether there is a relation between the two, whether there is something in common between the phobic object and this fetish. But to ask the questions in these terms, perhaps it is necessary, without refusing to approach the problems starting from the object relation, to find in these same phenomena the occasion, the beginning of a critique which, even if we submit to the query posed to us concerning the typical object, the ideal object, the functional object, all the kinds of object one might imagine in the human being, indeed leads us to raise this question in this light. But then, let us not content ourselves with uniform explanations for diverse phenomena, and begin by focusing our questions on what is essentially different in the function of a phobia and that of a fetish, in so far as they are both centred on the same fundamental background anxiety, where both would appear as a measure of protection, as a measure of guarantee for the subject.

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This is just what I have decided to take as my starting point in order to show you how we have started from our own experience to end up at the same problems. For it is indeed a matter of asking, not in a mythical manner, nor in an abstract manner, but in a manner as direct as the objects that have been presented to us. We realise it will not do to speak of the object in general, nor of an object which, by some indescribable virtue of magical communication, had the ability to regulate its relations with all the other objects. As if the fact of having happened to be a genital sufficed for us to pose and resolve all questions, for example, if what might be an object for a genital, which seems no less enigmatic from the essentially biological standpoint foregrounded here, one of the objects of present human experience, namely a coin, does not of its own accord pose the question of its own objectal value. The fact that, in a certain register, we would lose it as a means of exchange or any other kind of consideration for the exchange of any element of human life transposed in its commodity value – does it not introduce, in a thousand ways, the question of what has actually been resolved in Marxist theory by means of a term very similar to but not synonymous with the one we have just introduced in the notion of fetish, in short, the notion of the object – also, if you like, the concept of the screen object – and thereby the function of the constitution of this singular reality to which Freud from the very beginning has brought this truly striking light, and to which we ask ourselves why we do not continue to attribute its value, the concept of the screen memory as being most especially constituent of the past of each subject as such? Indeed, all these issues deserve to be taken up by themselves and for themselves, analysed in their relations with one another, since it is from these relations that can be derived the necessary distinctions of plane that would allow us to clearly define why a phobia and a fetish are two different things, and if there is indeed some connection between the general use of the word 'fetish' and the particular use we might make of it with respect to the precise form – the precise use of this term for a sexual perversion. This is how we shall introduce the topic of our next discussion, which will address

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the phobia and the fetish, and I think that it is by way of a return to what is really experienced that we shall be able to return and give back to the term “object relation” its true value.



**Session of 28th November 1956**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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For your sakes, I have done some reading this week on what psychoanalysts have written on our subject for this year, namely, the object, and more specifically, this object of which we spoke last time: the genital object. The genital object, to call it by its name, is woman [*la femme*], so why not call her by her name? So, I have granted myself a number of readings on female sexuality. It is more important for you to do this reading rather than me; that would make it easier for you to understand what I will come round to telling you on the subject and, after all, these readings are quite illuminating from other perspectives, especially in relation to Renan's well-known saying: "human stupidity gives us an idea of infinity". If he were alive today, he would have added that the theoretical ramblings of psychoanalysts – not to reduce these to stupidity – are just the sort that can give us an idea of infinity, because in fact it is extremely striking to see what extraordinary difficulties the minds of various analysts encounter after these statements, themselves so abrupt and surprising, on Freud's part.

26 Yet Freud, always on his own, brought on this subject – for such is probably all that will fall within the scope of what I tell you today – that surely if there is anything that ought to contradict to the utmost the idea of the object that we previously called an harmonic object, an object which by its nature finishes [*achevant*] the relation of subject to object... if there is anything which ought to contradict this, it is – I would not even say analytic experience since, after all, in everyday experience, the relations of man and woman are not an unproblematic thing; if they were not a problematic thing there would be no analysis at all – that Freud's precise formulations are what go the furthest in providing the notion of a certain 'not' [*pas*], a gap, something that doesn't quite go [*qui ne va pas*]. This does not mean that this is sufficient to define it, but the positive affirmation that it doesn't quite go is in Freud – it is in *Civilisation and its Discontents*; it is in the lesson of the *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. This then leads us to ask ourselves about the object. I remind you that the omission of the notion of the object, so commonly made, is not so pronounced in the landscape within which the experience and the statement of the Freudian doctrine situate and define this object which is, to start with, always presented in a quest for the lost object, and for the object as always being the refound object. Both are opposed in the most categorical fashion to the notion of the object as completing, in order to oppose the situation in which the subject in relation to the object is precisely the object itself caught in a quest,<sup>1</sup> whereas the idea of the completing object leads to the notion of an autonomous subject.

I already emphasised this notion of the hallucinated object last time. The hallucinated object... the object hallucinated against a background of anxiety-filled [*angoissante*] reality, which is a notion of the object such as emerges from the operation of what Freud called the primary system of desire<sup>2</sup> and, completely opposed to this in analytic practice, the notion of the object which ultimately reduces to the real. It is a matter of refinding the real. The object stands out [*se détache*], not against a background

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<sup>1</sup> There has been some debate over this sentence. 'Quête' has been rendered here as 'quest' but it has been noted that 'quête' can also mean 'collection', or 'offertory'. In the French, the full phrase is '*le sujet par rapport à l'objet est très précisément l'objet pris lui-même dans une quête*'.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Chapter VII of *Freud, S. (1900 [1895]). The Interpretation of Dreams (SE IV & V)* and *Freud, S. (1895). Project for a Scientific Psychology (SE I)*.

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of anxiety [*angoisse*], but against a background of everyday reality so to speak; the goal of the analytic search is to realise that there is no reason to be afraid<sup>3</sup> [*avoir peur*] of it, another term that is not the same as that of anxiety. And, finally, the third term in which we can see it [the object] and trace it in Freud is that of imaginary reciprocity, that is, in all relations with the object, the place of these related terms is occupied simultaneously by the subject, that identification with the object is what grounds all relations with the object.

In truth, this last point has not been forgotten, but it is obviously the one which the practice of object relations in modern analytic technique attaches itself to the most, resulting in what I will call this imperialism of signification. Since you can identify with me and I can identify with you, of the two of us it is surely the ego better adapted to reality that provides the best model. Ultimately, it is the identification with the analyst's ego, in an ideal outlining, that the progress of the analysis will come down to. In truth, I would like to illustrate this in order to show the extreme deviation that such bias in the handling of the object relation may condition, and I remind you of this because, for example, it has been specifically illustrated by the practice of obsessional neurosis.

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If obsessional neurosis is, as most of those here believe, this structuring notion with regard to the obsessional, which can be expressed more or less as follows – what is an obsessional? He is, in short, an actor who plays his part, who ensures a certain number of acts, as if he were dead. It is a means of taking refuge from death, this game in which he indulges in a particular way, a lively game which consists in demonstrating that he is invulnerable. To this end, he engages in a kind of taming which conditions all his relations to others. We see in it a kind of exhibition for showing the lengths he can go in this exercise. It has all the traits of a game, including the illusory traits – how far can this little other go, who is but his alter ego, his double, before an Other who attends the spectacle in which he himself is a spectator? For therein lies all his enjoyment of the game and its possibilities, but in spite of this, he does not know what place he occupies, and it is this that is unconscious in him. He does what he does for the sake of an alibi, that which is in his sights; he is well aware that the game is not played where he is, and that is why almost nothing that happens has real importance for him, but he does not know from where he sees all this and ultimately what is regulating the game; we know, for sure, that it is he himself, but we may also commit a thousand errors if we do not know where this game is being conducted, if we do not know where the notion of object is, the significant object for the subject.

It would be quite wrong to believe that this object can be designated in terms of any dual relationship, given the notion of the object relation as developed by the author<sup>4</sup>.

You will see where this leads, but it is probably clear that in this very complex situation, the notion of the object is not immediately given, since it is precisely insofar as he participates in an illusory game that what is, strictly speaking, the object... that is, a game of aggressive retaliation, a rich man's game, a

<sup>3</sup> 'avoir peur' in French translates literally as 'to have fear'. Lacan points to a distinction made between fear [*peur*] and anxiety [*angoisse*].

<sup>4</sup> Lacan is referring to the section entitled 'Obsessional Neurosis' in Bouvet's paper in 'La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui'. In this leçon there are several direct quotations from the paper. See Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d'objet*. Published in English as Bouvet, M. (1956). *Clinical Analysis, The Object Relationship*. in *Psychoanalysis of Today*, pp. 19 - 77, trans. by R.J. Hilton.

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game which takes one as close as possible to death, but which at the same time means placing oneself out of the range of any blows by somehow killing within himself in advance – mortifying, so to speak – his desire.

Here, the notion of object is infinitely complex and deserves to be emphasised at every moment so that we know, at least, what object we are talking about. We will try to give this notion of the object a uniform usage that allows us to locate it within our own vocabulary. It is not an obscure notion, but one that presents itself as remarkably difficult to pin down. To strengthen our comparison: it is a matter of demonstrating something which he [the obsessional] has unknowingly articulated for this

28 Other spectator at this place he puts us [the analyst] in, that the transference brings forward. What will the analyst do with this notion of object relations? I would ask you to resume the interpretation of these observations as representing the progress of the analysis of an obsessive in the case I am talking about, in the work of the author I am talking about<sup>5</sup>. You will see that the way of handling the object relation in this case consists, very precisely, in doing something similar to what would happen if one were watching a circus act in which a pair are delivering a series of alternating blows to one another; this would involve going down into the [circus] ring and making an effort to be afraid of receiving the slaps. On the contrary, it is by virtue of his aggressivity that he delivers them and that the relation of talking with him is an aggressive relation. At this point, the ringmaster comes in and says, “Look, this is unreasonable; leave off quarrelling, swallow your stick, each of you; then you will have it in the right place, you will have internalised it.” This is indeed one means of resolving the situation and bringing a way out to it. It can be accompanied by a little song, that truly imperishable tune by someone named ... who was a kind of genius<sup>6</sup>.

[But, by such means] we will never understand anything at all – neither of what I call on this occasion the sort of sacred character, this sort of religious pageantry [*exhibition d’office*], which we would attend on this occasion, bleak as it might appear, nor what, strictly speaking, the object relation means. The character and context, profoundly oral, of the imaginary object relation appears beneath the surface. In a way, it also allows us to see how strictly, rigorously imaginary, a practice which cannot escape the laws of the imaginary, of this dual relation which is taken to be real, can be. For in the end, the final term [*l’aboutissement*] of this object relation is the fantasy of phallic incorporation. Why phallic? Experience does not agree with the ideal notion we may have of its accomplishment; it inevitably presents itself with even greater emphasis on its paradoxes and, as you will see, today I am introducing it with the step that I am trying to make you take; the whole accomplishment of the dual relation as such, as we get closer to it, makes something emerge in the foreground as a privileged object, which is this imaginary object, which is called the phallus.

The entire notion of object is impossible to take forward, impossible to understand, and just as impossible even to apply, if we don’t introduce a kind of element – I won’t say a mediator because that would be taking a step that we haven’t yet made together – but a third party which is an element, the phallus to call it by its name, which I bring back into the foreground today in this schema which I gave

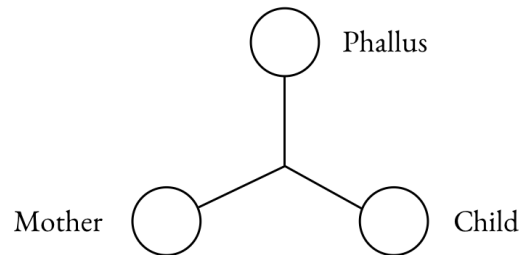
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<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.* – Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d’objet.*

<sup>6</sup> The name of this genius appears not to have been captured by the stenographer.

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you at the end of last year both as a conclusion to this element of the analysis of the signifier which the exploration of psychosis lead us to, but which was also a sort of introduction; the inaugural schema of what I will propose to you this year concerning the object relation.<sup>7</sup>



- 29 The imaginary relation, whatever it may be, is modulated by a certain relation which is effectively fundamental, which is, of course, the mother–child relation, with all that is problematic about it, and which surely serves to give us the idea that it concerns a real relation. In fact, it is this point towards which all the analysis of the analytic situation is presently directed, an analysis which tries to reduce itself into these latter terms, into terms of something that can be conceived as the development of the mother–child relation, with which it inscribes itself and which, as a result, bears the traces and reflections of this initial position. It is impossible, through the examination of a certain number of points of the analytic experience, to supply, to provide its development – even among the authors who have made it [the mother–child relation] the foundation of the entire genesis of analysis, in fact – to bring in this imaginary element, without, at the centre of the notion of the object relation, something that we can call the phallicism of the analytic experience appearing as a key point. This is demonstrated by experience, by the evolution of analytic theory, and in particular by what I will try to show you over the course of this session, that is, the deadlock [*les impasses*] which results from any attempt to reduce this imaginary phallicism to any real information, in the absence of the trinity of terms: symbolic, imaginary and real. In the end, we can but attempt to recover the origin of all that happens, of the whole analytic dialectic... we can but attempt to refer to the real.

To offer a final stroke towards this goal, this way in which the dual relation is conducted in a certain orientation, a theorisation of the analytic experience, I will go back to a point in the text – because this is worth noting – which is precisely that of the heading of the collective publication<sup>8</sup> I mentioned to you. When the analyst, entering the imaginary game of the obsessional, insists on making him recognise his aggressivity – that is, makes him situate the analyst in a dual relation, the imaginary relation, the one I referred to earlier as one of reciprocity – we have something which gives a kind of testimony of refusal, of the misrecognition the subject has of the situation, [in] the fact that, for

<sup>7</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La triade imaginaire*.

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.* – ‘*La psychanalyse d’aujourd’hui*’.

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example, the subject never wants to express his aggressivity, and does so only in the form of a slight irritation provoked by the technical rigidity<sup>9</sup>.

30 The author [Bouvet] admits that he insists on this topic and perpetually brings the subject back to it as if it were the central, significant topic, and adds, significantly, that “since everyone knows very well that irritation and irony are in the category of manifestations of aggressivity”, as if it were obvious that irritation was typical and characteristic of the aggressive relation as such. [But] we know that aggression can be provoked by any number of other sentiments, and that, for example, a sentiment of love cannot at all be ruled out from being the basis of an aggressive reaction. As for representing a reaction like irony as aggressive by nature, this doesn’t seem to me to be compatible with what everyone knows, that is to say, that irony is not an aggressive reaction, irony is above all a way of questioning, a mode of question; if there is an aggressive element, it is secondary in the structure of irony to the element of question. This shows you what a flattening of the map we end up with in an object relation which, after all, I am resolving to never speak to you about from now on, in this form or in any other. Nevertheless, we are now brought to the question: who, or what, are these relations between? And that’s the question, at once primary and fundamental, which we must start from because we will have to come back to it; it is the one we will end with. All the ambiguity of the question raised around the object can be resumed thus: is the object the real, or not?

The notion of the object, its handling within analysis, should it, or not... but we will come to it both through our developed vocabulary which we employ here – symbolic, imaginary, and real – as well as through the most immediate intuition of what this may in the end represent for you spontaneously, upon interpretation of what the thing clearly represents for you right away when someone speaks to you about it... the object – is it the real, yes or no? When we speak of the object relation, are we speaking purely and simply of access to the real, this access which must be the end [*terminaison*] of an analysis? That which is found in the real, is it the object?

31 This is worth asking ourselves since, after all, without even going to the heart of the problem of phallicism, which I am introducing today – that is, without us noticing a truly prominent feature of analytic experience by which a major object, around which turns the dialectic of the individual’s development, as well as the whole dialectic of an analysis, an object which is taken as such, for we will see in more detail that we must not confuse phallus and penis – if it became necessary to make the distinction, if around the 1920s–30s the notion of phallicism and the phallic stage was organised around a great shock which occupied the whole analytic community, it was to distinguish the penis as a real organ with functions that we could describe through certain real coordinates, and the phallus within its imaginary function.

Even if that were all, it is worth asking ourselves what the notion of object means. Because we cannot say that this object is not, within the analytic dialectic, a prevalent object, and an object which the individual has an idea of as such, whose isolation, for never having been formulated as strictly and solely conceivable on the imaginary level, represents no less – since what Freud brought at a certain time and to which so and so, particularly Jones, replied – how the notion of phallicism implies an

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<sup>9</sup> Lacan repeats Bouvet’s words verbatim here. See *ibid.* – Bouvet, M. *La clinique psychanalytique, la relation d’objet.*

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extrication from this category of the imaginary. This is what you will see coming through in every line. But before even getting into this, let us ask ourselves about the meaning of the relation, the reciprocal position, of the object and the real. There is more than one way to approach this question, for as soon as we approach it we realise that there is more than one sense to the real. I expect some of you won't hesitate to let out a little sigh of relief: "finally he is going to tell us about this notorious real which has until now remained in the shadows". In fact, it shouldn't surprise us that the real is something which is at the limits of our experience. That's to say [*C'est bien que*] that these conditions, so artificial... contrary to what we are told – that it's such a simple situation... [these conditions] are a position in relation to the real. This is sufficiently explained by our experience, yet we can only refer to it when we theorise. It would be apt, then, to grasp what we mean when in theorising we invoke the real. It is not very likely that we all have the same notion of it to start with, but what is likely is that we can all access a certain distinction, a certain dissociation, which is essential to bring in as to the treatment of the term 'real' or 'reality', if we look closely at the way in which it is used.

32 When we speak of the real we can target several things. First of all, there is everything that *effectively* happens. This is the notion of reality implied in the German term *Wirklichkeit*, which has the advantage of distinguishing in [the notion of] reality a function which the French language makes it hard to isolate. This [term] implies, in itself, all the possibilities of the effects, of the *Wirkung*, of the whole mechanism. Here I will only make a few points in passing to show to what extent psychoanalysts remain prisoners of this category so extremely foreign to everything that their practice should in fact be able to introduce them to, I would say, regarding this very notion of reality. If it is conceivable that a thinker of the mechanical–dynamist tradition, a tradition which goes back to the 18th–century scientific attempt at the development of the 'mechanised man'... if it is conceivable that from a certain perspective everything that happens on the level of mental life requires that we refer it to something which presents itself like material... then in what sense can this have any interest for an analyst, when the very principle of the exercise of his technique, of his function, plays out in a succession of effects which, if he is an analyst, he accepts, by hypothesis, as having their own order?

And that is exactly the perspective he must adopt if he follows Freud, if he conceives things in terms of what governs the whole life [*esprit*] of the system, that is, from an energetic perspective. Allow me to illustrate this through a comparison, in order to make you understand this fascination for what can be found in matter, this primitive *Stoff*, to understand what is brought into play by something that is so fascinating for the medical mind that we believe we are really saying something when we affirm, in a gratuitous way that, like all other doctors, we place at the foundation, we designate as the basis [*principe*] of everything that is at work in psychoanalysis, an organic reality, something that ultimately must find itself in reality. Freud put it as simply as this. One must refer to where he said it, and see what function it has. But this [organic reality] remains, at base, a kind of need for reassurance, when we see analysts, throughout their writings, coming back to it over and over, like knocking on wood. In the end, it is perfectly clear that we are putting into play nothing but mechanisms which are superficial and which must all refer to this latter term [reality], to something which we might know someday, which is this primary matter at the origin of all that happens.

Allow me to make a simple comparison to show you quite how absurd all of this is for an analyst who

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33 admits the order in which he maneuvers [*il se déplace*], the order of effectivity, which is itself the primary notion of reality. It's a little like if someone who managed a hydroelectric plant in the middle of a large river, the Rhine for example, were to demonstrate – in order to understand, to speak of what happens in this machine – that in the machine accumulates<sup>10</sup> that which is the basis for the accumulation of any kind of energy – in this case, this electrical force which can then be distributed and made available to consumers – and that this is, above all, precisely something which has the closest relation to the machine, and that we will say not only nothing more but literally nothing at all in dreaming of the moment when the landscape was still virgin, when the Rhine was flowing abundantly. But to say that there is something that, in some way, compels us to say the energy was in some sense already there in a virtual state in the current of the river, is to say something that, strictly speaking, means nothing. For the energy only begins to interest us, on this occasion, from the moment when it has accumulated, and it is only accumulated from the moment when the machines are made to work in a certain way, no doubt animated by a thing which is a kind of definitive propulsion which comes from the current of the river. But the reference to the current of the river as being the primitive order of this energy can precisely only come to the mind of someone totally mad, and lead to a notion which is, strictly speaking, of the order of *mana* – which concerns something of a very different order than this 'energy', or even 'force' – and who would like to rediscover, in all forces, the permanence of what is eventually accumulated as the element of *Wirkung*, a *Wirklichkeit* made possible by something that would somehow be there for all eternity. In other words, this sort of need of ours to think of, to confuse the *Stoff* – or the primitive matter or the impulse or the flow or the inclination – with what is really at stake in the operation of analytic reality, is something which represents nothing less than a misrecognition of the symbolic *Wirklichkeit* [reality]. That is to say, it is precisely in the conflict, in the dialectic, in the organisation and the structuration of elements which compose themselves, construct themselves, that this composition and this construction give to what is in question a wholly different energetic scope. We misrecognise the very reality in which we move by holding on to this need to speak of an ultimate reality as if it were elsewhere than in this very operation. There is another use of the notion of reality which is made in analysis. This one, much more important, has nothing to do with this reference which I could truly qualify as superstitious, in this case, which is a kind of consequence, a so-called organicist postulate which can literally have no meaning in the analytic perspective. I will show you that it has no more meaning in the order where Freud apparently reports on it. The other question, in the object relation, of reality, is one that comes into play in the double principle – pleasure principle and reality principle. This concerns something completely different, for it is quite clear that the pleasure principle is not something that operates in a way that is less real. In fact, I think that analysis stands to demonstrate the opposite. Here the use of the term 'reality' is wholly different. There is something which is striking enough, which is that this use [of 'reality'], which at the beginning showed itself to be so fruitful, which allowed for the terms 'primary system' and 'secondary system' in the order of the psyche, has revealed itself, as analysis

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<sup>10</sup> It has been pointed out that there may be an indirect reference to Wilhelm Reich in these passages, whose distribution of so-called orgone accumulators would lead to his sentencing in 1956 to two years imprisonment on charges of contempt.



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progressed, to be more problematic, but in a way which is somehow very elusive. To take account of the distance travelled, with a certain slippage [of meaning], between the first use of the opposition of these two principles and the point we come to now, we must almost refer to something that happens from time to time... the child who says that the emperor is naked – is he a halfwit, is he a genius, is he a joker, is he a savage? Nobody will ever know. He is surely something of a liberating figure in any case, and things like this do happen: analysts return to a kind of primitive intuition that everything we were saying up to that point had explained nothing.

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That's what happened to D.W. Winnicott. He wrote a little article to talk about what he calls the "transitional object"<sup>11</sup> [English in the original]. Thinking about the transitional object or transitional phenomenon, he simply remarks that the more we become interested in the function of the mother as absolutely primordial, decisive in the child's apprehension of reality, that is to say, the more we substitute the dialectical, impersonal opposition of the two principles, the pleasure principle and the reality principle, with something to which we have given actors, subjects... no doubt rather ideal subjects, no doubt actors who are a lot more like a kind of imaginary figuration or puppet, but this is where we have come to... the more we identify this pleasure principle with a certain object relation – that is, the maternal breast – we identify this reality principle with the fact that the child must learn to do without it. Quite specifically, Mr. Winnicott points out that in the end, if everything goes well... for it is important that everything goes well, for we are at the point of allowing everything that goes badly to drift towards a primordial anomaly, into frustration, the term 'frustration' becoming the key term in our dialectic... Winnicott points out that, all in all, everything will happen as if, in the beginning, for things to go well, that is, for the child not to be traumatised, the mother has to have acted in always being there at the moment she was needed, that is to say, precisely, in coming to position herself, at the moment of hallucination, as the real object which satisfies the child. Thus, in the beginning, there isn't any kind of distinction in the ideal mother-child relation between the hallucination which emerges through the principle of the notion we have of the primary system, the hallucination which emerges from the maternal breast, and the real achievement, the meeting with the real object in question. Thus, in the beginning, if all goes well, there isn't any means for the child to distinguish what is of the order of satisfaction founded on a hallucination, which is related to the operation and the functioning of the primary process, and the apprehension of the real which fulfils and effectively satisfies the child. All that it will be about is the mother progressively teaching the child to bear these frustrations and, at the same time, to perceive in the form of a certain inaugural tension the difference there is between reality and illusion, and the difference can only be practised by means of a disillusionment, that is to say that from time to time reality does not coincide with the hallucination which has emerged through desire.

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Winnicott simply remarks that the primary fact is that what is strictly inconceivable within such a dialectic is this: how could anything be elaborated which goes further than the notion of an object strictly corresponding to primary desire? ...and that the extreme diversity of objects, instrumental as well as fantasmatic, which intervene in the development of the field of human desire are strictly

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<sup>11</sup> See Winnicott, D. W. (1953). *Transitional objects and transitional phenomena*.

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unthinkable in such a dialectic from the moment that we incarnate it in two real actors, the mother and the child. The second thing is strictly a fact of experience. It's that even for the smallest child, we can see these objects he [Winnicott] calls transitional appearing, and we cannot say of these objects on which side they are situated in this dialectic, this reduced dialectic, this dialectic incarnated by the hallucination and the real object. That is, that which he calls the transitional objects, namely, to illustrate them, all these objects of the child's play, the child's toys, properly speaking – the child doesn't need us to give him any for him to make them out of anything he can get his hands on – these are the transitional objects about which there is no question of whether they are more subjective or more objective, they are of another nature of which Winnicott does not cross the border. To name them, we will simply call them imaginary. We will, straight away, be far enough into the imaginary that we see through these works – certainly very hesitant works, full of digressions, full of their authors' confusion – we see that the authors are nonetheless always brought back to these objects and, for example, seek to explain the origin of a fact such as the existence of the fetish, the sexual fetish. We see how they are led to do as much as they can to see which points are in common with the fetish, which comes to the fore of the [subject's] objectal demands<sup>12</sup> by virtue of the great satisfaction which it can have for a subject, namely, sexual satisfaction. They are led to seek out, to watch for in the child, a hint of the privileged handling of some little object, a handkerchief taken off the mother, a corner of a bedsheet, some accidental part of reality put within reach of the child's grasp, which appears in this period which, to be called here 'transitional', does not constitute an intermediate period but a permanent period of the child's development. They are led to almost confuse them, without asking about the distance there may be between the eroticisation of this object and the first appearance of the object as imaginary.

36 What we see here is what is forgotten in such a dialectic, a forgetting which, of course, demands these forms of supplementation on which I place the accent with regard to Winnicott's article; what is forgotten is that one of the most essential sources of all analytic experience, since the beginning, is the notion of the lack [*manque*] of the object, which is not quite the same thing. And I remind you that things have gone in a certain direction, that never in our concrete practise of analytic theory can we do without the notion of the lack of the object as central, not as a negative, but as the very mainspring of the subject's relation to the world. Analysis sets out from where it left off<sup>13</sup>. The analysis of neurosis starts with the notion, so paradoxical that we can say it is not yet completely developed, of castration. We believe that we are still speaking of it as we spoke of it during Freud's time. This is a complete mistake. We are speaking of it less and less. And we are wrong, in any case, because what we are speaking of much more is the notion of frustration. There is another term, a third term, which we are starting to speak of... or, more precisely, we will see how, necessarily, its notion has been introduced, both in what vein and by what necessity: the notion of privation. These are not at all three equivalent

<sup>12</sup> As in other English translations of Lacan's work, the term '*exigence*' has been translated throughout as 'demand'. A 'demand' stands apart from a 'requirement' or a 'necessity' by way of its sense of both urgency and agency.

<sup>13</sup> '*L'analyse commence dès son départ*' could be translated more literally as 'analysis starts from the beginning'. Here, it has been taken as a play on the two senses of 'analysis', to suggest that an individual's analysis always begins with what psychoanalysis historically began with – castration.

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things. To distinguish them I would like to point out a few things to you, simply to try, first of all, to make you understand what this is.

Of course, we must start with what is most familiar according to its use, that is to say the notion of frustration. What is the difference between a frustration and a privation? We must start from here because we are at the point of introducing the notion of privation and saying that in the psyche these two notions are experienced in the same way. This is to say something quite bold, but it is clear that as for privation, we will have to refer to it for now as if phallicism – that is, the demand of the phallus – is, as Freud says, the major point of all imaginary play in the conflictual progression described by the analysis of the subject. We can only speak – as regards everything other than the imaginary, that is, the real – we can only speak, in this case, of privation. This isn't how the phallic demand exerts itself, for one of the most problematic things that appears is how a being presented as a totality can feel deprived of something which by definition they do not have. We can say that privation is essentially something that, in its nature as lack, is a real lack, it is a hole [*trou*]. The notion we have of frustration, simply in referring to the use which is effectively made of these notions when we speak of them, is the notion of a detriment. It's an injury, a damage. This damage, such as we are used to seeing it at work, the way we make it come into play in our dialectic, it is never a question of anything more than an imaginary detriment. Frustration is essentially the domain of the claim [to something], the dimension of something which is desired and not held, but which is desired without any reference to any possibility, nor of satisfaction, nor acquisition. Frustration is in itself the domain of unbridled demands, the domain of lawless demands. The centre of the notion of frustration, insofar as it is one of the categories of lack, is an imaginary detriment. It is on the imaginary level that frustration is situated. It is perhaps easier for us, starting from these two remarks, to observe that castration, whose nature – I repeat – that is, the essential dramatic nature of castration, has been much more abandoned, neglected, than it has been deepened.

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To introduce it here, and in the most lively fashion, it will suffice to say that castration was introduced by Freud in a way that was absolutely tied to the notion of the primordial law, to what is there as fundamental law in the prohibition of incest and in the Oedipal structure, and introduced, without a doubt, by way of something which, in the end, if we think about it today, represents the meaning of what was first enunciated by him. This was done through a sort of mortal leap into experience. That he placed something as paradoxical as castration at the centre of the decisive crisis, the formative crisis, the major crisis which is Oedipus, is something we can only marvel at after the fact because, certainly, it is extraordinary that our only wish is to not speak about it. Castration is something that can only be classed in the category of symbolic debt. The distance that there is between symbolic debt, imaginary debt, and hole, real absence, is something which allows us to situate these three elements, these three elements that we call the three terms of reference in the lack of the object. This, of course, might appear to some to be inadmissible without some reserve. They would be right because, in reality, we must hold fast to the central notion that it is a question of categories of the lack of the object, for this to be valid.

I am saying lack 'of *the* object' but not 'of object', because if we place ourselves at the level 'of the object' we will be able to ask the question: what is the object which lacks in these three cases?

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38 It is at the level of castration that the answer is immediately the most clear; that which is lacking at the level of castration insofar as it is constituted by symbolic debt, the thing which sanctions the law, this something which gives it its support and its inverse, which is punishment – it is completely clear that in our psychoanalytic experience this is not a real object. It is only in the Laws of Manu<sup>14</sup> that we say that he who sleeps with his mother cuts off his genitals and, holding them in his hand, heads straight towards the West until death follows; we have, up to this moment, only observed these things in excessively rare cases which have nothing to do with our experience and which seem to us to call for explanations of a very different kind than that of structural and normalising mechanisms usually invoked in our experience. The object is imaginary, the castration in question is always an imaginary object. What facilitated our belief that frustration was something that should have allowed us to go much more easily to the heart of the problems was this commonality that exists between the imaginary character of the object of castration and the fact that frustration is an imaginary lack of the object. Now, it is not at all required that the lack and the object and even a third term that we will call the agent, be at the same level in these categories. In fact the object of castration is an imaginary object, this is what must make us ask the question of what the phallus is, which it took so long for us to identify as such.

However, as imaginary as frustration itself may be, the object of frustration is well and truly, in its nature, a real object; it's always something real which, for the child, for example, for the chosen subject of our dialectic of frustration... it is well and truly a real object which is lacking. This will help us perfectly to see. This is something obvious for which we need a slightly more metaphysical handling of the terms than what we are used to when we refer precisely to these criteria of reality which we were speaking about earlier. It's very clear that the object of privation is only ever a symbolic object – this is completely clear. That which is of the order of privation, that which is not in its place or, to be exact, that which is not in its place from the point of view of the real, this means absolutely nothing. All that is real is always and necessarily in its place, even when we disturb it. The real has the foremost property of wearing its place on the soles of its shoes – you can disturb the real as much as you like but, regardless, our bodies will still be in their place after they explode, their place of pieces. The absence of something in the real is something purely symbolic; that is, as long as we define by means of the law that it should be there, an object is missing at its place. Think as a reference of what happens when you ask for a book at the library. They tell you that it's missing from its place, it could be just beside it; nevertheless, in principle it is missing from its place, it is in principle invisible, but this doesn't mean that the librarian lives in an entirely symbolic world. When we speak of privation, it is a question of symbolic objects and nothing else.

39 This may seem a bit abstract, but you will see how far this will serve us, in what follows, towards detecting these kinds of sleights of hand by means of which we give solutions which aren't solutions to problems which are false problems. In other words, the means by which, in what follows, in the dialectic of what is discussed, in order to break with what seems intolerable – that is, the completely

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<sup>14</sup> According to Encyclopædia Britannica, Manu-smriti, ( Sanskrit: "Laws of Manu" or "The Remembered Tradition of Manu") also called Manava-dharma-shastra ("The Dharma Text of Manu"), traditionally the most authoritative of the books of the Hindu code (Dharma-shastra) in India.

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different evolution of what in psychoanalytic terms we call sexuality for the man and for the woman – desperate efforts are made to refer the two terms to a single principle, while perhaps there is from the beginning something which allows us to explain and conceive in a very clear and simple way why their evolution will be so different. I simply want to add something which will also reveal its impact: the notion of an agent. I know that here I am making a jump which would necessitate me returning to the imaginary triad of the mother, the child and the phallus, but I don't have the time to do it, I simply want to complete the picture. The agent also has a role to play in this lack of the object, because for frustration we have the presupposed idea that it is the mother who plays the role. What is the agent of frustration? Is it imaginary, symbolic, or real? That is, is it ultimately something with no kind of real existence, as I pointed out earlier?

These are questions which at least deserve our asking them. I will leave this question open at the end of this session, because even if it is quite clear that the answer could be initiated here, or even be deduced in a totally formal way, it cannot – at least at the point we've reached – be satisfactory, precisely because the notion of the agent is something which goes totally outside the framework of what we limited ourselves to today, that is, a first question implicating the relations of the object and the real. The agent is here clearly something of another order. Nevertheless, you see that the question of the qualification of the agent at these three levels is a question which is clearly suggested by the commencing of the construction of the phallus.

**Session of 5th December 1956**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

5th December 1956

Ladies and gentlemen, last night, you heard a talk concerning the topic of the image of the body.<sup>1</sup> In the circumstances, I said nothing beyond a general affirmation of what I thought was good about it and if I had been forced to speak, it would have been to situate this in relation to what we are doing here, educationally speaking. This is something I dislike doing in the context of scientific work that is really of a different order, and I am not sorry for not having spoken. At any rate, if we begin with that image of the body as it was presented to us last night, I think that to situate it in relation to what we are doing, you know one obvious thing very well: in the first place, it is not an object. They spoke of the object in trying to define stages and the notion of object really is important, but not only is this image of the body that you saw presented last night *not* an object, but I would say that what would allow us to best situate it in conjunction with other imaginary formations is that it *cannot* itself become an object. This is a very simple remark that no one made directly nor in some indirect way. For if, in analytic experience, we are dealing with objects whose imaginary character is in question – I didn't say they *are* imaginary, I'm saying that this is precisely the question we are asking here – if this is the central point upon which we situate ourselves in order to introduce what interests us in the concept of the object at the clinical level, that doesn't mean either that we sustain this point – that is, that we proceed from the hypothesis of the imaginary object. Not only do we not proceed from this point but it is precisely this question that we pose. But this possibly imaginary object, as it is indeed given to us in analytic experience, is already known to you.

42

In order to clarify these ideas, I have already taken up two examples that I said I would focus on: the phobia and the fetish. These are objects that are far from having revealed their secret – you would be wrong to believe that – whatever the exercises, acrobatics, contortions, or phantasmatic geneses to which one might give oneself over. It remains quite mysterious that, at certain periods in the lives of children, male or female, they feel obliged to be afraid of lions, which are not objects very commonly encountered in their experience. It is difficult to locate the form, a kind of primitive given, for example, inscribed in the image of the body. Whatever we do, a residue remains. It is always the residues in scientific explanations that are the most fruitful to consider. In any case, it is certainly not by sidestepping them that we make progress. Likewise you might have noticed that it is still quite clear in all of this that the number of sexual fetishes is quite limited. Why? Setting aside shoes, which here take on such a striking role in this regard, such that one wonders how it is that we do not pay more attention to them<sup>2</sup>, we hardly find anything but garters, stockings, bras and others. All of these are worn close enough to the skin but shoes are the most common. Here, once again, is a residue. Here are objects about which we wonder whether they are imaginary objects, and whether we can deduce their kinetic value in the economy of the libido on the sole basis of what may happen to emerge from a genesis – once again, in short, the notion of an ectopia in a certain typical relation with something that has emerged from another typical relation said to belong to stages following previous stages. Nonetheless, no matter what the objects are, whether or not they are the objects you were dealing with

<sup>1</sup> Presentation by Françoise Dolto, 4th December 1956.

<sup>2</sup> On the topic of foot and shoe fetishes, see, for example, Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p.155.

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yesterday evening, it is perfectly clear that they represent something which causes us great embarrassment, which is certainly extremely fascinating – one only has to see the interest raised in the gathering and the extent of the discussion. But these objects are, in the first place, if we wanted to approach them, we would say that they are constructions which order, organise, articulate, as we said, a certain experience, but what is completely striking is the use made of them by the practitioner, Ms. [Françoise] Dolto, as it happens.

43 This quite certainly concerns something that necessarily and in a perfectly comprehensible way can be situated solely through the notion of the signifier. Ms. Dolto uses it as a signifier; it is as a signifier that it comes into play in her dialogue; it is as a signifier that it represents something, and this is particularly evident in the fact that none of them can hold up on their own, it is always in relation to another of these images that each one takes on a solidifying, orienting value, penetrating in any case the subject she is dealing with, namely, the young child. This brings us back to the notion of the signifier once again, and for this I would like – because this is a question of teaching, and there is nothing more important than misunderstandings – to tell you that I noted in a direct and indirect manner that certain things I said last time were not understood. When I spoke of the notion of reality, when I said that psychoanalysts had a scientific notion of reality, which is in accordance with the one which has held back the progress of psychiatry for decades, and this is precisely the constraint from which we might have thought psychoanalysis would deliver it – that is, [the constraint of] seeking reality in something that would have the character of being more material. And to make myself understood I gave the example of a hydroelectric plant, and I spoke as if someone who deals with the various things that can happen at the hydroelectric plant – including its depletion, its being shut down, its extensions, its repairs – as though someone thought they could always rationalise what needs to be done at this plant through reference to the primary material which comes into play to make it work – that is the waterfall. Concerning which, someone came to me to say: “What are you getting at there? Just think that for the engineer this waterfall is everything, and since you are talking about the energy accumulated in the plant, this energy is nothing other than the transformation of potential energy which is given in advance at the site where the plant has been built, and when the engineer measures the height of the water flow – for example, in relation to the level at which it will spill over, – he can make a calculation. All of the potential energy which will come into play is already given, and the power of the plant is given precisely by the anterior conditions.”

44 In truth, there are several remarks to make here. The first one is in having to speak to you about reality, and having started by defining it as *Wirklichkeit*, as the efficacy of the whole system, in this case the psychological system. Then, secondly, in also having wanted to specify the mythical character of a certain way of conceiving this reality and having located it through this example. I didn't get to the third point which is the one under which the topic of the real can be presented – namely, precisely what comes first [*avant*]. We are constantly dealing with it.

Of course, it is precisely another way of considering reality, of what is there before a certain symbolic operation has taken place, and, of course, this is the most substantial part of the mirage which is implicit in the objection that was made. For, in truth, I am not at all denying here that something



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comes first. For example, before 'I' comes out of 'self' or 'it' [*ça*], there was something that the 'it' was, of course. It is simply a question of knowing what this 'it' is.<sup>3</sup>

I am told in the case of the power plant that what comes first is effectively the energy. I have actually never said otherwise, but energy and natural reality are worlds apart, for energy only starts to enter the equation from the moment you measure it, and you only think of measuring it from the moment when power plants are up and running, and then you have to do numerous calculations where the amount of available energy comes into effect. But this notion of energy is very effectively constructed to suit the necessity of a productive civilisation which wants to turn [this energy] to account, with regard to the work that it is necessary to expend in order to obtain the gain in efficiency that's available. You always measure this energy – for example, between two reference points.

There is no absolute energy of the natural reservoir. There is an energy of this reservoir in relation to the lower level to which the flowing liquid will be drawn when you have joined an overflow to this reservoir, but an overflow alone will not suffice to allow for a calculation of energy – it is in relation to the lower level of water that this energy will be calculable. The question is, in fact, not here. The question is that certain natural conditions must be realised for this calculation to have the slightest interest, since it is still true that any variation in the level of the water flow, whether it be small streams or even water droplets, will always potentially have a certain value of energy in reserve, ...but this will simply not interest anyone at all. To put it frankly, there must already be something in nature which presents the materials which will come into play in the use of the machine in a certain privileged way, a significant way, which presents itself as usable, as significant, as measurable, in this case to permit the building of a power plant. At the level of a system taken as signifying, this is something which is, of course, not to be contested. The important part, the analogy with the psyche... we will now see how it can be outlined. It can be outlined in two points. Freud, led precisely by the energetic notion, designated something as being a notion which we must use in analysis in a way comparable to that of energy. This is a notion which, just like energy, is entirely abstract and consists solely in our being able to lay down in analysis – and still, in a virtual way – a simple piece of circular reasoning destined to allow for a certain game of thought... this energy introduced strictly by the notion of equivalence – that is, the notion of a common measure among manifestations which present themselves as qualitatively very different<sup>4</sup>. This notion of energy is precisely the notion of libido. There is nothing that is less fixed to a material support than the notion of libido in analysis.

It is astonishing that in the "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" Freud only had to slightly modify a passage in which he had spoken of the physical support of the libido for the first time in 1905

<sup>3</sup> There is an echo here of Freud's phrase "Wo es war, soll Ich werden", which Strachey translates as "Where id was, there ego shall be." The phrase appears in the last but one sentence of 'Lecture XXXI: Dissection of the personality' in *Freud, S. (1933 [1932]). New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (SE XXII)*.

<sup>4</sup> Lacan refers here to what is commonly known as system equivalence, a way of modelling complex systems in which variable components are understood as having the same functional form across different systems. For example, force and voltage in mechanical and electrical systems, respectively, have identical mathematical models.

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in terms such that the discovery and the subsequent propagation of the notion of sex hormones led him to hardly need to modify this passage<sup>5</sup>. This is no surprise. This means that in all cases this reference to a strictly chemical support has no importance whatsoever. He says it... that there is one, that there are several, that there is one for femininity and one for masculinity, or two or three for each, or that they are interchangeable, or that there is only one, as it is in fact very possible – this, he says, has no importance whatsoever because, in any case, analytic experience makes it necessary for us to think that there is one libido and one libido only. He then immediately situates the libido in terms which I might call ‘neutralised’. As paradoxical as the term might sound, the libido is this something that connects the behaviour of beings – for example, in a way that will give them an active or passive position – but he tells us that in all cases we only take this libido insofar as it has effects which are, in any case, active effects even in the passive position, since in fact an activity is necessary for the adoption of the passive position. He even comes to remark that the libido thus takes on a quality such that we can only see it in this effective, active form, and therefore always more closely related to the masculine position<sup>6</sup>. He goes as far as to say that only the masculine form of libido is available to us.

What does that mean? And how paradoxical all this would be if it were not simply in reference to a notion which is only there to allow for the embodiment and the support of a particular kind of connection which happens at a certain level which, strictly speaking, is actually the imaginary level, the one which connects the behaviour of living beings in the presence of another living being through what we call the bonds of desire, all the longing which is one of the essential mainsprings of Freudian thought for the organisation of what is at stake in all sexual behaviours.

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The *Es*, then, which we are also in the habit of considering to have, in its own way, the greatest relation to inclinations, instincts, and in a sense, precisely to the libido... what is the *Es*? And to what, precisely, does this comparison allow us to compare it? We are allowed to compare the *Es* to something which is, quite precisely, the power plant, to the power plant for someone who sees it and knows absolutely nothing about how it works, to the power plant as seen by an uneducated person, who in fact thinks that it is maybe the genie of the current inside who is pulling pranks and transforming water into light or power. But the *Es*, what does it mean [*que veut-il dire*]? The *Es*... that is, that which in the subject is liable to become ‘I’, for that is still the best definition that we can have of the *Es*. What analysis has brought to us is that it is not a brute reality, nor simply what comes first. It is something which is already organised like the signifier is organised, which is already articulated like the signifier is articulated. It is true, just as with what the machine produces, that all the power could already be transformed, with the difference being that, even so, it is not only transformed but can be accumulated. This, here, is exactly the essential point of interest in the fact that the power plant is a

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<sup>5</sup> Lacan refers to the section entitled ‘Chemical Theory’ in Chapter III of the ‘Three Essays’. In the original 1905 version of the text, Freud proffers a “provisional hypothesis” on the chemical factors at play in sexual excitation, but adds that he attaches “no importance to this particular hypothesis” and that he “should be ready to abandon it at once in favour of another, provided that its fundamental nature remained unchanged – that is, the emphasis which it lays upon sexual chemistry”. In a footnote to this paragraph, the editors of the Standard Edition write that “[i]t is worth remarking how small a modification was made necessary in Freud’s hypothesis by the discovery of the sex hormones”. See Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), pp. 215-216.

<sup>6</sup> See Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 219.

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hydroelectric power plant and not simply, for example, a hydromechanical plant. It is true, of course, that there is all this energy. Nevertheless, nobody can deny that there is a perceptible difference not only in the landscape but in the real, when the power plant is built. The power plant was not constructed by an act of the Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit – if you have doubts you are wrong. It is precisely in order to remind you of the presence of the Holy Spirit, absolutely essential for the progression of our understanding of analysis, that I am giving you this theory of the signifier and the signified.

47 Let's take this up again on another level, as we said. The reality principle and the pleasure principle... if you oppose the two systems which represent each of them, respectively – that is, the primary and secondary systems – and you stick to only what defines them from the outside – that is to say that, on the one hand, what happens at the level of the primary system is governed by the pleasure principle, by the tendency to return to rest, and then, on the other hand, what happens at the level of the reality system is defined purely and simply as that which forces the subject into the reality we call 'external', into the taking of detours... Well, none of this, on its own, can give you the feeling of what in practice will come out of the conflictual, dialectical character of the use of these two terms. Simply, in its concrete usage, such as we make of it day-to-day, you will never fail to use each of these two systems, providing you are guided by a particular indication which is, in a sense, the paradox of each [system] – often avoided but all the same never forgotten in practice – which is the following: that what happens on the level of the pleasure principle is something which in fact presents itself as it is indicated to you, as tied to the law of return to rest and the inclination to return to rest, yet it remains striking... and this is why Freud – and he says it formally in his text – introduced the notion of libido that, paradoxically, pleasure... in the concrete sense, *Lust* with its ambiguous meaning in German, as he emphasizes, pleasure and desire, that is, in fact, two things which might appear contradictory but which are no less efficiently related in experience... that pleasure is not related to rest, but to longing, or to the erection of desire.<sup>7</sup>

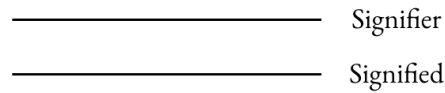
Inversely, no less of a paradox can be found at the level of reality, which is that there is not only the reality that we're always bumping into; there is something in this reality... just as there is the principle of, in short, returning to rest, and yet also this longing... at this level, on the other side as well, there is the principle of the curve, the detour of reality. This appears clearer, then, if correlatively to the existence of these two principles – of reality and of pleasure – we interpose the correlative existence of two levels which are precisely the two terms which link them in such a way as to allow for their dialectical operation: these are the two levels of speech such as they are expressed in the notion of signifier and signified. I have already put into a sort of parallel superposition the path of the signifier or of concrete discourse, for example, and the path of the signified insofar as it is that in which and as which the continuity of experience presents itself, the flux of inclinations [*tendances*] for a subject and between subjects.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 135, note 2 and *ibid.*, p. 212, note 2.

<sup>8</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma des parallèles*.

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Here, then, is the signifier and there the signified, a representation which is all the more valid since nothing can be conceived – not only in speech and language but in the very functioning of everything that presents itself as a phenomenon in analysis – if we do not essentially admit as possible the perpetual slippages of the signified under the signifier and of the signifier over the signified, that nothing of analytic experience can be explained except by this fundamental schema in which what is signifier of something can at any moment become signifier of something else and in which everything that presents itself in the longing, the inclination, the libido of the subject, is always marked by the trace of a signifier.

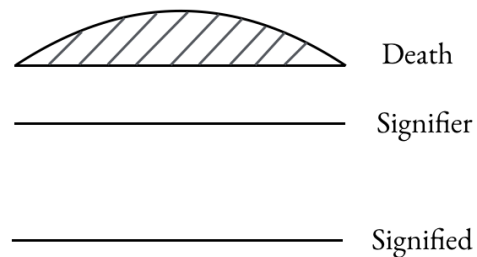
As far as we're concerned, there is nothing other than this. There is perhaps something else in the drive and in longing that is not at all marked by the trace of the signifier, but we have no access to this.

Nothing is accessible to us except marked by this trace of the signifier. The signifier, in short, introduces nothing into natural movement, into desire, or – in the particularly expressive English term which refers to this primitive expression of appetite – into demand [*exigence*] which is not marked by the specific laws of the signifier. This is why longing comes from the signifier and, as such, there is something in the existence and in this intervention of the signifier, something which effectively presents the same problem which was presented earlier in reminding you what the Holy Spirit ultimately is. We saw the year before last what it was for us and what it is, precisely, in the thought and the teaching of Freud. This Holy Spirit is the coming into the world, the entry into the world, of signifiers. What is this? It is very clearly what Freud brings us with the term 'death instinct'. It is this limit of the signified which is never attained by any living being, which is never attained at all, except in some probably mythical exceptional cases, since we only encounter it in the last writings of a certain philosophical experience which is nonetheless something found virtually at the limits of man's reflection on life itself, which allows him to glimpse death as its limit, as the absolute condition – unsurpassable, as Heidegger puts it – of his existence.

In any case, the existence in the world of man's possible overall relations with the signifier, at any rate, is very precisely tied to this possibility of the elimination, the bracketing, of all that is experienced. What is at the bottom of the existence of the signifier, of its presence in the world, is something that we will put in this place, and which is this effective surface of the signifier as something whereby the signifier reflects, in some sense, what we could call the last word of the signified – that is, of life, of experience, of the flux of emotions, of libidinal flux. It is death which is the foundation, the base, the operation of the Holy Spirit, through which the signifier exists.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma des parallèles (2)*.

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49 That this signifier... which has its own laws, which are recognisable or not in a given phenomenon... whether this signifier is there, or not, whether it is designated in the *Es*, this is the question we ask ourselves and which we resolve by positing that to understand anything about what we are doing in analysis, we must respond 'Yes'. That is to say, that the *Es* which is at stake in analysis is something of the signifier which is already there in the real.

Something of the signifier, incomprehensible, is already there. It is not some primitive or vague property falling under some – I don't know what – pre-established harmony. This is always more or less the hypothesis turned to by those – who I will not hesitate to call 'weak minds' on this occasion and of whom first prize goes to Mr. Jones<sup>10</sup> – I will tell you later on how he approaches the problem, for example, of the early development of the woman and of the famous castration complexes of women which pose an insoluble problem to all analysts from the moment when this comes to light and which sets out from the idea that since there is, as we say, the thread and the needle, there is also the girl and the boy, and that there can be between them the same pre-established harmony, and that we cannot fail to say that if some difficulty manifests itself, this can only be due to some secondary disorder, through some process of defense, through something that is purely accidental and contingent. The notion of primitive harmony is supposed, in some sense, and this follows from the notion that the unconscious is something by which what is in the subject is made to figure out what must correspond to him in an other, and this [notion] is to oppose this very simple thing Freud speaks of in his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" concerning this very important theme of the child's development vis-à-vis its sexual images – that is, that it is a shame that it is not so, that the child does not develop in such a way that already shows, in a sense, the railroad built of man's free access to woman, and an encounter which has no other obstacle than accidents that can happen along the way.

On the contrary, Freud posits that the sexual theories of children, those that will make their mark on all the development and all the history of the relation between the sexes, are linked to this: that the first maturity of the stage which is called, strictly speaking, the genital stage, which happens before the complete development of Oedipus is the phase called the 'phallic' phase in which there is, this time – neither in the name of a union of a sort of fundamental energetic equality, merely there for the convenience of thought, nor because of the fact that there is only one libido – but this time, on the imaginary level, that there is only one primitive imaginary representation of the genital state and phase: the phallus as such, the phallus which is not in itself simply the male genital apparatus as a whole, it is

<sup>10</sup> A possible reference to Jones' 1935 paper – see Jones, E. (1935). *Early Female Sexuality*.

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50 the phallus with the exception, he [Freud] says, in relation to the male genital apparatus, of its complement, the testicles for example<sup>11</sup>. The erected image of the phallus is what is fundamental here. There is no other choice than a virile image or castration.

I am not here validating Freud's term. I am saying that it is the point of departure that Freud gives us when he makes this reconstruction, which does not seem to me – though, of course, in relation to all that precedes the “Three Essays” – to consist in going in search of natural references to this idea [castration] discovered in analysis but what it emphasises is precisely that there are countless accidents in what we discover in the analytic experience which are far from being as natural as all that. In addition, if we posit what I am saying here as a principle... that is, that any analytic experience starts from the notion that there is something of the signifier already instated, already structured, there is already a finished and functional power plant. It is not you who has built it, it is language which has functioned there for as long as you can remember – literally, you cannot remember any further back. I mean in the entire history of humanity, ever since there are signifiers which function, subjects are organised in their psyche by the play of this signifier, and this is precisely what makes it that the *Es* of this given, this something that you will search for in the depths, is itself, even less so than images, something so natural that it is precisely the very opposite of the notion of nature that is the existence in nature of the hydroelectric plant – it is precisely this scandal of the existence in nature of the hydroelectric plant, as soon as it has been built by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and it is in this that the analytic position resides. When we approach the subject, we know that there is already something in nature which is the *Es* of the subject, and what happens is structured according to the mode of a signifying articulation that marks, with its traces, with its contradictions, with its profound difference from natural assimilations, all that is at work in this subject.

I felt the need to recall these positions which appear to me to be fundamental. I am pointing out that if I place this ultimate reality behind the signifier – this reality which is completely hidden from the signified – then, besides the function of the signifier, which is the possibility that nothing of the signified exists, it is none other than the death drive which makes us notice that life is completely null and void, improbable, all kinds of notions that have nothing to do with any kind of living process, the living process that consists precisely in making our little appearance in existence exactly like all those who have preceded us in the same typical fashion. The existence of the signifier is not linked to anything except the fact – for it is a fact – that something exists, which is [to say] precisely that this discourse is introduced into the world against this more or less known or unknown background. But it is still curious that Freud was led by analytic experience to be able to do none other than articulate something else, to say that if the signifier functions, this is against the background of a certain experience of death, an experience that has nothing at all to do with the word ‘experience’ in the sense of lived experience, because if there is something that our commentary on Freud's text on this two years ago has been able to show, it is that it is not a question of anything other than a reconstruction of

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<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Freud, S. (1923). *The Infantile Genital Organization (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)* (*SE XIX*), p. 142, note 1 – “It is, incidentally, remarkable what a small degree of attention the other part of the male genitals, the little sac with its contents, attracts in children. From all one hears in analyses, one would not guess that the male genitals consisted of anything more than the penis.”

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the fact of certain paradoxes, in other words, what is 'inexplicable by experience', that is, from the fact that the subject is led to behave in an essentially signifying way, indefinitely repeating something which is, strictly speaking, mortal.

Inversely, in the same way that this death, which here defies [death], is reflected back to us in the background of the signified, there is a whole series of things in the signified which are there but which are borrowed by the signifier, and it is precisely these things which are in question, that is, certain elements which are related to something so profoundly engaged in the signified, that is, the body. There are a certain number of elements, accidents of the body, which are given in experience. Just as in nature there are already certain natural reservoirs, in the signified there are certain elements which are caught in the signifier, giving it what we might call its first weapons, that is, things that are extremely evasive and yet very irreducible, of which precisely the phallic term, the pure and simple erection, the pure and simple raised stone is an example, and of which the notion of the human body as inheritor is another; of which in this way a certain number of elements all related more or less to bodily structure and not purely and simply to the lived experience of the body, form the first elements which are effectively borrowed, taken from experience, but completely transformed by the fact that they are symbolised, that is, always something which is articulated according to logical laws.

If I brought you back to the first of these logical laws, making you play at least the game of 'odds and evens',<sup>12</sup> the evens and the odds regarding the death drive, it is to remind you that the last reduction of these logical laws – that is to say the 'more' and the 'less' and the grouping by twos or by threes in a temporal sequence – it is [to remind you] that there are ultimate laws which are laws of the signifier, which are implicit, of course, in any process of differentiation, but impossible not to encounter.

Let us return now to where we left things last time, that is, at the level of the analytic experience. The central object relation, that which is dynamically creative, is that of lack – *Befindung* of the object, which is a *Wiederbefindung*, as Freud tells us at the beginning of the "Three Essays", as if this were a work written in one go. There is not a single one of Freud's works which was not subject to revision, for all of Freud's works have notes added but very few modifications of the text. The *Traumdeutung*<sup>13</sup> has been enriched without anything being changed of its initial balance. However the first thing you should get into your heads is that if you read the first edition of "Three Essays", you won't believe your eyes, if I may express myself in this way, because you won't at all recognise what, for you, seem to be the familiar themes of the "Three Essays" such as you usually read them, that is, with the additions which were made principally in 1915, several years afterwards. That is to say, everything that concerns the pregenital development of the libido is only conceivable after the appearance of the theory of narcissism, but in any case had never been introduced into the "Three Essays" until everything concerning the sexual theories of children – with its major misunderstandings, which consist largely, Freud says, in the fact that the child has no notion of coitus or reproduction and that this is their main deficiency – had been modified.

<sup>12</sup> See the session dated 23rd March 1955 of the second year of Lacan's seminar.

<sup>13</sup> Freud, S. (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams (SE IV & V)*.

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That this be also given after 1915 is essentially related to the promotion of this notion which comes to its conclusion only after this last edition in 1920 of the article on *Die infantile Genital-organization*<sup>14</sup>, a crucial element of genitality in its development which remains outside the limits of the “Three Essays” which do not quite get there, but whose progression, that is, this research on the pregenital relation as such, can be explained only by the importance of sexual theories and by the libido theory itself. [In] the chapter on libido theory<sup>15</sup> – the one which, in this respect, is precisely a chapter concerning the narcissistic notion as such, the discovery and the origin of the very idea of the theory of the libido – Freud tells us, we can only [explain] it from the moment that we have a proposed notion of an *Ich Libido* as a reservoir, constituting the libido of objects, and he adds: we can only, he says, glance furtively at this reservoir. It is, in short, in the notion of narcissistic tension as such, that is, in man’s relation to the image, that we can have an idea of the common measure and at the same time of the storehouse from which any object relation is established inasmuch as it is fundamentally imaginary. In other words, one of these essential articulations is the subject’s fascination by the image; it is an image which is ultimately only ever an image which he carries in himself. This is the last word on the theory of narcissism as such.

53

Everything which is then subsequently oriented in the direction of an authority [*valeur*] which could organise fantasies is something which supposes behind itself, not at all the idea of a pre-established harmony, of a natural adaptation of the object to the subject, but on the contrary something which supposes first and foremost an experience – such as the “Three Essays” give us in their simple, first, original version – that turns entirely around a two-phase development, a stratifying of the development of child sexuality in two moments, which means that the re-finding of the object will always be marked by the fact that... because of the latency period, the latent memory which traverses this period, [as] Freud articulates it, and what makes it that the first object, precisely that of the mother, is remembered in a way that has not been able to change, which is, he says, *verbündend war*, ‘irreversible’... the *Wiedergefunden* object, the object which will only ever be a re-found object will be marked by the primary character of this [first] object which will introduce an essential, fundamentally conflictual division in this re-found object, and the very fact of the re-finding of it.

And so it is around a first notion of discordance, of the re-found object’s discordance in relation to the object that is sought, that the first dialectic in Freud’s theory of sexuality is introduced. It is within this fundamental experience... and through the introduction of the notion of libido which establishes the specific functioning within this experience, this experience which supposes, essentially, the preservation in the subject’s memory, unbeknownst to the subject – that is, the signifying transmission within the subject – during the latency period, of an object which then comes to divide itself, to enter into discordance, to play a disruptive role in any subsequent object relation of the subject... It is within this that we discover specifically imaginary functions in certain moments, in certain select articulations,

<sup>14</sup> Freud, S. (1923). *The Infantile Genital Organization (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)* (SE XIX). The editors of the Standard Edition note in their introduction to the text that the paper “is essentially, as its sub-title implies, an addition to Freud’s *Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d); and in fact a new footnote giving the gist of what is put forward here was added to the edition of that work which appeared in the following year (1924)...”

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter III of ‘The Libido Theory’ in Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (SE VII), p. 217.



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in certain moments of this evolution, and everything of the pre-genital relation is caught inside this parenthesis, caught in the introduction of the imaginary layer of this dialectic which is at first, essentially, in our vocabulary, a dialectic of the symbolic and the real.

This introduction of the imaginary, which has become so prevalent since, is something which only appeared starting with the article on narcissism<sup>16</sup>, which is only articulated in the theory of sexuality in 1915, which is only formulated with regard to the phallic phase in 1920, but which is only formulated in a categorical way, which seemed disturbing at that time, sending the whole analytic audience into perplexity, and which can be expressed very precisely: the situation was such that it was in relation to ethics that this dialectic – called pre-genital at the time and, please note, not ‘pre-Oedipal’ – was situated. The term ‘pre-Oedipal’ was introduced in relation to feminine sexuality, ten years later. At this moment, what is at stake is the pre-genital relation, which is something to be situated in the memory of preparatory experiences, but which is only articulated in the Oedipal experience. It is on the basis of the signifying articulation of Oedipus that we see in the signifying material these images, these fantasies which themselves effectively come from something, from a certain experience at the contact between signifier and signified in which the signifier has taken its material from somewhere in the signified, in a certain number of living, lived relations which have allowed us to structure, to organise in this past, grasped retroactively, this imaginary organisation which we encounter above all, with its characteristic of being paradoxical. It is paradoxical, it opposes itself far more than it is in agreement with any idea of a harmonious regular development, it is on the contrary a critical development in which, even at the origin, the objects – as we call them – of the different oral and anal phases [*périodes*], are already taken to be something other than what they are, they are already shaped. These objects, on which we operate in such a way that it is possible to extract the signifying structure, are precisely those which we call... all the notions of incorporation which are those that organise them, dominate them and allow them to be articulated.

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We find, following what I told you last time, that it is around the notion of the lack of the object that we must organise the whole experience. I showed you three different levels which are essential for understanding everything that happens every time there is a crisis, encounter, effective action in this search for the object which is essentially, in itself, a critical notion of search: castration, frustration, privation. Their central structures – what is lacking in each of them – are three essentially different things. In the lessons which will follow, we will very precisely put ourselves at exactly the same point where we put ourselves in practice. In our way of conceiving of our experience, modern theory, current practice, analysts like these re-organise analytic experience no longer on the basis of castration, which was Freud’s original experience and discovery, along with that of Oedipus, but on the level of frustration. Next time I will start with an example that I took at random from the ‘psycho-analytiques’, the volumes which came out in 1949, a conference by Madame Schnurmann, student of Anna Freud’s, who witnessed, over a short period, the occurrence of a phobia in one of the children who was entrusted to Anna Freud. We will read this observation – one amongst a thousand others – and see

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<sup>16</sup> Freud, S. (1914). *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (SE XIV).

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what we understand of it; we will also attempt to see what is understood of it by the woman who reports it with every appearance of an exemplary fidelity, that is, something which doesn't exclude a certain number of pre-established categories, but which collects them for this purpose to give us the notion of a temporal succession.

55 We will see how, around a certain number of points and references, phobia will appear and then disappear. We will see in this subject a phobia, a privileged imaginary creation, prevalent for a certain length of time, which has a whole series of effects on the subject's behaviour. We will see if it is possible for the author to articulate what is essential in this observation, simply starting from the notion of frustration such as it is currently given, as something which simply comes down to the privation of the privileged object, which is of that period of the age when the subject finds himself at the moment of privation, it is a more or less regressive effect which can even be progressive in some cases – why not? We will see if it is in this register that a phenomenon can be understood in any way by its mere appearance, by its mere situation within a certain chronological order. We will see, conversely, if through reference to these three terms – I simply want to emphasise what they mean – which mean that in castration there is fundamentally a lack which is situated in the symbolic chain, that in frustration there is something which can only be understood on the imaginary level, as an imaginary detriment, and that in privation there is purely and simply something which is in the real, a real limit, a real gap, but which surely has interest only in that we see it, that it is not at all something that is in the subject. For the subject to access privation he must already symbolise the real, he must conceive of the real as being possibly other than what he is. The reference to privation, such as it is given here, consists in asking – before we can say anything sensible – that in experience everything does not happen as in an idealistic dream which the subject is in some way indebted to. In the genesis which is given to us of the psyche, in our current psychogenesis of analysis, the subject is like a spider which must pull the whole web out of itself – that is, each subject is enveloped with silk in his cocoon, his entire conception of the world must be pulled out of himself and his images.

56 This is where, with this preparation, everything I am explaining to you with this preparation is going, which will sustain the question for a while, which is the following: is it conceivable or not, to produce this psychogenesis that we currently hear: that is, the subject secreting emitting his successive relations out of himself, in the name of some – I don't know what – pre-established maturation, with the objects which will come to be those of this human world which is an other, and this in spite of all the appearances analysis gives us of the impossibility of engaging in such an exercise, because we only notice the clarifying aspects, and every time we get mixed up, this simply appears as a difficulty of language. This is simply a manifestation of the error where we are – that is to say that we can correctly situate the problem of object relations only by positing a certain framework which must be fundamental to the comprehension of this object relation, and that the first of these frames is that in the human world, the structure, the beginning of the organisation of the object is the lack of the object, and that this lack of the object must be conceived of at its different stages. That is, not simply in the subject at the level of the symbolic chain which escapes him at its beginning and its end, and at the level of frustration in which he is effectively established in an experience which is in itself thinkable, but

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that this lack must also be considered in the real. That is, to think that when we speak of privation here, it is not a question of a privation felt in the sense of a reference to that which we need... everyone makes such great use of this. Simply, the trick is – and this is what Mr. Jones does – to make this privation the equivalent of frustration. Privation is not equivalent to frustration, it is something which is in the real but which is in the real entirely outside the subject, for him to apprehend it he must first symbolise it.

How is the subject led to symbolise? How does frustration introduce the symbolic order? This is the question we will ask and it is this question which will allow us to see that the subject is not isolated in this matter, is not independent, it is not he who introduces the symbolic order. Something very striking is that yesterday evening nobody talked about an important passage in what Madame [Françoise] Dolto provided which is that, according to her, the only children who become phobic are those, of either sex, whose mother, it turns out, happens to have suffered a problem in the object relation with her own parent of the opposite sex. Here we are introduced to a notion which surely involves the intervention of something completely different from the relations between the child and the mother, and indeed if I set before you the trio of the mother, the child and the phallus, it is assuredly to remind you that aside from the child, there is more or less always for this mother the demand [*exigence*] of the phallus, which the child more or less symbolises or realises; that the child itself, who has its own relation to the mother, knows nothing of it because, in truth, there is something that must have appeared to you yesterday evening when we spoke of the image of the body regarding the child; this image of the body, if it is accessible to the child, is this how the mother sees her child? This is a question which was not asked.

Likewise, at what moment is the child in a position to notice that what the mother desires in the child, saturates and, satisfies in them, is their phallic image to her, the mother; and what is the possibility for the child to access this relational element? Is it something of the order of a direct spilling [*effusion*], even of a projection, which seems to suppose that any relation between subjects is of the same order as her own relation with her child? I am surprised that nobody asked her [Dolto]: if she sees

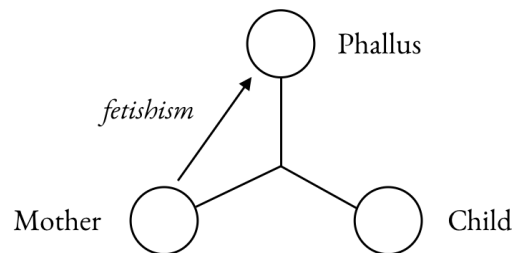
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all these body images, is there anyone apart from an analyst, and again outside her school, who finds themselves seeing these elements and these images in the child? This is the important point. The way in which the male or female child is induced, introduced to this imaginary discordance, which means that for the mother the child is far from merely being the child because it is also the phallus... how can we conceive of this? It is something which is available to experience, because from experience certain elements may emerge which show us, for example, that there must already be a period of symbolisation for the child to access it, or in certain cases it is in a kind of direct way that the child has taken on the imaginary detriment – not his own, but the one which the mother is in, in relation to this privation of the phallus. If she is really essential to development, it is around these crucial points – that is, whether an imaginary is here reflected in the symbolic, or on the contrary if a symbolic element appears in the imaginary – that we are asking ourselves the question of phobia.

So as not to leave you completely wanting, and to enlighten you, I will tell you that in this triple schema of the mother, the child and the phallus, what is at stake is [the reason] why in fetishism the

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child comes to more or less occupy the mother's position in relation to the phallus, or on the contrary in certain very particular forms of dependency, certain anomalies can present themselves with all appearance of normality, the child can also come to occupy the position of the phallus in relation to the mother.<sup>17</sup>



Why is the child brought to this? That is another question, but surely it is a question which will take us very far, because it seems not to be in a spontaneous and direct way that this mother-phallus relation is given to the child – everything happens simply because the child looks at his mother and realises that it is a phallus she desires. However, phobia, when it develops, is not at all of the order of the bond that the child establishes between the phallus and the mother, supplying [something of] the child's own, and to what end? We will attempt to see this.

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Phobia is something different, it is another mode of solution to this difficult problem introduced by the relations between the child and the mother. I already showed it to you last year to show you that for there to be three terms – it was an enclosed space – there needed to be an organisation of the symbolic world which is called 'the father.' Phobia is rather something of that order, of this enclosing bond, that is, of the call for backup at a particularly critical moment that has offered no other type of approach to the solution of the problem; of the call for a symbolic element whose singularity is to always appear as extremely symbolic – that is, extremely far removed from all imaginary apprehensions – where the truly mythical character of what intervenes in phobia is something which at a certain moment is called to the rescue of a solidarity, which is essential to maintain in the gap introduced by the apparition of the phallus between the mother and the child, in this orientation between the mother and the child.

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<sup>17</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Schéma du fétichisme*.

**Session of 12th December 1956**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

12th December 1956

Agent	Lack	Object
<i>Real</i> father	Castration: <i>symbolic</i> debt	<i>Imaginary</i> : phallus
<i>Symbolic</i> mother	Frustration: <i>imaginary</i> detriment	<i>Real</i> : breast, penis
<i>Imaginary</i> father	Privation: <i>real</i> hole	<i>Symbolic</i> : child

This, here, is the chart we came up with in order to articulate the problem of the object as it comes up in analysis. Today I will attempt to make apparent the kind of confusion and lack of rigour in this matter which result in this curious slippage which, all things considered, makes analysis contribute to a kind of notion of man's affective relations that I would call scandalous. In truth, I believe I have emphasised several times already a notion in analysis that, in the beginning, provoked such a scandal. It highlighted the role of sexuality... not always, of course, though analysis helped contribute to the fact of it being a commonplace, and of nobody thinking to be offended by it. I have emphasised precisely that analysis introduced, at the same time as this notion, and even much more than it, the notion of paradox, the essential inherent difficulty, we could say, of approaching the sexual object.

60 It is strange that, from there, we have slipped towards this harmonious notion of the object. To measure its difference from what Freud himself articulated with the greatest rigour, I have chosen a quote for you from the 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality'. Even those people who are the worst informed when it comes to the object relation will notice that we can see very well that in Freud many things are considered which concern the object – the choice of object, for example – but the notion of object relation on its own is not at all taken into account or developed, nor even placed in the foreground of the question. Here is the quote which can be found in Freud's article on drives and their vicissitudes: "The object of a drive [*pulsion*] is the thing in regard to which or through which the drive [*instinct*] is able to achieve its aim. It is what is most variable about a drive [*instinct*] and is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible."<sup>1</sup> The notion is articulated, then, that there is no pre-established harmony between the object and the drive [*tendance*], and that the object is, literally, only related to it by way of the conditions attached to the object.

We make of this what we will. It is not a doctrine, but a quotation, but it is a quotation among others and one of the most significant. It is a question of seeing what this conception of the object is, through what detour does it lead us so that we come to conceive of its effectual mechanism? We have come to emphasise this foreground on account of several points otherwise articulated in Freud – namely, the notion that the object is never but an object refound through a primitive *Findung*, and therefore ultimately a *Wiederfindung*, which is never satisfying – this is where the accent is placed on the notion

<sup>1</sup> This passage can be found in Freud, S. (1915). *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (SE XI), p.118.

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of refinding – and, what’s more, we have seen in [its] other characteristics that, on the one hand, this object is inadequate, and on the other hand, to some extent it even evades being grasped conceptually. And this leads us to try to firm up the fundamental notions, and in particular to dismantle the notion placed at the centre of contemporary analytic theory, this notion of frustration, once it has entered our own dialectics... although I have emphasized to you many times how marginal it is in comparison to Freud’s thought itself... to attempt to get a better grasp of it, to revisit it, and to see in what sense it was necessary, and also in what sense it is appropriate to rectify it, to criticise it, to make it usable and, frankly, coherent with regard to what constitutes the foundation of analytic doctrine, that is to say, what remains fundamentally Freud’s teaching and thought.

61 I have reminded you of what presented itself as immediately given: castration, frustration and privation – three terms of whose differences it is productive to take note. Castration is essentially tied to a symbolic order *qua* instituted, as concerning an enduring consistency from which the subject, under no circumstances, can be given. This is made sufficiently evident as much in our previous reflections as it is in the simple remark that, from the start, castration was tied to the central position given to the Oedipus complex as the essential articulating element in the entire evolution of sexuality the Oedipus complex as already fundamentally including in itself the notion of the law as absolutely ineradicable. I think that the fact that castration is at the level of symbolic debt will appear sufficiently affirmed and even sufficiently demonstrated by this remark, strengthened and supported by all our previous points. Last time, I indicated to you that surely what is concerned, what is at stake in this symbolic debt which is instituted by castration is an imaginary object – it is the phallus as such. This is what Freud affirms here, in any case, and this is the point from which I will proceed and from which we will attempt to push the dialectic of frustration a little further today.

Frustration, in itself, even when very well taken as the central position in the chart, is no more capable of throwing things into disorder or misalignment. If the notion of desire was placed by Freud at the centre of analytic conflictuality, it is surely something which adequately allows us to grasp that in placing the accent on the notion of frustration, we do not deviate very much from the central notion of the Freudian dialectic. What is important to grasp is what this frustration means, how it was introduced, and that to which it relates. It is clear that the notion of frustration, insofar as it is placed at the forefront of analytic theory, is related to the investigation of traumas, fixations, impressions of experiences which are in themselves pre-oedipal, which does not imply that they are external to the oedipal stage but that, in a sense, they provide its preparatory ground, its basis and foundation, that they sculpt [it] in such a way that certain inflections are already prepared within it, which will provide the axis on which the Oedipal conflict will be led to bend itself, to a greater or lesser degree, in a certain more or less atypical or heterotypical direction.

62 This notion of frustration is thus related to the first stage of life and to a mode of relation which in itself manifestly introduces the question of the real into the progress of analytic experience. Placed in the foreground, in the conditioning and the development of the subject, we see the introduction, along with the notion of frustration, of these notions which we call – roughly translated into terms of quantitative metaphor – satisfactions, gratifications of a certain number of adapted benefits, sufficient for the stages of the young subject’s development, and for which, in a sense, a greater or lesser [degree

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of] satiation [*saturation*]<sup>2</sup> or, on the contrary, deficit, is considered to be an essential element. I believe that this remark suffices to alert us to proofs, to make us refer to the texts, to see what step has been taken in this investigation, guided by analysis of the fact of the simple shift [*déplacement*] of interest in analytic literature. It can already be seen easily enough, at least for those who are familiar with these three notions to be able to easily recognise them. You will see that in an example of analytic literature in which this element of conceptual articulation of the thing can be easily recognised, the accent will be placed on certain real conditions which we detect – which we are supposed to detect – in the [analytic] experience, in a subject's history. The foregrounding of this point of interest is something which, from the very first analytic observations, will appear to us to be largely absent, in the sense that it is articulated differently. This puts us back at the level of frustration considered as a sort of element of real impressions, experienced in a period for the subject in which his relation to this real object, whichever it may be, is usually centred on the so-called primordial image of the maternal breast. And it is essentially in relation to this primordial object, that what I earlier called the subject's first leanings [*versants*] and fixations will form, in the presence of which different types of instinctual stages have been described, and whose characteristic is to give us the imaginary anatomy of the development of the subject. This is where these relations of oral and anal stages with their various subdivisions – phallic, sadistic, etc. – have found expression. And all are marked by this element of ambivalence in which the subject participates, in his very position, in the position of the other, where he is two, wherein he always participates in an essentially dual situation, without which no general assumption of the position is possible.

63 Let us see where all this brings us, simply limiting ourselves to this. We are, then, in the presence of an object which we take [as being] in this position, which is the position of desire. Let us take it – as it is given to us – to be the breast, as real object. We are thus brought to the heart of the question: what is this most primitive relationship which the subject has to the real object? You know very well the extent to which theoretician analysts have ended up in a sort of discussion that, at the very least, seems to indicate all kinds of misunderstandings. Freud has told us about the auto-erotic stage of experience. This auto-erotism has been maintained as being a primitive relation between the child and this primordial maternal object. At least, it has been maintained by some. Others have remarked that it is difficult to refer to a notion which seems to be founded on the fact that the subject it involves only knows himself, something which many features of direct observation... features that we think of as necessary to explain the development of the relations of mother and child... many features seem to contradict the fact that, in this case, there are no effectual relations with an object... and what can be more manifestly external to the subject than this 'something' for which he effectively has the most pressing need, and which is his first nourishment par excellence? In truth, it seems that there is a misunderstanding here, born of a sort of confusion, and it is by way of this confusion that the whole discussion ends up going nowhere, and results in such diverse statements – diverse enough, as it happens, that it would take us quite a while to enumerate them, and I cannot do it straight away, since we must make a certain progress in the conceptualisation of the matter in hand today.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *saturation* carries a combined sense of satisfaction and of something having been filled fully. It may also be understood as a kind of satisfaction in being made full, as in the satiation of hunger.



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But observe simply that something which we have already discussed, the theory of Alice Balint, who is looking to reconcile the notion of auto-erotism such as it is presented in Freud with what seems to be necessitated by the reality of the object with which the child is confronted at this completely primitive stage of his development<sup>3</sup>, leads to this thoroughly articulated, and quite striking conception which she calls 'primary love', [which is] the only form of love according to Mr and Mrs Balint<sup>4</sup>, in which egotism and gift are perfectly reconcilable – that is, [they] accept as fundamental a perfect reciprocity in the position of that which the child requires of the mother and, on the other hand, of that which the mother requires of the child, a perfect complementarity of the two types, the two poles of need... which is something so contrary to all clinical experience, precisely insofar as we are perpetually having to deal with the evocation, in the subject, of the mark of all that might have been, of discords – and truly fundamental discords at that – which I will have to recall for you later, by telling you that it is an excessively simple element in the couple, which is not a couple... [there is] something so discordant in the signature with which the very terms of this theory of so-called primitive, perfect and complementary love are written. [It is] simply in the remark that this... Alice Balint tells us... that these things are done as they have always been done. There, where the relationship is natural – that is, in the wild – where the child's contact with the mother is maintained, that is, always somewhere else, in dreamland, where, as everyone knows, the mother always has the child on her back. This is obviously a sort of evasion, quite incompatible with an entirely proper [*correcte*] theorisation which must ultimately admit that this is an entirely ideal, if not idealistic, arrangement, admit that the notion of such a strictly complementary love can be articulated, a love that is, in some way, destined to find, by itself, its own reciprocity.

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In truth, I am only taking this example because it introduces us to what we will point out presently, and what will be the driving element of the critique we are engaged in, regarding the notion of frustration. It is clear that this notion is not quite the fundamental image of representation which a theory such as Kleinian theory, for example, gives us. It is amusing here as well to see from which angle this theoretical reconstruction, that of Kleinian theory, is criticised, and particularly since it concerns the object relation. It happens that I fell upon a certain activity bulletin, that of the *Association des Psychanalystes de Belgique*. These are authors who we find in the volume which I referred to in the notes of my first session, a volume which I told you is truly centred on a shamelessly optimistic and altogether questionable viewpoint on the object relation which gives it its meaning. Here, in a slightly more confidential bulletin, it appears that things are criticised with more nuance, as if, in truth, there is a lack of sureness, a lack that one is a little ashamed to broadcast in these places, even though it assuredly appears, when one becomes aware of it, that it is this lack which is more commendable.

<sup>3</sup> See Balint, A. (1949). 'Love for the Mother and Mother Love' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 30, p. 251. Parts of the paper were first published under the title 'Reality Sense and the Development of the Ability to Love' in the 1933 Sandor Ferenczi memorial volume 'Lélekelemzési tanulmányok'. The final paper appeared in German in 1939 - see Balint, A. (1939). 'Liebe zur Mutter und Mutterliebe' in *Int. Z. f. Psa. u. Imago*, vol. 24, pp. 33-48.

<sup>4</sup> A reference to Michael Balint and his first wife, Alice. In the preface to his collected papers – see Balint, M. (1952). *Primary Love and Psycho-analytic Technique*. – he writes of their "intertwined" development: "Quite often it was just chance that decided which of us should publish a particular idea... We published only one paper jointly, although almost all of them could have been printed under our joint names."

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We can see that an article by Mr. Pasche and Mr. Renard reproduces a criticism which they brought to the Geneva conference<sup>5</sup> concerning the Kleinian positions. It is extremely striking to see Melanie Klein reproached in this article for having a theory of development which in a sense, according to critics and authors, places everything inside the subject, in short, places the whole oedipal stage in a preformed state, the possible development already included in an instinctual given, which would be the output – according to these authors – of different elements, and already, in some sense, potentially articulated in the manner in which the authors ask us to make the comparison... and so it is, for some, that in the theory of biological development, the whole oak is already contained within the acorn, that nothing would come to a given subject in some way from the outside, and that it would be through his primitive drives, namely, aggressive drives, at the start... and the prevalence of aggressivity is manifest when we understand it in this – Melanie Klein's – perspective... and then through the intermediary of the aftershocks of these aggressive drives, felt by the subject from the outside, namely the maternal field, the progressive construction – something which, we are told, can only be taken as a sort of preformed oak – of the notion of the totality of the mother from which this so-called 'depressive position' is established, which can present itself in any experience.

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All these criticisms must be taken in turn, to allow us to appreciate their exact value, and here I would simply like to point out to you what, paradoxically, these critiques as a whole result in. They result in a formulation which is this one, and it constitutes the heart and the centre of the article. It is surely that the authors here appear to be fascinated by the question of how, in effect, this fact of experience, that which in [the subject's] development is taken in from the outside, that which they believe they see in Melanie Klein... this is already given in an internal constellation from the start, and it would not be surprising to see the notion of the internal object foregrounded in such a prevalent way thereafter. And the authors come to the conclusion that they think they can throw out the Kleinian contribution by foregrounding the notion of the pre-formed oak, the hereditarily pre-formed oak, which they say is very difficult to represent. So, they say that the child is born with inherited instincts, facing a world which he does not perceive, but which he remembers, and which he will then have to neither take up from himself, nor from anything else, nor discover through a series of strange discoveries, but recognise. I think that most of you recognise the inescapably Platonic character of this formulation. This world which we have but to remember, this world which is to establish itself according to a certain imaginary preparation, for which the subject already finds himself to be prepared [*adéquat*], is something which surely represents a contradictory critique, but we will have to see whether, when put to the test, it is not only against everything which Freud has written, but whether we cannot already sense that the authors are themselves much closer than they think to the position for which they reproach Melanie Klein, namely that it is they who indicate the existence, in the subject, in the state of a preformed oak tree, and ready to emerge at any given point, all the elements which will allow the

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<sup>5</sup> Lacan refers to an article only very recently published at the time of this session – see Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'Réalité de l'objet et point de vue économique' in *Revue française de Psychanalyse*, XX, Octobre-Décembre 1956, no. 4, pp. 517–24. In English, see Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'The Reality of the Object and Economic Point of View' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 37, pp. 282–285. The paper was originally delivered at the 23rd Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Geneva, July 1955.

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subject to count himself in a series of [developmental] stages which cannot be called ideal except insofar as it is precisely the memories of the subject – and very precisely the phylogenetic memories – which will provide the model and standard of these stages. Is that what Melanie Klein intended to say? It is strictly unthinkable to maintain this, for if there is precisely one thing of which Ms Melanie Klein gives us an idea – and this is incidentally the sense of the authors' critique – it is surely that the initial situation is much more chaotic, truly anarchic at the beginning, that the sound and fury of the drives is characteristic of the origin. It is precisely a question of seeing how something like an order can establish itself from there. That there is something mythical in the Kleinian conceptualisation is beyond doubt. It is quite certain that the contradiction – if it provides a myth which they cannot get back to, and even if it resembles the Kleinian fantasy – is absolutely perfect. These fantasies of course only have a retroactive character. It is in the construction of the subject that we will see reprojected onto the past, from points which may be very premature and which must be defined... and why these points can be so premature, why from the age of two and a half we already see Ms Melanie Klein reading in the manner of someone reading a scrying or divinatorial mirror... she reads retroactively into the past of a very advanced subject, and she finds a way to read retroactively something which is none other than the oedipal structure.

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This is partially correct since, of course, there is an element of mirage, [but] naturally, it is not a matter of following her when she tells us that the oedipal structure was in a sense already there within the fragmented forms of the penis, moving around among different types, brothers, sisters, within the whole of this sort of defined field of the inside of the maternal body. But for this articulation to be detectable, articulable in a certain relation to the child – and very prematurely at that – is something which surely presents us with a fertile question... that all theoretical articulation is in some way purely hypothetical when it allows us to posit, from the start, something which might better satisfy our ideas of natural harmonies, but which does not conform with what is shown by experience.

And I believe that this is starting to show you the angle from which we can introduce something new into this confusion which remains at the level of the primordial mother-child relationship. I believe that this is in keeping with the fact that, not starting from a central notion, namely, frustration, which is [supposed to be] the true centre... it is not frustration from which we start, it is not about what [this relationship] should not be, it is a question of how the primitive relations of the child are put into place and situated.

Much can be clarified if we approach things in the following way. In this 'frustration' there are originally two axes which we find to be interlaced all the way through. There is the real object... and as we are told, it is certain that an object can begin to exert its influence in the subject's relations well before it has been perceived as an object... there is the real object, the direct relation, and it is solely according to this periodicity, where holes and deficiencies may appear, which would go to establish a certain mode of the subject's relation in which we may introduce something which, at this point, certainly would not make it necessary for us to grant that for the subject there is a distinction between a 'me' and a 'not-me' – for example, the auto-erotic position in the sense that it is understood in Freud, namely, that there is, strictly speaking, no constitution of the other, nor, to begin with, any conceivable

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67 relation whatsoever. The notion... in this fundamental relation which is a relation of lack to something which is effectively the object, but the object only insofar as it has insistence [*instance*] in relation to lack... the notion of the agent [*agent*] is something which should allow us to introduce a formulation of the general position, and one that is completely essential from the start. The agent, in this case, is the mother... and what have we seen in our experience these past years, notably in what Freud has articulated, concerning the principal position of the child vis-à-vis repetition games?<sup>6</sup> The mother is something other than this primitive object and, indeed, in accordance with observation does not, from the start, appear as such, as Freud clearly emphasised to us.

She [only] appears from this first game onward, which is taken up and tackled in such a swift fashion in the child's behaviour, that is, this game of the taking of an object, itself perfectly indifferent, an object without any kind of biological value whatsoever, which is the ball in this case, but which might also be anything at all which a small child of six months can put over the edge of his bed in order to catch it again. This 'presence-absence' coupling, articulated extremely prematurely by the child, is something which characterises, which connotes the first constitution of the agent of frustration, originally the mother, the mother as she is spoken of as introducing this new element of totality at a certain stage of development, which is that of the 'depressive position', and which is, in fact, characterised less by the opposition of a totality in relation to a sort of chaos of scattered objects – which would be the preceding stage – than by this aspect of 'presence-absence', not only placed there objectively, as such, but articulated by the subject, centred by the subject around something which is... we already articulated it in our studies of the previous year<sup>7</sup>... around something which means that 'presence-absence' is something which for the subject is articulated, that the maternal object is called here when it is absent and rejected in a similar register when it is present – that is, [the register of] the call – namely, by a vocalisation.

This essential scansion of the call is, of course, not something which gives us the whole symbolic order from the start – far from it – but which allows us to draw out, as an element distinct from the real object relation, something other, which is quite precisely what will offer the possibility of relation in the future, from this relation of the child to a real object with its scansion, the marks and traces it leaves behind, which offer us the possibility of connecting this real relation with a symbolic relation as such. Before demonstrating this more directly, I would like to highlight this one fact, which is that the relations of the child are introduced by this relation to the person constituted by the opposing couple 'presence-absence', this relation which is thus introduced into the experience of the child and which, at the moment of frustration, naturally tends to fall dormant. So we find the child between the notion of an agent who already participates in the order of symbolicity, as we have seen.

68 This is what we articulated last year. It is the opposing couple 'presence-absence', the connotation 'plus-minus', which gives us the first element. It is not enough by itself to constitute a symbolic order, since that would require a sequence, and a grouped sequence at that, but already in the opposition "more and less", "presence and absence", we find, in virtual form, the origin, the birth, the possibility,

<sup>6</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (SE XVIII), pp. 14–17.

<sup>7</sup> See the session of 18th January 1956 in Lacan, J. (1954-1955). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis* (Book II).

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the fundamental condition of a symbolic order. How should we conceive of the turning point in which this primordial relation to the real object may open onto something else? What is, in fact, the true shift, the turning point in which the mother-child dialectic opens onto a more complex relation, opens onto other elements that will introduce what we have called dialectic, properly speaking? I believe that we may formulate it schematically by asking the question: if what constitutes the symbolic agent, the mother as such, essential for the child's relation to this real object, then what happens if she no longer responds, if she does not answer to this call? Let us introduce the answer ourselves. What happens if she no longer responds, if she refuses [*déchoit*] this symbolic structuration which makes her a 'present-absent object' according to the call? She becomes real starting from this moment.

Why does she become real? What does this notion mean... breaking from this structure, which is the very same structure as that within which she has existed as agent up until this point? We have detached her from the real object which is the object of the child's satisfaction. She becomes real, that is, she no longer responds. She only responds, in a sense, of her own free will. She becomes something which initiates the structuration of all reality. In what follows, she becomes a power. Through a reversal of positions, this object... let us take the breast as an example – we can make it as enticing as ever, it does not matter, since here it is a question of a real relation... but from the moment that the mother becomes a power and as such becomes real, the child will depend on her, most manifestly, for access to these objects which had been, until now, purely and simply objects of satisfaction. They will become, on behalf of this power, gift objects, and thus in the same way – but no more so than the mother had been before now – become liable to enter into a connotation of 'presence-absence', but as dependent on this real object, on this power which is the maternal power... in short, objects as objects in the sense we understand them – not metaphorically, but objects as graspable, as obtainable. The notion of the 'not me'<sup>8</sup> is a question of observation, of knowing whether it first comes in through the image of the other or through what is possessable, what the child wants to keep close at hand – objects which, from that point on, no longer need to be objects of satisfaction in themselves, but objects which mark the value of this power which might not respond, which is the power of the mother.

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In other words, the position is reversed – the mother has become real and the object becomes symbolic. The object becomes, above all, a testament to the gift that comes from the maternal power. From that point on, the object has two kinds of satisfying properties. It is both a possible object of satisfaction insofar as it satisfies a need, as surely as it did before, but also, and no less surely, insofar as it symbolises a benevolent power. This is very important because one of the most cumbersome notions in all of analytic theory – such as it is formulated since it has become, according to a slogan, a [theory of] 'genetic psychoanalysis'<sup>9</sup> – is the notion of this so-called omnipotence of thought, an omnipotence which we impute to all that is most removed from us, as it is conceivable that the child has a notion of omnipotence – perhaps he has the essentials – but it is absolutely absurd – and it leads to dead ends – to think that the omnipotence in question is his own. The omnipotence in question is the moment of

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<sup>8</sup> English in the original.

<sup>9</sup> A likely reference to Hartmann, H. (1945). 'The genetic approach in psychoanalysis' in *Psychoanal Study Child*, vol. 1, pp. 11–30.

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this realisation<sup>10</sup> of the mother which I am describing to you. It is the mother who is all-powerful, not the child. The decisive moment – the passage of the mother into reality, proceeding from a completely archaic symbolisation... it is this moment, it is the moment when the mother can give anything at all. But it is absolutely erroneous and completely inconceivable to think that the child has any idea of his omnipotence. Not only does nothing in his development indicate that he does, but most everything which interests us and every accident serves to show us that this omnipotence and its failures have nothing to do with him, but as you will see, everything to do with deficiencies and disappointments concerning maternal omnipotence. This investigation may seem a little theoretical to you, but at the very least it has the advantage of introducing essential distinctions, openings, which are not being put to effective use. You will now see where this brings us, and what we will already be able to indicate of [these distinctions]. Here, then, is the child, who is in the presence of something which he has realised as a power, something which has suddenly gone from the level of the first ‘presence-absence’ connotation to something which can be refused, which holds anything the subject may need, even if he does not need it, and which becomes symbolic from the moment when it depends on this power.

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Let us ask the question from an entirely different starting point. Freud tells us there is something in this world of objects which has an absolutely decisive function, paradoxically decisive. It is the phallus, this object, which is itself defined as imaginary, which is in no way possible to confuse with the penis in its reality, which is strictly speaking the form of the penis, its erected image. This phallus has such a decisive importance that the nostalgia for it, its presence, its insistence [*instance*] in the imaginary is found to be more important, it would seem, for the members of humanity who are missing it – that is, the woman – than for he – that is, the man – who can assure it to be a reality, and for whom, indeed, all of sexual life is nonetheless subordinated to the fact of assuming it imaginarily, and ultimately assuming it legitimately, as use would permit. This is a given.

Now, let us take a look at our mother and child in question, let us confront them as I confront, to begin with, what Michel and Alice Balint [have said]... according to them, as with the Mortimer couple in the days of Jean Cocteau who have only a single heart, the mother and the child for Michel and Alice Balint have only a single totality of needs. Nevertheless, I will retain them as two external circles. What Freud tells us is that the woman has the phallus in her essential missing objects, that not only does this have the most intimate relationship to her relation to the child for the simple reason that if the woman finds a satisfaction in the child, it is precisely insofar as she fills up at her own level, that she finds this something or other in him which more or less calms her – this penis, this need for the phallus. If we do not incorporate this, we misrecognise not only Freud’s teaching, but something which is manifest in every moment of the experience.

Here, then, we have the mother and the child who have a certain relation between them. The child expects something from the mother, and he also receives something in this dialectic in which we cannot fail to introduce what I am introducing now, that the child can, in a sense – let us approximate by putting it as Mr. and Ms. Balint formulate it – believe to be loved for himself. The question is the following one. Inasmuch as this image of the phallus, for the mother, is not completely reduced to the

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<sup>10</sup> This could also be heard as *réalisation*, given that Lacan tells us “*la mère est devenue réelle*” – the mother has become real.

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71 image of the child, inasmuch as this double vision, this division of the so-called primordial desired object, which would be that of the mother in the child's presence, is in reality doubled by, on the one hand, the need for a certain imaginary fullness [*saturation*], and on the other hand, by what there may be in terms of real, efficient, instinctual relations with the child, at a primordial level, which always remains mythical, inasmuch as for the mother there is something which remains irreducible in what is at stake – ultimately, if we follow Freud, this is to say that the child as real symbolises the image. If it is important that the child, as real for the mother, takes on for her the symbolic function of her imaginary need, the three terms are there, and all sorts of varieties will be able to introduce themselves. The child, put in the presence of the mother, all sorts of already structured situations existing between him and the mother, namely, starting from the moment when the mother has introduced herself into the real in a state of power, something opens the possibility for the child of an intermediary as such, as a gift object.

It is a question of knowing at which moment, and how, by which mode of access, might the child be directly introduced into the symbolic-imaginary-real structure such as it is produced for the mother. In other words, at which moment can the child enter, assume, in a more or less symbolised way, as we will see, the imaginary situation, real as to what the phallus is for the mother? At which moment can the child feel himself dispossessed, to a certain extent, of something he demands [*exige*] from the mother when he notices that it is not he who is loved, but something else, a certain image. There is something which goes further. It is that this phallic image is realised by the child on himself. This is where the narcissistic relation, properly speaking, intervenes. To what extent, at the moment when the child apprehends, for example, the difference between the sexes, does this experience come to be articulated with what is offered to him in the very presence and action of the mother, with the recognition of this imaginary third term, which is the phallus for the mother? Furthermore, to what extent is the notion that the mother is missing this phallus, that the mother is herself desiring, not only of something other than him, but desiring full stop – that is, affected in her power – desiring something which, for the subject, can and will be more decisive than anything?

72 I announced to you last time the observation of a phobia.<sup>11</sup> I will indicate straight away what its interest will be. It is a little girl, and we have – thanks to the fact that it is wartime and that it is a student of Anna Freud's – all sorts of good conditions. The child will be observed from head to toe, and as it is a student of Ms Anna Freud's, in this sense she will be a good observer because she understands nothing. She understands nothing because Ms Anna Freud's theory is false, and consequently this will put her before the facts in a state of astonishment which will make for all the fruitfulness of the observation. And in this case everything is taken note of, one day at a time. The little girl notices that the boys have a pee-pee-maker, as it is called in the observation of little Hans. For quite a while she puts herself in the position of rivalry – she is two and five months – that is, she does everything she can to do as the little boys do. This child is separated from her mother, not only because of the war, but because at the beginning of the war her mother lost her husband. She comes to see her, their relations are excellent, the 'presence-absence' is regular, and the games of love, of contact with the child, are games of getting

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<sup>11</sup> See Schnurmann, A. (1946). 'Observation of a Phobia' in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol 4, pp. 253–270.

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up close. She comes in on tiptoe, and she draws out her arrival – we see her function of symbolic mother. Everything is going very well. She has real objects which she wants when the mother is not there. When the mother is there she plays her role of symbolic mother.

This little girl then makes the discovery that boys have a pee-pee-maker. This surely results in something, namely, that she wants to imitate them and that she wants to manipulate their pee-pee-maker. There is a drama, but one that brings absolutely no consequences. Yet this observation is presented to us as one of a phobia, and, in fact, one fine night the little girl will awake, struck with a wild fright, and the cause will be the presence of a dog, which is there, which wants to bite her, which makes her want to leave her bed and makes it necessary to put her in another. This observation of phobia develops for a while. Does this phobia follow from the discovery of the absence of a penis? Why do we ask this question?

We are asking this question because this dog... we will know insofar as we analyse the child, that is to say, as we follow and understand what she tells us... this dog is clearly a dog that bites, that bites the genitals. The first truly long sentence... for this is a child who is a bit behind... which she pronounces in her development is to say that dogs bite the legs of bad boys, and this is right at the origin of her phobia. You can also see the relation which exists between the symbolisation of the object and the phobia. Why the dog? We will discuss that later. But what I would like to point out now is that this dog is there as an agent which removes what, initially, was more or less admitted as absent. Will we make a short-circuit of this and say that it is simply a matter, in this phobia, of a passage to the level of the law – that is to say, as I was telling you earlier, that something endowed with power is there to intervene and to justify what is absent, what is absent by way of its being taken off, bitten?

It is in this sense that I showed you, that I have tried to articulate today, a schema which allows us to take the next step, to see this thing which remains quite summary. We are doing it at every moment. Mr. Jones<sup>12</sup> tells us clearly. After all, for the child, the superego is perhaps nothing but an alibi.

Anxieties are primordial, primitive, imaginary. In a sense, he returns here to a kind of artifice. It is the compensation or the moral price – in other words, culture and all its prohibitions. It is

73 something obsolete – shielded from anything fundamental which might be there, namely, anxieties in their unconstrained state – which is, in a sense, put to rest. There is something accurate in all this, which is the mechanism of phobia. And to stretch it out as Mr. Pasche does at the end of this article I told you about<sup>13</sup>, to the point of saying that this mechanism of phobia is something which explains the death instinct, for example, or even that dream images are a way of dressing up the subject's anxieties – personalising them, one might say – that is, always returning to the same idea that this is not a misrecognition of the symbolic order... but the idea that it is a kind of dressing up, a disguise for something more fundamental... is this what I mean to tell you in bringing in this observation of phobia? No! The point of this is to notice that the phobia took more than a month to break out. It

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<sup>12</sup> A possible reference to Jones, E. (1916). *The Theory of Symbolism*. See, in particular, *Chapter IV, The Genesis of the Super-ego*, p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> A further reference to Pasche, F. & Renard, M. (1956). 'The Reality of the Object and Economic Point of View' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 37, pp. 282–285.



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took much longer – a period marked by the discovery of this child's aphallus or aphallicism and the outbreak of the phobia.

Something had to happen in the interval, which is that, firstly, the mother stopped coming because she had fallen ill and needed an operation. The mother is no longer the symbolic mother – the mother is missing. She returns, she plays with the child again. Still, nothing happens. She returns, leaning on a cane. She returns weakened. She no longer has the same presence or the same joyfulness, nor even the same relations of coming close and moving away which had founded a coupling [*accrochage*] with the child that was sufficient, which took place every eight days. And it is this moment, then, in a very distant third period, which gives birth to the discovery that thanks to these observers we may say that Oedipus does not come from the phallus, from the second rupture of the alternating rhythm of 'coming – having come' of the mother as such. The mother also needs to have appeared as someone who could lack. And her lack is inscribed in the reaction, the behaviour of the child – that is, the child is very sad, she needs to be reassured. There was no phobia. It is only when she sees her mother again in a debilitated state, leaning on a stick, sick, tired, that the dream of the dog breaks out the next day, and then the development of the phobia.

There is only one thing in the observation which is more significant and paradoxical than this. We will talk about this phobia again, about the way these therapists tackled it and what they believed they understood. I would simply like to point out in the history of the phobia, that all this at least raises the question of knowing from which moment it is, in which the mother lacks a phallus, that this something or other, which is determined and regulated through the phobia, made the phobia necessary. Why is it sufficient? This is another question which we will approach next time. There is another point, no less striking, which is that after the phobia, the war ends, the mother takes back her child, and remarries. She finds herself with a new father, and a new brother – the son of the gentleman whom the mother remarries – and at that point the brother she has suddenly acquired, and who is plainly older than her, about five years older, starts to engage in all sorts of games with her, both adorational and violent. Among these, there is the request to expose their nudity, and obviously the brother does something to her which, precisely, is wholly related to the interest he bears towards this little girl insofar as she is 'apenile'. And this is where the psychotherapist is surprised – this would have been a good opportunity for her phobia to relapse, for in the environmental theory on which Anna Freud's whole therapy is founded, it is insofar as the ego is more or less well informed about reality that discordances establish themselves.

Is it at that point, faced [*représentifié*] with her lack once again, with the presence of the man-brother, of this figure who is not only phallic, but bearer of a penis... wouldn't there be opportunity for a relapse here? Far from it. She has never been better. There is no trace, at that point, of mental troubles. She develops perfectly well. Furthermore, we know exactly why. It is that her mother obviously prefers her to this boy, but nevertheless the father is someone present enough to introduce, precisely, a new element – the element of which we have not yet spoken but which, all the same, is essentially related to the function of phobia, a symbolic element beyond the relation of power or powerlessness with the mother. This element is the father, strictly speaking, who in his relations with the mother frees [from her] the notion of power. In short, it is that which, on the contrary, appears to have been filled [*sature*]

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by the phobia – namely, what she fears in the castrating animal as such – which turned out to be absolutely necessary, turned out to have been the essential element of articulation which allowed this child to traverse the serious crisis in which she was standing in the face of maternal impotence. She rediscovers, there, her need, filled by maternal presence and, moreover, by the fact that something... of which, it is a matter of knowing whether the therapist sees as clearly as all that... that is, that there are perhaps all sorts of pathological possibilities in this relation in which she is already a father's daughter, for we might notice, in a different light, that she alone has become something which is worth more than the brother.

In any case, she will surely become the phallus-sister, of which we so often speak, of which it is a matter of knowing, in what follows, the extent to which she will not be implicated in this imaginary function. But for the moment, there is no essential need to fill in through the articulation of phallic fantasy. The father is there. He is sufficient. He suffices to maintain, among the three terms of the mother-child-phallus relation, a sufficient gap for the subject to not have to go out of her way – she does not in any way have to do her bit in maintaining this gap. How is this gap maintained? By which path, which identification, which artifice? This is what we will start to try to tackle next time, by taking up this observation again a little more – that is to say, introducing you, in this way, to what is most distinctive in the pre-oedipal object relation, that is, the birth of the fetish object.

**Session of 19th December 1956**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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The analytic conception of the object relation has already taken on a certain form in history. What I am trying to show you takes up the issue again in a way that is partly different and partly the same but, of course, only insofar as it is introduced into a different system which gives it a different meaning. It is appropriate, at the point we have reached, to correctly and emphatically punctuate how this object relation is placed by the group that places it more and more – and I have noticed this recently in re-reading certain articles – at the centre of their conception of analysis. We must indicate in what sense this formulation – precipitated, affirmed, and even, up to a point, affirmed simultaneously, over the years – has led to something which is now very firmly articulated. In certain articles, I sometimes wished, ironically, that someone would successfully defend the object relation such as it is conceived in a certain orientation. My wish has since been granted abundantly. More than one has given us this formulation – and more specifically, a formulation which had been going rather soft on the part of he who introduced it with regard to obsessional neurosis. But for some others, we could say that there has been an effort of clarification in the prevailing conception. And in the article on motricity<sup>1</sup> in the object relation in the January–June 1955 issue of the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, Mr Michel Fain gives us a lively example which, I think, responds to the summary of it which I will give you. When you read the article, it will surely seem to you that things go much farther than the idea which I am only able to give you in an inevitably shortened fashion with these few words.

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At any rate, I hope that you will see to what extent it is true that the relation between the analysed [*analysé*] and the analyser [*analysant*] is conceived from the start like the one which is established between a subject – the patient – and an external object – the analyst. And, to express it in our vocabulary, the analyst is here conceived as real.

All the tension of the analytic situation is conceived on the basis of this ‘couple’ which, all by itself, is an organising element of the analytic development, which is to say that between a subject who is reclined – or not – on a sofa, and the external object, which is the analyst, all that can, in principle, be established or manifested is what is called the primitive drive relation, which should normally – as is presupposed in the development of the analytic relation – manifest itself through motor activity. It is in terms of the faint traces, carefully observed, of the stages of the subject’s motor reactions, that we find the last word on what happens at the level of the drive, which will somehow be there, localised, felt by the analyst as alive. It is insofar as the subject contains his movements that he is forced to contain them within the relation such as it is established by analytic convention. It is here, at this level, that this manifestation is concerned, that it is located in the mind of the analyst – that is to say, it is here that the drive emerges. In the end, the situation is, at base, conceived as being only possible [for the subject] to externalise through an erotic aggression, which does not manifest itself because it is agreed that it will not manifest – but somehow it is desirable that the erection pops up, so to speak, at any moment. It is precisely insofar as the motor manifestation of the drive cannot produce itself within the analytic convention – that is, the [reclining] position given by the rule – that we will be allowed to see that what

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<sup>1</sup> See Marty, P. & Fain, M. 1955. *Importance du rôle de la motricité*. in *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, vol. 19, pp. 205 - 322. The paper was presented at the 17th Congress of Romance-Language Psychoanalysts held in November, 1954.

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interferes with this situation, considered as constitutive, is quite precisely formulated for us as follows: that superimposed on the relation with the external object there is a relation with an internal object. This is how it is expressed in the article I just mentioned to you.

79 It is inasmuch as the subject has a certain relation with an internal object, which is always considered to be the person present but caught somehow in the imaginary mechanisms already established in the subject... it is [inasmuch] as a certain discord is introduced between this imaginary object and the real object, that the analyst will be evaluated, gauged, at every moment, and will tailor his interventions according to the discord between this internal object of this fantasmatic relation to someone who is, in principle, the person present, since no one comes into play in the analytic situation besides those who are there. And the notion that is emphasised by one of these authors, who is followed, in this case, by all the others... [the notion] of the neurotic distance that the subject imposes on the object refers quite precisely to this analytic situation. It is entirely insofar as, at some point, the fantasmatic object, the internal object, will finally be – at least, suspended in this position and experienced this way by the subject – reduced to the real distance which is that between the subject and the analyst. It is insofar as the subject gets hold of his analyst as a real presence. Here the authors go very far. I have already alluded several times to the fact that one of these authors – it's true – at a postulant stage of his career, spoke of a crucial turning point of an analysis at the moment when... and it was not a metaphor, his analysand was able to smell him. It was not a matter of smelling him psychologically... when he had perceived his smell. This sort of foregrounding or bringing to the surface of the relation of 'scenting' is, I must say, one of the mathematical consequences of such a conception of the analytic relation. It is quite certain that in a restricted position within which, little by little, a distance must be attained, a distance which is conceived as active, present, real, vis-à-vis the analyst... it is quite certain that one of the most direct modes of relations in this position, which is a real and simply restricted position, must be this mode of distant apprehension given by scenting. I am not just using this as an example. This has been repeated several times and it seems that in the current environment one tends more and more to give pivotal importance to such modes of apprehension. This, then, is how the analytic position is thought within this situation which is that of a real relation of two figures in a closed space, within which they are separated by a sort of barrier, which is a barrier of convention [*barrière conventionnelle*], and something must be realised...

I am speaking of the theoretical formulation of things. We will see afterwards where this leads in terms of practical consequences. It is quite clear that such an exorbitant conception cannot be pushed to its ultimate consequences. On the other hand, it is quite clear that if what I am teaching you is true then this is not actually the situation. Of course, it is not enough to conceive it as such for it to be as we conceive of it. We will handle it crookedly due to the way we conceive of it, all the same, but what it really is remains. It is something which I tried to express to you through this schema<sup>2</sup> which interposes and interlaces the symbolic relation and the imaginary relation, the one serving as a sort of filter of the other. And, insofar as we misrecognise it, it is quite clear that this situation is not real. It is therefore something which ends up manifesting the inadequacy of this conception. But, inversely, the

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<sup>2</sup> Lacan is referring to 'Schema L', reproduced in our translation of the session of 21st November 1956.

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inadequacy of this conception may have some consequences for how to bring the whole situation to a successful conclusion. This is an example of a kind that I will emphasise for you today to show you in what this can, in fact, result. But here, already, there is a situation conceived as a real situation, as a situation that reduces the imaginary to the real, an operation of reduction within which a certain number of phenomena occur which will allow us to situate the different stages where the subject has remained more or less adherent or fixed to this imaginary relation and to, we might say, exhaust the various positions – essentially imaginary positions, as we have shown, at the forefront of the pregenital relation – that are becoming increasingly essential in what is explored in analysis.

The characteristic of such a conception, to be sure, is that the only thing... and it isn't nothing, since everything is there... the only thing which is not elucidated at all can be expressed as follows. It is simply that we do not know why we speak, in this situation. We really do not know. This does not mean that we could do without it. Nothing is said regarding the function, strictly speaking, of language and of speech in this position.

Equally, by the way, what we will see coming to light is the very special value given... this, again, you will find in the cited authors and texts, punctuated in the most precise manner... that only the impulsive verbalisations, the sort of cries addressed to the analyst, in the style of “Why are you not answering me?”, ultimately represent something which is valuable only insofar as the words are impulsive. And to signal a verbalisation only has importance insofar as it is impulsive, only insofar as it is a motor manifestation. In this operation of adjusting, we might say, to the distance of the internal object [*objet interne*]<sup>3</sup>, to which all the technique will submit, in a sense... what will the result be? Of what does our schema allow us to conceive in what might happen? This relation [  $a' \rightarrow a$  ] concerns the imaginary relation, that is, the subject's relation – more or less discordant, broken down, exposed to splitting – to a unifying image which is that of the small other, which is a narcissistic image. It is fundamentally along this line that the imaginary relation [  $a' \rightarrow a$  ] is established. Likewise, it is on this line [  $A \rightarrow S$  ] – which is not a line since it is necessary to establish it – that this relation to the Other occurs, not simply the Other which is there, which is literally the place of speech. So long as there is, already structured in the speaking relation, this beyond, this Other that is beyond even this other which you apprehend imaginarily, this supposed Other, which is the subject as such, the subject in which your speech is constituted... because it can, as speech, not only receive and perceive speech, but respond to it... It is along this line that all that is of the order of transference, strictly speaking, is established, with the imaginary playing precisely the role of filter, even of obstacle.

Of course, in every neurosis, the subject already has his own adjustments [*réglage*], so to speak. It's something that serves a purpose for him, in effect, this adjustment in relation to the image. It's something which helps him to hear and, at the same time, to not hear what is there to be heard in the place of speech. Let us say no more than this: if our entire effort, our entire interest bears solely on what is here, [  $a' \rightarrow a$  ], in this transverse position in relation to the advent of speech [  $A \rightarrow S$  ] ... if we misrecognise everything of the relation between the imaginary tension [  $a' \rightarrow a$  ] and that which must

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the phrase ‘internal object’ translates ‘*objet intérieur*’. Here, Lacan adopts the variation ‘*objet interne*’ from Marty and Fain, which has a stronger association to Melanie Klein's work in object relations theory.

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81 be realised and come to light in the unconscious symbolic relation [  $A \rightarrow S$  ]... because this [relation between them] is precisely the entire analytic doctrine which is there in a potential state, and there is something which must allow it to be completed, allow it to be realised as history just as much as avowal... if we abandon the notion of the function of the imaginary relation in relation to this impossibility of symbolic accession which constitutes neurosis... if we do not constantly think each one in terms of the other... what we can expect there to be said, in principle, is precisely what these authors, the advocates of this conception, call the object relation. And this distance towards the object is precisely regulated in view of a certain end...

If we are only interested in [this distance] to destroy it, in a sense, supposing that this were possible in focusing solely on it – to arrive somewhere, at a certain result, then let it be enough to see that we already do have results. Subjects who have been through this style of apprehension, of trial, have already been handed to us in person. There is something absolutely certain: that at least in a certain number of cases – and, precisely, cases of obsessional neurosis – this way of situating the development of the analytic situation wholly within the pursuit of the reduction of this famous distance, which would be considered characteristic of the obsessional neurotic's object relation, we end up with what could be called paradoxical perverse reactions. For example, the explosion, the precipitation... which is most unusual and which hardly existed in the analytic literature before the foregrounding of this technical method... of a homosexual attachment for an object which is, as it were, absolutely paradoxical, which in the subject's relation remains there in the manner of a sort of artifact, a kind of jellification of an image, a thing which has crystallised, precipitated around objects which find themselves within the subject's reach, and which can present, for a while, quite a lasting persistence. This is not so surprising if we take up the relation of the imaginary mother-child-phallus triad. I pushed things far enough last time for you to have seen a line of research take shape. To be sure, this is to hold us at the prelude of putting the symbolic relation into play, which will only arrive with the function of the fourth, which is that of the father, introduced by the dimension of Oedipus. We are here in a triangle which is in itself pre-oedipal. I am emphasising this. It is only isolated here in an abstract manner. Its development only interests us insofar as it is subsequently taken up in the set of four when this paternal function comes into play with this, let us say, fundamental disappointment of the child's, not only in his recognising that he is not the mother's sole object... we left as an open  
82 question how he recognises it... but also his noticing that the possible object... and this is accentuated to a greater or lesser degree from case to case... the mother's interest is the phallus. The first question concerning the recognition of the mother-child relation is this perception, in the second place, that the mother is, in fact, deprived, [that she] lacks this object herself. This is the point we reached last time. I showed you this by evoking the transitory case of a phobia in a very young child<sup>4</sup>, which allowed us to study it in a very favourable manner because it is the limit of the the oedipal relation which we could observe following a certain double disappointment – that is, an imaginary disappointment, the child locating the phallus she is missing herself and then, in a second stage of the perception, that the mother – this mother who is at the border of the symbolic and the real – is also missing the phallus. And the

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<sup>4</sup> See Schurmann, A. (1946) *Observation of a Phobia. in Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, vol. 4, pp. 253 - 270.*

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emergence [*éclosion*]... the child's call to sustain this somehow unsustainable relation, and the intervention of this fantasmatic being – the dog – which intervenes here as the one who is in some sense, strictly speaking in charge of the whole situation, the one who bites, the one who punishes, the one thanks to whom this whole situation is thinkable, symbolically livable, at least temporarily... what happens, then? What position is possible when this harnessing of the three imaginary objects happens to be undone? There is more than one possible solution, and the solution is always called for, in a normal or abnormal situation. What happens in the normal oedipal situation?

It is through the intermediary of a certain rivalry punctuated by identification, in an alternation of the subject's relations with the father, that something may be established, which will make the subject... in a sense, in a number of different ways, according to his or her own position as a girl or as a boy... come to bestow [*conférer*], one might say... for the boy, it is absolutely clear... bestow, within certain boundaries, precisely those boundaries which introduce him to the symbolic relation... bestow this phallic power. And in a certain way, when I told you the other day that for the mother, the child as a real being was taken to be a symbol of her lack of object, of her imaginary appetite for the phallus... the normal way out of this situation can be conceived as being this, precisely realised at the level of the child – namely, that the child symbolically receives the phallus which he needs, but which, for him to need it, he must previously have been threatened by the castrating agent, which is originally and essentially the paternal agent. It is by a constitution at the symbolic level, the level of a sort of pact, of the right to the phallus, that this virile identification, which forms the basis of a normative oedipal relation, is established for the child. But, even here, I am making a somewhat sideways remark. What does this result in? There is something quite strange, almost paradoxical, in the original formulations written in Freud's name on the distinction between the anaclitic relation and the narcissistic relation.

83 In the Oedipus, this libidinal relation... In adolescents, Freud tells us that there are two types of love object: the anaclitic love object which bears the mark of a primitive dependence on the mother; and the narcissistic love object, modelled on an image which is the image of the subject himself, which is the narcissistic image. It is this image which we have tried to elaborate here by showing its roots in the specular relation to the other. The word 'anaclitic', even though we owe it to Freud, is really quite badly chosen, for in Greek it really does not have the meaning Freud gives it, which is indicated by the German word *Anlehnung*... relation... a relation of supporting against. This, by the way, lends itself to all sorts of misunderstandings, some readers having pushed this 'supporting against' right up to being something which is ultimately a sort of defense reaction. But, let us leave this aside. In fact, if we read Freud we really do see that it is a question of this need for a support and for this something which is effectively just asking to be opened towards a relation of dependency. If we push further, we see that there are strange contradictions in the way Freud formulates the opposition between these two modes of relation, anaclitic and narcissistic. Very curiously, he is led to speak of a need *to be* loved, much more than the need *to* love, in the anaclitic relation. Inversely, and quite paradoxically, the narcissist suddenly appears in a light which surprises us. For, in truth, [Freud] is attracted by an element of activity inherent in the narcissist's very specific behaviour – he appears active precisely inasmuch as he still, to a certain extent, misrecognises the other. Freud decorates [*revêt*] him with the attribute of the need to love, which creates, suddenly and paradoxically, a kind of natural place for what, in another vocabulary,



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we would call oblativ [love], which can be nothing if not disconcerting.

I think there's something to come back to here but once again it is in the misrecognition of the positioning of intersubjective elements that these paradoxical perspectives take up their origin and, at the same time, their justification. What is called the anaclitic relation in the sense that it interests us – that is, at the level of its persistence in adults – is always conceived as a sort of pure and simple throwback, a prolongation of what we call an infantile position. If, effectively, the subject who holds this position... which, in the article on libidinal types<sup>5</sup>, Freud calls nothing more and nothing less than the erotic position, which goes to show that it is actually the most open position... what makes us misrecognise its essence is precisely not realising that inasmuch as the subject acquires the phallus as such in the symbolic relation, and becomes invested in it as belonging to him and as being for him legitimately wielded [*d'un exercice légitime*], so to speak, he becomes, in relation to the successor of the maternal object, to this refund object, marked by the relation to the primitive mother who will always in principle be, in the normal position of the Oedipus, from the very origin of the Freudian account, the object for the male subject – that is to say, he becomes the bearer of this object of desire for the woman. The position becomes anaclitic inasmuch as it is on *him*, on the phallus of which he is henceforth the master, the representative, the custodian – it is insofar as the woman depends on him that the position is anaclitic. The relation of dependence is established insofar as, identifying himself with the other, with the objectal partner, he is indispensable to this partner, that it is he who satisfies her, and he alone, because he is in principle the only custodian of this object, which is the object of desire for the mother. It is in accordance with the completion of the oedipal position that the subject finds himself in the position which we could call optimal, in a certain perspective, in relation to the refund object which will be the successor of the primitive maternal object, and in relation to which he himself will become the indispensable object and, knowing himself to be indispensable, a part of the erotic life of precisely those subjects participating in this libidinal category is entirely conditioned by the need, once experienced and assumed by the other, of the maternal woman as needing to find his object in him, which is the phallic object. This is what essentially constitutes the anaclitic relation as opposed to the narcissistic relation.

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This is but a parenthesis intended to show the usefulness of always putting into play this dialectic of the relation – here [between] the three primary objects, around which there remains, for the moment, apart from in the general notion, something which contains them all and binds them in the symbolic relation... around which, for the moment, the fourth term is localised: the father insofar as he introduces the symbolic relation here, the possibility of transcending the relation of frustration, or lack of the object, through the relation of castration – which is something else entirely – that is, who introduces this lack of object into a dialectic, into something which gives and takes, who establishes, invests, bestows the dimension of a pact of prohibition, a law – the prohibition of incest, in particular – into this whole dialectic. The outcome will be precisely this: at the moment when things enter into discord, disconnection, into the destruction of connections, for one reason or another, in the progression of historical incidents in the child's relation to the mother, relative to a third object, a

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<sup>5</sup> See Freud, S. (1932). *Libidinal types*. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. 1, pp. 3 - 6.

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phallic object, which is at the same time what the woman is missing and what the child discovers to be missing from the mother... there are other modes of re-establishing this consistency. These modes are imaginary modes, atypical imaginary modes which consist in the child's identification with the mother, for example, proceeding from an imaginary shift of the child in relation to his or her maternal partner, from the choice of her place, the assumption of this lack for her around the phallic object as such.

85 The schema I am giving you is none other than the schema of fetishist perversion. This is an example of a solution, if you will, but there is a more direct way. In other words, other solutions exist to access this lack of object, which is already, at the imaginary level, the human way of realising man's relation to his existence, that is, to something that can be put in the place of cause, which gives us something different from the animal and from all the possible animal relations at the imaginary level – that is to say, within certain conditions, punctuated, extra-historical, such as the paroxysm of perversion always presents itself. Perversion has this property of realising a certain mode of access to this beyond of the image of the other which characterises the human realm, but it is realised, simply, in a moment like those always produced by the paroxysms of perversions, which are, in a sense, syncopated moments within the subject's history. There are a number of convergences or ascents [*montée*] towards the moment, which is perhaps very significantly qualified as a passage to the act<sup>6</sup>, and during this passage to the act, something is realised, which is a fusion, an access to this beyond which is, strictly speaking, this trans-individual dimension which the Freudian anaclitic theory, formulated as such, tells us to call Eros, this union of two individuals, each torn off from himself and, for a moment, more or less fragile, transitory, even virtual, constituting this unity. This unity is realised at certain moments of perversion, and what constitutes perversion is precisely that it can only ever be realised in these moments, which are not arranged symbolically. The subject eventually finds his object, his exclusive object which is – he says it himself – all the more exclusive and perfectly satisfying for its being inanimate. At least this way he will have the peace of mind that it will not show any disappointment. When the subject loves a slipper, we have a subject who, so to speak, truly has the object of his desires within reach – an object devoid of any subjective, intersubjective, even trans-subjective, properties, is a safer bet. The fetishist solution is, in terms of realising the condition of lack as such, indisputably one of the most conceivable conditions within this perspective, and it *is* realised. We also know that, given the trademark of the imaginary relation is to be always perfectly reciprocal since it is a mirror relation, we must expect to see in the fetishist, from time to time, the appearance of the position, not of identification with the mother, but identification with the object. This is effectively what we will see happen over the course of an analysis of a fetishist, for this position as such is always the most unsatisfying one there is. It is not enough that for a brief moment the fascinating illumination of the object which had been the maternal object is something that satisfies the subject. It is not enough for an erotic balance to be established around this. And indeed, for now, if it is with the object that he identifies, he will lose what we might call his primitive object, namely, the mother. He will consider himself a destructive object for the mother. It is this perpetual game, this sort of profound double vision which marks all the

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<sup>6</sup> This appears to be Lacan's first use of the phrase "*passage à l'acte*".

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apprehension of the fetishist manifestation, which we shall go into later.

But it is so visible and patent that someone such as Phyllis Greenacre<sup>7</sup>, who seriously attempted to deal with the foundations of the fetishist relation in depth, tells us that we seem to be in the presence of a subject who could show us his own image in two opposed mirrors with excessive swiftness. She says it like this without, at that point, knowing why – for this comes at an awkward moment – but she had, all of a sudden, the feeling that it was this: he is never where he is for the very good reason that he has left his place – he has gone, in a specular relation, from the mother to the phallus. He alternates between being one and the other, a position which only stabilises provided that he seizes this sort of simultaneously unique, privileged and impermanent symbol, which is the precise object of fetishism – that is, something which symbolises the phallus. It is therefore at the level of analogous relations – at least, those which we are able to conceive as essentially being of a perverse nature – that the results manifest themselves as only fleeting, at least when faced with a certain way of handling the anaclitic relation if it is focused entirely on the object relation as something involving only the imaginary and the real, and if it adjusts the whole adaptation of the imaginary relation according to the supposed real of the presence of the analyst. In my Rome Report I alluded somewhere<sup>8</sup> to the mode of object relation by comparing it to what I called a sort of bundling<sup>9</sup>, pushed to its very limits due to a psychological ordeal. This short passage might have gone unnoticed, but in a note I enlighten the reader and specify that bundling is something very precise concerning certain customs which still exist in these sorts of cultural islands where ancient customs persist. But we already find in Stendhal, who recounts this as a kind of specificity of Swiss fantasists or those from the south of Germany, in different places, which are not without interest from a geographical point of view. This bundling consists quite precisely in the conception of amorous relations, in a technique, a pattern of relations between male and female which consists in permitting, under certain conditions, that another partner who, for example, approaches the group in a special way... that someone in the house, generally the daughter, may, for the duration of a relation essentially established as one of hospitality, offer to share her bed, all this being tied to the condition that contact will not occur, and this is where bundling comes from. The girl is frequently wrapped in a sheet, in this type of custom, so that all of the criteria of seduction are there, aside from the last. While this may pass as simply being a pleasing whimsical custom which we may regret not participating in – it could be amusing! – it deserves a certain amount of attention, for ultimately we wouldn't have to force anything to say that the analytic situation, seventeen or eighteen years after Freud's death, is paradoxical, and it ends up being conceived, formalised like this. Here there is the report from a session written in 1933 or 1934, with all of the patient's movements

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Greenacre, P. (1953). *Certain Relationships Between Fetishism and Faulty Development of the Body Image*. in *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Child*, vol. 8, pp. 79 - 98.

<sup>8</sup> See Lacan, J. (1953). 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'. From note 40 in Bruce Fink's translation: "This term refers to the custom, of Celtic origin and still practiced by certain Bible sects in America, of allowing a couple engaged to be married, or even a passing guest and the family's daughter, to spend the night together in the same bed, provided that they keep their clothes on. The word derives its meaning from the fact that the girl is usually wrapped up in sheets. (Quincey speaks of it. See also the book by Aurand le Jeune on this practice among the Amish.) Thus the myth of Tristan and Isolde, and even the complex that it represents, now underwrites the analyst in his quest for the soul destined for mystifying nuptials via the extenuation of its instinctual fantasies."

<sup>9</sup> English in the original.

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during the session, oriented insofar as she manifests something – this urge – which is made manifest to a greater or lesser degree, at more or less of a distance from the analyst, who is there behind her back. There is nonetheless something rather striking here, and all the more because this text<sup>10</sup> was published since I wrote my report<sup>11</sup>, which proves that I did not force anything in saying that the practice of analysis, in a certain conception, was being reduced to this aim and to these psychological consequences. I am pointing out to you that we find these paradoxes in the habits and customs of certain cultural islands. There is a Protestant sect on which someone has done some rather advanced studies. It is a sect of Dutch origin which has conserved in its relations, in a very precise way, the local customs related to a religious unity – it is the Amish sect. It is quite clear that all this brings out misunderstood residues, certainly, but we find their symbolic formulation to be perfectly coordinated, deliberate, organised into an entire tradition which one could call religious, even symbolic.

It is clear that all that we know about the practice of courtly love, and the entire sphere in which it was localised in the Middle Ages, involves this sort of very rigorous technical elaboration of seduction, which included long, restrained rehearsals in the presence of the love object and which, in fact, targeted the realisation of this beyond which is searched for in love – this properly erotic beyond. As soon as we hold the key to these techniques, to all these traditions, we find signs of their emergence perfectly well formulated in other areas of culture. This is a class of research in amorous achievement which has been laid out, again and again, in human history in a completely conscious manner. As for what is organised, what is effectively obtained, we do not have to pose the question here – if it aimed at something attempting to go beyond the physiological short-circuit, if one can say it this way, there is no doubt that it has a certain interest. This is not something which is introduced here without a certain reference which allows us to exactly situate both this metaphor and, at the same time, the possibility of incorporating at different levels – that is, more or less consciously – what we are doing with the standard use of the imaginary relation as such, perhaps itself employed deliberately... the standard use of, we might say, practices which may appear perverse to naïve eyes, and which are actually not, no more than any regulation of seduction in a defined realm of ‘customs and patterns’<sup>12</sup>, as we call them. This is something which deserves to be signalled as a point of reference, to let us know where we situate ourselves.

Now let us take a case which is developed in the journal cited last time<sup>13</sup>, which brings in honest questions from members of a certain group about the object relation. We have, here, under the pen of a person who has climbed the ladder in the analytic community, the observation of what she rightly calls a phobic subject. This phobic subject appears as someone whose activity has been reduced to the point of a kind of almost complete inactivity. The subject’s most manifest symptom is the fear of being too

<sup>10</sup> See Lebovici, R. (1956). *Perversion sexuelle transitoire au cours d’un traitement psychanalytique*. in *Bulletin d’activités de l’association des psychanalystes de Belgique*, vol. 25, pp. 1 - 17. The paper appears to have been presented at the 19th Psycho-Analytical Congress in Geneva, July 1955.

<sup>11</sup> A reference to Lacan’s ‘Rome Report’, presented at the Rome Congress held at the *Instituto di Psicologia della Università di Roma*, 26th - 27th September 1953 – see Lacan, J. (1953). *The Function and Field of Speech and Language*. in *Écrits*.

<sup>12</sup> English in the original.

<sup>13</sup> See Lebovici, R. (1956). *Perversion sexuelle transitoire au cours d’un traitement psychanalytique*. in *Bulletin d’activités de l’association des psychanalystes de Belgique*, vol. 25, pp. 1 - 17.

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tall; he always displays an extremely hunched posture. Almost everything has become impossible in his relations with the professional milieu. He leads a reduced life sheltered from family, but nevertheless not without having a mistress, who is older than him, provided to him by his mother. And it is in this constellation that the female analyst in question seizes him and starts to broach the issue. The subject's diagnosis is made astutely, and the diagnosis of phobia does not suffer from the paradox of the fact that the phobogenic object, at first blush, does not appear to be external.

89 However, at one point we see a recurring dream appear which is the model of an externalised anxiety. In this particular case the object is only discovered on the second try. It is precisely the phobic object itself, which we know to be perfectly recognisable. It is the substitute for the paternal image, which is completely lacking in this case. It is the image of a man in armour, and equipped with a particularly aggressive instrument, which is none other than a tube of Fly-tox<sup>14</sup> to destroy all the little phobic objects – insects – which is marvellously illustrated here. And it turns out that being chased and suffocated in the dark by this armoured man is what the subject is afraid of, and this fear is not negligible in the general balance of this phobic structure. We obtain, after a while, the emergence of this image. The female analyst in charge of the subject here gives us an observation entitled: “Of a perverse reaction or of the appearance of a perversion during an analytic treatment”. It would not be forcing anything... transitory sexual perversion... on my part to introduce this question of perverse reaction, since the author puts the accent on this as being the interest of the observation. This is the interest and the author is not at ease... Not only is the author not at ease, but she has noticed very well that the reaction she calls perverse – it is, of course, a label – appeared in precise circumstances. In any case, the fact that the author poses the question around this moment proves she is aware that this is where the question is, starting from the moment when, having finally seen the phobogenic object come to light – the armoured man – she interprets it as being the phallic mother.

Why the phallic mother when it is really a man in armour with all its heraldic character? Why the phallic mother? Over the course of this entire observation, the questions the author is asking herself are reported with, I believe, a fidelity which is undeniable, and quite well emphasised, at any rate. The author asks herself the following question: did I not make an interpretation just now which was incorrect? since it was after the interpretation that this perverse reaction appeared, and we then became engaged in no less than a three-year period, in which the subject developed, in stages, firstly, a perverse fantasy which consisted in his imagining himself being seen urinating by a woman who, very aroused, solicits him for sexual relations, and then a reversal of this position, that is, he, the subject, observing, whilst masturbating or not masturbating, a urinating woman, then, in a third stage, the effective realisation of this position, namely, the discovery of a small space in a cinema, happily equipped with skylights thanks to which he could effectively observe women in the adjacent toilets, while he stayed in his own cubby hole.

90 We have something here which the author herself is questioning, the determining value of a certain mode of interpretation in relation to the precipitation of a thing which first of all took the shape of a fantasmatic crystallisation of something which is evidently part of the subject's constitution – that is,

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<sup>14</sup> Common insecticide in the 1950s–60s.

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not the phallic mother, but the mother in her relation to the phallus. But the author herself gives us the key to the idea that there is a phallic mother involved. The author interrogates herself at one point on the general progress of the treatment, and she observes that she herself had ultimately been much more prohibiting or prohibitive than the mother ever was. Everything goes to show that the entity of the phallic mother is produced here due to what the author herself calls her own counter-transferential positions. If we follow the analysis closely we will have no doubt whatsoever [about this], for during the development of this imaginary relation – of course, insofar as it was developed by these analytic stumbles – we can see, firstly, the analyst intervening in regards to a dream where the subject, finding himself in the presence of someone from his past, towards whom he claims he has amorous urges, says he is impeded by the presence of another female subject who has also played a role in his history – a woman whom he saw in his childhood urinate before him at a much more advanced stage of his childhood, namely, when he was past the age of thirteen. The analyst intervenes in the following manner: “No doubt you prefer to interest yourself in a woman by watching her urinate than to make the effort of approaching another woman who you may like but who happens to be married.” In making this intervention, the analyst thinks she is reintroducing the truth in a way which is slightly forced, for the male figure is only indicated in the dream through associations, that is, the supposed husband of the mother. The husband, who comes in to reintroduce the Oedipus complex, intervenes in a way which has all the marks of a provocation, especially if we know that it was the analyst’s husband who sent the subject to her.

There is precisely something of a turning point at this moment. It is this moment that produces the progressive reversal of the fantasy of observation, from being observed to being the one observing. Secondly, as if this were not enough, the analyst responds to a request from the subject to slow down the pace of the sessions: “Here you are showing your passive positions because you know very well that in any case you will not get it”. At this moment the fantasy crystallises completely, which proves that there is something more here. The subject, who understands quite a lot in his relations of the impossibility of attaining the feminine object, ends up developing these fantasies inside of the treatment itself – fear of urinating on the sofa, etc. He begins to have these reactions which manifest a certain reduction of the distance to the real object. He begins to spy on the analyst’s legs – which the analyst notes, by the way, with a certain satisfaction. There is, in effect, at the edge of the real situation, something of the constitution of the – not phallic but – *aphallic* mother.

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If there is anything which is effectively the principle of the establishment of the fetishist position, it is quite precisely that the subject stops at a certain level in his investigation and his observation of the woman insofar as she has or doesn’t have the organ here in question. We find ourselves, therefore, in a position which, little by little, ends up making the subject say “My God, the only solution would be to sleep with my analyst”. He says this. At that point the analyst starts to find that this is getting on her nerves a little, and makes this remark towards him – after which she anxiously asks herself “Was I right to say that?” She tells him “You are amusing yourself for now, making yourself afraid of something which you know very well will never happen”. Anybody can question the degree of mastery involved in an interpretation such as this, which is a slightly brutal reminder of the conventions of the analytic situation. It is completely in accord with the notion we may have of the analytic position as being a real

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position. This brings things back into focus. It is quite precisely after this intervention that the subject definitively passes to the act and finds the perfect place, the elected place in the real – namely, the way the loos are set up on the Champs Elysées – where he finds himself, this time, really at the correct distance in reality, separated by a wall from the object of his observation, which he can observe this time, clearly not as a phallic mother, but very precisely as a phallic mother, and suspend there, for a while, all the erotic activity which is so satisfying that he declares that until the moment of this discovery he has lived as an automaton but that now everything has changed. This is where things stand.

I simply wanted you to get a sense that assuredly the notion of the distance to the analyst–object *qua* real object, and the so–called notion of reference, can be something which is not without effect. These are, ultimately, perhaps not the most desirable effects. I am not telling you how this treatment terminates. Every detail is so rich in pedagogical value that one would have to examine it meticulously. The last session is avoided. The subject gets an operation on some varicose vein as well– it’s all there... the timid attempt to access castration, and a certain freedom which can spring from it, is even indicated there – after which it is judged that this is sufficient. The subject goes back to his mistress, the same one he had at the beginning, the one who is fifteen years older than him. And since he no longer speaks of her large size, his phobia is considered to be healed. Unfortunately, starting then, he is occupied by one thing only – the size of his shoes. Sometimes they are too large and he loses his balance, or they are too small and squeeze his feet – in such a way that the shift, the transformation, of the phobia is accomplished. After all, why not consider this to be the end of the analytic work? In any event, from the experimental point of view there is something which is certainly not devoid of interest. The peak, of course, of access to supposed comfort, to the real object, is given as if there were almost a sign of recognition. I am speaking, to those in the know, of the moment when the subject perceives, in the presence of the analyst, a smell of urine – this being considered as the moment when the distance to the real object... throughout the observations it is pointed out that it is here, the point on which the entire neurotic relation fails... when the distance is finally right. This, of course, coincides with the peak, the culmination, of the perversion. When I say perversion, let me tell you... it is less of a perversion and more that the author conceals something from herself. We should not consider this a perversion, strictly speaking, but rather an artefact. These things, though they can be permanent and very durable, are nonetheless artefacts that are susceptible to rupture or dissolution, sometimes quite suddenly. After a certain time, an usher walks in on the subject. The mere fact of being caught by the usher makes the visits to this particularly appropriate location, which the real happened to offer him at just the right moment, drop off overnight. The real always offers us everything we need at just the right moment, when we have finally been adjusted, by the correct means, to the correct distance.

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**Session of 9th January 1957**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV



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Today we will dive into a problem which, if we had proceeded step by step, we would usually have encountered much sooner in our discourse. It is that of the most problematic perversion which exists in the analytic perspective, namely, female homosexuality. Why would I proceed in this way? I would say that there is an element of contingency in this. It is certain that we won't be able to proceed with an examination of the object relation this year without encountering the female object and you know that the problem is not knowing exactly how we encounter the female object in analysis. Analysis tells us enough about it to enlighten us when the subject of this encounter is not natural.

I sufficiently demonstrated that in the first half of these seminars last trimester by showing you that the female subject, in her encounters, is always destined for a sort of reunion which necessarily positions her, in relation to the man, in this ambiguity of natural and symbolic relations which is exactly that with which I am trying to demonstrate the whole of the analytic dimension. The problem is surely to know what the female object thinks about this, and what the female object thinks about it is even less natural than the way in which the male subject approaches her. What the female object thinks about this... that is, starting from her first contacts with the natural and primordial object of desire, the maternal breast, what is her path? How does the female object become involved in this dialectic? I am not calling her an object today for nothing – it is clear that this object must come into effect at some point. Only, it takes this very unnatural position of an object, since it is a figurative position which is only worth qualifying as such because it is a position which is taken by a subject.

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Female homosexuality has taken on in all analysis a particularly exemplary value, in what it has been able to reveal of the stages, the progression and halts in this progression, which might mark the woman's fate in this natural relationship, biological at the outset, but which does not cease to bear on the symbolic level, on the level of the subject's assumption, insofar as it is itself caught in the symbolic chain. Indeed, it is here that the woman is concerned. And it is precisely insofar as she has to make a choice – a choice that must be, in some way, as analytic experience teaches us, a compromise between what is to be attained and what could not be attained – that female homosexuality is encountered every time the discussion establishes itself on the topic of the stages the woman must go through in her symbolic progression. This, meanwhile, must lead to exhausting a certain number of texts, specifically those of Freud's that range from 1923, which you might note as the date of his article on the infantile genital organisation<sup>1</sup> in which he posits, as a principle, the primacy of phallic assumption as the end of the infantile stage of sexuality, a typical phase for the boy as for the girl<sup>2</sup>. The genital organisation is attained for one as for the other, but on a model that makes the possession or the non-possession of the phallus into the primordial differential element with which, at this level, the genital organisation of the sexes are opposed to each other. According to Freud, there is not a realisation of the male and the female at this moment, but of what is endowed with the phallic attribute, and that what is not

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<sup>1</sup> See Freud, S. (1923). *The infantile genital organization* (SE XIX), pp. 139-145.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 140 – “At the same time, the main characteristic of this ‘infantile genital organization’ is its difference from the final genital organization of the adult. This consists in the fact that, for both sexes, only one genital, namely the male one, comes into account. What is present, therefore, is not a primacy of the genitals, but a primacy of the phallus.”

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endowed with it is considered to be the equivalent of castrated<sup>3</sup>. And I will add, to specify his thought, that this organisation is the formula of an essential and terminal step of the first phase of infantile sexuality, that which is completed at the start of the latency period. Let me specify the thought. This is founded, for one sex as for the other, on a misdeal [*maldonne*]. And this misdeal is founded on the ignorance – it is not a matter of misrecognition but of ignorance – of the fertilising role of the man's semen and, on the other hand, of the existence of the female organ as such.

97 These are truly enormous claims which require an exegesis to be understood, for here there is no possibility of finding ourselves in the presence of something that can be taken at the level of real experience. I mean that, as has often been pointed out – with great confusion, for that matter – by those authors who have gone into action following this affirmation of Freud's, a great number of facts show that, in several registers of experience, all kinds of things admit the unveiling of the presence if not of the male role in the act of procreation then of the existence of the female organ, at least in the woman herself. It can hardly be contested, I believe, at least as having been realised in a certain number of cases, that there is something corresponding to vaginal localisation in the premature experience of the little girl, and that there are sensations, even a premature vaginal masturbation. And it is asked whether, in fact, this predominance of the phallic phase must be attributed to the existence of the clitoris, and whether this is a result of the libido – let us make this term synonymous with all erotogenic experience – being initially, originally and exclusively concentrated on the clitoris, and whether it perhaps only comes about after a displacement which must be long and laborious, and which necessitates quite a long detour.

I believe it is quite certain that Freud's affirmation cannot be understood in these terms. Too many altogether muddled facts allow all kinds of objections to be made against this. I will only allude to one of them, reminding you that we must admit... if we wish to conceive in a way which seems to require, by way of a certain number of premisses, and precisely those realistic premisses that hold that every type of misrecognition supposes a certain recognition in the unconscious of the coaptation of the sexes... [we must admit] that for the girl, it is only against the background of a certain denial of the existence of the vagina that there can be, precisely, this prevalence of the organ that does not belong to her as such, [that is not] her own, and it is a matter of registering this. It is on the basis of these hypotheses, taken as *a priori*, that the girl strives to trace a genesis of this phallic term. In the case of the girl, we will go into details and we will see this sort of necessity borrowed from a certain number of premisses, expressed in part by Freud himself for that matter, and he clearly shows that by the very uncertainty of the last occurrence she refers to – for the facts on which she bases herself, this primordial experience of the vaginal organ, are very prudent, reserved, even – that for her, it is indeed a question of a sort of reconstruction, required by premisses which are theoretical premisses stemming from a dead end, [which is] the way that Freud's affirmation should be understood, founded on his experience, and which he advances, moreover, with prudence, with that portion of uncertainty, even, which is so characteristic of his presentation of this discovery, but which is no less affirmed as being primordial, and even as necessary to take as a fixed point, a pivot around which the theoretical

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<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 144 – “The lack of a penis is regarded as a result of castration, and so now the child is faced with the task of coming to terms with castration in relation to himself.”

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interpretation itself must be developed. This is what we will try to do, on the basis of this paradoxical affirmation of the term ‘phallicism’, between these affirmations of Freud’s at the point in his work at which they occur, and the prolongations which he gives them when, in 1931,<sup>4</sup> he writes something even more unbelievable about feminine sexuality. At the same time, an extremely active debate starts up, a harvest of speculations, such that this fact is recorded by [inaudible]<sup>5</sup> and also by Jones<sup>6</sup>. And here, there is a real progression of approximations, which is exactly what I had to devote myself to during this vacation, and I would say of it that it appeared to me to be extremely difficult to summarise without distortion, because what characterises it is surely its unmastered character.

We will have to exhaust this profoundly unmastered character of the categories at stake, and in order to summarise it and to make ourselves understood, there is no way forward other than mastering it, and to master it is already to completely change its axis and its nature, and this is something that at a certain point, cannot truly give an accurate perspective on the matter at hand, for this character is truly essential to the entire problem. It is truly correlative to the second objective of our theoretical examination this year – to show how, in a parallel and quite unshakable way, analytic practice itself is engaged in an unmasterable deviation. And once again I would say that, returning to this precise incidence which constitutes the object of what I am exposing to you in the middle of this heap of facts, it came to me this morning that it could be retained as a sort of exemplary image, this little fact simply noted during one of these articles. It is a matter of something admitted by everyone – namely, that around this development for the little girl, and at the moment when she goes into Oedipus, it is exactly as substitute for this missing phallus that she starts to desire a child from the father. And one of these authors cited, as an example, the analysis of a child<sup>7</sup>.

There is something here that can come into play with regular occurrence in the rush of the Oedipal movement... that is to say, that the disappointment of not having a child by the father is something which will play an essential role in making the little girl come back from what she had entered into in Oedipus, namely, by way of this paradoxical route that begins with identification with the father, such that she takes up the feminine position again – all the authors admit it in principle – via this privation of the child desired from the father. And exemplifying this movement, which is given to us as being always essentially unconscious, in a case where, to sum it up, an analysis had allowed a child to bring to light this image of the little girl who, having been in the process of analysis and regarding herself as seeing what happened in her unconscious more clearly than anyone else, woke up every morning following some insight or other, asking if the father’s little child had come and if it was to come today or tomorrow, and she asked this every morning with anger and tears. This example seems to me, once

<sup>4</sup> See Freud, S. (1931). *Female sexuality* (SE XXI), pp. 221-243.

<sup>5</sup> This is given as Karen Horney in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller. See, for example – Horney, K. (1925). ‘On the genesis of the castration complex in women’ in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 5, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example – Jones, E. (1927). *The Early Development of Female Sexuality*.

<sup>7</sup> See Deutsch, H. (1930). ‘The Significance of Masochism in the Mental Life of Women’ in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 11, p. 51. Lacan refers to the following passage: “I heard of the little daughter of an analyst mother who, at the time when she was experiencing penis-envy, was consoled with the prospect of having a child. Every morning she woke up to ask in a fury: ‘Hasn’t the child come yet?’ and no more accepted the consolation of the future than we are consoled by the promise of Paradise.”

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99 again, exemplary of what is at stake in this deviation of analytic practice which always accompanies our theoretical exploration this year, concerning the object relation. For in truth, we are here touching with the tips of our fingers the way in which a certain mode of understanding, of tackling frustrations, is something which, in reality, leads analysis to a mode of intervention whose effects might appear not only dubious, but manifestly opposed to what is at stake in what we could call the process of analytic interpretation. It is perfectly clear that the notion we might have that, at a given moment in the little girl's development, the child appears as an imaginary object, as a substitute for the missing phallus, and which plays an essential role in her development, is [an idea] which only has any value, and which can only legitimately be put into play as such, later on, or even at a contemporary stage.

The child, whom the subject is dealing with, enters into the game of a series of symbolic resonances that will reach into the past, that will put into play what she experienced in the phallic stage, namely, all of those possessive or destructive reactions which can be tied for her to the moment of the phallic crisis – with all its implications, truly problematic implications – in the stage of childhood to which it corresponds. It is, in short, only after the fact that everything that comes back to this prevalence or predominance of the phallus at a stage of the girl's development will have repercussions, and repercussions insofar as it becomes necessary for the girl at some moment or another to symbolise some event which happens – either the late arrival of a child for someone in immediate relation to her, or that the question of the possession of the child for the subject will effectively arise, the question of her own maternity.

But what to invoke, if it is only at this moment, the moment when it happens, that something intervenes, not in the symbolic structuration of the subject, but in a certain relationship of imaginary substitution precipitated at that moment by speech, at the symbolic level, which is experienced by the child in a completely different way? This is already to give the child, in some sense, the sanction of an organisation, an introduction to a sort of legitimacy which literally consecrates frustration as such, establishes it at the centre of experience, whereas it is only legitimately introduced as frustration if it has effectively happened at the level of the unconscious, as the correct theory tells us. This frustration is but a passing moment, as well as a moment which only has an importance and a role, for us analysts, at the purely theoretical level of the articulation of what occurred. The subject's realisation of this frustration is out of the question [*exclue*] by definition, because it is extraordinarily unstable. It has importance and interest only insofar as it leads to something else, which is one of these two registers I distinguished for you, privation and castration, where castration is none other than that which establishes the necessity of this frustration in its true dimension, that which transcends it and establishes it within something, within a law that gives it another value, and which, for that matter, consecrates the existence of privation, because at the level of the real, privation is not conceivable, except for a being who articulates something at the symbolic level. It is solely on this basis that a privation can, in fact, be conceived at all.

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We get a sense of it in interventions which are, in a way, supporting interventions, psychotherapeutic interventions such as, for example, the one I briefly mentioned to you regarding the little girl<sup>8</sup> who was

<sup>8</sup> See Schnurmann, A. (1946). 'Observation of a Phobia' in *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol 4, pp. 253–270.

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in the care of a student of Anna Freud's, and who had the beginnings of a phobia concerning the experience she had of being deprived of something in different conditions from those which the child found herself up against. I showed you that the mainspring of the displacement necessary for phobia lies not at all in this experience, not in the fact of not having this phallus, but in the fact of her mother being unable to give it to her, and on top of that, that she could not give it to her because she did not have it herself. The intervention made by the psychotherapist, which consists in telling her – and she is quite correct – that all women are like that, may allow us to think that it is a matter of reduction to the real. It is not a reduction to the real because the child knows very well that she doesn't have a phallus – she [the psychotherapist] only teaches her the rule. It is insofar as she brings it to the symbolic level of the law that the efficacy of her intervention is brought into question. For in truth, she does nothing but ask herself about her intervention being effective or not, in a certain reduction of the phobia.

In that instant, it is clear that it is only effective in an extremely momentary way and that the phobia then resumes with greater intensity. It will only subside when the child has been reintegrated into a complete family – that is, at the moment when, in principle, her frustration should seem to her to be even greater than before, since here she is confronted with a stepfather, in other words, with a male who enters into the family dynamic – her mother being a widow up until then – and with an older brother. Only at this moment does the phobia diminish, because she literally no longer needs it to make up for this absence, in the symbolic circuit, of any properly phallus-bearing element – that is, of males. The essential point in these critical remarks on the usage we make of the term frustration which, of course, is in a certain way legitimised by the fact that what is essential in this dialectic is the lack of object more than the object itself... in a certain way, frustration appears to match up to this conceptual notion [that] bears on the instability of the very dialectic of frustration. Frustration is not privation. Why? Frustration concerns something you are deprived of by someone else, from whom you expected to get what you asked for. What is at stake in frustration is something which is not so much the object but the love of whoever can give you this gift, if it is given to you. The object of frustration is not so much the object but the gift.

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Here we find ourselves at the origin of a dialectic, the symbolic gap, which is itself vanishing at every moment, for this gift is a gift which is not yet given except with a certain gratuity. The gift comes from the Other. What is behind the Other – that is to say, the entire chain on account of which this gift comes to you – is still unperceived, and it is from the moment it *is* perceived that the subject will see that the gift is much more total than it first appears, namely, that it concerns the entire human chain. But at the beginning of the dialectic of frustration there is nothing but this confrontation with the Other, this gift which appears but which, if it is given as a gift, makes the object itself vanish as an object. If, in other words, the demand were fulfilled, the object would be pushed into the background. However, in the case that the demand is not fulfilled then the object also fades away and changes its signification. If you want to uphold the word frustration... for there is frustration if the subject puts forward the claim that this term implies... it is in bringing the object into play as something which was due by right, which was already among the subject's belongings [*appartenances*]. The object, at this moment, falls under what we could call the narcissistic era [*ère*] of the subject's belongings. In both cases, whatever happens, the moment of frustration is a vanishing moment which gives way to

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something that takes us to another level than that of pure and simple desire. Demand brings with it, in a sense, something which human experience knows well, which is that it has, in itself, something which makes it impossible to truly fulfil. Fulfilled or not, it is annihilated, crushed, in the next stage, and is immediately projected onto something else – either onto the articulation of the chain of gifts, or onto this closed and absolutely inextinguishable thing called narcissism, thanks to which the object, for the subject, is at the same time something which is him and which is not him, and something by which he can never be satisfied precisely in this sense that it is him and it is not him at the same time.

102 It is only insofar as frustration enters a dialectic which, by legalising it, also gives it this dimension of gratuity, situating it somewhere, such that this symbolised order of the real can also be established, where the subject can instate, for example, certain permanent privations as existing and accepted [*admits*]. This is something which, being misunderstood, brings in all kinds of ways of reconstructing everything that is given to us in experience, as an effect related to the fundamental lack of object, brings in a whole series of impasses, always related to the idea of wanting to destroy... on the basis of desire considered as a pure element of the individual, desire with the backlash it involves in its satisfaction just as in its dissatisfaction, of wanting to hold on to, to reconstruct the entire chain of experience which can literally only be elaborated, conceived, if we first posit, in principle, that nothing is articulated, that nothing can be held up in experience, unless we posit, as precedent, the fact that nothing is established, or constituted as a properly analysable conflict, until the moment when the subject enters the legal order, the symbolic order, enters an order which is an order of the symbol, the symbolic chain, the order of symbolic debt. It is only on the basis of this entry into something which pre-exists everything that happens to the subject, every kind of event or disillusionment... it is on this basis that everything through which he approaches it – namely, his history, his experience – this disordered thing which is there before it is ordered, articulated, takes on meaning, and only then can be analysed.

There is no better place for us to naïvely go into these references to make you see how well-founded this reminder is – and it should be merely a reminder – than in some of Freud's texts themselves. Yesterday evening a few of you spoke of a certain uncertain aspect, sometimes paradoxically wild aspect, of some texts. You even spoke of risky, or even diplomatic, elements – we cannot see why, for that matter – which is why I have chosen one of the most brilliant [texts], I would even say the most disturbing, but it is conceivable that it could seem truly archaic, even outdated.

It is “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman”.<sup>9</sup> I would simply like to remind you of its essential articulations. It concerns a girl from a good Viennese family, and for a good family it was quite a big step to send someone to see Freud, since this happened in 1920. Something very strange had happened. The daughter of this household, age eighteen, beautiful, intelligent, of very high social standing, is a cause of worry to her parents because she is running after someone who we would call a ‘society lady’, ten years her senior. It is specified, by all sorts of details given to us by the family, that this society lady is perhaps of a society which we could qualify as ‘half-society’ in the class rankings of what is considered to be respectable at that moment in Vienna. The kind of attachment that, as will be

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<sup>9</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), pp. 145-172.

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revealed as things move along, is truly passionate, it ties her to this lady, it is something which places her in rather difficult relations with her family. We subsequently learn that these rather difficult relations do not prevent the establishment of the entire situation. Truth be told, the fact that this absolutely enrages the father is certainly a motive for which the girl, in a way, not only maintains this passion but conducts it. I mean the sort of calm defiance with which she pursues her assiduities with the lady in question – her waiting in the street, the way in which she partially advertises her activity without showing it off – all this is enough for her parents to become aware of it, especially her father. We also learn that the mother is not exactly easy-going. She had been neurotic, and does not take it quite so badly or, in any case, does not take it completely seriously. They come and ask Freud to fix this and he points out, very pertinently, the difficulties of establishing a treatment when it is a matter of satisfying the demands of relatives. Freud very rightfully points out that one cannot get an analysis ‘to order’. In fact, this only introduces something even more extraordinary and points in a direction that will reveal Freud’s considerations regarding analysis itself, which will seem quite dated to some. That is, what Freud tells us in order to explain that this analysis had not reached its end, that it allowed him to see very, very far – and this is why he is telling us about it – but that it certainly did not allow him to change much about this girl’s fate. And to explain it, he introduces an idea that is not without basis, even though it might seem obsolete. It is a schematic idea which should incite us to revisit certain primary data, rather than to consider ourselves more agreeable. This is the fact that there are two elements in an analysis. The first is, in some sense, the gathering together of all that we can know. Then, we will weaken the resistances which are still standing, in which the subject already knows a lot of things. And the comparison he introduces here is no less astounding. He compares this to packing baggage before a trip, which is always something rather complicated, and then it is a matter of getting on board and making the journey. This reference, coming from someone who has a travel and rail phobia, is all a bit rich! But what is even more incredible is that, all this time, he has the feeling that nothing actually happens.

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However, he sees very clearly what has happened and he emphasises a certain number of stages. He clearly sees that in childhood there was something which seems not to have gone smoothly, at the moment when she understood, by way of her two brothers – the older one, precisely – the difference which made her into someone who did not have the fundamentally desirable object, the phallic object, and this did not go smoothly. One of these two brothers is younger than her. Nonetheless, until then, Freud tells us that the girl has never been neurotic. No hysterical symptoms have been brought to analysis. Nothing in her childhood history is worth noting in terms of its pathological consequences. And this is indeed why it is striking, in this case – at least clinically – to see such a late emergence of an attitude which appears frankly abnormal to everyone, which is that of this singular position she occupies vis-à-vis this somewhat castigated woman, and towards whom she shows this passionate attachment that brings her to the outbreak that led her to consult Freud. For if it became necessary to entrust herself to Freud, it was because something remarkable happened – that is, the girl’s gentle flirting with danger. She went walking with the woman almost directly in front of her own house. One day the father comes out and sees this and, being surrounded by other people, casts them a fiery glance and goes away. However, the lady asks the girl, “Who is that person?” – “It’s papa.” – “He doesn’t look

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happy!” The lady then takes the matter rather badly. It is pointed out to us that until then she has had a very reserved attitude towards the girl, a cold attitude, or even more than that, and she certainly did not encourage these assiduities at all, that she did not especially desire complications, and she tells her “under these circumstances, we shall no longer see each other.”

In Vienna there are these sorts of little railway rings, and being not so very far from one of these little bridges, the girl then jumps off one of them. She drops down, *niederkommt*. She breaks a few bones but survives. So, as Freud tells us, until the moment when this attachment appeared, the girl had had a development that was not only normal but, in all appearances, very well-oriented. But was there not something, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, which caused her to hope for that most pleasing development of the female vocation, that of maternity? She was playing mother to her parents’ friends’ little boy and all of a sudden this sort of maternal love, which seemed to make of her a model mother early on, suddenly stops, and it is at that moment, Freud says, that she starts to go out with women – for the affair in question is not her first – who he qualifies as “already mature”. That is to say, women who are already some sort of maternal substitute, it would seem.

105 All the same, this schema doesn’t hold up so well for the last person, the one who had truly embodied the dramatic affair over the course of which the initiation of the analysis would revolve, as well as the problematic of a declared homosexuality, for the subject declares to Freud that there is no question for her of abandoning any of her ambitions or her object choice. She will do all that is necessary to deceive her family, but she will continue to ensure her ties with the person for whom she is far from having lost her taste, and who turns out to be moved enough by this extraordinary sign of devotion that she thereafter becomes much more accommodating to her. This declared relation, then, maintained by the subject, is something regarding which Freud offers very striking comments. He gives the value of a sanction to some of these comments, either illustrating what happened before the treatment – for example, the suicide attempt – or illustrating his own failings. The former seem very pertinent, and the latter as well, though perhaps not exactly in the way he himself intends.

However, Freud’s observations have the feature of giving us an extraordinary clarity, even on matters which, in a sense, escaped Freud himself. I am alluding to the observation of Dora<sup>10</sup>, where Freud saw things clearly later on. He had intervened with Dora while being unaware of her question with regard to her own sex – that is, Dora’s homosexuality. Here [in the present case] we note a lack of awareness which is analogous [to Dora’s case] but much more instructive, since it goes much deeper. And then there are also the things he tells us, of which he only makes incomplete use and which are certainly no less interesting for it, on the topic of what is at stake in this suicide attempt, which in a sense crowns itself as a meaningful act, an episode regarding which we certainly cannot say that the subject is not intimately linked to the mounting of tension, up until the moment when conflict breaks out and ends in catastrophe.

He explains this to us in the following manner. It is within the register of an orientation – normal, in some sense – towards a desire to have a child by the father, that we must conceive of the original crisis which made this subject engage in something strictly opposite to it, for it is pointed out that there was

<sup>10</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria (SE VII)*, pp. 7-114.



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a true reversal of positions, and Freud attempts to articulate this. It is a matter of one of these cases where the disappointment from the object of desire continues through a complete reversal of position, which is the identification with this object and which, due to this – Freud articulates it precisely in a note<sup>11</sup> – is equivalent to a regression to narcissism. When I make this dialectic of narcissism into, essentially, this ‘me – small other’ relation, I am doing absolutely nothing other than making evident what is implicit in all of Freud’s ways of expressing himself.

106 What, then, is this disappointment, this moment around the fifteenth year when, engaged in a process of taking possession of this imaginary object, of this imaginary child – she is so aware of it that the date is noted in the patient’s history – the subject effects this reversal? At this moment her mother *really* has a child by the father. In other words, the patient acquires a third brother. Here is the crucial point, as well as the apparently exceptional character of this observation, following something that happened. It is now a matter of seeing in which light this is best interpreted because, well, it is no triviality that the intervention of a little one, a latecomer like this one, results in a profound switch in the sexual orientation of a subject. It is, then, at this moment that the girl changes position, and we must find out what happened here. Freud tells us this – it is something which must surely be considered as reactive [*réactionnel*] – although the term is not in the text, but it is implied, since he continues to suppose that her resentment towards the father carries on playing a role. It is the main role, the lynchpin of the situation, which explains everything about the way the affair is carried out. She is clearly aggressive towards the father and the suicide attempt – following the disappointment produced by the fact that the counterpart object of her attachment, as it were, foils her – would only be a matter of the counter-aggressivity of the father, of a switching of this aggression onto the subject herself, combined with something which, Freud tells us, symbolically satisfies what is at stake. Namely, that through a sort of precipitation, a concentration at the level of the objects which are truly at stake, a sort of collapse of the situation into its primitive components when the girl *niederkommt*, drops off the bridge, she accomplishes a symbolic act which is none other than the *niederkommen* of being delivered of a child in childbirth – it is the term used in German to say one is giving birth. Here there is something which brings us back to the ultimate and original sense of a structure of the situation.

In the second group of remarks made by Freud, we must explain why the situation met with a dead end during the treatment, and he tells us. It is inasmuch as the resistance was not conquered, that everything he could say to her merely interested her a great deal, but without causing her to abandon her ultimate positions – that is, she maintained all of it, as we would say today, at the level of an intellectual interest. Freud more or less compares her and her reactions to a lady to whom one shows various objects and who, through her lorgnette, says, “how pretty!” This is a metaphor. He says that nevertheless we cannot say that there was a total absence of transference and he indicates this presence

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<sup>11</sup> See the first footnote in *Freud, S. (1920). The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman (SE XVIII), p. 158* – “It is by no means rare for a love-relation to be broken off through a process of identification on the part of the lover with the loved object, a process equivalent to a kind of regression to narcissism. After this has been accomplished, it is easy in making a fresh choice of object to direct the libido to a member of the sex opposite to that of the earlier choice.”

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of transference with great perspicacity in the patient's dreams, dreams which in themselves... and in parallel to her declarations – quite unambiguous – that the patient makes to him about her determination not to change anything about her behaviour towards the lady... [these dreams] announce a stunning blossoming again of this most pleasing orientation – that is, the arrival of some handsome and satisfying husband, not to mention the expectation of an object, the fruit of this love. In short, something is announced in the dream, in the idyllic character of this husband, that is so forced, almost, that anyone other than Freud would have been fooled, would have taken this as a sign of great hope.

Freud is not fooled. He sees in this a transference, in the sense that it is the flipside of this kind of counter-plot she conducted, the play [*jeu*] she makes in response to the disappointment, for she was, certainly, not only aggressive and provocative with the father, but she also made concessions. It was only a matter of showing the father that she was deceiving him. And Freud recognises that something analogous is at stake, and that this is the transference significance of these dreams. She is reproducing with him, Freud, the fundamental position of the cruel game [*jeu*] which she carried out with the father. Here we cannot help going back to this kind of basic relativity that is essential in what we call symbolic formation – I mean to say, inasmuch as this is the fundamental line of what constitutes, for us, the field of the unconscious. This is what Freud expresses in a very exact way, of which the only flaw is its being a little too accentuated. He tells us: “I believe that the intention to mislead me was one of the formative elements of this dream. It was also an attempt to win my interest and my good opinion, probably in order to disappoint me all the more profoundly later on.”<sup>12</sup> Here we can see the first signs of the intention, imputed to the subject, of getting into this position of captivating him, of capturing him, Freud says, of making him fall from a greater height, making him drop from even higher, where he, himself, is something that is, in a sense, caught in the situation, we might say, for there appears to be no doubt about the accent we can hear in this sentence, that there is what we call a counter-transference action. It is accurate that the dream is deceptive, and he only retains this much.

Immediately afterwards he goes into the discussion, strictly speaking, of what, in his words, is so fascinating to find. That is, that the typical manifestation of the unconscious can be a deceptive one, for it is certainly true that he hears the objections which will be made against him ahead of time: “If the unconscious *also* lies to us, then what can we rely on?”<sup>13</sup>

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What will his disciples say? He provides a long explanation, so tendentious, for that matter, to explain to them that, ultimately, this is in no way a contradiction, and to show them how it might come about. The fact remains that the groundwork laid down by Freud in 1920 is exactly the most essential of what is in the unconscious, this relation of the subject to the Other as such, which quite precisely involves, at base, the possibility of being carried out at this level – we are in the order of lies and the truth. But, even though Freud sees this very clearly, it seems that what escapes him is that it is an authentic [*vrai*] transference – that is, that the way forward is in the interpretation of the desire to deceive, instead of taking the transference for something that is – to put it in a rather coarse way – directed against him. For it was enough for him to add this sentence: “It is also an attempt to trip me up, to captivate me, to

<sup>12</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), p. 165.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid*, p. 165.

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make me find her very pretty.”<sup>14</sup> And she must be ravishing, this girl, for him to be, as with Dora, not completely free in this matter, where what he wants to avoid is precisely to affirm that the worst is in store for him, something in which he himself will feel disillusioned – that is to say, he is quite ready to make these illusions himself. In protecting himself from these illusions, he is already going along with the game. He realises the imaginary game. From that moment on, he makes it become real, since he is inside it. And, as it happens, it hits the target, for in his way of interpreting the matter, he tells the girl that her intention is indeed to deceive him, as she habitually deceives her father. That is to say, he immediately cuts short what he has made real as the imaginary relation, and in a certain sense his counter-transference could have been useful, provided that it were not a counter-transference, provided that he himself did not believe it – that is, that he not be involved in it. To the extent that he is involved in it, and that he interprets too prematurely, he brings back to the real this desire of the girl – which is but a desire, not an intention – to deceive. He gives it an incarnation [*il lui donne corps*], he operates with her exactly like the person who intervened with the little girl, like a statue, and like the symbolic thing which is at the heart of what I explain to you when I speak to you of this slippage into the imaginary which becomes, much more than a trap, a wound [*plaie*].

109 From the moment that he sets himself up in a kind of doctrine... here we see an extreme example, transparent, we cannot miss it, it is in the text... it is insofar as, with his interpretation at this moment, Freud makes the conflict break out, gives body to it... well, just as he himself senses, this is what was at stake, to reveal this lying discourse which is there in the unconscious. In fact there is no question of anything else. Instead of this, in wanting to reunite, Freud separates. He tells her that all this is directed against him and, in fact, the treatment does not go much further – that is to say, it is interrupted. But there is something much more interesting which is emphasised by Freud, but which he does not interpret, which is absolutely huge and which did not escape him. It is the nature of the girl’s passion for the person in question – it is not a homosexual relationship like the others. What is particular to homosexual relationships is, precisely, to present all its variations, and perhaps even some others, as heterosexual variations. Yet what Freud emphasises, in a way which is truly admirable, is what he calls this object choice of a properly masculine type, and he explains what he means by this. He articulates it in a manner which has extraordinary depth. It is literally Platonic love in its most exalted form. It is something which demands no other satisfaction than the service of the lady. It is truly a sacred love, one might say, or courtly love in its most devoted form. He adds a few words such as ‘exalt’ which has a very particular meaning in the cultural history of Germany<sup>15</sup>. His exaltation is the basis of the relation proper. In short, he lays something out which situates this amorous relationship at the highest degree of the symbolised amorous relation, laid out as a service, an institution, a reference, and not simply as something submitted to, not as something like a force of attraction or a need. It is something which, in itself, not only gets by without satisfaction, but aims precisely for this non-satisfaction. It is the institution of lack in the relation to the object, as being the very order in which an ideal love can

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid*, p. 165.

<sup>15</sup> Lacan is most likely referring here to Freud’s use of *Verehrung* in *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman*, which Strachey translates as ‘worship’ and its verb form *verehrten* as ‘adored’. Note that *Verehrung* is also the term used for the veneration of Mary in the Catholic Church.

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flourish. Do you not see that there is something here which conjoins in a kind of knot the three levels that I am trying to get you to recognise, that conjoins them in the knot of this whole process? This knot which will be found, say, from frustration to symptom, and one could take the word 'symptom' as its equivalent, since we are in the process of interrogating it, this enigma. This is how the problem of this situation will come to articulate itself, this situation which is exceptional but which is only worth being grasped in its own register – that is to say, it is exceptional because it is particular. We have the reference, experienced in an innocent way, to the imaginary object, this child, which interpretation allows us to conceive as a child received from the father. We have already been told this – that homosexual women, contrary to what one may think, are those who have a very strong paternal fixation.

110 What happens? Why is there truly a crisis? It is because at that moment the real object intervenes, a child given by the father, it is true, but precisely given to someone else, and to the person who is closest to her. At this moment a true reversal occurs: the mechanism is explained. I believe that it is of great importance to see that in this case, something had already been established at the symbolic level, for it is at the symbolic level that she satisfies herself with this child as if with a child which was given to her by the father so that, for an instant, she is brought back to the level of frustration by the presence of this real object. It is no longer a matter of something which satisfies her in the imaginary, that is, of something which already sustained her in the relation between women, with all that is established of the paternal presence as such, as being the father *par excellence*, the fundamental father, the father who will be for her every type of man who will give her a child – this is something which for the moment brings her back to the level of frustration because here the object, for a moment, is real and it is materialised by the fact that it is her mother who has it instead of her. What is most important at this moment? Is it solely this sort of turnaround which makes her identify with the father at that moment? It is clear that this has played its part.

Does she herself become this sort of latent child that will effectively be able to *niederkommen* when the crisis has arrived at its end? And I think that we would know after how many months this happened, if we had the dates like we do for Dora. What is even more important is that what is desired is something that is beyond this woman. This love she devotes to her is for someone who is other than her, this love which lives purely and simply in the register of this devotion, which carries the highest degree of attachment, the voiding [*anéantissement*] of the subject in the relation. This is something which – and not for nothing – Freud seems to reserve for the register of masculine experience. For in fact, it is in a sort of institutionalised fulfilment of a highly elaborated cultural relation where these things are observed and maintained. The crossing over, the reflection at this level of fundamental disappointment, the way out that the subject finds, poses the question of what, in the register of love in the woman, is loved above herself. This implicates precisely everything which is truly fundamental in the questions relating to love in its consummation. What, for her, is properly desired is precisely what she is lacking, and what she is lacking in this case is the return to the primordial object – the equivalent, the imaginary substitute that the subject would find in the child. It is precisely the phallus. What is, at its extreme, searched for in the woman, in the most idealised love is what she lacks – what is searched for beyond her is the phallus *qua* central object in the whole libidinal economy.

**Session of 16th January 1957**

Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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111 Last time, we finished our meeting trying to summarise the case that Freud presented of female homosexuality. I sketched out for you, along the way, amidst the twists and turns, something which we might call the structure, for if we were not examining it against the background of a structural analysis, it would have little more importance than a picturesque case. We should return to this structural analysis, for it is only by making it progress, and as far as possible, that it is worth it for analysis to commit to this path.

There is something missing in analytic theory – that is what seems to me to crop up at every moment. It might not be a bad idea, then, to remind ourselves that, in fact, it is in order to effectively respond to this lack that we are keeping up this effort. To be sure, this lack can be felt everywhere. I recently saw it reviving itself in my mind while watching Anna Freud's ideas confront Melanie Klein's.<sup>1</sup> No doubt Anna Freud has since watered down her approach considerably, but she founded the principles of her analysis of children on such remarks as the following. That, for example, no transference can occur – at least, no transference neurosis – because, as children are still involved in the situation which generates neurotic tension, there can be no transference, properly speaking, for something which is in the process of playing itself out.<sup>2</sup> Then, on the other hand, the fact that they can still have a relation to the objects of their inaugural attachment – another remark ultimately of the same kind, but different – [this fact] should change the position of the analyst, who would here intervene, in such a manner that is entirely at the level of the present, which should profoundly modify their technique. So, her technique was in a sense profoundly modified, and Anna Freud pays tribute here to something like a premonition of the importance of the essential function of speech in the analytic relationship. Surely, she says, the child can have a different relationship to speech than the adult, such that he must be approached with the help of those playful tactics which are the techniques of child analysis. The child is also in a position that does not allow for the analyst to offer themselves to him in a neutral or receptive position which aims above all to receive him, to allow his speech to flourish and, occasionally, to echo it.

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I would say, therefore, that the analyst's engagement through some other means than the relation of speech, whilst it is not developed, nor even conceived, is indicated nonetheless. Melanie Klein points out in her arguments that, on the contrary, nothing is more like this than the analysis of a child, for even at an extremely premature age, what is already at stake in the unconscious of the child has nothing to do with the real parents, contrary to what Anna Freud says. Already between the ages of two and a half and three, the situation is greatly modified in relation to what can be observed in the real relations. It is already very much a question of an extensive dramatisation which is deeply foreign to the child's actual family relations, that we can observe in the case of a child who had been raised as an only child by a figure who lived very far away from the child's parents, an old aunt, which placed him in a

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<sup>1</sup> Lacan refers to a collection of papers contemporary to this seminar, published under the direction of Sacha Nacht. See Lebovici, S., Diatkine, R., Favreau, J. A., Luquet, P. & Luquet-Parat, J. (1956). *La psychanalyse des enfants* in *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui*: Presses Universitaires de France. The discussion of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein's ideas can be found on pages 193–201.

<sup>2</sup> A possible reference to *ibid.*, p. 194.

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completely isolated and dual relationship with a single person. It could be observed that this child nonetheless re-constituted an entire family drama with a father, a mother, and even brother and sister rivals – I cite.<sup>3</sup> So, it is a matter of already revealing something in analysis that is, at base, not purely and simply in an immediate relation to the real but is something already inscribed in a symbolisation which, from that moment onwards... I mean to say, if we accept Melanie Klein's assertions, and these rest on her experience, and this experience is communicated to us in observations which border on the bizarre, for in truth we cannot fail to be struck by this sort of witch's cauldron at the bottom of which bubbles an entire imaginary world – the idea of the maternal body as a container.<sup>4</sup> There, all the primordial fantasies, in some sense from the very beginning, tend to be structured into a drama that appears pre-constituted, and for which the most aggressive primordial instincts must be stirred up at every moment in order to turn the machine. We cannot fail to be struck at once by the evidence of how all this fantasmagoria matches up with the specific data that Melanie Klein is handling here, and at the same time ask ourselves what is actually at hand. What could be the meaning of this dramatic symbolisation which seems to be all the more satisfied the further back we go in time, as if we could assume that ultimately the closer we get to the origin, the more the Oedipus complex is satisfied, articulated, ready to activate itself?

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This at least merits that we ask ourselves a question, and this question resurges everywhere on this very path along which I am trying to lead you, for the moment, which is that of perversion. What is perversion? Within a single group, we hear quite conflicting views on this. Some, believing that they are following Freud, will say that we must purely and simply return to the notion of the persistence of a fixation supporting a partial drive, one that would survive the entire progression, the entire dialectic, but that tends to establish itself with the Oedipus, somehow unscathed, and would not be exposed to the transformations which tend to reduce the other partial drives, in a movement which ultimately unifies them and makes them result in the genital drive. This is the ideal drive, essentially unifying. Perversion, then, involves something which is a sort of accident in the development of the drives. But in translating Freud's claim that perversion is the negative of neurosis<sup>5</sup> in a classical way, they want to make perversion purely and simply into something wherein the drive has not developed. Others, however – who are, incidentally, not the most prominent or insightful but are informed by experience and by something which is truly essential in analytic practice – will try to show that perversion is quite far from being something pure and persistent, and that, when all is said and done, perversion is, in fact, a part of what has been produced through all the crises, dramatic fusions and 'de-fusions' [*dé-fusions*], which present the same rich dimensions, the same abundance, rhythms and stages as a neurosis. They will then attempt to explain that it is the negative of neurosis, by coming up with such formulations as saying perversion is 'an eroticisation of defense', just like all these games by which an analysis of the

<sup>3</sup> It has not been possible to locate this case.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example – Klein, M. (1930). 'The importance of symbol-formation in the development of the ego' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol 11, pp. 24–39.

<sup>5</sup> Lacan misquotes Freud here. In his study, Freud writes "Psychoneuroses are, so to speak, the negative of perversions." See Freud, S. (1905 [1901]). *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (SE VII)*, pp. 7–114. Further references to this statement are given in Strachey's introduction in the same volume.

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reduction of defenses is pursued. This sounds nice, it gives a certain image, but why in fact can it be eroticised? This is the question. Where does this eroticisation come from? Where is it situated, this invisible power that would be able to project this colouration which seems to bring in something superfluous, a change in quality, taking as defence something which is, strictly speaking, to be considered a libidinal satisfaction? This is not, in fact, unthinkable, but the least we can say is that it hasn't been thought.

114 Ultimately, we should not be under the impression that, within the development of analytic theory, Freud decided to try to give us a notion of this which he elaborated on. I would go further. In Freud himself, we have an example which proves that, surely, when he says that 'perversion is the negative of neurosis', this is not a formulation to be taken in the way we have always taken it – that is, as simply meaning that whatever is hidden in the unconscious when we are in the presence of a neurotic case is there for all to see in perversion, and in some sense, is free. He is actually proposing something else to us. Perhaps, after all, it should be taken as having been proffered as one of these dense formulas in which our analysis might find its true meaning. And it is in trying to follow it, and seeing for example how he conceives the mechanism of a phenomenon we could call perverse – categorically perverse, even – that we may ultimately realise what he means when he says that perversion is the negative of neurosis. If we examine things a little more closely, if we took this study, which should be famous, "A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions",<sup>6</sup> we would notice that Freud's attentiveness here is characteristic, and it is no less characteristic that he chooses this as the title. He insists on it in the text – it is something which is not merely a label, but a phrase taken directly from the testimonies of patients, when they start talking about their fantasies, which are basically sadomasochistic fantasies, regardless of what role or function they may take on in any particular case. Freud tells us that he is centering his study specifically on six cases which are all more or less obsessional neuroses, four women and two men<sup>7</sup>, and in the background there is all his experience of those cases that he himself does not understand very well. Additionally, it seems, there is here a sort of summing up, an attempt to organise a considerable number of experiences.

115 When the subject claims to bring something called fantasy into play in the treatment, he expresses it in this remarkable form, as an imprecision which leaves these questions unresolved and very difficult for him to answer, and in truth he cannot offer satisfying answers directly. He can hardly say anything more to characterise them, not without this sort of aversion, or even shame or embarrassment, which is present not in the practice of the fantasies, which are more or less associated, oratorical, and which are generally carried out by subjects as activities that do not produce any kind of guilt. But... and this is something quite remarkable... not only does their formulation present great difficulties, but their articulation provokes a great deal of aversion, revulsion and guilt in the subject<sup>8</sup>. And already, we can sense something here which should cause us to prick up our ears, between the fantasmatic or imaginary usage of these images and their formulation in speech. Already this signal in the subject's behaviour is something which marks a limit. It is not the same thing to play with it mentally and to speak about it.

<sup>6</sup> See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions* (SE XVII).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189–191.



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Concerning this fantasy, 'a child is being beaten', Freud tells us what his experience has shown him, what this meant for the subjects in question<sup>9</sup>.

We will not get to the end of this article today. I would simply like to emphasise certain elements that are completely clear because they directly concern the path I led you along last time, approaching the problem through the case of the psychogenesis of female homosexuality.<sup>10</sup> Freud tells us that the progress of the analysis shows that in this fantasy it is a matter of something that has, through a series of transformations, been substituted for other fantasies which played a completely understandable role at the time of the subject's development. It is the structure of these states that I wish to expose for you, to allow you to recognise in them something that seems completely clear as long as we keep our eyes open, at least in the dimension in which we are trying to progress, and which can be taken up again under the heading of subjective structure. In other words, we will always try to support ourselves with this as we try to give a true position to what, in the theory, often presents itself as an ambiguity, even a dead end, or a case of myopia. This means seeing at which level of subjective structure a phenomenon occurs.

We can observe that Freud tells us that the [subject's] history divides itself into three stages, to the extent that it opens up under analytic pressure, and allows us to locate the origin of these fantasies. He also says, in this first typical formulation of the fantasy, for reasons that he will specify later, but which we will leave aside for today, in the first part of his account that we will not emphasise this time, that he will limit himself to what happens specifically for women<sup>11</sup>. The form assumed by the first fantasy – the one we can, he tells us, locate through the analysis of facts, is this one: "My father is beating a child, who is the child that I hate."<sup>12</sup> This is a fantasy that is more or less connected, in the history, to the introduction of a brother or a sister, a rival who at some point ends up, in being present, by way of the care they receive, frustrating the child of the parents' affection.

Here, especially, it is a question of the father. We will not insist on this point for now, but we will not omit to point out that this is a girl, taken [into analysis] at a certain moment, when the Oedipus complex has already been constituted, when the relation to the father has been established.

116 We will leave for another date, then, the explanation of the preeminence, in a totally primitive fantasy, of the father's person, it being understood that this is not unrelated to the fact that she is a girl. But, let us leave this problem aside. What is important is this – here, we touch upon the beginning of a historical perspective which is retroactive. It is from the present point where we are in the analysis that the subject formulates for the past, organises a primal dramatic situation, in such a way that is nonetheless inscribed in their present speech, in their present powers of symbolisation, and we locate, through the progress of analysis, something like the primal thing<sup>13</sup>, the deepest primordial organisation. This is something that has the obvious complexity of having three players. There is the

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191–195.

<sup>10</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII), pp. 145–172.

<sup>11</sup> See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions* (SE XVII), pp. 195–196.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup> See Lacan, J. (1955). *The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis*.

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agent of the punishment. There is the one who suffers it, who is other than the subject, namely, a child whom the subject hates and whom she thereby sees as deprived of this parental preference that is at stake. She feels herself to be privileged by the fact that the other [child] loses this preference. There is something which, we might say, implies a triple dimension and a triple tension that implies the relation of a subject to two others whose own relations are motivated by something that is centred by the subject. To accentuate a certain sense of things, one might put it like this – “My father is beating my brother or my sister, out of a fear that I will think he prefers them to me”.

A causality or a tension, a reference to a subject taken as a third party, in favour of whom this thing happens, is something which animates and drives the action on the second player, the one who suffers it. And this third party, the subject, is herself called upon here, presented in the situation as the one for whose eyes this must take place, with the intention of letting her know that something belonging to her is given to her, which is the privilege of this preference, this precedence, this structure which, in a sense, reintroduces... just as earlier there was the notion of fear... a sort of anticipation, a temporal dimension, forward tension, which is introduced as a motor within this triple situation. There is a reference to the third party as subject, as she must believe it or infer something of a certain behaviour which bears on the second object, which in this case is taken as the instrument of this communication between the two subjects, which is ultimately a communication of love. For it is at the expense of the second player that the central subject receives something which is announced at this moment – the expression of her wish, of her desire to be preferred, to be loved. It is a formation which is, of course, already dramatised, already a reaction insofar as it has emerged from a complex situation. But this complex situation supposes this triple ‘inter-subjective’<sup>14</sup> reference, with all that it requires, and introduces it by way of temporal reference, of time, of scansion. It supposes the introduction of the second subject to be necessary. Why?

117 What crosses from one subject to the other is the instrument, the mainspring, the medium, the means. Ultimately, we find ourselves before a fully inter-subjective structure, in the sense in which it is established in the effective crossing of speech. It is not a matter of the thing having been spoken. It is a matter of the inter-subjective structure in this ternary situation that is established in the primal fantasy itself bearing the mark of the very same inter-subjective structure which constitutes all effective speech. The second step represents a reduced situation in relation to the first. Freud tells us that here we find, in a very peculiar way, a situation reduced to two players. I am following Freud’s text here<sup>15</sup>. We are explaining it as best we can. Freud indicates the explanation, without weighing it up much further, explaining it as a necessary and reconstructive stage indispensable for understanding all the motivation behind what is produced in the subject’s history. This second stage produces: “I am being beaten by my father.” Here it is a question of a situation reduced to two, a situation which, we might say, excludes every dimension except that of the relation to the agent of the beating. There is something here that might lend itself to all sorts of interpretations, but these interpretations will themselves remain marked by a character of the greatest ambiguity. If, in the first fantasy, there is an organisation and a structure

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<sup>14</sup> English in the original.

<sup>15</sup> See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions (SE XVII)*, p. 185.

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which gives it a meaning that we could indicate with a series of arrows, in the other [fantasy] the situation is so ambiguous that we might wonder for a moment to what extent the subject participates with the one who attacks and hits her.

This is the classic sado-masochistic ambiguity. And if we resolve it then we will conclude, as Freud puts it, that there is something here that is linked to this essence of masochism, but that the ego, in this case, figures strongly in the situation. The subject finds herself in a situation which is reciprocal, but exclusive at the same time. It's either her or the other who is being beaten, and here [in the second stage] it is her, and in the fact that it's her there is something that is indicated but not resolved. One can see – and the next part of the discussion shows it – in this very act of being beaten, also a transposition,<sup>16</sup> or a displacement of something which, perhaps, is already marked with eroticism. The very fact that we may speak, at this point, of the essence of masochism, is entirely indicative, whereas in the previous stage, Freud says, we were in a situation that, in a way, as structured as it may have been, was pregnant with every virtuality. It was neither sexual, nor especially sadistic. It potentially contained them, and this something that rushes in one direction or another, albeit ambiguously, distinguishes itself in the second stage, this stage of the dual relation, with all the problems it raises at the libidinal level. This second stage, which is dual, and where the subject finds her/himself included in a relationship which is dual, and therefore ambiguous, with the other as such, in this sort of 'either-or'

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which is fundamental in the dual relation... Freud tells us that it is so fleeting that we are almost always forced to reconstruct it.<sup>17</sup> This fleetingness is its characteristic, and very soon the situation advances to the third stage where, we might say, the subject is reduced to her most extreme point,<sup>18</sup> and apparently refinds her ternary position in the form of this pure and simple observer, who in a sense reduces this inter-subjective situation with the temporal situation, after having moved from the second situation, dual and reciprocal, to the completely desubjectivised situation, that of the ultimate fantasy, namely, "one beats a child."<sup>19</sup> Of course, this "one" is something in which we can vaguely locate the paternal function, but in general the father is not recognisable and this is but a substitute.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, when we say "one beats a child", this is the subject's formula, which Freud wanted to maintain, but it is often a matter of several children. Fantasmatic production makes it shatter by multiplying it into thousands of copies.

And this clearly shows the essential character of desubjectivation, which takes place in the primordial relation, and what remains is this objectivisation – this radical desubjectivation, at least – of the structure, at which level the subject is only there as a kind of spectator, reduced to the state of a spectator, or simply of an eye, that is to say, that which always characterises any kind of object at the limit and the final point of its reduction. There must be, if not always a subject, an eye to see the

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 185. Freud uses the term "transformation" in the paper: "Profound transformations have taken place between this first phase and the next."

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186.

<sup>19</sup> This is an English translation of the French phrase Lacan uses here "On bat un enfant". The agent – "one [on]" – is not explicit in the original German phrase "Ein Kind wird geschlagen", which Strachey can translate more directly as "A child is being beaten".

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

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subject... an eye, a screen on which the subject is instituted.

What do we see here? At the precise point we have reached in our process, how can we translate this into our language? It is clear that in terms of the schema of the subject, the Other, and the imaginary relation of the subject's ego, more or less fantasmaticised, the imaginary relation is inscribed in this direction, and in this relation that is more or less marked by a specularity and reciprocity between the ego and the other. We find ourselves in the presence of something that is an unconscious speech, that we had to re-find via all the artifices of the analysis of the transference, which is as follows. "My father, in beating a child which is the child that I hate, shows me that he loves me,"<sup>21</sup> or, "My father is beating a child out of fear that I'll think that I am not the favourite," or any other formulation which, in one way or another, places value on one of the accents of this dramatic relation. What is excluded, what is not present in neurosis, what we must locate, and what will go through developments which manifest themselves in all the symptoms constitutive of neurosis can be re-found in an element of the clinical table which is fantasy.

119 How does it present itself? It presents itself in a way that still bears witness, quite visibly, to signifying elements of speech articulated at the level of this 'trans-object', we might say. It is the big Other, the place where unconscious speech is articulated, the *Es* insofar as it is speech, history, memory, articulated structure. Perversion – or, let us say perverse fantasy, in order to limit ourselves to this – has a property which we can now see emerging. What is this sort of residue, symbolic reduction, which has progressively eliminated all the subjective structure from the situation, leaving only something entirely objectivised and ultimately enigmatic to emerge that retains to the end all its force – but a force unrevealed, unconstituted, unassumed by the subject, something that is, at the level of the Other, an articulated structure where the subject is engaged? We find ourselves here at the level of the perverse fantasy, something which has all its elements, but which at the same time has lost all signification, namely, the inter-subjective relation. This is, in a sense, the retention of what we might call signifiers in their pure state, signifiers without [*sans*] the inter-subjective relation, signifiers emptied of their subject, a sort of objectivation of the signifiers of the situation as such. This something that is indicated as a kind of fundamental structuring relation of the subject's history at the level of perversion, is in the end maintained and contained, but in the form of a pure sign. And what else do we discover at the level of perversion?

Now recall what you know about the fetish, for example, this fetish concerning which you have been told that it can be explained by this never-before-seen 'beyond'. And rightly so! It's the penis of the phallic mother, which is linked for the subject – most often after a brief analytic effort, at least regarding those memories which are still accessible to the subject – to a situation in which, we could say, the child halts in his observations, at least in his memory, at the hem of his mother's dress, where we find a sort of remarkable contest in amongst the structure of what we could call the screen memory, that is, the moment where the chain of memories stops, and it effectively stops at the hem of the dress, no higher than the ankle. This is indeed the reason why it is here that we have the shoe and this is also why the shoe can, at least in particular cases – but this is an exemplary case – take on the function of a

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

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120 substitute for what is not seen but is articulated, formulated, as being here truly for the subject of the mother who possesses this phallus – imaginary, undoubtedly – but essential to her symbolic foundation as phallic mother. Here we find ourselves facing something of the same order, facing this thing which fixes, reduces to the status of a snapshot, the course of memories by arresting it at this point which is called a screen memory, in the manner of something which would unfold rather quickly and that would stop at a single point all at once, freezing all the characters, as in a cinematographic movement, this sort of snapshot that characterises this reduction of the full, meaningful scene, articulated from subject to subject, [a reduction] to something that immobilises itself in this fantasy, which remains charged with all the erotic values that are included in what [the scene] expressed, and of which it is, in a sense, the witness, the support, the last remaining support. Here, we are touching upon how what we might call the mould of perversion, namely, this valorisation of the image, insofar as it remains the privileged witness of something which must be articulated in the unconscious, must be put into play again in the dialectics of transference, that is, in something which must re-expand within the analytic dialogue. The value, then, of the imaginary dimension appears to be prevalent whenever it is a matter of perversion, and it is insofar as this imaginary relation is on the road between what passes from the subject to the Other, or, more precisely of what remains of the subject within [*situé*] the Other, insofar as it is, precisely, repressed. That is to say that speech – which is indeed the subject's and yet, by its very nature qua speech, is a message which he must receive from the Other in its inverted form – can just as well remain in the Other, that is, it can just as well constitute the repressed of the unconscious, instating a possible relation albeit one that is unrealised.

“Possible”... in fact, that's not all – there also has to be some impossibility in there. Otherwise it would not be repressed. And it is indeed repressed because this impossibility is there in ordinary situations that we need all the artifices of transference to render the communication from this Other, the big Other, to the subject, acceptable, articulable once again, insofar as the ‘I’ of the subject comes to be. Within this indication that Freudian analysis gives us in the clearest fashion – and everything is said and articulated much further still than what I'm saying here – Freud marks clearly at this point that it is by way of the avatars and the adventure of Oedipus, the progress and resolution of Oedipus, that we should consider the question, the problem, of the constitution of any perversion. It is astonishing that we could even have dreamed of maintaining the idea, this somehow popular translation, of perversion as being the ‘negative of neurosis’, simply for the reason that [it would make] perversion a drive that is not elaborated by the oedipal and neurotic mechanism, but instead the pure and simple survival, persistence, of an irreducible partial drive.

121 Well, Freud, by way of this primordial article and many more points as well, sufficiently indicates that, as primitive as we may suppose it to be, no perverse structuration, which we analysts become aware of at any rate, is only articulable as a means, a lynchpin, an element of something which is ultimately conceived, understood and articulated in, by, and for – and *solely* in, by, and for – the process, the organisation, the articulation of the Oedipus complex. Let us attempt to inscribe our case from the

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other day<sup>22</sup> into this relation that crosses from subject to Other, insofar as this [ A → S ]<sup>23</sup> is where symbolic signification must turn out to be, where the subject's entire present genesis must be established ...and the imaginary imposition [ a' → a ] is, on the other hand, where he finds his status, his objectal structure that he recognises to be instated as such in a certain capture vis à vis those objects that are for him, so to speak, immediately attractive, that correspond to this desire, insofar as he engages himself in the paths, the imaginary tracks, which form what we call libidinal fixations. Let us simply try to take this up again, even if today we will not push this to its conclusion. What do we see? We can put down five moments to describe the major phenomena of this inauguration, not only of perversion. Whether we consider it fundamental or acquired is of little importance. In this case we know when this perversion was first indicated, then established, then precipitated. We have its mechanisms and its beginnings. It is a perversion that was late to emerge. This does not mean that it did not have its underlying causes in entirely primordial phenomena, but let us attempt to understand what we see concerning the pathways cleared by Freud himself. There is a state which is primordial, at the point when this woman installed herself at the time of puberty, around thirteen to fourteen years. This girl cherishes an object, to which she is tied by its affective bonds, a child she cares for. She appears to everyone to be particularly well disposed in this regard, precisely along the path they all expect to be the typical female calling – maternity. And it is on this basis that something happens that will create a sort of reversal in her, one that will become established when she becomes interested in love objects that will first be marked by the sign of femininity – women who are in a roughly maternal situation, neo-maternalsing, and who will finally lead her to this passion which we hear called, literally, 'devouring', for this person who is also called the Lady.

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And it is not for nothing – she treats this Lady in a knightly and literally masculine fashion, a highly sophisticated style in a masculine register and from the masculine perspective. This passion for the Lady is a service performed, in a sense, without any demands, nor any desire, nor even with any hope of something in return, but with this character of gift, of projection of the lover above any kind of manifestation of the loved, which is one of the most elaborate and characteristic forms of the romantic relation in its most highly developed form. How are we to conceive of this transformation? I provided you with the first moment, and between the two something happens, and we are told what it is. We are going to implicate this transformation in the same terms which served to analyse the position. We know, thanks to Freud, that the element through which the masculine or feminine subject arrives – this is the meaning of what Freud tells us when he speaks of the phallic stage of infantile genital organisation – just before the latency period is this phallic stage which indicates the point of the realisation of the genital. Everything is there, up to and including the choice of object<sup>24</sup>. However, there is something that isn't, which is a full realisation of the genital function insofar as it is structured

<sup>22</sup> That is, the previous session of the 9th January 1957, during which Lacan comments on Freud's case – *Freud, S. (1920). The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman (SE XVIII), pp. 145–172.*

<sup>23</sup> Lacan refers to Schema L.

<sup>24</sup> See *Freud, S. (1923). The Infantile Genital Organization – An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality (SE XIX), p. 140.* where Freud writes "...the choice of an object, such as we have shown to be characteristic of the pubertal phase of development, has already frequently or habitually been effected during the years of childhood: that is to say, the whole of the sexual currents have become directed towards a single person in relation to whom they seek to achieve their aims."

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and effectively organised. Something remains which is fantasmatic, essentially imaginary, which is the prevalence of the phallus, according to which there are two types of beings in the world. There are those who have the phallus and those who do not, that is, those who are castrated. This is how Freud formulates it. It is very clear that there is something here which strongly suggests a problematic that, in truth, the authors cannot resolve, insofar as [for them] it is a matter of justifying this one way or another on grounds that are determined for the subject in the real. I already told you that I would put into parentheses the extraordinary modes of explanation to which this has constrained the authors. Their general mode of operation can be summarised like so As everyone knows, everything must already be inferred and inscribed in unconscious drives, the subject must already have, preformed and by its nature, something that renders the cooperation of the sexes adequate.

This must, then, already be a kind of formation in which the subject finds some advantage, and that already with this he must have a process of defense. This is not, in fact, inconceivable in a certain perspective, but this evades the problem, and it effectively commits the authors to making a series of constructions which only push back all symbolic dialectics to their origin, and which become more and more unthinkable the e further back we go towards this origin. Let us simply admit this for the moment, and let us also admit something else, which will be easier for us to admit than the authors. It is simply that, here, the phallus ends up being this imaginary element – it is a fact that must be taken qua fact – through which the subject is introduced, at the genital level, to the symbolic of the gift.

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The symbolic of the gift and genital maturation are two different things. They are connected through something that is included in the real human situation by the fact that it is at the level of rules established through the law in the exercise of the genital functions, insofar as they effectively come into play in inter-human exchange. It is because things take place at this level, that there is effectively an extremely close link between genital maturation and the symbolic of the gift. But this is not something which has any kind of individual inter-biological coherence for the subject. However, we find that the fantasy of the phallus, within this symbolic of the gift at the genital level takes on its value, and this is what Freud insists on. It does not – and for good reason – have the same value for the one who really possesses the phallus, namely, the male child, and for the child who does not possess it, namely, the female child. For the female child it is very precisely insofar as she does not possess it that she will be introduced into the symbolic of the gift, that is, it is insofar as she phallicises the situation, insofar as it is a question of having or not having the phallus, that she enters the Oedipus complex, while what Freud emphasises to us is that for the boy this is not how he enters it but how he gets out of it. This is to say that at the end of the Oedipus complex, that is, at the moment when he will have realised the symbolic of the gift at a certain level, he must effectively make a gift of what he has. Whereas if the girl enters the Oedipus complex, it is insofar as she finds what she does not have in the Oedipus complex, but what she does not have... because we are already at the level and in the register where something imaginary enters a symbolic dialectic, what one does not have is simply something that exists just as much as anything else, and it is marked by the minus sign – the girl simply enters into it with this minus.

Entering into it with the minus or with the plus doesn't affect what is at stake. Something must be there for us to be able to put down plus or minus, presence or absence. What is at stake here [still]

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comes into play, and it is this coming into play of the phallus which, Freud says, is the mainspring of girl's entry into the Oedipus complex. Within this symbolic of the gift, all kinds of things can be given in exchange, so many things that this is ultimately why we have so many equivalents of the phallus in what effectively takes place in symptoms. And Freud goes further. You will find in "a child is being beaten" the indication, formulated in very raw terms, that if so many elements of pre-genital relations come into play in this oedipal dialectic<sup>25</sup>, that is, if so many frustrations at the oral and anal level tend to occur, which are, at the same time, things which come in to realise frustrations, accidents, and dramatic aspects [at the level] of the oedipal relation, that is, something which according to the assumptions [of these authors] should only be satisfied in the genital development, Freud says the following, which is that, in relation to something obscure which happens at the level of the ego – obscure, of course, because the child has no experience of it – the elements and the objects which are part of other pre-genital relations are more accessible to verbal representation.<sup>26</sup> He goes as far as to say that if pregenital objects come into play in the oedipal dialectic it is insofar as they lend themselves more easily to verbal representation, that is that the child can more easily say that what the father occasionally gives the mother is his urine<sup>27</sup>, because urine is something whose use, function and existence he is quite familiar with, as an object that is easier to symbolise – that is, an object that has more or less the power of a sign – than an object which has attained a certain realisation in the child's imagination, than something which remains extremely difficult to refer to [*saisir*], and, for the girl, difficult to access.

This puts the girl in a position in which the first introduction, we are told, into the dialectic of the Oedipus, hinges on the fact that she will receive the penis she desires from the father in the guise of a substitute, the child<sup>28</sup>. But in the example which concerns us, there is a real child, for in this game she is playing mother to an actual child. On the other hand, concerning this child to whom she plays mother, since it may satisfy something in her as an imaginary phallic substitution, it is by making this substitution and constituting herself as a subject, an imaginary mother, without being aware of it, that she is satisfied by having this child. Indeed, it is to acquire this imaginary penis of which she is fundamentally frustrated, then by putting in place this imaginary penis at the level of the ego.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Freud, S. (1919). *A child is being beaten: A contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions* (SE XVII), p. 193.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p188.

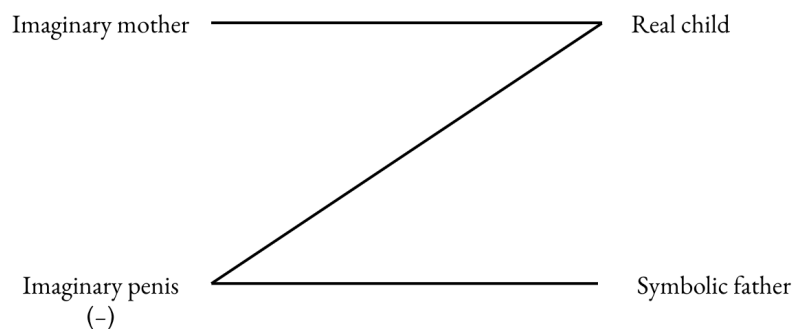
<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p188.

<sup>28</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman* (SE XVIII p. 157, where Freud writes: "It was just when the girl was experiencing the revival of her infantile Oedipus complex at puberty that she suffered her great disappointment. She became keenly conscious of the wish to have a child, and a male one; that what she desired was her father's child and an image of him, her consciousness was not allowed to know."

<sup>29</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La jeune homosexuelle*.



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I am doing nothing other than emphasising the following, which is the characteristic of original frustration. Any object that is introduced under the sign of frustration, I mean, that is introduced by a realised frustration, is and can only be an object which the subject takes up in this ambiguous position, that of belonging to her own body.

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I am emphasising this because as soon as we speak of the primordial relations of the child and the mother, we place all of the accent, taken in a passive way, on the notion of frustration. We are told that the child passes the first test of the relation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle in the frustrations felt on the mother's part, following which you can see the term 'frustration of the object', or 'loss of the love object' indiscriminately employed. However, if there is one thing I insisted upon in the previous lessons, it was surely on the bipolarity or the clearly marked opposition between the real object – insofar as the child can be frustrated [*frustré*] of it, namely, the mother's breast – and, on the other hand, the mother insofar as she is in a position to grant or to deny this real object. This supposes that there is a distinction between the breast and the mother as a total object, and that this is what Melanie Klein is referring to when she speaks first of partial objects and then of the mother insofar as she establishes herself as a total object and can then create the notorious depressive position in the child. This is, indeed, a way of seeing things, but what is eluded in this position is that the two objects are not of the same nature. But whether they are distinguished or not, it still remains that the mother is established as an agent through the function of the call, that she is already, in a rudimentary way, taken as an object marked and signified [*connoté*] with a possibility of more or of less as presence or absence, that the frustration realised by anything which connects to the mother as such is a frustration of love, that everything which comes from the mother as responding to this call is something which is a gift, that is, something other than the object.

In other words, there is a radical difference between the gift as a sign of love – what essentially aims at something radically beyond, at something other, the love of the mother – and the object, whatever it may be, which comes in here to satisfy the child's needs. Frustration of love and frustration of enjoyment [*jouissance*] are two separate things, because frustration of love is in itself pregnant with all the intersubjective relations such as they might later be constituted. But frustration of enjoyment is not in itself pregnant with anything. Contrary to what we are told, it is not the frustration of

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enjoyment which engenders reality, as can be seen in the standard confusion that we read in the analytic literature, but Mr Winnicott knows this very well all the same.<sup>30</sup> We cannot find the slightest genesis of reality according to the fact that the child has or does not have the breast. If he doesn't have the breast, he is hungry and he will continue to scream. In other words, what does the frustration of enjoyment produce? At most, it produces the renewal of desire but it does not constitute any kind of object whatsoever. And this is ultimately why Winnicott is led to remark that what is truly tangible in the child's behaviour, what allows us to bring to light that there is effectively a progression, a progression which is constituted and which requires an original explanation... it is not simply because the child is deprived of the mother's breast that he conjures up a fundamental image of it, nor any other kind of image. This image itself must be taken as an original dimension, the tip of the breast being absolutely essential. This is where the phallus will substitute itself and superimpose itself. They themselves, at this time, show that they share this character of requiring us to stop, insofar as they are constituted as images, namely that what subsists, what follows, is an original dimension. What follows the frustration of the object of enjoyment for the child is something that is maintained in the subject in a state of an imaginary relation, not simply something that focuses the stirring [*lancée*] of desire in the same way that, for animals, it is, in the end, always a certain lure which is oriented... since these behaviours always have some meaning or other... oriented towards the opponent's feathers or fins, those which make it an opponent. And we can always find something to individualise the image in the biological. It is present there, without doubt, but with this something that accentuates it in Man, and which can be observed in the child's behaviour. These images are referred to this fundamental image that grants him his status as complete [*statut global*], like a kind of set by which he clings to the other as such, which means that here, as well, there is this image by which subjects can be grouped and de-grouped, as belonging or not belonging. In short, the problem is not of knowing whether narcissism, first conceived as a kind of imagined and ideal auto-eroticism, is developed to a lesser or greater degree. It is, on the contrary, to know the function of an original narcissism in the constitution of an objectal world as such. This is why Winnicott dwells upon those objects which he calls transitional and without which we wouldn't have any kind of account of the way in which the child would be able to build [*constituer*] a world out of his frustrations in the first place. For he certainly does build a world, but it cannot be said that it is the object of his desires that originally frustrates him. The child builds a world insofar as in directing himself towards something he desires, he runs the risk of an

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Winnicott, D. (1953). 'Transitional objects and transitional phenomena – a study of the first not-me possession' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 34, p. 89, where Winnicott writes: "It is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related. It is usual to refer to 'reality-testing', and to make a clear distinction between apperception and perception. I am here staking a claim for an intermediate state between a baby's inability and growing ability to recognize and accept reality. I am therefore studying the substance of illusion, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes the hallmark of madness when an adult puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own. We can share a respect for illusory experience, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences. This is a natural root of grouping among human beings."

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encounter with something he might bump into or burn himself against. But this object is not in any way engendered by the object of desire. It is not something that can be modelled by the stages of the development of desire as it establishes and organises itself in infantile development – it is something else.

127 The object, insofar as it is engendered by frustration itself, is something in which we must admit the autonomy of this imaginary production in its relation to the image of the body – that is, as this ambiguous object which is between the two, and for which we can speak neither of reality nor of unreality, this is how Winnicott very appropriately articulates it, and instead of introducing us into all the problems this brings about concerning the introduction of this object into the order of the symbolic, he gets there in spite of himself because we are forced to go there as soon as we involve ourselves with these semi-real objects which are the transitional objects he refers to. These objects to which the child clings – a small corner of his blanket, a bit of his bib... and this is not observable in all children, but in the majority... these objects for which he sees very clearly what must be their ultimate relation to the fetish, which he is wrong to call a primitive fetish, but which is, in fact, its origin. Winnicott stays here and says that after all, this object which is neither real nor unreal is something to which we attribute neither a full reality nor a fully illusory character.

Everything in the midst of which a good English citizen lives, knowing in advance how one is to act, that is, your philosophical ideas, your religious system... nobody dreams of telling you that you believe in one philosophical or religious doctrine or another, nor does anybody dream of taking them away from you. It is this domain between the two. And he is not wrong. It is very much in the midst of it that life situates itself, but how to organise all the rest if that wasn't there? He points out that one must not have too many requirements, and that the character of half-existence in which these things are established is, indeed, marked by the one thing that no one thinks of, short of being forced to impose it on others as being an object to which one must adhere – the authenticity or the cold, hard reality of what is advanced as religious idea or as philosophical illusion. In short, that inspired world points out each one of us has a right to be mad, and on the condition of remaining mad separately, and this is where would begin the madness of imposing one's private madness on the set of subjects, each one constituted in a sort of nomadism of the transitional object. This transitional object, this imaginary penis of the fact of having her own child is nothing other than what we are told when it is affirmed to us that she has her imaginary penis from the moment she starts mothering her child. So what is needed for her to pass to the third moment, that is, the second stage of the five situations – which we will not look at today – at which this young girl in love lover arrives.

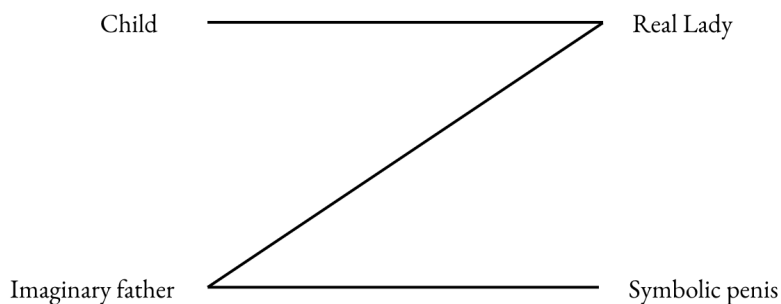
128 She is homosexual, and Freud tells us that she loves like a man. Even though the translator translated this in the feminine, our homosexual is in the virile position, namely, that this father who is at the level of the big 'A' in the first stage is now at the level of the ego, inasmuch as she has assumed the masculine position.<sup>31</sup> Here, there is the Lady, the object of love that has been substituted for the child, then the symbolic penis, namely what is there in love at its most developed point, what is beyond the loved

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<sup>31</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La jeune homosexuelle (2)*.

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subject. What is loved in love is what is beyond the subject, it is literally what he or she does not have. It is precisely insofar as the Lady does not have the symbolic penis, but that everything points to her having it, for she is the chosen object of all the subject's adoration... it is insofar as all of this that she is loved.



There arises a permutation which causes the symbolic father to slide into the imaginary through the subject's identification to the function of the father. Something else comes into the ego here with regard to the love object. It is precisely the having of this beyond that is the symbolic penis, which was first to be found at the imaginary level. At this point, let us simply ask what happened between the two? The second moment, and the characteristic that can be observed there, and which we find again in the fourth moment... it is that there has been, at the level of the imaginary relation, the introduction of the real action of the father, this symbolic father who was there in the unconscious. For when the real child begins to be substituted for the desire for the penis, a child which the father is going to give to her, this is an imaginary or real child which is already there. It is rather unsettling that it is real, but it comes from a father who, himself, remains... and even especially so since the child is real... he remains unconscious as a progenitor.

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Except the father really gave a child, not to his daughter, but to the mother, which is to say that this real child unconsciously desired by the daughter, and to which she gave this substitute by which she satisfies herself, already shows, without a doubt, an escalation of need, which gives the situation its dramaticism. The subject has been frustrated in a very particular way by the fact that the real child, coming from the father qua symbolic father, has been given to her own mother. These are the characteristics that can be observed. When we say that it is undoubtedly to some accommodation of the instincts or the tendencies, or some primitive drive, that we owe the fact that in such a case things have taken shape in terms of a perversion, are we always, in fact, starting from these three absolutely essential elements – providing in distinguishing them – which are imaginary, symbolic and real? Here we may remark that it is insofar as the real has been introduced, a real that responded to the unconscious situation at the level of the imaginary register, that the situation revealed itself to be – for highly structured reasons – a relation of jealousy. The untenable character of this imaginary satisfaction to which the child was confining herself is that, through a sort of interposition, he is there, realised at the level of the imaginary relation. He has effectively entered into play, and no longer as a

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symbolic father. At this point, another imaginary relations establishes itself, which the child will fill in as best she can, but it is marked by this fact that what was latently articulated at the level of the big Other begins to... in the style of a perversion, and this is why, for that matter, it results in a perversion and for no other reason... begins to articulate itself in an imaginary way, in that the girl identifies, at that moment, with the father. She takes on this role herself and becomes the imaginary father. She, too, will have kept his penis, and attaches herself to an object to which she must necessarily give the very thing that the object does not have. It is this necessity of motivating, of focusing her love not on the object but on what the object does not have, this something that takes us right to the heart of the romantic relation itself, and of the gift, this something which renders necessary the ternary constellation in this subject's history.

This is where we will take things up next time. This will allow us to go deeper into the dialectic of the gift as it is seen and experienced so primordially by the subject, that is, to see its other aspect, the one we left to one side earlier. I emphasised the paradoxes of frustration on the side of the object, but I did not say what caused the frustration of love, or what it signified as such.

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Jacques Lacan - Seminar IV

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There are certain texts in this booklet<sup>1</sup> that will allow you to find a fresh attempt at this logic, to find it where it is particularly alive – that is, in our practice. Taking up again what I am alluding to, our famous game of odds and evens<sup>2</sup>, you will very easily find the three moments of subjectivity insofar as this game relates to frustration, providing we take frustration in the sense of the lack of the object. You can find them easily if you think about the zero position of the problem, the opposition which institutes the pure symbol – plus (+) or minus (–), presence or absence – in which there is nothing but a sort of objectivisable [*objectivable*] position of the rules of the game. You can easily see the second moment in the fact that in this sort of demand, which is the declaration of the game, you put yourself in a position of being gratified, or not, by someone who, having the dice in their hands from that point on, is in fact completely helpless. It is no longer up to him whether what he has in his hands answers to your demand. So, there you have the second stage of the dual relation as instituting this call and its response, at which the level of frustration is established, and you can see, at the same time, its absolutely ephemeral and literally insatiable character. If this game involves something which interests you and which gives it a meaning, it is evidently because you introduce the third dimension, that of the law, in a form which is always latent in the playing of the game – namely, what is at stake from the point of view of the one who demands? The Other, of course, is supposed at every moment to suggest a regularity – a law, in other words – which at the same time he is trying hard to conceal [*dérober*].

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It is in this dimension of the institution of a law, a regularity, understood as a possibility, and which is constantly being revealed to him at every instant by the one who suggests the hidden part of the game, the part concealed from him, the appearance of which is momentarily suggested to him... It is at this moment that what is most fundamental in the game and what gives it its intersubjective meaning is established, which establishes the game in a dimension which is no longer dual but ternary, such that it is essential.

The value of my introduction hinges on this, that it is necessary to introduce three terms in order for something resembling a law to be articulated, these three intersubjective terms through which we will attempt to see how this object is introduced – an object which, by the mere fact of coming within our reach, under our jurisdiction in analytic practice, is an object that must enter the symbolic chain. This is what we arrived at last time, when we took up the story of our case of female homosexuality.<sup>3</sup> We reached what I called the third moment, that is, the moment constructed in the following way. In the first situation which we arbitrarily took as the starting point... but then there was already a kind of concession to a progressive point of view, going from the past to the future in a chronological ordering of terms... in order to facilitate things by bringing them closer to what happens in the dialectic of frustration, which, being conceived in a summary way, without distinguishing between real, imaginary, and symbolic levels, results in impasses that I hope to make more and more apparent to you as we move

<sup>1</sup> See Lacan, J. (1955). *Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'*.

<sup>2</sup> Lacan refers to Poe's description of a game played by schoolboys in 'The Purloined Letter': "This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one."

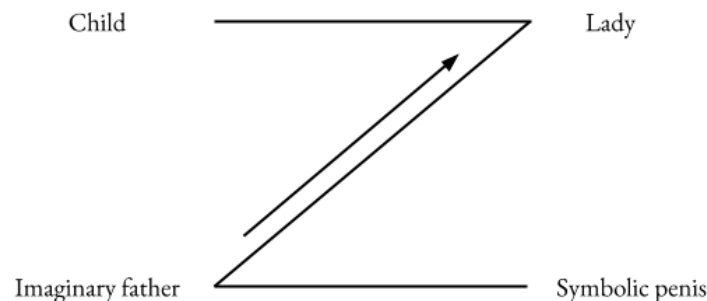
<sup>3</sup> See Freud, S. (1920). *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman (SE XVIII)*, pp. 145-172

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forwards. For the moment, we are trying to establish the principles of these relations between the object and the constitution of the symbolic chain. So, we have the girl's position when she is still going through puberty, and the first symbolic and imaginary structuration of her position takes place classically, as prescribed by the theory, with this equivalence between the imaginary penis and the child, which establishes her within a certain relation of imaginary mother with regard to this beyond, which is her father, who intervenes at this moment as a symbolic function, that is to say, as the one who can provide the phallus. Nonetheless, at this point, the power of the father is unconscious, and whoever can produce the child is unconscious.

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It is at this stage, one might say, that the fatal moment occurs, wherein the father intervenes in the real to give a child to the mother, making this child, with whom the girl is in an imaginary relationship, into something realised, and something that, consequently, she can no longer sustain in the imaginary position in which she established it. We now find ourselves in the second moment, wherein the intervention of the real father at the level of the child of which she was thus frustrated, produces the transformation of the whole equation, which is posed as follows: the imaginary father, the Lady, the symbolic penis. That is to say that, by way of a sort of inversion, her relation to the father crosses over from the symbolic order in the direction of the imaginary relation or, if you like, it is, in a way, the projection of the relation of the unconscious formula, which at that moment is of her initial stability into a perverse relation, an imaginary relation – that of her relationship with the lady.<sup>4</sup>



And so, after a first application of our formulas, the positions of these terms are posited in what is without a doubt an enigmatic fashion, and over which we might even pause for a moment. Nevertheless, we must note that these terms, whichever they may be, impose themselves. I mean, they impose a structure – that is, if we were to change the position of any one of them, we would have to move all the others around... and not to just anywhere we please. Let us now attempt to see what this means. Its meaning is given to us by analysis. What does Freud say at the crucial moment of this case<sup>5</sup>? That is, at the point where, through a certain conception he has developed concerning the position at

<sup>4</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *La Jeune Homosexuelle (3)*.

<sup>5</sup> The term Lacan uses here is “*observation*”, which has been variously translated as “case” or “case study”.



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stake, through an intervention he makes in this direction, he crystallises, in a certain way, the position between himself and the patient, but in an unsatisfying way, since he backs out and then affirms that at that moment the analytic relation breaks off?

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In any case, whatever Freud might have thought, he is far from being led into putting all the blame for an impasse onto the patient's position. His own intervention, or his conception, his prejudices regarding this position, must count for something in the fact that the situation breaks off. Let us remind ourselves what this position is, and how Freud formulates it for us. He tells us that the patient's resistances were too great to overcome. How does he materialise these resistances? What examples does he give us of them? What meaning does he give them? He sees them expressed particularly in dreams that, paradoxically, might have produced many hopes – that is, hopes that the situation will normalise. These are the dreams which are exclusively conjugal, dreams of union and happy marriage. In these dreams, the patient is subjected to an ideal spouse and has children. In short, the dream manifests something which goes in the direction of what society – as represented here by the family, if not Freud – can hope for as the best outcome of the treatment.

Freud, informed by everything that the patient tells him of her position and her intentions, far from taking the text of the dream at face value, only sees a trick, as he puts it, on the part of the patient. He sees something expressly designed to deceive him, more precisely in the manner that I evoked earlier in this use of the intersubjective game of divination. He sees something designed to delude and disillusion him at the same time. What is remarkable is that this supposes, as Freud points out, that we may now object to him: “But, then, the unconscious can lie!” It is a point on which Freud lingers for a long time, discussing it, and taking care to respond in a highly articulate manner. For, taking up the distinction made in *The Interpretation of Dreams* between the preconscious and the unconscious, he presents something similar, which he recalls in another case to which we will return, and for which I gave, following Lagache's report on transference, a short intervention<sup>6</sup> summarising the positions through which I believe we should conceive of the Dora case<sup>7</sup>. It is an observation which must be brought out in the Dora case – a passage from the *Traumdeutung* which is the comparison, regarding the relations of unconscious desire and preconscious desire, the comparison between capitalist and entrepreneur<sup>8</sup>. Preconscious desire is, we might say, the entrepreneur of the dream, but the dream would not have sufficient resources to establish itself as representative of this thing called the unconscious if there were not another desire providing the background of the dream, which is unconscious desire. He draws this distinction very well, except that he does not draw its ultimate consequences. In short, there is a distinction between what the subject brings into the dream, which is at the level of the unconscious, and the factor of the dual relation, the relation to the one we are addressing when we recount this dream, when we take it up in analysis. And it is in this sense that I am telling you that a dream produced over the course of an analysis always has a certain direction towards the analyst, and this direction is not always necessarily the unconscious one.

<sup>6</sup> See Lacan, J. (1953). *Presentation on Transference*. in *Écrits*, pp. 176-185.

<sup>7</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), pp. 7-114.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter VII of Freud, S. (1900 [1895]). *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE V), p. 561.

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But the entire question is in knowing where to put the accent, whether with respect to the intentions, which always end up being those intentions which Freud tells us are avowedly those of the patient, that is, intentions of playing games with her father, in which the patient succeeds in formulating the game of deceit by pretending to be insulted and maintaining her positions and her fidelity towards the Lady, or whether this thing that is expressed in the dream be purely and simply conceived in this perspective of deceit – in other words, in its preconscious intentionalisation [*intentionnalisation*]. It doesn't seem...<sup>9</sup> For if we look at it closely, what can we see being expressed? No doubt, there is a dialectic of deceit here. But what is being expressed, what is brought back to the signifier, is precisely what is diverted at the origin in the first position, and is called... in the unconscious, at this stage, and hence also in the unconscious in the third stage, which is formulated as follows, as coming from the father, in the way in which the subject receives her own message in its inverted form – “You are my wife”, “You are my master”, “You shall have a child by me”. It is at the point of entry into Oedipus, or insofar as the Oedipus is not resolved, that the promise on which the girl's entry into the Oedipus complex is founded. It is from here that the position sets out. And if, in fact, we find something in the dream which is articulated as a situation in which this promise is fulfilled, it always turns out to be the same content of the unconscious, and if Freud hesitates in the face of it, it is precisely for want of a perfectly pure formulation of what transference is. There is, in transference, an imaginary element and a symbolic element, and consequently there is a choice to be made. If transference has any meaning, if what Freud subsequently brought us with the notion of *Weiderholungszwang* [repetition compulsion] such that I took care to spend a year going around it in order to make you see what meaning it might have, it is first and foremost inasmuch as there is an insistence proper to the symbolic chain as such. This insistence proper to the symbolic chain is not, by definition, assumed by the subject. Nonetheless, the sole fact that it is reproduced and that it emerges in the third stage as a remainder, as formulated in the dream, means that even if at the imaginary level – that is, in the direct relation to the therapist – this dream appears to be a deceitful dream, the dream is nonetheless, strictly speaking, the representative of the transference in the proper sense. And it is here that Freud – with an audacity grounded in a less oscillating position of his notion of transference, could have securely placed his confidence, and could have intervened, on condition of conceiving, very precisely, that the transference essentially happens at the level of symbolic articulation, that when we speak of transference, when something takes its full meaning from the fact of the analyst becoming the site of the transference, it is quite precisely insofar as it is a question of a symbolic articulation as such.

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This is, of course, before the subject has assumed it, because it is quite precisely a transference dream. Freud notes that at this particular moment it is mostly reproduced as something belonging to the order of transference. Simply put, he draws neither the direct consequence, nor the correct method of intervention. I am pointing this out because in truth this is not simply to be remarked on for this particular case. We have, equally, another case – Dora's case, to be precise – within which the problem opens up at the same level in the same manner, except that Freud makes the exact opposite mistake. One might say these two cases balance each other admirably. They are strictly interwoven, the one with

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<sup>9</sup> Lacan breaks off here.

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the other, but not only insofar as there is produced, in one case, in one direction, this conflation of the symbolic position with imaginary position, and in the other case, a conflation in the opposite direction.

We could say that in their sum constellation, these two cases strictly correspond with one another, except that the one is organised in relation to the other in the form of the positive to the negative. I could say that there is no better illustration of Freud's formulation that "perversion is the negative of neurosis". Still, it must be further developed. Let us quickly recall the terms of the Dora case, by way of what they have in common with the terms of the present constellation. We have, in the Dora case, precisely in the foreground, the same figures – a father, a daughter, and also a Lady, Mrs. K. And it is all the more striking for us that it is also around the Lady that the whole problem turns, and yet this fact is hidden from Freud in the girl's presentation as a little hysteric, brought to him for a few symptoms she has had, undoubtedly minor but clearly all of the same character. Above all, the situation becomes intolerable following something that is a sort of demonstration or intention of suicide, which ends up alarming her family. When they bring her to Freud, the father presents her as being ill, and undoubtedly the shift to the level of a consultation is an element that in itself denotes a crisis in the social group, which until then had been held in a certain balance. Nevertheless this singular balance had broken apart two years earlier, and had been established by a position which was initially concealed from Freud, namely that the father had Mrs. K. as his mistress, and that this woman was married to a man named Mr. K., who existed in a sort of quartet, a relation with the couple made up of the father and the daughter, the mother being absent from the situation. We can already see, as we continue to move forward, the contrast with the young homosexual's situation. There, the mother is present, for it is she that seizes the father's attention from the daughter, and introduces this element of real frustration which will have been the determining factor in the formation of the perverse constellation. Where, in the Dora case, it is the father who introduces the Lady and appears to keep her there, here it is the daughter who introduces her. What is striking, in this position, is that Dora immediately points out to Freud her extraordinarily vivid claim concerning her father's affection, which she tells him has been snatched away by this liaison, and she immediately demonstrates to Freud that she has always kept herself informed of the existence, permanence, and prevalence of this liaison but that she has come to tolerate it no longer, and that all her behaviour is a protest in relation to this. Freud, in a step that is decisive for the properly dialectical quality of the first step of the Freudian experiment, brings her back to the question, "What you rebel against here, this disarray, is this not something in which you yourself have played a role?"

And, indeed, he very quickly highlights that up until the critical moment, this position had been propped up in the most efficient manner by Dora herself, who proved to be more than ready to oblige this singular position and was really its lynchpin, protecting, in a way, the secret meetings of her father and the lady, even substituting herself for the lady, in one case, in terms of her role – namely, taking care of the children – and on the other hand, as we proceed further into the concept and the structure of the case, even demonstrating a very special bond with the lady, who was discovered to be [Dora's] confidante, and in whom she seems to have gone very far in placing her confidence. This case is so rich that we can still discover things in it, but this brief reminder can in no way replace a careful reading of

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the case. Let us point out, for one thing, this interval of nine months between two symptoms that Freud believes he is discovering because the patient transmits it to him in a symbolic way<sup>10</sup>. But, if we look more closely, we notice that in [Freud's] notes it is actually fifteen months. And these fifteen months have a significance, because it is a fifteen which is found throughout the case, and it is helpful in understanding things insofar as they are founded on numbers, and on a purely symbolic value.

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Today, I can only remind you of the terms in which the problem is articulated throughout the case study. It is not only that Freud notices afterwards that his failure is due to the patient's resistance in admitting – as Freud suggests to her, with all the weight of his insistence and his authority – the relationship that ties her to Mr. K. This is not all that can be read throughout the case study. It is not simply as a side note or an afterthought that Freud indicates that there undoubtedly was an error, namely that he should have understood that Dora's homosexual attachment to Mrs. K. was the true meaning of both the establishment of her original position, as well as her crisis, which we are just now approaching. It is not merely that Freud recognises this afterwards. All throughout the case study, Freud has a great ambivalence concerning the true object of Dora's desire. Here, again, we find ourselves in an arrangement of the problem which is a possible formulation of this unresolved ambiguity, as it were. It is clear that Mr. K is a character of primary importance for Dora and that there is something like a libidinal attachment established between them. It is also clear that something of a different order, which nonetheless carries a very great weight, is playing a role at every moment in the libidinal attachment to Mrs. K. How are we to conceive of the one and the other in a manner which would justify the progression of the affair, its crisis, and the breaking point of its equilibrium? That is, in a manner which would allow us to see equally both the progression of the affair and the moment when it stops? Already in a first criticism or first approach to the problem, in an observation I made five years ago<sup>11</sup>, I indicated that, in accordance with the hysterical structure, the hysteric is someone who loves by proxy. You can see this in a host of observations of hysterics. The hysteric is someone whose object is homosexual, and who approaches this homosexual object by way of identification with someone of the opposite sex. This is a first approach to the patient, a kind of clinical one. I went further, starting with the notion of the narcissistic relation insofar as it is foundational for the ego, and the matrix of the constitution of this imaginary function called the ego. I said that ultimately we had enough traces to make the following observation – that it is insofar as Dora's ego, and only her ego, is identified with a virile figure... I'm referring to the completed situation in the quadrille... it is only insofar as Dora is Mr. K, insofar as men are, for her, one of the many possible crystallisations of her ego, that the situation can be understood. In other words, it is through the intermediary of Mr. K., it is

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* In a footnote in 'Part III: The Second Dream', Freud writes "I looked about for a method of approaching the puzzle. Periods of time had been mentioned in the dream; and time is assuredly never a matter of indifference in any biological event. I therefore asked Dora when this attack of appendicitis had taken place; Every difficulty was resolved at a single blow by her prompt reply: 'Nine months later.' The period of time is sufficiently characteristic. Her supposed attack of appendicitis had thus enabled the patient with the modest means at her disposal (the pains and the menstrual flow) to realize a phantasy of childbirth."

<sup>11</sup> Between 1950 and 1953, Lacan conducted private seminars on three of Freud's major case studies – Dora, The Wolf Man, and the Rat Man – at his residence in Paris. Lacan's seminar on Dora provided the backdrop for his 1951 paper – see *Lacan, J. (1953). Presentation on Transference.*

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insofar as she is Mr. K... and it is by this imaginary point which constitutes the personality of Mr. K, that she is attached to the figure of Mrs. K.

139 I went even further, and I said that Mrs. K. is a person of importance. Why? She is not important simply because she is a choice among other objects. She is not simply someone who we could say is invested with this narcissistic function, which is at the bottom of any state of being in love. Mrs. K. is Dora's question, as the dreams indicate... for the essential weight of the case is carried in the dreams<sup>12</sup>. Let us now attempt to transcribe this using our present formulation and try to situate, in the quartet, what organises itself in our fundamental schema. Dora is an hysteric, that is, someone who has arrived at the Oedipal crisis and who in this crisis has overcome it and simultaneously could not overcome it. There is a reason for this, which is that her own father, unlike the young homosexual's father, is impotent. The entire case rests on this central notion of the father's impotence. This is, therefore, an opportunity to foreground, in a particularly exemplary manner, what the function of the father as such might be, in relation to the lack of object. By what means does the daughter enter the Oedipus? What might be the function of the father as a donor? In other words, this situation rests on the distinction that I made with regard to primitive frustration, with regard to what can be established in the mother-child relation – that is, the distinction that the object belongs to the subject only after her being stripped of it. It is only after this frustration that her desire subsists, and this frustration only has a meaning insofar as the object subsists after the frustration has occurred. The situation rests on the differentiation that is made in the mother's intervention at this point – that is, in another register, whether she gives or does not give and whether this giving is or is not a sign of love. Here the father is made to be the one who gives this missing object symbolically. But he does not give it, because he does not have it. The phallic deficiency of the father is what traverses the entire case history as an absolutely fundamental and constitutive ingredient of the situation.

140 Do we not find ourselves here, in a sense, in a single register? That is to say, is it not purely and simply in relation to this lack that the whole crisis will establish itself? Let us look at what is at stake. What does it mean to give? In other words, what dimension is introduced into the object relation where it is raised to the level of the symbolic, by the fact that the object can or can not be given? In other words, is it ever the case that the object is given? This is the question in which we see, in the case of Dora, one of the most exemplary ways out, for she remains very attached to this father from whom she does not symbolically receive the virile gift. She remains so attached that her story begins, at the age of her exit from Oedipus, precisely with a whole series of hysterical accidents which are very clearly related to manifestations of love for this father, who at that point, appears more decisively than ever as an injured and sick father, as a father stricken in his vital potency itself. The love she has for this father is at that point very precisely and strictly related, correlatively and coextensively, to the decline of this father. We thus have a very clear distinction. What takes place in the love relation, what is demanded as a sign of love, is only ever something which has value as a sign. Or, to go even further, no greater gift, no greater sign of love is possible, than the gift of what one does not have. But be sure to take note of this:

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<sup>12</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria (SE VII)*, p. 64.

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the dimension of the gift only exists with the introduction of the law, with the fact that the gift, as all sociological reflection affirms and presents to us, is something that circulates.<sup>13</sup>

The gift you give is always the gift you have received. But between two subjects, this cycle of gifts always comes from elsewhere, for we might say that what establishes the love relation is that this gift is given for nothing. The ‘nothing for nothing’, which is the principle of exchange, is a formula in which this ambiguous ‘nothing’ comes up, like in every formula. This ‘nothing for nothing’ which seems to be the very formula of interest, is also the formula of pure gratuity. In fact, in the gift of love there is only ever something given ‘for nothing’, and which can only be ‘nothing’. In other words, it is insofar as a subject gives something gratuitously, and insofar as behind what he gives, there is all that he lacks, that the original gift... such as it is effectively practised at the origin of human exchanges in the form of the *potlatch*... what makes it a gift is that the subject sacrifices something beyond what he has. I would ask you to take notice of the fact that if we suppose a subject that carries within himself the full stock [*charge*] of all possible goods and riches, a subject who has, in a sense, all [*comble*] it is possible to have, then a gift given by such a subject would literally have none of the value of a sign of love. And if it is possible that believers imagine that it is possible to love God because God is supposed to effectively have this total plenitude, this everything [*comble*] within Him, it is quite certain that if such a thing is even conceivable of being recognised as such, in relation to what would very precisely claim ... at the bottom of every belief that there is nonetheless something which remains there, as long as this being – who is supposed to be thought as a whole being – undoubtedly lacks the principal aspect of being, namely, existence. This is to say that at the bottom of any belief in God as perfectly and totally munificent there is this *je ne sais quoi* that he always lacks, which makes it always conceivable that he does not exist. There is no reason to love God except that he might not exist.

141 What is certain is that this is indeed where Dora is situated at the moment when she loves her father. She loves him precisely for what he does not give her. The entire situation is unthinkable outside of this primitive position, which is maintained until the end, but what must be conceived is how she could bear this position, tolerate it, given that the father engages in something else in front of Dora, which she herself even seems to have induced. The entire case is founded on the following: Father, Dora, Mrs. K.<sup>14</sup>



The entire situation is established as if Dora were to ask herself “What does my father love in Mrs. K?”

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, *Mauss, M. (1950 [1925]). The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies.*

<sup>14</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora*.

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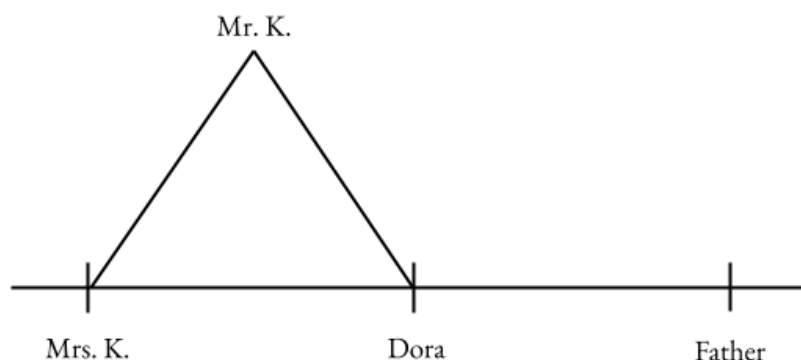
Mrs. K. presents herself as something her father may love beyond Dora, and what Dora is attached to is what is loved, by her father, in another, in this Other, such that she does not know what it is, and this very much conforms to what is supposed in all the theory of the phallic object, namely, that in order for the feminine subject to enter the dialectic of the symbolic order, she must enter it through this gift of the phallus. She cannot enter it otherwise. This supposes, then, that real need – which is not denied by Freud, which emerges with the feminine organ itself, the woman's physiology – is never granted entry into the establishment of the position of desire. Desire aims at the phallus insofar as it must be received as a gift. For this to happen, it must be raised to the level of the gift, present or absent. In fact, it is insofar as it is raised to the dignity of a gift object that it causes the subject to enter the dialectic of exchange, which will normalise all these positions, up to and including the essential prohibitions which ground the general movement of exchange. It is herein that the real need – again, whose existence Freud never dreamed of denying – associated with the feminine organ itself, will prove to find its place and its satisfaction, we might say, laterally. But it is never symbolically located as something which has a meaning. It is always essentially problematic in itself, placed in the way of a certain access to the symbolic, and it is effectively what is at stake during the deployment of these symptoms and the deployment of this case. Dora asks herself, "What is a woman?" And it is insofar as Mrs. K. incarnates this feminine function as such that she represents the question that Dora projects herself into. It is insofar as Dora herself is on the way to a dual relationship with Mrs. K, that Mrs. K. is what is loved beyond Dora – which is ultimately the reason why she, Dora, feels herself to be implicated in this position. In a sense, Mrs. K. is loved beyond Dora herself because she embodies [*réalise*] what Dora can neither know nor understand of this situation in which she, Dora, cannot find her place. Insofar as love for another being is love for something beyond what they are, it is ultimately something in a being which they lack, and love, for Dora, is situated somewhere between her father and Mrs. K, insofar as, because her father loves Mrs. K, Dora herself is satisfied, on condition, of course, that this situation is maintained. This situation which, for that matter, is symbolised in a thousand ways – namely, that this impotent father substitutes the symbolic gift by every possible means, including material gifts, to make up for what he does not accomplish as a virile presence, and makes Dora benefit from this along the way through all sorts of generosity which are distributed equally between the mistress and his daughter. He thus makes her participate in this symbolic situation. However, this is not quite enough and Dora attempts to re-establish, to restore access to a position manifested in the opposite direction. What I mean by this is that it is no longer vis-à-vis the father, but vis-à-vis the woman in front of her, Mrs. K, that she attempts to re-establish a triangular situation, and it is here that Mr. K comes in that is, it is effectively through him that the triangle can be closed, but in an inverted position.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora (2)*.

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Through an interest in her own question, Dora views Mr. K to be someone who participates in what symbolises, in the case, the dimension of the question in Mrs. K's presence. That is, again, this adoration expressed by a quite obvious symbolic association, given in the case study – namely, the Sistine Madonna.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. K. is the object of adoration of all those who surround her, and it is as a participant in this adoration that Dora is ultimately situated in relation to her. Mr. K is the means by which she normalises this position, in an attempt to reintegrate something that brings the masculine element into the circuit, and it is

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effectively at the point when Mr. K tells her neither that he is courting her nor that he loves her, nor even approaches her in a manner intolerable for a hysteric, but when he tells her “*Ich habe nichts an meiner Frau*” [‘I get nothing out of my wife.’] that she slaps him<sup>17</sup>. The crucial element is that Mr. K at some point says something which has a particularly vivid meaning. Providing we grant this term ‘nothing’ its full impact and all its resonance, the German formula is particularly expressive. In short, he tells her something which results in his own removal from this circuit as it is constituted, as it is established in the following order.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 96. A painting by Raphael Sanzio, located in Dresden from 1754-1945. In ‘Part III: The Second Dream’ of his case study, Freud describes Dora’s response to the painting: “She remained two hours in front of the Sistine Madonna, rapt in silent admiration. When I asked her what had pleased her so much about the picture she could find no clear answer to make. At last she said: ‘The Madonna.’”

<sup>17</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (SE VII), p. 98. Freud writes: “No sooner had she grasped the purport of his words than she had slapped him in the face and hurried away. I enquired what his actual words had been. Dora could only remember one of his pleas: ‘You know I get nothing out of my wife.’”

<sup>18</sup> The schema that follows appears in the published French edition of the seminar edited by J-A Miller, where it is labelled as *Dora* (3).





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for, we might say, Mr K.'s complacency – permitting him, with a kind of veiled tolerance, to pursue this courtesanery by which, over the years, he gives himself to Dora. So, it is insofar as Mr K. admits to not being part of a circuit in which Dora can either identify him with herself, or can imagine that she, Dora, is his object beyond the woman, this object through which she is attached to him, insofar as the rupture of these bonds... which are undoubtedly subtle and ambiguous but which have, in every case, a perfectly clear meaning and orientation... insofar as this rupture is understood, and that Dora can no longer find her place in the circuit, except in an extremely unstable manner... but she does find it, in a certain manner... and at every moment it is insofar as there occurs the rupturing of these bonds that the situation loses its balance and Dora sees herself diminished to the role of pure and simple object, and she then begins to enter into making claim to this something which she was very well-disposed to considering, and which she received until this moment, through the intermediary of another, which is her father's love. From that moment on, she claims it exclusively for herself, since it is totally refused to her.

145 What difference appears, between these two registers and these two situations in which Dora and our homosexual are respectively involved? To move quickly and end with something illustrative, I will tell you the following, which we will confirm. If it is true that what is maintained in our homosexual's unconscious is the father's promise – “You shall have a child by me” – and if what she shows in this exalted love for the Lady is precisely, as Freud tells us, the model of absolutely disinterested love, love for nothing, then do you not see that in this first case everything happens as if the girl wanted to show her father what authentic love is, this love that her father refused her? Undoubtedly, it became entangled in the subject's unconscious, because he finds more benefits with the mother, and this relation is fundamental for the child's entry into the Oedipus – that is, the crushing superiority of the rival adult. What she demonstrates to him is how one can love someone not only for what they have, but literally for what they do not have, for this symbolic penis which she knows very well that she will not find in the Lady, because she knows very well where it can be found – that is, with her father, who is *not* impotent. In other words, what perversion reveals, in this case, is that it expresses itself between the lines, through contrasts, by allusions. It is this way we have of speaking of something completely different but which, through a rigorous sequence of terms which are brought into play, necessarily implies its counterpart, which is what we want to make the Other here. In other words, we find here what I have previously called metonymy – that is, in the broadest sense, to make one thing heard whilst speaking of something else entirely. If you do not understand, in all its generality, this fundamental notion of metonymy, it is completely inconceivable that you would arrive at any conception at all of what perversion in the imaginary could mean. This metonymy is the principle of all that can be called realism, in the order of make-believe and of art. For realism literally has no kind of meaning. A novel, made up of a bunch of little marks, will mean nothing if, quite precisely, it does not make something vibrate with a sense of the beyond. If great novelists are bearable, it is insofar as everything they dedicate themselves to showing us finds a meaning, not merely symbolically, nor allegorically, but through that which they hold at a distance. It is the same with cinema. Similarly, the function of the subject's perversion is a metonymic function. But is it the same thing for Dora, who is neurotic? It is completely different. Looking at the schema, we notice that in perversion we are dealing with a

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signifying action which indicates a signifier further along the signifying chain, inasmuch as it is attached to it by a necessary signifier. It is insofar as Dora, taken as a subject, places herself under a certain number of signifiers in the chain with every step. It is insofar as Mrs. K. is literally her metaphor.

146 For Dora can say nothing about what she is, nor what purpose she serves, nor what purpose love serves. Simply, she knows that love exists and she finds a historicisation for it, in which she finds its place in the form of a question, centred on the content and the articulation of all her dreams which mean nothing else – the jewellery box, etc. It is insofar as Dora questions herself on what it is to be a woman that she expresses herself as she does, through symptoms. These symptoms are signifying elements, but beneath them runs a signified that is perpetually shifting, which is Dora's way of involving and concerning herself. It is as a metaphor that Dora's neurosis makes sense, and can be untangled. And it is precisely insofar as Freud himself is introduced into this metaphor, and for his having tried to force the real element that tends to slip into all of this metaphor by saying "What you love is precisely this", that, of course, something in the situation is normalised by the entrance of Mr. K into the game. But this something remains in a metaphorical state, and the proof is that Freud can think – with this sort of prodigious, intuitive sense he has of meanings – that there is something resembling a kind of pregnancy for Dora, something after the crisis of separation with Mr. K. In fact, it is a kind of strange, meaningful miscarriage that takes place. Freud thinks 'nine months' because Dora herself says 'nine months',<sup>20</sup> and she admits by this that there is a sort of pregnancy there. But, in fact, it is beyond this point, past what would be normal for Dora to call the gestation period, that it is significant that Dora sees the final resonance of this something which continues to tie her to Mr. K.

And in fact we can find here, in a certain form, the equivalence of a sort of copulation, translated into the symbolic order, in a purely metaphorical way. Once again, the symptom here is but a metaphor, an attempt to rejoin the law of symbolic exchanges with the man by which one is united or disunited. On the other hand, the childbirth which can equally be found on the other side, at the end of the case of the young homosexual before she is taken into Freud's care, manifests itself in the following way. She suddenly jumps off a low railway bridge at the moment when, once again, the real father intervenes, in order to demonstrate her irritation and her wrath to him, and which the woman who is with her sanctions, in telling her that she no longer wants to see her. At this moment, the young girl finds herself stripped of the last of her resources, for until then she had been quite frustrated for having been deprived of what ought to have been given her – namely, the paternal phallus. But she had

147 found the means, via the path of this imaginary relation, to maintain her desire. At this moment, in the wake of the Lady's rejection, she can no longer sustain anything at all – that is to say, the object is definitively lost, this nothing in which she has established herself in order to demonstrate to her father how one can love no longer has its *raison d'être*, and it is exactly at that point that she commits suicide. But Freud points out to us that this also has another meaning. It has the meaning of a definitive loss of the object, that this phallus – which is clearly denied her – falls, *niederkommt*. This has the value of a definitive privation and, at the same time, the mimicking of a sort of symbolic birth. And you can find

<sup>20</sup> See Freud, S. (1901 [1905]). *Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria (SE VII)*, p. 102.

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here this metonymical aspect that I was telling you about, for if this act of throwing oneself off a railway bridge at the critical and terminal moment of these relations with the Lady and the father, can be interpreted by Freud as a sort of demonstrative way for her to bring about this child she did not have, and at the same time destroying herself in a final act, signifying the object, then it is an interpretation founded solely on the presence of the word '*niederkommt*', which metonymically indicates the third term and the theme of suicide in which it is expressed for the homosexual in question, and which is the sole and unique mainspring of all perversion. And this conforms to all Freud has repeatedly affirmed concerning the pathogenesis of a certain type of female homosexuality – namely, an unwavering and particularly intense love for the father.